

## 0. Main : From Fear to Freedom

As a new academic year will soon begin in most parts of the world and as autumn sets up in the northern hemisphere, a reflective mood on recent events and future developments is perhaps not out of place.

During the past months and in some places, the memory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (28 June 1712-2 July 1778) for the tercentenary anniversary of his birth was celebrated. One cannot deny the influence that his thinking has exerted either on education or on political philosophy through his reflections on the “social contract”, so important for future forms of democracy. The reception of his legacy in China is examined in some pages of this issue.

It is therefore fitting that we draw our attention to Aung San Suu Kyi who, after many years of struggle and house of arrest, had finally been freed and was able to take part in the legislative elections of Myanmar where she won a seat in the parliament on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012.

Meanwhile, the financial and economic crisis continues to grip not a few nations in the Western world where the social predicament worsens every month, letting off many workers out of job. China is not exempted of these worries since its export ratio decreases and a new generation of migrant workers, aware of their merits in China’s economic rise, manage to get their rights for better salaries, as explained in one of the following articles.

In such a context two important changes on the world stage will have the limelight. After due preparation done on the highest echelons of the decision making process, the new Chinese top leadership will be formed during the Congress of its Party meeting on dates not yet published at the time of writing. But as if it were in a synchronized choreography quite rare in recent world history, during the same period of time democratic political debates in the USA between the two presidential candidates will climax on Tuesday November 6, the date of the election.

Be they synchronized or not, these changes will have to bear fruit: the games are not done. Other forces in fact are at work where the Arab Spring had seen new flowers blooming, yet soon fading away in several countries. Revolutions are prone to degenerate into internecine bloody conflicts as is the case in Syria. Geopolitics maneuvers, as expressed by obstinate vetoes, do not help any way in resolving the crisis.

Under the principle of non-interference in another state’s affairs, the state’s sovereignty is valued more than its people, although disputed policies have desperately induced the nation into rebellion! One must wonder that international institutions are still deprived by the “veto” mechanism from legal means to respond to humanitarian ethical calls.

State’s sovereignty and national identity are closely linked as they mutually comfort or weaken each other. Hence the challenge to rule — it is an art — and to identify oneself in a nation. In this regard, history cannot at will be put into brackets: history is a critical reference for moral and national education. In this regard, considering the crimes so often committed against children in the country, the need in China for moral and civic education against corruption is acknowledged by all.

National identity is certainly more difficult to be built on a solid basis now that many countries in the East as in the West are subjected to various flux of immigration, a by-product of a globalised economy. Chinese immigration in several countries in Africa, presented in one article in these pages, is just one case. The integration of these newly formed ethnic communities of different religious traditions in their host region add new dimensions to the issue of cultural encounter and to the possibility of multi-culturality in old countries of strong national identity as in Europe.

As this Fall closes in, to face new challenges can lead “from fear to freedom”.

**Yves Camus**

## 1. World

Isolated in the midst of the financial and economic global crisis, Aung San Suu Kyi's release from house arrest on 13 November 2010 ended her long and courageous 15 year carrier of one of the most influential political prisoners of recent time. The dramatic and central part of her family and political life, celebrated in the movie *The Lady* (2011, directed by Luc Besson), narrates how she became the epicenter of Burma democratic movement. Elected again on 1 April 2012 in her party, the National League for Democracy, she entered the lower house of the Burmese parliament to resume her political action. This section presents one of her most famous texts, "Freedom from Fear", she wrote from her house arrest after being rewarded by the European Parliament the 1990 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which she could not receive one year later in Strasbourg. Meanwhile, the ills of debried capitalism in the global crisis continue to affect many governments, enterprises and families: Gaël Giraud, a Jesuit economist and researcher at the CNRS [National Centre for Scientific Research] in Paris, offers some reflections that could help in the understanding of the facts.

The Editor

## 2. Society

When his recent report *The Limits to Growth* appeared in some European translations, Dr. Dennis Meadows has had the following comments: "The Japanese have a proverb that says : « If your only tool is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." If with a problem you go to see a surgeon, he will answer you with "surgery", a psychiatrist with "psychiatry", an economist with "growth". These are the only tools at their disposal. People want to be useful, they have a tool, they imagine that their tool is useful." Speaking about the foreseeable collapse of economic global development, he added elsewhere: "Technology is a tool. Like all tools, it reflects the values and goals of the person or organization that develops it. As long as the dominant values and goals are short-term, egoistic, and concentrated on economic indicators, there will not be any way to avoid collapse." This section examines what escapes economists for lack of better tools: the social and human problems in the global economic effort towards sustainable development. Human and ethical values should be integrated into what economic indicators like CPI [consumer price index] or GDP [gross domestic product] can only measure. Dr. Liu Kaiming, from The Institute of Contemporary Observation [Research on Contemporary Views of Society] in Shenzhen, describes accurately what the "sweatshops" contributed to the double-digit economic growth of China in recent years: they are now facing unprecedented challenges from a new generation of "migrant" workers better aware of their merits and of their rights. But in China like elsewhere, workers "migration" is not only interior. In the following article, Dr. Yoon Jung Park, Visiting Professor on African Studies at Harvard University, presents her research and reflections on the Chinese migrants in Africa and their communities: in addressing the misperceptions and the gaps carried by the media, new information and reflections help realise the difficulties of these communities in foreign lands.

The Editor

## 3. Arts & Letters

This section's two articles introduce readers to aspects of Chinese literature, art and society, albeit during very different historical periods. More specifically, that by Lu Shuyan compares the pastoral poems of 陶淵明 Tao Yuanming (CE<sup>1</sup> 365-427), one of the leading lights of Six Dynasties poetry, to the rural poems of Chinese migrant workers of our own days. In contrast to these poor village migrants working in urban constructions, the first of the poets discussed belonged to the scholar-official class, but all the poets, regardless of class, have as a common theme a longing for the simplicity of nature and for the values of China's disappearing ancestral village life. The article by Emily Curtis discusses the snuff bottles used for the storage of ground tobacco, the smoking and inhaling of which was a custom of Amerindian origin, which, as this article argues, the Portuguese brought to Macau from Brazil. Here the cultural importance that snuff acquired in China is illustrated through an examination of three snuff bottles, a China trade portrait in an American museum, and the letters of the Portuguese traveller José Ignacio de Andrade describing an 1843 visit to Canton. In his book Andrade includes the images of two *hong* merchants that show them, characteristically, tightly holding their snuff bottles as prized possessions. The use of snuff became widely used, but initially it was fashionable among the upper classes in 18th and 19th century Europe and China, including Qing emperors. Today snuff taking is of interest to art historians, museum curators and antique collectors because of the beauty of the small, skilfully painted containers crafted in China for storage of the granulated tobacco.

César Guillén Nuñez

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<sup>1</sup> CE : Christian and Common Era [Editor's note].

#### 4. History and Culture

To celebrate the tercentenary of the birth of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the Philosophy Department at Sun Yatsen University, Guangzhou, organized an “International Conference: Rousseau in French thought and in Chinese thought” held on the University Main Campus on 17-18 May 2012. Twenty or so scholars (among them thirteen coming from various universities in China) debated for two days about the main humanistic tenets of Rousseau’s thinking, so influential in education and political philosophy during and after the so-called “Enlightenment” age. This section is fortunate to publish two contributions chosen for their common pertinence in the debates: how Rousseau’s thinking and influence had been received in China? In the first, Yan Deru, from Jilin University, examines how much Rousseau’s ideas on “Democracy”, “Equality” and “Liberty” have somehow been distorted by two important thinkers of the late Qing era and the beginning of the republican period of China: Yan Fu and Liang Qichao. The analysis is enlarged by the second contribution: in it, Han Huihua, from the Nanjing University, discusses Rousseau’s influence through some imperfect modern Chinese translations, with a renewal of his image in recent decades. Better critical editions of Rousseau’s main works are now more easily available to better translations.

**The Editor**

#### 5. Thought and Humanism

Great humanistic ideas, no matter your own ethnic cultural background, are die hard ideas: they have a long but troubled history. Take for instance Socrates who was condemned to commit suicide for his teaching to the youth, traditionally summed up in one sentence: “Know thyself.” This section offers in this regard two valuable contributions. In the first, Dr Michael Fuller, from The Theological Institute of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Edinburgh, examines what he calls some “flashing points” between modern science and theology. Three cases are analysed which deal with the centrality of humankind in the Universe: the sphericity of the Planet Earth, its rotation around the Sun, and the evolution of life and of humankind. Theology (the academic spiritual exploration of the human being) was called to integrate progressive scientific and humanistic discoveries by Columbus, Galileo and Darwin, in order to be faithful to its vocation. As it can be seen, at stake was the dignity of the human being or its “personhood”. Some people or former heads of state might still think that these notions are only western by origin and modern, therefore not belonging to humankind’s patrimony. In the second contribution, Fr. Leo Lefebure, from Georgetown University, Washington D.C., addresses the question. Through a narrative dating back about 2100 years B.C.E.<sup>2</sup> in the Ancient Egypt, the tale named “The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant” shows that the principles of social justice and human dignity had already been so early in history into consideration. Often condemned to death but not suicidal, great humanistic ideas are hard to die: they remain here to be put into practice. Listen to the “Eloquent Peasant”.

**The Editor**

#### 6. Debates and Features

It is well known: comparison is no reason. But apart from adding some hidden stimulation to get better understanding, metaphors more often than not help carrying across a message without adding the burden of bothering comments. This section happens to publish to very different features. The first relates to ecology: in it Pedro Walpole, a Jesuit based in the Philippines and ecologist expert on landslides and flooding in the Asia Pacific region, presents in a short article the “Lancang Jiang to the Mekong Delta” development projects with their economical, ecological, social and human aspects — not to speak about their international dimensions. The focus is on the many dams already built along the upper stream of the Mekong River and its tributaries, to generate electric power: but by strangling the flow of water, they imperil the flow of life in the affected populated regions. The second is made of a reflective essay written by Florence Gallez, from the Comparative Media Studies at MIT Centre for Civic Media, Boston, Massachusetts. Written soon after the recent new election of Vladimir Putin as President of Russia, it has an eloquent yet brief title : “Putin Part III”. The essay is not anecdotic but opens some vistas on the Russian society confronting political power, months before the paradigmatic protest of the “Pussy Riot” young ladies... If environmental ecology can generate a metaphor, political ecology should generate sound reflections.

**The Editor**

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<sup>2</sup> B.C.E.: before the Christian and Common Era.