New Trend of Academic Thinking in the Studies of Chinese Culture after the May Fourth Movement

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**Abstract:** The May Fourth Movement of 1919 marked an important turning point in the traditional culture. It laid the path for the commencement of the modernization of the studies of Chinese Culture. As the component of the New Culture Movement (1915-19), ‘to straighten out the Chinese Culture’ has an air of modern elements. It is the guiding principle of the studies of Chinese Culture to adopt historical insight and evolutionary mode of thinking. Scrupulous spirit and scientific methodology become the researchers’ initiative pursuit. The May Fourth Movement marked the change of the academic thinking in the studies of Chinese Culture from traditional to modern.

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The twentieth century is a period full of unprecedented uncertainties. In this period, the development of the modernization, which began in the middle of the nineteenth century, quickened its pace and accomplished its historic transition from traditional to modern. From the Reform Movement of 1898 to the May Fourth Movement of 1919, besides political changes, the ideology and culture also went through big transformations. In the process of this transformation, western culture served as a catalyst as well as a beacon light. At that time, with the guidance of western social political ideas and philosophical culture, an inspired group of people resolved to social reforms denounced the decadent feudal customs sternly. If resisting foreign aggression, saving the nation from subjugation and making the country strong were the order of social politics before 1919; it follows that the enlightenment of the nation with democracy and science as its core were the central theme of the culture current. In this influential book named “Academic Studies of Qing Dynasty (1644-1911): A Survey,” Liang Qichao stated at the beginning, ‘Not all thoughts can be developed into academic current of the times. Only those that contain considerable values and meet the needs of the time can. In China, from Qin Dynasty (206-220BC) to present, the study of Confucian classics of Han Dynasty(206BC-220AD), Buddhist philosophy of Sui Dynasty (581-618) and Tang Dynasty (618-917), Confucian school of idealists philosophy of the Song Dynasty (420-479) and Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and textual research of Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), can be called the academic current of the time.’ 1 Just as Lizhu, who had the good eyesight and

could see everything 100 steps away clearly, but not those right under his nose.\(^2\) Liang was unable to take into his vision the New Culture Movement (1915-19) which marked a new chapter in the history of Chinese Culture since this book was written in 1920. Of course, it is natural that this book, specialized in the academic studies of Qing Dynasty, does not mention anything after, but we should know that, compared with the four periods enumerated by Liang, the new thoughts of the May 4th Movement period with science and democracy as their slogan seemed important and significant since these new thoughts became the turning point of the Chinese culture. As a component of the social cultural life of the time, the studies of Chinese culture also underwent a series of historical changes. Thus begins the modernization of the studies from traditional to modern.

I.

What is the trend of the studies of Chinese culture in the twentieth century? Let’s consider this question by instancing the studies of classical literature, which is one of the major parts of the studies of Chinese culture. Two decades before the May 4th Movement of 1919, classical literature was still prevailing although reform movements and Revolution of 1911 dominated this period. Recently Liu Na, a contemporary literary historian, scrupulously straightened out the literal history of this period, which has been always neglected. She said, ‘in this newly established and chaotic Republic of China (1912-49), political upheavals were leading the value criteria astray. Chinese traditional culture went through awful ordeal when social system underwent through a big transformation, which was distinctive for ‘power-has-the-say’ politics. The literati of the times were overwhelmed by wilderment and agitation when they were trying

\(^2\) A word of Hanfeizi (Han-Fei-Tzu, 280-233B.C.), a legalist statesman and thinker of the late Warring States Period (475-211B.C.).
to regain their faith in traditional values. Not only those believers in the traditional values were stubbornly defending the classical literature experiences, but also the young people nurtured by new ideas manifested a trend of restoring old customs. During those years when the monarchy was superseded by the republic, poetry became the last-ditch attempt to save the traditional culture from its doom since public morality was no longer existed in the form what it used to be. This attempt illustrated the usual way of thinking that literature was closely related to the national destiny. In this period, various types of classical literary works, such as poetry, *ci*, classical prose, and parallel prose, etc were booming. Also the studies on these literary forms were flourishing. Therefore, Liu Na calls this period “the last glow” of the setting Chinese classical literature. By “the last glow,” she refers to the situation of works of various literary forms. The studies of classical literature, even the studies of Chinese culture, had never stagnated, before or after the New Culture Movement (1915-19) even in its heyday.

Wang Yao has pointed out long ago that whom the forerunners of the New Culture Movement criticized as ‘Tongcheng absurdities’ and ‘Xuanxue monsters’ was not the Tongcheng School or Xuaxue School in history but the conventional literati at that time that got dizzy with their modeling on the ancients. Liu Na, in her book mentioned above, also states similar opinion that over a long period of time the public often showed their strong disapproval towards

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4. *Ci*, poetry written to certain tunes with strict tonal patterns and rhyme schemes and in fixed numbers if lines and words, originating in the Tang Dynasty and fully developed in the Song Dynasty.
5. Parallel prose, a rhythmical prose characterized by parallelism and ornateness.
the traditional culture including classical literature, yet rereading the
two manifestoes, *A humble Opinion on Literary Reformation*, and *On
the literary Revolution*, reveals that the pioneers of the New Culture
Movement such as Hushi, Chen Duxiu etc, denounced exactly the
conventional literati of that time, not the classical writers in history.

Since traditional Chinese culture was always deficient in the
spirit of science and democracy, the New Culture Movement with
just these two as its slogan, put forward the fighting against the tra-
dition as its first move and was famous for this. The reason they
fought against the traditional culture was the lack of the elements of
democracy and science, not all its achievements. On the contrary, the
leading figures of the New Culture Movement also derived a lot of
nourishment as well as anti-traditional elements from these very
achievements. Hu Shi said, ‘I believe there is wonder in the history
of poetry, from Tang poems to Song poems. Poetry is more close to
compositions and conversations. ... An important contribution of the
major poets of Song Dynasty to the history of poetry was that they
broke free from the conventional metrical patterns developed in
from Six Dynasties, and tried to create a conversational style. At that
time, I was under very good influence from reading these Song
poems and thus formed my own ideas that to compose a poem was
to write an essay and avoid meticulous and flowery language.’

From the above, we can see that the main ideas of the major leaders
of the New Culture Movement were all derived from classical litera-
ture, let alone the Movement itself embodied various academic cul-
tural schools, such as cultural radicals, cultural conservatives, and
cultural liberals, the names, given by later generations, bear obvi-
ous bias. No matter whether these names are proper or not, it is a
hard fact that there exist various academic cultural schools. It is
these schools intermingled together that formed a sweet ensemble of
the New Culture Movement. Yet during a long period, some people

7. Hu Shi, “To Be Compelled to Act Desperately”, in *The Sections of
believed that in the transition period only the ‘radicals’ promoted cultural development, while the ‘liberals’ and especially the ‘conservatives’ hindered its progress. This kind of opinion is somewhat biased, at least calls for our reconsideration. In the transition period, there existed three kinds of ideas, that is, radicalism, conservatism and liberalism. In the twentieth century, these three schools were formed with abrupt social upheavals and world cultural turbulence as their background and manifested their different responses and foci towards these changes. It is these three schools work together that promote cultural development. Among these, the idea of straightening out the national culture that developed simultaneously with the New Culture Reform calls for special attention. Not because it served as one of the most important schools of the New Culture Movement, but because it embodies a new way of thinking, new method and spirit of research, which will greatly benefit our understanding of the transformation of academic studies.

II.

During the New Culture Movement, ‘to straighten out Chinese Culture’ as a kind of cultural ideas was first put forward by the members of the Chinese Culture Association founded by Liu Shipei and Huang Kan in early 1919, not in the New Culture camp. Chinese Culture, the journal of this Association, stated clearly its motto as ‘to carry forward the indigenous learning of China’ in 1919 in Vol. 1. At about the same time there appeared the voice of ‘straightening out the Chinese Culture’ in the New Culture camp. In April 1919 Fu Sinian published an article on New Trend, a journal edited by himself and his friends. In this article he pointed out that ‘in China no matter what school it is, if its thoughts are not well organized, it should be

reorganized first then people can understand and study them.” As a component of the New Culture Movement, the idea of ‘straightening out Chinese Culture’ had modern elements from its very birth. In May 1919, Mao Zishui published a thesis named ‘The Spirit of Chinese Culture and Science.’ In this article he analyzed the function of studying Chinese Culture as ‘to know the reason why the academic thoughts and the Nation are so underdeveloped in order to find out the way to improve them.’ In November Hu Shi put forward the idea of ‘quintessence and dregs.’ He said, ‘if you want to know the quintessence and the dregs of Chinese culture, you must straighten the culture by employing critical attitude and scientific method.’ In January 1923 Hu Shi added, ‘the studies of Chinese Culture include both the quintessence and dregs in culture. Without a thorough understanding of the dregs how can we know the quintessence?’ Yu Xiangsen was also of the same opinion as Hu Shi’s. He said, ‘there are two real kinds of culture, good and bad.’ He further explained that the ‘the good culture refers to those works that contain profound meaning, perfect form, and plain style’ and are of ‘creativity’ and ‘permanent value’; the bad culture refers to those works that ‘only stresses the words and expressions and not the meaning, that only tries to imitate the traditional culture without bringing new ideas, and that only repeat former arguments to force others to submit without telling the truth of life to move and enlighten others.’ The good culture needs ‘our study and development,’ while the bad one should be thrown away ‘with an attitude of revulsion let alone study them.’ All these ideas can be regarded as the basis of

the thoughts of straightening out Chinese culture holding by the New Culture Movement’s Supporters. These ideas also marked a clear discrepancy with the conservatives’ idea of battling against the western culture and advocating the culture quintessence represented by Liu Shipei.

Traditionally writings were meant to convey truth and practical knowledge of managing state affairs and Chinese intellectuals always considered literature and literary studies as a natural method of moral and political education. Modern literature started taking a firm root under a difficult circumstance when the invasion of the western big powers and national crisis were persisting, so the most important task of the modern intellectuals was to save the country from subjugation and to enlighten the people. They expect literature could invite western thoughts to enlighten people to rescue and bring the nation back on the right course. Therefore, the traditional ideas that literature functions in the moralization of the society have been developed and promoted to a great extent under the new circumstances and historical conditions. A typical example to illustrate this point is the opening part of ‘On the Relationship between Novels and Mass Education’ written by Liang Qichao in 1902. In that, Liang writes that, ‘if you want to modernize the mind of the whole nation, morality, religion, politics, customs, learning and skill then first, you must modernize the writing of novels; and the people’s mind is also the case, that is, the modernization of the people’s dignity presupposes the modernization of the novels.’

Several years later Wang Zhonglin in his article ‘On The Relationship Between Novels And Political Reform’ stated, ‘saving the country starts with the novels i.e., the reform of the novels.’ Although the focus of the above comments is


on novel, but it also means the creation of other literary forms as well. Chinese Literature carries out its fight against the imperialism and feudalism and enlightening people. Thus it still remains the highest form of literary creations and criticisms and the studies of Chinese culture as well. One can see the basic principle of the movement of “straightening the Chinese Culture,” a slogan at that time serves as a good answer. Hu Shi carried on the slogan forward in his ‘The Significance of New Thinking.’ He said, ‘researches on various questions should foster academic thoughts; straightening out Chinese Culture should rebuild civilization.’ Mao Zishui in his article cited above said, ‘only those people who follow the spirit of science can straighten out Chinese Culture.’ Here the spirit of science refers to that of academic learning to benefit the society. The study of past culture should pave the way for the establishment of the future civilization principles and scholarly pursuits. The putting forward of this study under new and changed situation carries some modern elements of the time. But the dichotomy of quintessence and dregs in culture and the original idea of making the past serve the present are obvious.

Liang Qichao’s idea of saving the country from subjugation, enlightening the people, focusing on the human destiny, and reforming the society which resulted from feeling of anxiety about lagging behind, another literary school represented by Wang Guowei was totally against the former one. Influenced by Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and others Wang Guowei paid more attention to literature for aesthetic taste and the independent characteristic of its forms. He criticized ‘the recent literary works forget their own value while boast as a mean of political education which demonstrate no discrepancy with philosophy. This kind of idea is sure to deserve the charge of desecrating philosophy and literature. Therefore how can it be developed?’ He also denounced the idea in many articles such

15. Wang Zhongqi, “On The Relationship Between the Novels And Political Reform,” in Novels Every Month, No. 9.
as Kang Youwei’s *Research on Confucius Social Reform* as ‘an example that has no sense of literary works but political means.’ Then he added that ‘it has a long history that arts contain no independent value. This is not the fault of ancient poets who were motivated by their intention of being loyal to the sovereign and faithful to the country and encouraging virtue and punishing the evils. The works only on arts usually received criticism without any exoneration.’

This idea is a typical reflection of the intellectuals pursuing freedom under the influence of the western ideas after Reform Movement of 1898. This kind of pursuit was further developed after the May Fourth Movement. The reflection of this idea on literature is to stress aesthetic conception of literature. For example, Yan Jicheng said, ‘the aim of arts cannot be mixed with the elements of utilitarianism.’ Yu Xiangsen also pointed out that we should pay much attention to those works, which convey no ‘profound meanings’ but can as well ‘move people.’ He added that the influence of the author himself on the works also needs our attention because ‘literary works are the reflection of the author’ and ‘the true value of literature lies also in the inner world of the author apart from the aesthetic appreciation.’

Just as these learners discussed, these are the ‘aesthetic criteria’ of those who studied Chinese Culture to treat ‘national literary heritage.’ Based on the idea that arts are one of the aesthetic forms,

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they stressed literature itself, aimed at the self-satisfaction of literature, and pursued the aesthetic characteristics of arts. They believed that ‘the personality, ideas and behaviors etc are all shaped as according to the time and circumstances.’ They also analyzed the relations between author and his works from the angle of how does the inner world of the author is fused into his works and stressed the function of the author’s subjectivity on the works. This is not only the development of the criteria of ‘making comments on the public figures and states affairs’ and those of human personality, but also the reflection of the idea to ‘emancipate the personality’ and the achievement of the breakthrough of the convention that ‘writings are meant to convey truth and practical knowledge of managing state affairs.’ All these manifest the characteristics of the time and modern ideas.

Still some learners connect the idea of stressing the aesthetic value of literature with the exploration and demarcation of ‘literature’ as a concept during the New Culture Movement. They thought that the concept of ‘literature’ always has broad and blurred meanings. From Zhang Taiyan’s *On the Studies of Chinese Culture* before Revolution of 1911 is a collection of the articles of the learners of the May Fourth Movement in which many people tried to adopt scientific insight to separate literature from studies of Confucius, philology, various schools of philosophy and historiography. It enlarges the range of the studies of Chinese Literary history to poetry, novels, traditional opera and artistic essays and grants literature an independent status. This not only ensured the scientific direction for the development of present studies of Chinese classics, but also made people to pay attention to the aesthetic value of literary works. Wang Guowei’s On the Red Mansion, On Literary Works, and The History of Traditional Opera of Song and Yuan Dynasty were the path breaker and the intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement period where they clarified the artistic nature of literature. Hu Shi, Zheng

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21. Yu Xiangsen, Ibid.
Zhenduo, Lu Xun and others as well can sense this in the works on classics.

The appearance of the idea that people try to explore, confirm, and enhance the aesthetic value of literature is a symbol of the freedom of thought in the May Fourth Movement Period. This kind of studies never died out, although gone through a lot of misunderstanding, distortion, and blame because of its confrontation with the traditional view of stressing the educational function of literature, with the historic task of fighting against the imperialism and feudalism in the early part of the twentieth century and with the rampant idea of literature as an instrument and political vulgarization. During the last two decades of the twentieth century when a new era of liberation was coming, this kind of studies, full of vigor, became the main current of the time.

III.

Several years before the May Fourth Movement, Hu Shi bring forward ‘the inductive theory,’ ‘historical insight,’ and ‘evolutionary mode of thinking. Nowadays, what our nation need the most is not those novel ideas, profound thought, but the ways to do research, to discuss various phenomena, and to manage the country. In my opinion, there are three important ways that could as elixir for the deadly evils; the inductive theory, historical insight, and the evolutionary mode of thinking.’22 Actually this is not Hu Shi’s opinion but a summary of academic theories and ideas of that time.

Inductive theory is a branch of logic and is a method to obtaining conclusion by starting from specific facts. It is the generalization of the experiences and facts as a common way of knowing and grasping the world. Hu Shi thought that only the studies in the reign

of Qianlong (1736-95) and Jiaqing (1796-1820) combined the inductive and deductive methods together. Therefore ‘among the old studies, only the plain learning of Qing Dynasty carried the scientific spirit’ and ‘coincide with the scientific method,’ but this coincidence was subconscious. For those learners of the May Fourth Movement period who advocated the straightening out the Chinese culture, they tend to accept the western ideas. Zheng Zhenduo once said, ‘it is Bacon who started the inductive observation. And it is because this idea that the modern thoughts get dramatic development and strengthen its foundation.’ ‘From the birth of the inductive observation, to be reliable and borne out of evidence were the creed of all learners.’

Evolution, as a systematic theory, was born in Europe in the nineteenth century founded by Darwin. Later this theory was employed in social and political fields and thus formed a social Darwinism theory. In China, Yan Fu was the first one to introduce this theory. The reformists of 1898 always used the modern ideas that ‘nature selects and the fittest survive’ to motivate people to save the country from subjugation. Influenced by this, after the May Fourth Movement an influential thought came into being. The religious idea that ‘Heaven changeth not, likewise; the Way changeth not’ cannot exist anymore and doomed to die out. In literary field this kind of evolutionary idea won popular support. Wang Guowei in his Preface to History of the Traditional Opera of Song and Yuan Dynasty said ‘every period has its own literature.’ This evolutionary mode of thinking became the major principle to guide those learners to carry out their researches and to fight against the old outdated practices of


restoring ancient customs and to reform the literature. Hu Shi said, ‘every dynasty has its own literature. They are all different from one another. This is not my personal opinion, but a universal truth in the process of cultural evolution. ...... This is also the universal truth for the literary evolution. Then I can talk about my idea of not imitating the ancients.’

‘Every period has its own literature. There are discrepancies in between. Although formed a succession, they never copy each other. Those plagiarisms cannot be called real literature.’ Zheng Zhenduo also pointed out that ‘literature is in a process of constant development and change; therefore the studies on literature should also advance. The literature of one time should be different from another.’ Hence every period should have its own studies on literature, and these studies should also be developed together. This calls for the reassessment of the past heritage Hu Shi emphasized this point in his The Significance of New Thinking by citing Nietzsche; ‘Nietzsche said that this is an age of reassessing everything.’ Zheng Zhenduo also asked to ‘reassess and explore the value of the Chinese literature.’ ‘All the literary criticism and the old conventions should be thrown away. To study a kind of literary works or the works of certain time, you should build your own bases.’ At that time, most of the advocators of the New Culture Reform including Lu Xun are also the supporters of evolutionary theory. The evolutionary mode of thinking is not only adopted in the researches on Chinese classics but also the studies on the history of

literature. When commented on one of the literary works named *The Changes of Chinese Literature* in the 1930s, Luo Zegen said, 'before the May Fourth Movement, most studies are guided by the idea of retrogression in ideology and the idea of the educational function of literature, such as *The Complete Literary History of Chinese Literature* by Xie Wuliang and *The History of Chinese Literature* by Zeng Yi; after the May Fourth Movement, most studies are guided by the evolutionary theory in ideology and the literary idea of exploring the emotion, such as *The History of Poetry* edited by Lun Zhongkai and Feng Yuanjun, *The History of Chinese Literature With Pictures* by Zheng Zhenduo and this book.'

The historical insight produced by Hu Shi contains many meanings. First it is combined with the evolutionary theory. He criticized openly in his *The Significance of New Thinking* that ‘the past researches on Chinese Classics seldom adopted the historical insights’; therefore it was actually ‘a literary idea of historical evolution.’ Besides this it also refers to ‘the employment of the historical insight to enlarge the range of the studies of Chinese Culture to include the custom and tradition of the last 3,000-4,000 years. The historical insight broke through all the bias and observed everything historically, so the studies of Chinese Culture are responsible for the task of straightening out all Chinese culture and throwing away the ignorance’s.’ At the same time we should also consider the background of the literary works. ‘A different type of literature dominates in every age. Therefore, it is necessary to put the literary works back to its time and then study them. Without noticing its historical background, we would misinterpret the contents and mislead the followers.’

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of its time and assure its original value.35

It is obvious that these three ideas considerably influenced the studies of the twentieth century. As for Chinese Classics it is no doubt that the complete reassessment of the traditional culture, the constant enlargement of the research areas, the continuous changes of the study angles, and the innovation of the methods and the criticism systems are all determined by the specific social thoughts of every period, but they are also closely related with the historical insights and the evolutionary theory.

IV.

‘The scientific spirit’ to ‘straighten out the studies of Chinese Culture,’ advocated during the period of the May Fourth Movement, undoubtedly includes the self-conscious exploration of the specific methods and means of ‘straightening out the studies of Chinese Culture.’ At that time many people mentioned the problem of ‘scientific method.’ In Fu Sinian’s Postscript written for Mao Zishui’s the spirit of the studies of Chinese literature and Science, he put forward the idea of ‘scientific doctrine and method’ to straighten out the studies of Chinese literature. In August 1919 Hu Shi in one of his article on the studies of Chinese literature-an answer to Mao Zishui wrote, ‘We could achieve more if we would study Chinese literature by means of self-conscious scientific methods together with the scrupulous ones.’ In Liang Qichao’s Two Major Ways to Study Chinese Culture in 1923, he said, ‘We should use objective scientific method to study the knowledge of literature.’36 The same year, in Zheng Zhen-duo’s The Construction of New Literature and the New Study of Chinese

34. Ibid.
Culture, he expressed the similar idea that ‘the new spirit of our straightening out the studies of Chinese culture “every bit should be based on evidence.” We should do some pioneering work in the literary circle using the scientific method.’ Mao Zishui said, ‘the term “scientific spirit” contains many meanings. The main idea is “to seek truth” which was often talked about by ancients. Anytime when you want to expound a theory, you must justify them. Only when the evidences are adequate, can you make a conclusion. We should make accurate and just analysis of certain fact without believing other people’s words blindly or sticking to our own opinion stubbornly. This all consist scientific spirit.’

When one talk about the scientific method it is impossible not to mention Mr Hu Shi who talked about methods and being the model. Liang Qichao, in his Academic Studies of Qing Dynasty in 1920, said, ‘the reason that I talked about the Confucius studies of Qing Dynasty are that this kind of studies employed the inductive method and scientific spirit. This method and spirit can be described as follows: first, observe the subject carefully and then find out their valuable points. Second, pay attention to everything related to the valuable points and list them for further investigation. Third, put forward your opinion based on the result of the comparison. Fourth, prove your thoughts by seeking all kinds of evidences. If it is affirmative then your opinion is acceptable, if not then drop that idea.’ The historical insight also contains methodology. Hu Shi, in his The Grammar of Chinese, explained the meaning of the historical research method. He divided this into two parts: ‘first, when you instance examples you must classify the examples

according to time. Therefore the *Analects of Confucius* should not be put together with the works of Oyang Xiu. Second, generalize the regulations of certain period and then compare them. If they are the same then they can be put together. If not we should study the changes of every period, trace them back and find out the reason.⁴⁰

Hu Shi took an honor and was known for his exhortation which was produced under the influence of Huxley and Dewey after his studies on the learning of the Qing Dynasty. He said, ‘in scientific study you can put forward a bold hypothesis, but you must seek the proof conscientiously.’ ‘Because without bold hypothesis, there would be no new findings; without adequate evidence, it would not able to convince people.’⁴¹

Apart from these, what need to be mentioned are another two methods; systematic and comparative study.

In *The Research Method of the Learners of Qing Dynasty* by Hu Shi, he said, ‘every school of thoughts should have a system. They are not chaotic bits of knowledge.’ Later in his *Introducing to Quarter on Chinese Culture Studies*, Hu Shi clearly pointed out the systematic methods to straighten out Chinese Culture, such as, index, closing entries, and special coverage, and also designed a particular holistic system for the studies of Chinese Culture which was a branch of the studies of Chinese History. Although this was based on the bigger problem of Chinese History, his ideas were of great importance in planning, designing, arranging, and studying of each specific field.

Liang Qichao also stressed the importance of the systematic method in his *The Scientific Spirit vs. the Oriental and Western Culture*. He said, ‘only those knowledge which formed a system can be called scientific; and only the methods that taught people to seek truth can be called scientific spirit.’⁴² By ‘systematic,’ he meant the

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⁴² Liang Qichao, “The Scientific Spirit vs. The Oriental and Western Culture
same with Hu Shi and also meant that ‘one must find out the similarities among the discrete subjects, and grasp the relations in between. Thus from what is already known to what is not.’ His many academic writings in the last ten years of his life such as *The Emotion Conveyed in Chinese Verses* (1922), *The Geographic Distribution of Modern Learning Conventions* (1924) etc all adopted the systematic method. He himself was also very proud of ‘employing the method of classifying the works according to their emotions inside to study the old literary works. The ancients did mention sometimes but never study them systematically.’ Even his works on specific authors such as *On Qu Yuan* (1922) and *The Philosophy of Dai Dong Yuan* (1923) were greatly different from the old type of comments and criticisms in collecting the evidence, designing the structure, and describing the process. As for the form, these all articles contain modern structures. Therefore, systematic method is a kind of research method and without any doubt this method represents the modern scientific research and rational spirit and has an air of modern learning.

So is the method of comparison is also very important. Comparison is a method that penetrates all the academic researches past and present home and abroad based on the common points of human beings. Take the researches on the history of ancient literature as an example. The controversies such as the discrepancies between the literary works of the north and south China, between Li Po and Du Fu, the poems of Tang and Song Dynasties are all based on the

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method of comparison. Apart from this it also manifested the modern vision and global idea represented by the phenomenon that the oriental studied the western world and combined it together. It is for this reason Hu Shi stressed the method of comparison and stated this point in his *The Grammar of Chinese*. He thought that besides the collection of the rules of the ancient Chinese and the various dialects, the comparison between them and the western languages such as English, Germany, French, Greek, and Latin as well as the oriental languages such as Mongolian, and Japanese also called for our attention. ‘There are many facts that cannot be explained clearly only by them; but when compared with others the facts turned out as plain as one’s nose without any explanation.’ In Introducing to *Quarter on Chinese Culture Studies* (1923) he added, ‘nowadays when studying Chinese Culture we should breakthrough the convention of looking at everything separately, instead, we must do comparison carefully. Firstly, as for methodology, the academic studies already accepted the methods of western world, while we Chinese are still in the process of learning the ropes bit by bit. At present we must adopt their scientific method to better our researches. Secondly, as for the materials, the western world provides experiences, achievements, and methods that we can study and employ. Ignorance is the biggest enemy of science and the comparison of various materials is the best way to win the battle.’

From that time on, it became a common practice for the learners to adopt the method of comparison. Chen Yinke and Fu Sinian who had studied abroad all noticed this phenomenon closely. Chen Yinke, in *A Letter to My Sister*, said, ‘if the studies can be done by using the western method of studying languages to compare Chinese with Tibetan languages, it will be much better than the great learners of Qing Dynasty.”46 In *The Purport of the Researches on Languages in History*, Fu Sinian advocated strongly the comparison method. ‘If

you want to study the dialect of Sui and Tang Dynasty, you can start with the translated terms in Sanskrit also the Tibetan language, Burmese, and Siamese actually all belong to the same family. In the future these are all indispensable materials for the establishment of ancient Chinese philology by way of comparative linguistics.’

Meng Wentong, an orthodox historian, said in his memoir of the creation of The Details of History that ‘it was a good way to compare China and abroad when you want to study the history.’ ‘When I wrote this book I was enlightened by the western history I had read it when I was a student. Combining this with the history of our country I broke the conventional way of arranging history by dividing the ancient nations in Chinese into three sections.’

Hu Shi’s The Study Method and Materials in 1928 analyzed the shortcomings of Chinese learning by comparing it with the Western writings. Several decades later, the comparative study that he advocated developed into a wider and independent branch of modern learning, which was never dreamed of even by Hu Shi himself no matter how bold his hypothesis was.

V.

Chinese learning including the studies of Chinese culture changed its forms after the May 4th Movement. The old Confucius studies-led knowledge system that contains four parts was replaced by western way of classification quickly in as short as twenty years.


Many papers used western academic theories. Wang Guowei’s *Comments on The Red Mansion* (1904) and *Notes and Commentaries on Ci Poetry* (1908) were all typical examples which adopted the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and western modern aesthetic theory. Many more types of studies were born during this period of time. The rise of folklore and folk literature represented that the New Culture Movement thought highly of the folk literature, popular literature, and vernacular writings and were influenced by Japanese folklore studies. The Chinese-foreign communication history, although with the studies of the history of Yuan Dynasty and northwest history and geography as its background, was directly related with the archeological discovery of the western learners in the northwest China at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the second and third decades of the twentieth century, traditional epigraphy developed into modern archeology and the researches on various dialects were carried out; these were all promoted by western archeology and linguistic theories.\(^{50}\)

Founded in January 1922, the studies of Chinese culture research institute of Beijing University is the earliest research institution of its kind. The establishment of this kind of research institute itself is a typical embodiment of the western impact. For example, Hong Shilv said, ‘when I traveled in Europe, I found that various research institutions have adequate resources to carry out a detailed research work. Then I understand why the western studies reached so great achievements. This is no sheer coincidence.’\(^{51}\) The new change in the academic thoughts is the cause inside for its establishment. Shen Jianshi, who was entrusted to build this institute by Cai Yuanpei, pointed out that every kind of studies which aim at developing into an academic school must be based on systematic researches and this kind of researches depend on adequate materials.’ Every kind of

research ‘needs special institute to shoulder the responsibility, enough funds to run, versatile learners to carry out, and a considerable period of time to complete.’ At the same time, the establishment of the modern institute will promote the development of the systematic researches. The article, *Introducing to Quarter on Chinese Culture Studies*, which contains many new ideas and theories, actually is the right foreword to the journal of the studies of Chinese culture research institute of Beijing University by Hu Shi. And from the various publications of the studies of Chinese culture research institute of Beijing University including the *Quarter on Chinese Culture*, we can find the change in academic environment from tradition to modern. As for the forms, these articles use both the classical and vernacular Chinese and combine the modern way of writing which employ footnotes and the traditional way which use ‘preface’ and ‘postscript.’ These articles were written both by Chinese authors and foreign writers. As for the articles themselves, the ideas and the research method were influenced by the west and showed the characteristic of changing to modern researches. For example, Wang Rongbao’s *Research on Gegeyuyumogu* is a novel thought, which, under the influence of *Transliteration of Sanskrit and Ancient Chinese Pronunciations* by a Russian writer named, studied about Sanskrit of Six Dynasties (222-589 A.D.) and the Chinese pronunciations in Japanese and ancient version of *Pilgrimage to the West* and therefore put forward a new idea of Chinese pronunciations. Lin Yutang after reading Wang’s article wrote a paper to mend it by using the

method of comparing the Chinese and western pronunciations and studying the dialects of Japan, Korea, and Annam. Liu Fu’s *An Experiment of the Change of the Four Tones in Chinese*\(^{56}\) adopted the method of phonetic experiments that were newly invented by European researchers. This article introduced this method to China.\(^{57}\)

With the foundation of many universities such as, Southeast University (1923), Tsinghua University (1925), Xiamen University (1926), Zhongshan University (1927), Central Research Institute (1928), Yanjing University (1928), and Qilu University (1930) etc. many research institutions were established successively. They are getting integrated into the world academics.\(^{58}\)

Although May Fourth Movement period had long past, its influence still remains powerful. It ranks as one of the most important patriotic movements in the political history since it was against imperialism and feudalism, as one of the essential cultural movements in the cultural history since it advocated democracy and science, as one of the key literary movements in the literary history and established a new branch of learning. Looking back on the past eighty years after the May Fourth movement, we find that it developed from the old learning and are completely different from the old ones in motivation, goal, standard, criteria, ideology, methodology, structure, and way of writing and expression. It is just these discrepancies that made the May Fourth movement the component of the modern culture of the twentieth century. All these changes got its foundation in the May Fourth Movement period.

