East Asian History

Number 2 · December 1991  The continuation of Papers on Far Eastern History

Institute of Advanced Studies
Australian National University
This is the second issue of East Asian History in the series previously entitled Papers on Far Eastern History. The journal is published twice a year.
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Cover calligraphy  Yan Zhenqing 颜真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

Cover illustration  “Seeing the apparel, but not the person.”
Cartoon by Liu Bai 劉白, Pan-chiao man-hua
[Five-cents comics], vol.6, no.1 (1932), p.5
MODERNIZING MORALITY? PARADOXES OF
SOCIALIZATION IN CHINA DURING THE 1980s

Børge Bakken

The basic methods and principles of social control and socialization during
the reform period of the 1980s have not changed dramatically from earlier
periods in the history of the People's Republic, and its roots go much further
back than that. The old methods basically prevailed throughout the reform
period, and also well before 4 June 1989, in spite of the rhetoric about
modernization and democratization. However, the society itself changed
considerably during the period, and has thus begun to challenge the old
methods of control. Moral educators and engineers of social control have
been at a loss to know what to do in this new situation; both traditional
methods of control and a peculiar mixture of repeated references to the
'scientification' of moral control have thus been seen in the 1980s. This
paper presents some of the paradoxes in that process.

Socialization in a Changing Society

The problem presented by the modernization process is that rapid
change in a society no longer encourages traditional methods of socializa-
tion—or at least, such methods can no longer form the basis of the
socialization process. For instance, imitating and emulating the ideals of the
past and those of the older generation often stands out as irrelevant for the
younger generation and for the modernization process in general. The old
control mechanisms have lost their former effect, yet we have seen a
stubborn determination among the Chinese leadership to adhere to the old
methods of control. The State Educational Commission in February 1989
stressed moral instruction as one of the priority issues in education.¹
Likewise, the Party Central Committee earlier that same year issued a directive
regulation stating that improving morality among youth would be a decisive factor in safeguarding China's future. By 'creating a spiritual culture' is meant, in effect, 'maintaining social control', while the several definitions of xiandai ren 现代人, or the 'modern person' of the reform period, are often contrasted to their detriment with the desirability of maintaining control the old way.

Another term, daigou 代沟, or 'generation gap', became part of the new vocabulary during the reforms. It was because of the rapidly changing attitudes among youth that the need to regain control over morality and social behaviour arose in the first place. The growing problem of youth disobedience, the growing outspokenness of students, general social unrest, and the explosion in youth criminality, must have appeared to the Chinese leadership as symptoms of the same overall malaise. Cases of juvenile delinquency in 1988 comprised 75.7 per cent of all criminal cases in China—a dramatic increase indeed from the 18 per cent of 1956. The offenders get younger and younger, and school children now dominate the sharp increase in gang crime. According to the Interpol statistics on crime, China's juvenile crime rate would seem to be the world's highest. This is only apparently so, however, as the Chinese definition of 'juvenile' covers the ages of fourteen to twenty-five; typically the upper age-limit for juveniles is defined as seventeen to eighteen years. Juvenile crime rates in China are still high, but more 'normal' than shown by the statistics. However, China was placed as low as number 111 out of the 113 countries with regard to total crime-rates. The often violent reaction against criminals is thus also not justified from a statistical point of view. But even if absolute rates of criminality are low compared with Western societies, fears about the imminent breakdown of the control mechanisms of the past have been strong in China in the last few years. Rebellious love and sexual activity among youth, another phenomenon which illustrates powerfully what the older generation regards as the breakdown of social order and morality, takes place at an ever-younger age and would appear to indicate to that other generation that everything solid does seem to have 'melted into air', precisely and disturbingly as in old Marx's vision.

**Young Love and Old Means of Control**

One area where traditional moral education and changing social practices clash, and where past methods can no longer cope with the situation of today is the area of youthful love and sexuality. It has become one of the most debated topics of deviance from social norms, and a most powerful symbol of social danger in China during the last years. The old methods of preventing zaolian 早恋, or 'too early love', still hold sway, and have continued to form the basis of the handling of relations between the sexes in schools. Pedagogical textbooks and articles in the press time and
again stress the importance of preventing love affairs among youth. A problem which a few years ago was limited to university students or upper secondary-school pupils has suddenly become a central problem for teachers in lower secondary-schools. And worse still (seen from the teachers' point of view), zaolian now occurs even in primary schools. “The more zaolian is prohibited, the more it spreads,” is the anguished cry of the teacher.\(^7\) In universities the problem of student love has naturally been almost impossible to handle. A recent survey conducted among students in Beijing showed that as many as 83.06 per cent approved of couples living together unmarried.\(^8\)

The phenomenon of ‘too early love’ not only signals a change in youth attitudes; it even has a sound biological basis as that very age-group now reaches physical maturity much earlier than a few decades, or even a few years, ago. A survey conducted among school-girls in Beijing in 1963–64 showed that the average age for experiencing their first menstruation was at that time 14.4 years. A recent Beijing survey, in 1988–89, showed that the average age for first menstruation had dropped to 13.0 years, while the experience was not uncommon among ten-year-old girls.\(^9\) Many stories in youth and education magazines now focus on teachers’ and parents’ misunderstanding of the unexpectedly early physiological and psychological change among school-children.\(^10\) The expectation of the older generation that youth will behave exactly as it did no longer fits the new social reality.

The problem stems partly from the fact that the old socialization methods are unable to cope with the new situation. The rules and norms of Chinese society are simply unprepared for the rapid physiological, social and psychological changes taking place among youth in a period of modernization. The remedy is seen to be, first and foremost, to teach youth to respect traditional morals and social norms, yet at the same time the cry for a sounder scientific approach to solving the new problems is constantly heard. General sex education is still far from being accepted. However, more extreme methods of ‘scientific’ control have already been applied. For persons suffering from “sexual hyperfunction” (xing kangjin de ren 性亢进的人) and “sexual addiction” (xingpi de ren 性癖的人), moral and ideological education is seen to be no longer sufficient, and psychological and medical treatment may need to be applied. One article recommends that medical treatment be used to regulate the whole “internal system” and control the level of sex hormones—a method advocated not for the regulation of dangerous sex criminals but for specific application to sexually active young girls.\(^11\)

Fear of losing control over the younger generation is clearly reflected in much of the youth research going on in China, and ‘social control’ (shehui kongzhi 社会控制) has become a central catchword in much of this research.\(^12\) Young people no longer seem to imitate the ways of the older generation.

Margaret Mead once used the distinctions ‘postfigurative’, ‘cofigurative’ and ‘prefigurative’ to describe three different kinds of culture and three kinds

\(^7\) Ding Yu, “Tantan ruhe zhengque chuli zhongxuesheng ‘zaolian’ de wenti” [On the correct handling of the problem of early love among middle school students], Renmin jiaoyu, 1988, no.3, p.21.

\(^8\) Zhongguo qingnianbao [China youth journal], 19 January 1989, p.2.

\(^9\) Wang Ruoye and Han Shuyuan, “Dui Beijing 200 ming zhongxuesheng de shenghuo huanjing ji xing shengli yizhi de diaocha baoguo” [Investigation report on the living environment and the sexual physiology and consciousness among 200 middle school students], Beijing jiaoyu, 1989, no.11, pp.41–2.

\(^10\) Jin Ge, “Yongdong de chunqing (Qingshaonian chunqi wenti caifang sui gan)” [Stirrings of love (thoughts after gathering material on puberty problems)], Xinjiang qingnian, 1989, no.10, p.12.


\(^12\) Tan Jianguang “Qingnian shehuixue de lilun yaodian” [The main theoretical points of youth sociology], Qingshaonian yanjiu, 1987, no.2, pp.4–8.
of socialization process. In a ‘postfigurative’ culture, children learn primarily from their forebears; in a ‘configurative’ culture, both children and adults learn from their peers; while ‘prefigurative’ culture describes a socialization process in which adults learn from their children. Traditional societies are primarily postfigurative, deriving their authority from the past. In more developed societies, with their need to incorporate change, we see the emergence of some stronger form of configurative learning from peers, playmates, fellow students, fellow workers, etc. The modernization process can be described as a process of socialization where the young take on new authority with their prefigurative apprehension of the still unknown future.

This rather rough-and-ready description of the historical process of socialization might shed light on the situation in present day China. Under examination here will be certain aspects of education and socialization which illuminate the conflict between methods of socialization that are mainly postfigurative and traditional, and the emerging prefigurative demands of socialization found in modern society. An attempt to understand the Chinese quest for the modernization of moral education will reveal some interesting paradoxes in Chinese educational practice. In the attempt to democratize the methods of socialization (at least before 4 June 1989), the technocratization of morality at the same time introduced another dangerous trend: a ‘scientific’ superstructure is being sought which can be incorporated into a strictly postfigurative approach to social control.

The ‘Feudal’ Tradition of Imitation

The ‘feudal’ tradition embodies a particular form of education in which imitation and repetition lie at the core of the educational process. This basic approach is typical of the kind of postfigurative society described by Mead, in which the apprentice copies the master. Repetition of the truth contained in the catechism was also central to the ‘feudal’ educational systems of the West. A non-changing society naturally encouraged this kind of education, as the mode of life lived by the parent generation would be repeated by younger generations in a seemingly endless continuity. Not only traditional China but traditional European society as well was dominated by such postfigurative and imitative socialization practices. The Latin schools of Europe stressed imitation as the most vital part of the learning process. A sixteenth-century manuscript on pedagogy is typical in describing “memory and imitation” as the “salient signs of an able mind.” By extension, behaviour should be similarly manageable, for when the will had been trained by systematic habituation, actions would cease to be erratic or capricious. Thus the entire chain of psychological responses, from perceiving to learning, judging, knowing, and acting, was seen as an orderly, controllable, and more or less predictable process. Students were expected to imitate the rules of knowledge and behaviour presented to them in the classroom. The method...
of 'copying the classics' (yinjing judian 引经据典) has similarly haunted the Chinese educational system for centuries.16

Methods of imitation in China were not only used in a meritocratic context; moral education in traditional society also preserved the imitation method as its core. In fact, moral education was seen as the most important part of education in such a society, and it was also assumed that by learning moral rules by heart one would learn to behave correctly. The imitation method thus became an important factor in the system of virtuocracy.17

The imitatio of the old Latin schools finds its equivalent in the Chinese mofang 模仿, or the 'imitation' method, and bangyang jiaoyu fa 榜样教育法, the 'model-education method'. Even today these are seen as the most important tools in moral education.18 One recent education dictionary typically describes the model-education method as "one of the basic methods of moral education."19 Others claim it is the very "cornerstone of moral education," and the "cement of a magnificent construction."20 Mofang is described as a central to the search for excellence in everything, from languages and art to an ability to "differentiate between right and wrong."21 Typical, also, are references to Confucius and Lenin in the attempt to legitimize methods of imitation. The exemplary persons or heroes themselves are referred to as 'models' (mofan 模範), or more often, in the pedagogical literature, as bangyang. Such heroes are supposed to reflect the moral standards of society. In other words, the imitation of models still lies at the heart of the socialization process in China, and the prevalence of such age-old methods, appearing as they do alongside the frequent slogans of modernization, presents one of the paradoxes in contemporary Chinese education.

The Chinese debate on model-learning, however, has touched upon certain fundamental issues of the reform period: the awkward balancing of tradition and modernization, and the trend towards both democratization and technocratization in the socialization process itself.

This rough description of the educational and socialization methods in the traditional society is only a sketch that could be further elaborated; certainly, the relation between the type of society and the methods of socialization employed should not be understood as a simple one-to-one relation. The most important point for our present purposes is to remember that a postfigurative society is one of slow change, and that imitation methods fit very well into that kind of society. At one time, imitation even

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16 For a detailed definition of virtuocracy, see Susan Shirk, Competitive comrades: career incentives and student strategies in China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
20 Liao Fuling, "Qianlun gaige, kaifang yu daxuesheng de lixiang jiaoyu" [On reform, opening up, and the education of ideals among university students], Jiaoyu yanjiu, 1985, no.10, p.12.
21 Jiaoyu cidian, p.809.
In one dictionary it is typically stated that: "If you want to create you have to imitate well; this is the dialectical relation of inheritance and innovation." See Zhang Nianhong and Leng Hong'en, eds, Rencai xue cidian [Dictionary of talent studies] (Beijing: Nongcun Duwu Chubanshe, 1989), p.81.

Modernizing Morality:
Models of Technocracy and Democracy

An interesting article by Yu Wujin in the Renmin Ribao takes up the old problem of 'scientism' (kexue zhuyi 科学主义) in Chinese culture, a discussion which seems relevant to the question dealt with in this paper. Wu points out that a basic characteristic of scientism is a belief in the possibility and capability of natural science and technology to solve all issues in society. Belief in scientism will lead to the application of the methods and conclusions of natural science to all aspects of social life. In the drive to build a modern society, however, the importance of scientific and technological modernization has certainly been exaggerated. Yu Wujin points to the fact that scientific tendencies have even led to such phenomena as a form of 'technohumanism' (jishu rendao zhuyi 技术人道主义). The pedagogical methods used to modernize morality, in the view of the present author, have clearly followed a similar pattern of thinking. We have seen educational methods turn into pedagogical technology for the modernizing of virtuocracy.

The quest to modernize old methods of control and socialization instead of replacing them with new methods might also correspond to another paradox pointed out by Yu Wujin. He claims that even though people might criticize the old culture in present-day China they are still themselves products of this tradition. Thus, they will still identify with the traditional structures of society. The traditional methods of imitating and emulating models have certainly met with new problems during the reforms. Youth magazines have...
published many discussions on the modernization of personality. Some of these have a technical approach approved of even by the present leadership. Often such discussions emphasize that the modern person should have “a strong concept of time,” “an enterprising spirit,” etc. They also emphasize values like effectiveness, scientific knowledge, reason, optimism, and so forth. But at the same time the value of possessing “a unique individual character” has been emphasized. In one such discussion it is explicitly stated that: “The modern person does not imitate other peoples’ lives (bu shi qu mojiang biede ren deshenghuo 不是去模仿别人的生活), but goes his own way. [He] has his own individual characteristics and philosophy of life.”25 Here we again see the duality of the socialization process. The technocratic concept of the ‘modern person’ is challenged by another trend emphasizing the political and democratic side of his personality.

The modern model as depicted has a set of new characteristics. The range of identification is thought to be wider, and the positive effect on behaviour more reliable when people can feel they have something in common with the particular model. Next, models should be time-relevant and mirror the contemporary spirit; they should not reflect the values of a time long past. Finally, models should also be pluralistic (duoyuan hua 多样化) in form and content, thereby reflecting the needs of a more modern and open society. The models need no longer be perfect in every aspect.26 Even the predominantly technocratic concept of rencai 人才, or ‘talent’, puts stress on creativeness and diversity. However, the “creative style” (chuangzao jiangshi 创造方式) and “diversity” (duoyang xing 多样型) of that concept mainly serve technocratic ends like “promoting the social division of labour,” etc.27

The criticism of the ‘Lei Feng spirit’, made by prominent dissenting persons, as something which makes people into ‘tools’ (gongju 工具) need not have been limited in its range of attack to old models and old concepts. The criticism of the ‘tool’ function of Lei Feng could just as well be a criticism of the prevailing reformist alternative, in which ‘talent’ is imbued with the ‘spirit of science’—or rather the ‘spirit of scientism’. Sometimes this type of ‘modern person’ sounds more like a robot or an ideal behaviorist phantom, or, as one author eagerly suggests, a person “detached from everything” in his or her quest for “rational analysis” and “scientistic observation.”28 The link between morality and ‘science’ seen during the reforms is simply a modern manifestation of that age-old attempt to explain human behaviour as an orderly, controllable and more or less predictable process. This Chinese form of disciplinary technology leans heavily on traditional concepts of learning, morality and society.

28 Yang Wenjie, “Xiandai qingnian yinggai jubei nar xie nengli” [The abilities that modern youth should have], in Zhongguo daqushi yu dangdai qingnian [Chinese megatrends and contemporary youth] (Jinan: Shandong Renmin Chubanshe, 1985), p.168.
Families and Class Teachers: Modernizing Morality the Traditional Way

The scientific trend represents a specific myth of modernization rather than contributing to any real modernization process. ‘Science’ has merely been used as a catchword for legitimizing the old ways of control. One of the main trends in ‘modernizing’ the method of socialization through models has been the strengthening of the importance of immediate (zhijie 直接) models, such as the family, the teacher, and so on. In fact, this trend has helped restore traditional patterns of authority. The function of the family as a production and consumption unit was not only strengthened during the reforms; it also assumed a greater importance in its moral education role. In sharp contrast to this trend, however, are the results of a survey of attitudes among youth. It was found that the statement, “Standing on your own feet, and not relying on mother and father,” drew support from as many as 90.2 per cent of those asked. Notwithstanding this, official family models, or “outstanding family-heads of the whole country” (quanguoyouxiujiaozhang 全国优秀家长), have been named. In one textbook for secondary school students, the traditional duty of taking care of parents is seen as a “very basic theme” in moral education, and as a “part of the communist morality itself.” The textbook even sets Mao Zedong up as a model for following the Confucian xiao 孝, or showing piety for one’s elders. A new stress on ‘loving-your-mother’ education (‘ai mama’ jiaoyu 爱妈妈教育) is justified by the argument that “If a child cannot love its own mother, it cannot love other people, its native place, or its mother country.” The reason for this renewed emphasis on the family in moral education is easy to see. The Minister for Civil Affairs, Cai Naifu, said in an interview in 1986 that “Because the concept of the family remains strong among the Chinese people, there is no need to shift insurance functions from the family to society. Responsibility for supporting old people should be shouldered by the family.” During the reforms the family has increasingly come to be seen as the basic unit for providing social welfare. The emphasis has shifted from government assistance to self-support, and the government has decided to “encourage the tradition of respecting the elderly and caring for the young and promote the family role in social welfare.” There is, however, a paradox in strengthening the role of the family and at the same time stressing the universalistic values of impartiality (gongzheng 公正) as opposed to favouritism (piansi 偏私), and collective as opposed to private interests. Strengthened family ties will certainly not make that kind of attitude easier to achieve. Instead, it is the guanxi 关系 of family connections that is encouraged.

In schools, the class teacher (banzhuren 班主任) is being made into a generalized model above all others, representing, it is said, a crucial continuity in moral education, a continuity not guaranteed by peasants, workers or anyone else outside the classroom. The class teacher is thus regaining the position lost during the cultural revolution. It was claimed then
that the class teacher had a negative ideological influence on the students; now the class teacher seems to have become for ‘spiritual civilization’ what the entrepreneur was meant to be for ‘material civilization’. Textbooks of moral education once again stress “respect for the teacher” as “the good traditional morality of our nation.” The class teacher should be made into a paragon of virtue for the students to follow. The irony of it all is that these ‘models of spiritual civilization’ are scorned because of their low income and social prestige. One popular saying goes: “Jia you san dou liang, shet dang xiao hai wang [At home he has three dou (dl.) of grain; who can match the children’s king?]. This scornful saying has some basis in reality. A 1988 survey from Beijing showed that cooks in restaurants had a monthly income of about 300 yuan; a shop-assistant in a department store had about 200, and a farm-labourer about 140 yuan (including his 50

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38 Martin King Whyte, Small groups and political rituals in China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p.132.
39 Qingshaonian xiuyang, p.260.

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Figure 2
‘Certain kinds of education’
— Feng Zikai (1942).
Fifty years after Feng’s comment the educational methods of moulding and modelling are still the same despite the repeated talk of making education more ‘scientific’
yuan of extra allowances for living expenses—shenghuo buzhu 生活补助). With the same extra allowances included, the highest rank of teachers—those at university level—received 104.5 yuan a month as a lecturer, 129.5 as an associate professor, and 182.5 as a professor.40 Among teachers, the post of banzhuren in charge of moral education is often given to someone regarded as not good enough as a teacher or lecturer. "He can only do banzhuren-work" is a phrase often heard. Despite some recent wage-rises, the naming of scores of model-teachers, and the introduction of a special ‘teachers’ day’, the prestige of teachers is still low. Research on imitation and modelling point to the fact that prestigious models are crucial for successful emulation to occur. Thus the aim of making students emulate their low-prestige teachers might be more than difficult to achieve.41

The ideal, however, is to forget the “three dou of grain” and be a “three-hearts” (sanxin 三心) teacher: warmhearted (rexin 热心), careful (xinxin 细心), and patient (naixin 耐心). But above all he or she should be “scientific and objective” in work. Indeed, the ideal teacher is going to be nothing less than an objective paragon of virtue. Objectivity should be the aim especially in the evaluation and judging of pupils; favouritism and one-sidedness should be banned, subjective evaluation of pupils should be eschewed, and strict objectivity maintained.42 The ‘scientific method’ again provides the ultimate solution. It is stated that the teacher should know, not suppose, this or that, when evaluating moral achievement.43 Thus, the class teacher fulfills the positivist ideal of the neutral scientist, or the scientific educator. Through this metamorphosis the imitation-ideal of ‘feudal’ times suddenly becomes the scientific personification of the prefigurative model of the future. Eureka! The subjective process of morality has become a scientific one.

Measuring Morality: the Trap of Scientism

The problem to be solved, of course, is an important one indeed: that of trying to overcome the subjective methods of judgement inherent in the virtuocratic process. But the process of modernizing or rationalizing virtuocracy has often proved to be nothing but a scientistic trap. Instead of being preoccupied by what is actually measured in the process of judging morality, one is diverted to the question of bow it is measured. In the language of methodology, this means concentrating on the reliability more than the validity of the process. From textbooks on methodology in the social sciences we know that the scientist might fail to establish validity; he no longer knows what he has measured. As one sociologist puts it: “The chances of such failure are increased by the interaction between the researcher and his subjects, the imposition of his definition on theirs, their ability to interpret and adjust to his motives, and their skill in managing their responses.”44 This was the problem analyzed by Susan Shirk: how the process of moral education

41 See Bandura and Walters, Social learning, p.10.
42 See Zhongguo jiaoyubao, 11 August 1984, p.1; 19 April 1986, p.3.
turned into mere strategies for apple-polishing among students, and how it became nearly impossible to know what was honest behaviour and what was play-acting. In a rapidly changing society, a 'culture of imitation' seems to lead to a double standard of morality. Some kind of 'culture of simulation' seems to become more and more dominant as the ideals to be emulated are no longer socially-based moral norms, or at least not the only social norms available any longer. The society is in a state of anomie, yet the old and outdated rules and norms still stubbornly dictate the methods of socialization and social control.

The disappointing answer to the problem of measuring morality given by Chinese educators, however, seems merely to be that morality is not being measured well enough. The problem thus becomes how to use 'scientific methods' of measuring this morality in a better way. More important than knowing what is actually measured seems to be the need to legitimize moral and political education according to meritocratic standards. One report concludes that campaigns like that of 'learning from Lei Feng' had the effect of improving the students' marks in all subjects. For example, the average mark among students in a certain Qinghai secondary school reached a top of 89 points (out of 100) during the campaigns, while in secondary schools in Anhui it was reported that the use of models (bangyang) had improved the average mark of the students from 81.1 to 87.8 after only a short period of campaigning. In other words, good morality can be measured through students' general marks. More detailed accounts of procedures for moral measurement have been given. One researcher who wanted to bring the evaluation of the morality of student cadres and activists more up-to-date, and more in line with the reform policy found that the task was made difficult by the subjective criteria of measurement. Instead, the judgement of students' moral/political conduct—their biaoxian 表現—should have been linked to more exact and measurable criteria such as homework preparation, rate of lecture attendance, participation in laboratory work or experiments, learning of disciplinary rules, etc. He suggests a system of "negative marks" (koufen 扣分) for breaking the rules of discipline, evading duties (in the case of student cadres), and so on. Marks should be allotted after discussion among students and teachers, and a mark bonus granted for good conduct and moral achievement. Any students praised in the school paper, at a mass meeting or in other public fora would gain a 50-point bonus. Being praised in the institute paper or at an institute meeting would be worth a 30-point bonus. "Various kinds of good deeds" should be rewarded with from 2 to 5 points each. For whole classes which had won praise or degrees of honour, a collective bonus of 3 to 5 points per student should be given. Students who received a bonus in the form of money also should be given an additional 5 to 8 points on the scale of morality bonuses, while those showing a sacrificing spirit, inventiveness,
Huang Ke, "Qianyi gaoxiao sxtiang zhengzhi gongzuo de dai guannian" [On the concept of generation in higher education ideological/political work], Jiaoyu yanjiu, 1985, no.9, pp.34-7.

48 Huang Ke, "Qianyi gaoxiao sxtiang zhengzhi gongzuo de dai guannian" [On the concept of generation in higher education ideological/political work], Jiaoyu yanjiu, 1985, no.9, pp.34-7.

or who published articles in magazines, should be granted an additional bonus. As an extra incentive, student cadres should be given a bonus of from 1 to 25 points for a range of different achievements.48 What we see here resembles what sociologists call the phenomenon of ‘over-measurement’.

**Figure 3**

*Example of appraisal form for secondary-school students.*

*Such forms exist in many different versions. In this particular example the appraisal is supposed to take place eight times a school-year. It should be based on ‘daily evaluation’ of the student's behaviour, and should be summed up every fortnight by the class teacher with active help from students and parents. It includes columns for assessment of 'attitudes towards the four basic principles, interest in politics and current affairs, attitude towards personal progress, taking part in collective activities and caring about the collective, attitude towards studying, respecting the law and school regulations, respecting teachers and parents, attitude towards fellow students, attitude towards right and wrong, loyalty and honesty, and attitude towards work and other duties'.

There is a column for the student's self-evaluation, one for an evaluation by the teacher and the small group, and one to record the parents' opinion. A special column is provided for recording 'outstanding deeds' or 'serious mistakes' not covered by the regular evaluation. It is rounded off with the 'remarks' of the teacher. An 'average overall appraisal mark' is given as a result of the different points scored on each item after summing up the different fortnightly results. There are four levels of evaluation, the best being in the 85-100 point bracket, the second best in 70-84, the third in 60-69, with the lowest mark awarded for not reaching the prescribed standard of 60 points.*

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**表1：中学生政治思想品德日常表现评分表**

| 周次 | 项目 | 学习遵守四项基本原则 | 待关心 | 写进步 | 团 | 体 | 活动 | 家校联系和思想 | 任务 | 小组 | 观 | 言 | 行 | 品 | 余 | 跑
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Amitai Etzioni explains this phenomenon thus: "Most organizations under pressure to be rational are eager to measure their efficiency. Curiously the very effort—the desire to establish how we are doing and to find ways of improving if we are not doing as well as we ought to do—often has quite undesired effects from the point of view of the organizational goals. Frequent measuring can distort the organizational efforts because, as a rule, some aspects of its output are more measurable than others. Frequent measuring tends to encourage over-production of highly measurable items and neglect the less measurable ones."

It just might not be possible to 'operationalize' morality in the way this has been tried in China lately. The 'spiritual civilization' so much talked about in recent years might turn out to be nothing more than a mere myth of scientism.

It is certainly a true paradox when students gain individual money bonuses and personal privileges for showing a spirit of thrift and collective consciousness. One teacher in Guizhou protested against the method of giving money bonuses to students who had achieved titles of honour for their moral good deeds by giving his students 10 yuan each semester for such good deeds. Yet others practice the method of rewarding the recipients of 'titles of honour' with all kinds of different privileges. In Anhui Normal College, the three per cent of the students winning the title of 'excellent student' (youxiushezeng 优秀学生) could choose their own work unit after their final examination. Those who had obtained the title two years in succession were awarded a special honorary morality diploma (youxuubiyeshezhengshu 优秀毕业生证书).

Money is also being used as a means of control over discipline. Pupils only nine or ten years old are obliged to pay fines each time they break the disciplinary rules. One school had a full list of the cost of different violations of discipline. These ranged from 0.30 yuan for throwing one's bicycle around in the schoolyard, via 1 yuan for peeing there, to 3 yuan for stealing plants from the school garden. An article in People's Education, however, warns against the excessive use of 'economic punishment' (jingjizibaij) in schools. More and more schools were adopting such methods, according to the article. In one example given, the student received a warning for the first violation of discipline. The next time 1 yuan had to be paid, the third time 2 yuan, and for the fourth successive violation, a fine of 5 yuan was payable to the school. Such modernization of the methods of maintaining good morality, it was argued, might even have contributed to the increasing drop-out rates in schools. Not only did these methods have a technocratic bias, they sometimes more closely represented the view of a greedy merchant than that of an objective scientist.
Pingbi: an Objective Process of Moral Competition?

At the heart of the virtuocratic evaluation process lies the process of comparing and assessing, or pingbi 评比. Students' ideas and behaviour should be compared, discussed and evaluated in an organized way. This method was discredited for many years as it was claimed it destroyed the basic spirit of unity among students. However, it was reintroduced in all schools in the early 1980s, to “strengthen moral education” as it was formulated. The process is now described as one of “friendly competition” (youyijingsai 友谊竞赛), and is said to constitute an important moral education process in itself. Instead of pure meritocratic competition for marks, this process is meant to represent a competition for honour (rongyu 荣誉). Some researchers, examining this particular kind of morality competition, however, have instead identified the function of pure behavioural control.

Titles of honour like ‘three-good student’ (sanhao xuesheng 三好学生) etc., are being awarded to those students regarded as most outstanding in the fields of academic study, physical fitness and morality. A lot could be said about how this process is practised and how it functions; here, however, only the tendency to regard it as a process of objective evaluation will be considered.

This notion of objectivity is strongly criticized by Li Datong in the *China Educational Journal*. He attacks the exaggerated importance attached to the method which he thinks has achieved an undeserved all-powerful status in moral education. He also attacks the attempts to quantify such a process of evaluating morality. Li points out the absurdity of using the graded scale of 100 marks to evaluate such phenomena as “avoiding lies” and “loving the Fatherland and the Party,” claiming that moral/political campaigns cannot be measured so exactly. In his analysis he also takes up the problems of sycophancy and cheating spawned by the process of moral evaluation. He makes the final point that the aims of moral education do not lie in mere measurement and the pingbi process itself, as so many people seem to think, and that the method should therefore be stripped of the powerful status it has been given.

Both students and teachers are required to take part in the process of evaluating morality. In line with the renewed stress on the role of the class teacher, the latter naturally has the last word. All students can express their opinions in the evaluation report (pingyu 评议), but many refrain from doing so to avoid commenting on their fellow students in public. In Beijing University the writer was told that while students and teachers frequently agreed on the meritocratic abilities of the candidates, they were often in complete disagreement when it came to evaluating their morality. This is why class teachers are asked not to take the results of the small-group discussions among students too seriously when writing their final evaluations for these reports from activists and fellow teachers together with the
class teacher’s own opinion are what count.\textsuperscript{59} These are the evaluations presented in the final ‘graduation diploma’ (\textit{biye jianding \毕业鉴定}), which has something of the character of a pure ‘morality diploma’. Sometimes the students’ moral achievements are graded, using terms such as ‘very good’ (\textit{liang \良}), ‘average’ (\textit{zhong \中}), ‘needing help to overcome difficulties’ (\textit{fenyou \分忧}), and ‘not up to standard’ (\textit{cha \差}).\textsuperscript{60}

Different ‘morality diplomas’ have become widely used. A ‘three-good student’ now receives a diploma which says: “This comrade possesses high ideals, morality, culture and work discipline, and will fight to build the socialist modernization of the Fatherland.”\textsuperscript{61} ‘Titles of honour’, too, have begun to appear in ranked order. For instance, one can be ‘three-good’ on different levels. In Anhui province, 358 ‘three-good’ titles and 162 higher titles of honour were awarded to individual students and classes, while sixty-two were awarded collectively. These provincial-level titles of honour were awarded to those selected from among the 2.33 million secondary-school children in the province.\textsuperscript{62}

Titles exist all the way down to the local county-school or even classroom levels. We are seeing the signs of a ‘morality-diploma disease’ in which the diploma as such has assumed much more importance than the actual morality. There also seems to be a bureaucratic burgeoning of reports and documents that go to make up the final morality diploma. In 1987, a spate of new reports on political behaviour and moral conduct, etc., was put onto the student files; at the same time, the various titles of honour were given a more prominent place in the file system.\textsuperscript{63}

Dang’an: \textit{Morality Frozen into Files}

If pedagogical textbooks stress \textit{pingbi} discussions as a moral learning process in themselves, it is nevertheless the formalized result of that process that counts. The evaluation of political and moral behaviour among pupils and students is summed up as being “very important for the recruitment of new students, and one of the basic grounds on which work units can recruit new labour power.”\textsuperscript{64} Morality evaluation in schools has become the basis for the personal-file system (\textit{dang’an zhidu \档案制度}) kept by Chinese work units. These files or archives will follow the individual forever, any morality evaluation once given being ‘frozen’ there in written reports. In 1981, a regulation on strengthening the task of compiling such files for school-pupils and students was issued. It deals in detail with the content of the files, which should contain all end-of-term examination results, health cards, all reports and notes about the student made during his school years, reports on material rewards, disciplinary sanctions, etc.\textsuperscript{65} In 1984, the then Ministry of Education issued another regulation stating that these files were to be consulted as part of the procedure for recruiting students for higher education. The files were

\textsuperscript{59} This information is based on interviews with students from Beijing University which took place in Beijing during the summer of 1986.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Zhongguo baike nianjian 1982}, p.577.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Zhongguo jiaoyubao}, 6 July 1986, p.2.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 1 April 1986, p.2.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 30 June 1987, p.3, gives details about this ‘morality inflation’, and specifies which reports were supposed to be in the files.


\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Zhongguo baike nianjian 1982}, pp.572-3.
Figure 4
Example of a check-list for material included in a Chinese personnel file (1990). The list contains reports on 'personal details' (liü) as well as a personal 'curriculum vitae' (zizhuan). It has a section for moral appraisals and examination results from study and work units. There is also a section on personal 'political history'. Here appeals for rehabilitation, official answers, and conclusions from higher levels are listed—an especially important section for cadres. Material from party and youth league organizations for activists, material on rewards and punishments, official warnings, as well as model positions and titles achieved, is all supposed to be entered. In addition, the check-list includes space for 'survey-reports' and sections for 'other'.

Also to be given a more important role in job-recruitment after graduation. They were to provide information on the student's family situation, and list any political, economic or legal 'problems' faced by him or her. It stressed especially the importance of the evaluation report (pingyu) and the graduation diploma (biye jiaoding), the very documents mentioned above in discussing the pingbi procedure. The file should also contain a special section on any 'titles of honour' or other rewards achieved by the student, with the class teacher being chiefly responsible for collecting such information. Once again the objectivity of the procedure is stressed: trifles and irrelevant information are to be weeded out so that the material may
correspond to reality and give a true picture of the student. The task of setting up these files was, at the time, expected to be accomplished by 1987. One might well wonder, however, whether this quest for objectivity is being upheld while criteria like having a ‘disgusting character’ (pinzhe elie 品质恶劣), or being ‘morally degenerate’ (daode baohuai 道德败坏) are given as official reasons for refusing individuals access to a particular line of education or a specific job. It is incumbent on the party committees of the different schools to check such criteria before recruiting students. Some work units, however, silently sabotage the directive to use these files when hiring personnel, regarding them as little more than irrelevant records of the past.

Morality diplomas and titles of honour do, however, become highly relevant in the search for jobs. Material from surveys issued by the Ministry of Finance concerning middle schools specializing in economy and management studies gives enough details relating to both titles of honour and job allocation to adduce a clear connection between the two. The surveys cover some fifty-seven such schools throughout China, some of which provide information on both matters. Material from one school in Anhui province shows that out of 503 students who graduated between 1979 and 1983, 48 (or 9.5 per cent of the total) had been awarded the ‘three-good student’ title. A further 16 received the title of ‘excellent student cadre’ (youxu xuesheng ganbu 优秀学生干部), while twelve received the less elevated ‘excellent member’ (of the youth organization) (youxu tuanyuan 优秀团员). In all, 76 students (or 15.1 per cent) had received prominent titles of honour at this school. 59 others had received smaller rewards in ‘learn from Lei Feng’ campaigns, though these were not regarded as having the same status as the other 76. All the students obtained their jobs through the state job-allocation system. The best jobs were defined as those of cadre on the provincial level, which were of two kinds: one in the Provincial Economic Office (sheng caizhengting 省财政厅), and the other in the Department directly responsible for the province (sheng zhi zhuguan bumen 省直主管部门). 56 students were appointed to these two work-units on the principle of selecting the best students for the best jobs (zeyou fenpei 择优分配). Of these, 34 had been granted one of the three leading titles of honour. This means that 60.7 per cent of the top jobs went to students with such titles, while only 39.3 per cent went to students without titles of honour or with only minor titles acquired during the Lei Feng campaigns.

To sum up: while almost 45 per cent of students with leading titles of honour secured the best jobs, only just over 5 per cent of students without such titles were able to get that far. The chances, in other words, for landing top jobs in the provincial administration were nine times as high for those with such titles as for those without.
Concluding Remarks

These data may be subject to different interpretation. Nevertheless they provide a good indication that virtuocratic control has been far from dead and cold during the period of the reforms. The tendency towards it, however, has been considerably strengthened in the hardened climate of control in evidence since the Tiananmen crack-down. The stress on democracy as a means to modernize morality has been greatly modified by the quest for ‘unity and stability’, while the technocratic side of that process still holds sway. The general picture of an emerging prefigurative society adhering to mainly postfigurative methods of socialization and control would seem to emerge even more strongly. There is certainly nothing approaching a prefigurative vision in that model, while Deng's catch-cry about "looking towards the future" would appear to be as strongly as ever rooted in the past. At the same time, such methods of socialization carry a very potent message about both who is in power and how the power-holders intend to retain control in the realm of defining morality.