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Article 3 by Hayhoe

The Ideas of Ma Xiangbo and their Relevance for China & for Global Understanding Today

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As a young scholar, starting a PhD at the University of London in the early 1980s and teaching for two years at Fudan University in Shanghai, I came upon the story of Ma Xiangbo, an influential Chinese intellectual who was deeply versed in both classical Chinese and classical European knowledge. He had experienced a traditional Chinese education and then studied in the Jesuit College St Ignace, which had been founded in Shanghai in 1840, the year of his birth. He was to live until 1939, nearly one hundred years, the most tumultuous century of China's modern development. He founded three universities, as well as making an effort to establish China's first modern academy, modelled after the Académie Française. I was so inspired by his dedication and the impact of his leadership on academic, religious and political circles that I translated some of his writing and



Ma Xiangbo (1840-1939)

It was thus exciting to learn, twenty one years later, that a small conference was being held in the School of Philosophy at Fudan University, on the subject of Fudan's founder, Ma Xiangbo, and the comparative study of classics. This paper was prepared for that conference in early November of 2017. It was a joy to read carefully through the book I had co-edited long ago, and reflect on all the learnings that came out of that project. The book begins with three major papers on different aspects of Ma's career in Part One. Zhu Weizheng focused on his political contributions, Li Tiangang wrote about his efforts to nurture a truly indigenous Christianity on Chinese soil and Lu Yongling told the story of the founding of three major universities, each with a distinctive character and approach. Part Two includes key articles written by Ma that I had chosen to translate. They cover themes such as religion and culture, the academy and political reform. Part Three provides an exhaustive list of Ma's own books, articles and translations, as well as his letters and articles published about him from 1928 to 1990.

As I re-read this volume in order to prepare some thoughts for this paper, I was deeply touched by several dimensions of Ma Xiangbo's life and contribution. I could see much of his thinking is as relevant to the current situation in China and the world, as was the original study to the 1990s. Four themes flowed through my mind, while doing this reading and reflection. The first relates to the continuing importance of religion in human life, which was demonstrated in the dialogue of civilizations that emerged in the 1990s. The second relates to the comparative study of Chinese and European Classics. Not only was Ma's scholarship rooted in the mastery of Greek and Latin classics he obtained in his Jesuit education, but at a deeper level his mastery of the Chinese classics led to a strong conviction that China's modern development must be built on appropriate Chinese concepts for subjects such as philosophy and economics. Thirdly Ma was committed to designing a curriculum for modern universities that fully balanced and integrated forms of knowledge drawn



participation in government, beginning at the most immediate local level. I will take up each of these points in the pages that follow.

Let me begin with the end of the Cold War and the new understandings that emerged in the 1990s about the continuing importance of religion in human societies. The dominant sociological theory of the western capitalist world, modernization theory or structural functionalism, had been developed under the assumption that religion was a core element in traditional societies, but that the secularization of society was an inevitable and inescapable feature of modern development. Religion would survive under modernity only as the private or personal interest of the few. The other dominant sociological theory of the 20th century, neo-Marxism, in both its dependency and world system versions, also anticipated an end to any need for religion, once a world socialist system had been established.

However, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a discourse around the "clash of civilizations" made it very clear that religion and spirituality remain an extremely important part of life for most communities and societies. Samuel Huntington's much quoted article articulated the point that future conflict would arise less from ideological or political differences than from differences rooted in distinctive world religions and civilizations, thus anticipating some of the conflicts that emerged with the 9/11 tragedy. One year before Huntington's 1993 article, I had convened a conference at the University of Toronto on the subject of "Knowledge Across Cultures" which called on Western universities to learn from the rich heritage and contribution of Chinese, Indian and Middle Eastern civilizations and religious traditions and acknowledge their contributions to the European Enlightenment. Ten years later, the papers presented at this conference were republished under the title *Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogue among Civilizations* (Hayhoe & Pan, 2001). This was precisely the year which the United Nations had named the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and, by a tragic irony, it was also the year of the 9/11 terrorist attack.

It was in the context of the early 1990s, that I was working on the translation of Ma Xiangbo's writing and the editing of *Ma Xiangbo and the Mind of Modern China*. (Hayhoe & Lu, 1996) What emerged from our translations and the essay written by Li Tiangang, was a picture of Ma Xiangbo as scholar who had a profound understanding of the achievements of modern science and mathematics, and yet saw no conflict with the religious knowledge that he had embraced at a deep level through his study of the Bible, his translation of the New Testament into Chinese and his reflections on resonances between Jewish, Christian and Confucian thought. His appreciation of the balance between an interest in science and a commitment to Christian faith in the work of such early Jesuit missionaries as Matteo Ricci, Guilio Aleni and Adam Schall von Bell was inspirational. I could imagine him as one of those who would be speaking out today in the university community about the importance of religious faith in modern life, and the necessity of religion being separate from the state in order that every individual be free to explore the spiritual realm and make their own



"Religion and Culture" (*ibid.* 272-282) show a balanced understanding of the relation between science and religion. In the latter piece, he called attention to the ideas of scientists such as Andre Dumas and William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) and shared the follow quotation from Lord Kelvin: "Don't any of you be afraid of people who think freely; if you put great efforts into your research, science will require you to have a firm faith in the Creator, and this Creator is the true source of religion. Only in this way will you realise that scientific principles not only do not hinder people, but encourage people to believe in religion." "What we mean by this true source," he went on to say, "is something that embraces all human affairs as well as the material world, all that is beautiful and good, all principles and laws – that is the basic principles which are pursued by science. When you undertake to do rigorous research into the sciences, you should research these questions." (*ibid.* 273-274)

So the first point I would make is that Ma Xiangbo would not have been surprised by the ways in which theories of modernization and neo-Marxism that anticipated a complete secularization of modern society were shown to be extremely short-sighted when the dialogue among civilizations emerged in the 1990s. His writing also remains vibrant with ideas and understandings that can contribute to this ongoing dialogue.

On the second point, Ma was deeply committed to ensuring that young Chinese of his generation had a clear understanding of China's classical traditions, and could build their efforts to establish a modern society on concepts firmly rooted in classical Chinese understanding, not terms that had been hastily borrowed from Japan's experience of modernization. I was inspired particularly by Ma's efforts to create the Hanxia Kaowenyuan (Haxia Academy of Humanities and Sciences) modelled on his appreciation of the role, status and contribution of the Académie Française. It was thus most interesting to translate the documents he wrote in 1913 and 1914 (*ibid.*, 223-240), and note the emphasis he placed on finding roots for the moral and spiritual formation of young people in China's own classical texts and formulating appropriate translations of core concepts from the philosophical and theological texts of Europe. His *Introduction to Philosophy* (Zhizhi Qianshuo) written in 1926 (*ibid.*, 253-268) as a textbook for Furen University, explained why the term *zhizhi* (致知) was much more appropriate than the Japanese derived term *zhexue* (哲学) which had become standard even then: "For the title of this volume, see Zhu Xi's notes to the *Great Learning*: 'The word 'zhi' refers to a process of reasoning, while "zhi" means knowledge. Thus the phrase 'zhizhi' means to develop one's knowledge to the fullest possible degree and expresses the hope for a knowledge that is complete. Probably this is close to the Western term philosophy, love of wisdom, with the Greek term '*sophia*' meaning wisdom and '*philo*' meaning love." (*ibid.* p. 255) Other academic terms which Ma would have preferred over the Japanese versions that became dominant were '*gezhexue*' (格致) for science, instead of '*kexue*' (科学) and '*licai*' (理财) for economics, instead of '*jingji*' (经济). Unfortunately, his efforts to establish the Hanxia Academy of Humanities and Sciences failed to gain adequate support, as explained by Yongling Lu in her essay on Ma's contributions to higher learning. The dominance of Japanese derived terms in China's modern curriculum has made it an "alienated" set of knowledge categories in some ways. (Lu & Hayhoe, 2004, 295-296)



University in Beijing in 1926. In his efforts to found Zhendan (Aurore) University in 1903, Ma laid out the principle of a modern Chinese university that gave equal importance to Chinese classical knowledge and the Greek and Latin classics of Europe, as a foundation, then built a curriculum based on arts and sciences as well as professional fields such as law and medicine. The approach to learning was to be informal, with a minimum of formal lecturing and students developing their knowledge through reading and personal consultation with professors. Within two years, the French Jesuit leaders whom Ma had invited to assist in the development of the university took advantage of his illness to reform the curriculum towards a strong professional orientation, and much reduced attention to classical foundations from either China or Europe. Ma and a considerable number of students walked out in 1905 to create Fudan University, a second Aurore, but this institution also failed to give the kind of attention Ma felt was necessary to classical foundations of knowledge. (Hayhoe,1984) Caught up in patriotic movements and the burgeoning needs and interests of the commercial atmosphere of Shanghai, it did not establish high academic standards till much later.

However, Ma Xiangbo and Ying Lianzhi, an influential publisher who was also a Catholic believer, sent an appeal to Pope Pius X in 1912 for a Catholic University to be established. (Hayhoe & Lu, 1996, 219-222) Shortly afterwards the Furen She was set up by Ying Lianzhi as an informal academy for the study of European and Chinese religious classics. This was a first move towards a university which could truly balance Chinese and European classical knowledge, including philosophy and theology, as well as giving attention to the natural sciences, including mining and architecture, also history, sociology and languages. Ying had gathered a group of young Catholics from around the country to study the works of such early Jesuits as Matteo Ricci, Adam Schall von Bell and outstanding Chinese scholar officials such as Paul Xu Guangqi, as well as Christian Chinese from the Nestorian period in the 8th century and the Yuan dynasty period (13th to 14th centuries). Among them was the historian Chen Yuan, who was later to become president of Furen University. After its founding in 1925, it was placed under the care of American Benedictines, subsequently the German society of the Divine Word in 1933, and was able to remain open in Beijing under the Japanese occupation, then move to Taiwan after the Chinese revolution. The contributions and historical development of Furen University are thus a tremendously valuable legacy that goes back to Ma Xiangbo's early vision for a university both modern and profoundly Chinese. (Hayhoe, 1988)

Finally, let me turn to Ma Xiangbo's passion for democracy, a theme that is richly developed in Zhu Weizheng's essay, "Statesman and Centenarian: Ma Xiangbo as witness of China's early Modernity."(Hayhoe & Lu, 1996, 13-88) Zhu's commentary on an essay written by Ma in 1918, "A Mirror of the Mind of a Citizen of the Republican State" is profoundly moving. The essay summarizes Ma political views since the founding of the Republic of China in 1911. Zhu begins by remarking that although this was a brief seven years, there had already been five presidents, ten prime ministers, two attempts to restore monarchy and three nationwide civil wars. Ever since siding with republican revolutionaries in 1911, Ma had not wavered in his conviction that democracy must be implemented. He emphasized that a citizen of the Chinese republic must reflect on the interconnection between



that a republic is a state where citizens are the master and the public must be aware of their right to self-government, as well as knowing and abiding by the law. (*ibid.*, p. 62) He went on to emphasize that the constitution must ensure a government by the people, the core of which is local self-government. A citizen of the republican state is characterized by dedication to self-government, autonomy and freedom, he declared. Zhu points out that Sun Yat Sen was far behind Ma in his commitment to self-government, putting forward a three-stage theory regarding the reconstruction of the nation. The first stage would be martial law, then compulsory indoctrination as the second stage and constitutional government as the final stage. Zhu went on to comment on Chiang Kai Shek's unfortunate execution of this approach, and then made the following prescient remark: "Other self-styled successors of Sun have been even more enigmatic over this issue, shifting from one of the three stages to another and never being able to complete the indoctrination stage up to the present time." (*ibid.* p.68)

Let me close this brief essay by saying again how inspirational it has been to revisit research on Ma Xiangbo done long ago, and to reflect on translations of his work that I was privileged to undertake at that time. If one were to ask what Ma would say about the China of today, there can be little doubt that he would be delighted to see the high global standing of China's top universities, including Fudan University in Shanghai, one of the three he founded. He would also applaud the ways in which Chinese culture and civilization is being introduced to the world by Confucius Institutes established through about 500 partnerships between Chinese universities and universities around the world. However, he would be disappointed to see that the kind of "bottom-up" political reform he had promoted so passionately in his writings and in his support for progressive causes has not yet been achieved.

Francis Fukuyama's recent work, *The Origins of Political Order* (Fukuyama, 2011) provides some insight into how China has managed its dramatic economic modernization, coordinated by a remarkably strong and resilient state, noting that "many of the elements of what we now know to be a modern state were already in place in China in the third century B.C., some eighteen hundred years before they emerged in Europe (*ibid.*,19) Fukuyama goes on to identify the other two elements of modernity that are traced in his wide sweep of the history of modernisation - the rule of law and accountable government. Until now the rule of law (*fazhi*法制) might be better described as "rule by law" (*fazhi*法治) in the Chinese context. Governmental accountability is also limited in a situation where civil society remains a somewhat contested term and citizenship is defined more in terms of patriotic loyalty to the state than individual responsibility for the social good. (Pan, 2017) The vision presented by Ma Xiangbo in "The Mirror of a Mind of the Citizen of the Republican State" thus still carries an important message for China as well as many other parts of our global world.

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Fudan University founded by Ma Xiangbo

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