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Education as Revolution: Theorising Education and Learning in Xin Shiji (1907-1910)

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Education as Revolution: Theorising Education and Learning in *Xin Shiji* (1907-1910)

Abstract

Xin Shiji, printed in France by a group of anarchists and revolutionaries between 1907-1910, is best known for its association with the Chinese anarchist movement in the early twentieth century. Previous studies of this journal have predominately focused on the history of the Chinese anarchist movement and the dissemination of radical thought in China. This article examines how the question of education was raised and what was being discussed in terms of learning, what knowledge and aspects of learning were perceived as being needed, and demanded, and how this view of education and learning impacted their views of Chinese language and script. *Xin Shiji* presents a cosmopolitan moment of educational imagination in the late Qing and early Republican period, hitherto largely ignored in the scholarly literature on education of this period, which has focused primarily on the role of education and educational transformation in the process of state-building. Dispassionate about disseminating new ideas about citizenship and exploring the potential role of education in creating new citizens, the educational thoughts in *Xin Shiji* emphasized the connection of an autonomous individual and a member of society who is not bound by the nation-state. They elaborated a cosmopolitan vision of education that did not situate itself within an existing tradition and refused to presuppose the institutional and political forms through which education and learning should be implemented.

Introduction¹

In 1906 a group of Chinese anarchists and revolutionaries founded an association called World Society (世界社 *Shijie she*) to promote the anarchist cause in China. The group's leading figures, later known among historians of China as the "Paris group,"² were Li Shizeng 李石曾

¹ Translations in the article the present author's unless otherwise noted. In most cases, I have incorporated the English text translated from Chinese into the main body of the article to assist the reader. The original texts in Chinese are provided in footnotes. In the case of critical translations that call for greater attention, I have also provided explanations in the footnotes.

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3 (1881-1973), Wu Zihui 吳稚暉 (1864-1953), Zhang Jingjiang 張靜江 (1877-1950), and Chu
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7 Minyi 褚民誼 (1884-1946).² Publishing was a significant aspect of their political project and
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10 they set up a publishing house —then, Europe’s only Chinese printing press. In 1907, this
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12 group launched a journal, *the New Century* (新世紀 *Xin Shiji*), which also went by the
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14 Esperanto *La Novaj Tempoj*. *Xin Shiji* ran for three years from 1907 to May 1910 and produced
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16 121 issues.³ Voicing a utopian spirit and imagining unprecedented alternatives, it became one
17
18 of the leading voices of Chinese anarchism at the time and served as a major propaganda organ,
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20 advocating for the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty through insurrection.
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26 Since education was a very central part of the political thought of anarchism, in *Xin Shiji* the
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28 Paris group advocated a new kind of education that would produce autonomous individuals
29
30 and a cosmopolitan sociality that transcended the nation-state, believing that such education
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32 and their goal of social revolution were two sides of the same coin. This conceptualisation of
33
34 education contrasts with the one of late Qing and early Republican mainstream educational
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36 reformers who had a near consensus in favour of a version of education that emphasized nation-
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38 building and citizenship in new Western-style schools.
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45 ² For more details on the history of Chinese anarchist movements, see Robert A. Scalapino and George T. Yu,
46 *The Chinese Anarchist Movement* (Berkeley: University of California, 1961). Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and*
47 *Chinese political culture* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1990). Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese*
48 *Revolution* (University of California Press, 1991).

49 ³ The Japanese scholar Hirano Yoshitarō, contends that *Xin Shiji* was smuggled back to China and Japan by
50 Chinese crew members of ocean-going vessels thus circulating among revolutionaries both countries, see Hirano
51 Yoshitaro, “Shinseiki kaidai,” in *Shinseiki. Shinseiki sosho*, (Tokyo: Daian, 1966), 1-12. Cited in Lin Shaoyang
52 *Ding ge yi wen: Qingji geming yu Zhang Taiyan “fugu” de xinwenhua yundong* [Revolution by means of culture:
53 the late Qing Revolution and Zhang Taiyan] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2018). The Korean scholar
54 Youn Dae-yeong, believes that *Xin Shiji* had a print-run of 1500 copies, which were not sold in Paris, but shipped
55 directly to China. Some of the copies were also distributed clandestinely in French colonies such as Vietnam, see
56 Youn Dae-yeong, “The introduction of revolutionary 'new books' and Vietnamese intellectuals in the early 20th
57 century,” *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter* No.79 (2018):38-42. It is unclear how many copies
58 circulated in China. Regardless of how the journal entered China, *Xin Shiji* was instrumental in shaping early
59 revolutionary thoughts there, and in 1947 the journal was reprinted in Shanghai following requests from archival
60 institutions, libraries and museums.

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3 Many works have examined the conceptual transformation of education and educational
4 reforms from the late Qing (1850-1912) to the Republican period. Excellent though these works
5 are, they focus primarily on themes of school reform, nationalism and citizenship with a version
6 of education which is patriotic, democratic, and pragmatic. Since the 1980s, these studies have
7 shifted from viewing the education transformation process as a Western system superseding a
8 'traditional' local system to acknowledging and examining the complexity between local
9 cultural and institutional resources and foreign and modern concepts and systems. For example,
10 Sally Borthwick provides a general introduction to the educational changes and reforms in
11 China towards a ~~centralised~~centralized, universal public education system from the late Qing
12 to the 1950s and shows that at the beginning of the century traditional and modern schools
13 existed side by side.⁴ Ruth Hayhoe also examines the influence of Chinese tradition in her
14 study of China's universities during the Republican period.⁵ Scholars of education generally
15 assume that these educational articulations and transformations "perform the essential tasks of
16 nation-building: the creation of a unified, loyal, and economically productive citizenry", or in
17 other words, a ~~Westernised~~Westernized modern subjectivity.⁶ Paul Bailey's study examines
18 the changing educational discourse in China from the late Qing to the early Republican era,
19 and shows how the idea of education has shifted from training a few to staff the bureaucracy
20 to producing responsible citizens during this transitional period. shows how the traditional view
21 of cultivating 'human talent' to staff the bureaucracy gave way to the goal of educating all the
22 people to be responsible citizens.⁷ Stig Thøgersen examines the development of modern
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51 ⁴ Sally Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China: The Beginnings of the Modern Era* (Hoover Institution
52 Press, Stanford University, 1983).

53 ⁵ Ruth Hayhoe, "Cultural Tradition and Educational Modernization: Lessons from the Republican Era," In
54 Hayhoe, R. ed., *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience* (Oxford, England; New York: Pergamon
55 Press, 1992), 47–72; Ruth Hayhoe, *China's Universities 1895–1995: A Century of Cultural Conflict* (New York
56 & London: Garland, 1996).

57 ⁶ Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe, "Introduction," in Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe and Yongling Lu, eds., *Education,*
58 *Culture, and Identity in Twentieth Century China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 3.

59 ⁷ Paul Bailey, *Reform the people: Changing attitudes towards popular education in early twentieth-century China*
60 (Edinburgh University Press, 1990).

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3 education from the rural level through the studies of village schools in Zouping, Shandong, to
4 understand the dynamic between society and state in the making of a modern nation.⁸ Thomas
5
6 Curran's work provide an insightful overview of various education reform movements in China
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8 from the late Qing to the Republican era and concludes that the schools contributed little to
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10 modernization of the nation as the modern school system produced neither a new "secular
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12 intelligentsia" of managers and technocrats nor "national integration and unity."⁹ Cong
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14 Xiaoping's book examines the development of Chinese teachers' schools from late Qing to the
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16 late 1930s and their role in the process of "in-creating a politically unified and nationally edified
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18 citizenry localizing the global and nationalizing the local."¹⁰ Historians Robert Culp and Peter
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20 Zarrow demonstrates how civic ritual and practice, and textbooks served as important arenas
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22 for shaping and disseminating new ideas about citizenship and the nation state from the late
23
24 Qing to the early Republican period.¹¹
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31 Taken as a whole, these studies have paid exclusive attention to the role of education and
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33 educational transformation in the process of state-building, therefore neglected the
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35 cosmopolitan conceptualisation of education in a moment of national transition and
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37 transformation which is characterised by a tension and interposition between cosmopolitanism
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39 and Chinese nationalism.¹²
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46 ⁸ Stig Thøgersen, *A County of Culture: Twentieth Century China Seen from the Village Schools of Zouping, Shandong* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

47 ⁹ See Thomas Curran, *Educational Reform in Republican China: The Failure of Educators to Create a Modern Nation* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 460

48 ¹⁰ Cong Xiaoping, *Teachers' schools and the making of the modern Chinese nation-state, 1897-1937* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 10.

49 ¹¹ Robert Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); Peter Zarrow, *Educating China: knowledge, society and textbooks in a modernizing world, 1902-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

50 ¹² Rebecca Karl argues that Chinese nationalism is "a congeries of diverse intellectual praxes and concept-
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52 formations, which are not reducible to the pursuit of a political state, and which are endowed with translocal
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54 significance precisely because of the emergency of nationalism globally". See Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese
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56 Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 24. Shih Shumei also
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58 states that during the May Fourth period, Chinese intellectuals were able to "invent a cosmopolitan subjectivity
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60 that did not take the nation-state or the ethnos as the sole boundary marker of identity, as they could establish a

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3 With education being a central concern of the anarchist movement and the Paris group, *Xin*
4 *Shiji* is a compelling repository of early discussion and articulation around the question of
5 education and learning. The anarchist nature, the negation of nation boundaries, also means
6 that their educational thoughts serve as a tool for social transformation *beyond* nation-state
7 boundaries. Existing scholarship on *Xin Shiji* and the Paris group has helped to illuminate the
8 centrality of the education though in the formulation of the revolution theory. When examining
9 the anarchism movements in China, Arif Dirlik highlights the importance of education in the
10 anarchist idea of social revolution and points out that education was the “cornerstone” of
11 anarchist revolution, He examines how the centrality of education was formulated by the Paris
12 anarchists in relation to the idea of revolution - the sense that education and revolution were
13 conceived dialectically - the advance of one inducing the advance of the other in the endless
14 evolution of humanity, and there was no distinction between the process and the goals of
15 revolution.¹³ Peter Zarrow presents a comprehensive overview of the principal ideas of key
16 anarchist thinkers and includes some details on thoughts about education.¹⁴ However, both
17 works have primarily focused on the political thoughts and intellectual formation of the
18 anarchist movement, they discuss mainly the relationship between education and revolution,
19 not thoroughly and exclusively on the educational thoughts articulated in *Xin Shiji*. Scholarship
20 in the Chinese language on Chinese anarchism is also abundant, yet once again the educational
21 aspect of the movement is not the focus of these studies.¹⁵

22 transnationally mediated identity in the global terrain.” See Shih Shu-mei, *The lure of the modern: Writing*
23 *modernism in semicolonial China, 1917-1937* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2001), 50.

24 ¹³ See Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, 29.

25 ¹⁴ Peter Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese political culture*.

26 ¹⁵ See Xu Shanguang and Liu Jianping, *Zhongguo wuzhengfuzhuyi shi* [History of Chinese anarchism] (Wuhan:
27 Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1989). Jiang Jun and Li Xingzhi, *Zhongguo jindai de wuzhengfu zhuyi sichao* [Anarchist
28 thoughts in modern China] (Jinan: Shandong remin chubanshe, 1991). Cao Shixuan, *Qing mo minchu wuzhengfu*
29 *pai de wenhua sixiang* [Anarchist cultural thought in the late Qing and early Republic] (Beijing: Shehui kexue
30 wenxian chubanshe, 2003).

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3 This article examines the educational thoughts articulated in *Xin Shiji* by the Paris group and
4 throw light on the cosmopolitan imagination of education which is largely ignored in the
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6 scholarly literature on this period. It examines how the question of education was raised and
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8 what was being discussed in terms of learning, what knowledge and aspects of learning were
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10 perceived as being needed, and demanded, and how this view of education and learning
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12 impacted their views of Chinese language and script. In this cosmopolitan moment of
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14 educational imagination, *Xin Shiji*'s educational thoughts strove to transcend the nation state
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16 boundaries. Dispassionate about disseminating new ideas about citizenship and exploring the
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18 potential role of education in creating new citizens, they emphasized the connection of an
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20 autonomous individual and a member of society who is not bound by the nation-state. They
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22 elaborated a cosmopolitan vision of education that did not situate itself within an existing
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24 tradition and refused to presuppose the institutional and political forms through which
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26 education and learning should be implemented. Regardless of their real limitations, it would
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28 be more appropriate to read *Xin Shiji*'s educational thoughts, not in terms of a consequentialist
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30 means-end analysis but rather as alternative possibilities and futures that were imagined before
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32 being extinguished.
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39 40 **“Education as Revolution” — Anarcho-Education, not Education of the “Civilised** 41 42 **Nations”** 43 44

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46 The concept of education in China underwent a fundamental change after the end of the
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48 nineteenth century, moving from an individual, private or family pursuit to that of an
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50 ~~organised~~organized mass activity controlled from above. This transition has been described as
51
52 the “disenchantment of learning” by some scholars.¹⁶ The Neo-Confucian understanding of the
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54 nature and accumulation of knowledge was gradually displaced by a new
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59 ¹⁶ Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe, “Introduction,” 5.
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~~conceptualisation~~conceptualization of secular learning, utilitarian knowledge, and vocational study. *Jiaoyu* (教育 lit: teach and rear), a neologistic translation of the English term “education” borrowed from Japanese was used to describe this new understanding.¹⁷ Western influences on education in China came via Japan, with new schools being established and educational reforms implemented based on the Japanese educational model from the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁸

To better understand the concept of education discussed in *Xin Shiji*, it is as well to start from the Paris group’s definition of revolution. They made a basic distinction between “political revolution” and “social revolution.”¹⁹ The Paris group believed that the former was a limited revolution, a revolution of the few, serving to substitute new inequalities for old ones. The only complete revolution should be the anarchist revolution, literally revolution in ~~favour~~favor of no government, or social revolution. This meant a revolution based upon popular support and participation, the principles of political freedom, equality and a sharing of the wealth. All of which, most importantly, requires equal and popular education. This distinction explains why education was so fundamentally important to the Paris group. In an article published in 1908, Wu Zhihui ~~summarised~~summarized this theory of education using the phrase “education as revolution.”²⁰ giving equal importance to education.²⁰ He wrote:

¹⁷ See Masamichi Ueno, “The thought of Manabi: Learning in the age of globalisation reconsidered,” In *Manabi and Japanese Schooling* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 20-21.

¹⁸ See Abe Hiroshi, “Borrowing from Japan: China’s First Modern Educational System,” in Ruth Hayhoe and Marianne Bastid, eds., *China’s Education and the Industrialised World: Studies in Cultural Transfer* (London: Routledge, 1987), 57–80; Paula Harrell, *Sowing the seeds of change: Chinese students, Japanese teachers, 1895-1905* (Stanford University Press, 1992); Sushila Narsimhan, “Influence of Japan in China’s Educational Development, 1896-1911,” *Educational Planning and Administration*, 2004. 18 (4): 421–48.

¹⁹ This is best stated in a long article by Chu Minyi entitled *On Anarchy* which ran through 5 issues. For a distinction of the political revolution and social revolution, see Chu Minyi, “*Xu Wuzhengfushuo*” [On Anarchy], *Xin Shiji*, No. 34. Chu Minyi reiterated this distinction in different articles: “Wen Geming” [Inquiring about Revolution], *Xin Shiji*, No. 20; “Puji Geming” [UniversalisingUniversalizing Revolution], *Xin Shiji*, No. 15, 18, 20, 23.

²⁰ Wu Zhihui often wrote using a pen name: Ran, Ranliao, Yi, Jingheng, Siwu, etc. Sometimes he used names such as “Liu oujie yifenzi” (a person in Europe), “zhongguo zhi yiren” (a person from China), “ping liangxinzhe” (a reader with conscience), “wu zhengfudang yiren” (an anarchist) etc. He also adopted the pen names of Li

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3 Education on an everyday basis is revolution every day. When there is a relatively small
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5 manifestation of education, slightly reforming minor customs of the society, this is a
6
7 small revolution... If the educational manifestation is great, swiftly, completely and
8
9 forcibly reforming old customs, this is a great revolution... Truth and justice progress
10
11 every day; education does not rest for a second and also the revolution never stops. The
12
13 consequences of education are certainly nothing but revolution.²¹
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16 He ~~recognised~~recognized the progressive nature of a republican revolution, but the real goal of
17
18 the revolution, he argued, was not just to destroy harmful institutions, but to reform people's
19
20 minds, to bring fundamental change in both political and social structures. Present-day
21
22 education was separated from revolution and as a result of this separation, revolution became
23
24 merely “unconscious riots.”²² Revolution was destruction, and destruction without
25
26 construction would lead only to disastrous consequences. Therefore “revolution is nothing but
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28 people abandoning their old habits and adopting a new way of life after the
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30 ~~popularisation~~popularization of education. These are lifelong effects.”²³
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36 Education held such a pivotal position for the Chinese anarchists in Paris owing to their firm
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38 belief in “progress” 進化 *Jinhua*.²⁴ In the inaugural issue of *Xin Shiji*, an article entitled *The*
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40 *Revolution of the New Century* declared that the revolution they sought was “a progressive
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48 Shizeng such as Zhen, Min, Zhenmin. See Chen Linghai “Wu Zhihui xiansheng nianpu jianbian, 1907”₃ in *Wu*
49 *Zhihui xiansheng quanji* [Collected Works of Mr. Wu Zhihui] (Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang
50 weiyuanhui dangshi shiliao bianzuan weiyuanhui, 1969), Vol. 18: 31.

51 ²¹ Wu Zhihui, “Wu Zhengfuzhuyi yi jiaoyu wei geming shuo” [Anarchist Education as Revolution], *Xin Shiji*, No.
52 65, 1908, p. 11. The English translation is quoted from Zarrow, 1990, 121.

53 ²² Wu Zhihui, “Wu Zhengfuzhuyi yi jiaoyu wei geming shuo.”₃ 10.

54 ²³ Wu Zhihui, “Wu Zhengfuzhuyi yi jiaoyu wei geming shuo.”₃ 11.

55 ²⁴ It is challenging to provide an accurate translation for the Chinese term *jinhua* which itself is a neologism
56 meaning evolution or progress, depending on the context. Here I choose to translate it into *progress* to capture the
57 optimism implication of progressive evolution implied in the articles. For the emergence of the Chinese concept
58 of “progress” as well as its relation to the concept of evolution in modern China, see Kai Vogelsang, “The Chinese
59 Concept of Progress,” in Thomas Föhlich and Axel Schneider, eds., *Chinese Visions of Progress, 1895 to 1949*
60 (Leiden: Brill. 2020), 43–74.

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4 revolution” (進化之革命 *Jinhua zhi geming*), a revolution for the majority of people.²⁵ Their
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7 idea of revolution was associated with progress. When defining the nature of revolution, Li
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11 Shizeng made it very clear that: “revolution is to get rid of what hinders progress, and so
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revolution” (進化之革命 *Jinhua zhi geming*), a revolution for the majority of people.²⁵ Their idea of revolution was associated with progress. When defining the nature of revolution, Li Shizeng made it very clear that: “revolution is to get rid of what hinders progress, and so revolution is nothing more than seeking progress.”²⁶ Therefore, the Paris group believed that revolution was an act that served a transient purpose — to clear away obstacles — but that education would last forever by transforming people’s minds and achieve real progress. Education therefore was a central concern in *Xin Shiji* and perceived as an instrument that could bring about a radical change along with revolution. But what was the education that they envisaged? Certainly not the education of the day, which was labelled as “slavery education” (奴隸教育 *nuli jiaoyu*) by the anarchists in several *Xin Shiji* articles.²⁷ They believed that, in general, the function of government was to defend the rights of the rich within its own country and to conquer weaker nations overseas. Therefore, the purpose of education of the day was to maintain the government and authority. It was “education of the powerful”²⁸; not the “education based on equality.”²⁸ They excoriated education in China:

Education in the schools today (in China), contains about twenty percent of knowledge, and the remaining eighty percent consist of all sorts of so-called moral bullshit, such as being loyal to the Emperor and venerating Confucius.²⁹

²⁵ “Xin Shiji zhi geming” [The Revolution of the New Century], *Xin Shiji*, No. 1, 1907, 1.

²⁶ Zhen, “Jinhua you geming” [Evolution and Revolution], *Xin Shiji*, No. 20, 1907, 1.

²⁷ This came from the anarchist view on the relationship between education and the state. For anarchists, state education is authoritarian in practice, and they argue that education is a tool used by the state to ensure its authority and continued future. For an analysis of the relationship between education and state authority in anarchist thoughts, see Judith Suissa, *Anarchism and education: A philosophical perspective* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010) chapter 4: Authority, the state and education, 54-61.

²⁸ Chu Minyi, “Xu wuzhengfu shuo”²⁸; *Xin Shiji*, No. 43, 1908, 4.

²⁹ “Tan wuzhengfu zhi xiantian” [Chat about the Anarchy], *Xin Shiji*, No. 49, 1908, 3.

The article entitled *Chat about Anarchy*, remarked that when looking at the textbooks of all nations, one realised that they all “start with teaching blind faith of the nation”³⁰; “then infused with militarism” in order to defend the governments.³⁰ It also denounced the education of the West or the “so-called civilised nations”³¹; believing it mainly “consists of doctrines such as patriotism, martialism, public spiritism and legalism all which, put in a nutshell, are to protect the government.”³¹

Being critical of education in Western countries, quite clearly *Xin Shiji* did not advocate replacing local education with Western-style education. Its educational designs do not fit into the binary of Westernisation or preservation of what was regarded as a national heritage in the process of nation-building. What then were the educational ideas formulated and proposed in *Xin Shiji*? In general terms, it covered two broad elements: public morality and scientific knowledge.

“There is no morality other than knowledge and learning” — Education as an instrument of moral improvement

The notion of public morals (公德 *gongde*) is an important element of *Xin Shiji*. As Wu Zhihui put forward in his famous article “Anarchist Education as Revolution”³²:

There is no such thing that can be called education outside of the morality contained in truth and public morals, such as fraternity, equality, and liberty, and so forth, or outside of the knowledge contained in truth and public morals, such as experimental science and so forth, as implemented in anarchist education.³²

³⁰ “Tan wuzhengfu zhi xiantian”³; 3.

³¹ “Tan wuzhengfu zhi xiantian”³; 3.

³² Wu Zhihui, [Anarchist Education as Revolution], 8. The English translation is quoted from Zarrow, 1990, 122. Here by saying “truth”³; Wu meant that “science” as truth itself has no moral content.

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3 However, this was not the first time the notion of *gongde* was raised and discussed. In
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6 *Discourse on the New Citizen* (新民說 *Xinmin Shuo*) in 1902, Liang Qichao (1873-1929) also
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8
9 looked for moral solutions to political questions in China. In order to cultivate “new people”
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11 (新民 *xinmin*), Liang argued for moral reform so that people’s mindset would be
12
13 ~~modernised~~modernized and a national subjectivity forged.³³ His moral imagination designated
14
15 the binaries of “public morals” (公德 *gongde*) and “private morals” (私德 *side*), by introducing
16
17 the concept of *qun* 群 (group), an ancient term which went back to philosopher Xunzi.³⁴
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19 Perceiving the lack of national cohesion as the China’s greatest weakness, he revived the word
20
21 *qun* to draw a cognitive canvas for the ‘collective’ or ‘society’ and assigned a new ethical value
22
23 to it.³⁵ Liang believed that society traditionally over-~~emphasised~~emphasized “private morals”
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25 which mainly concerned the process of perfection of the self. What a new manifestation of
26
27 China desperately needed was “public morals”; a set of moral codes that governed the
28
29 relationships of the individual to the collective (*qun*).³⁶ If the country was to be invigorated,
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31 people needed to learn how to relate to each other in new ways. The public morals promoted
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33 by Liang Qichao drove his political imagination of popular nationalism. The notion of public
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33 *Xinmin* means new people. It has been translated to “new citizen” as scholars believe it was a treatise on citizenship and nation-building. For Liang’s ideas on citizenship, see Teresa Man Ling Lee, “Liang Qichao and the Meaning of Citizenship: Then and Now,” *History of Political Thought*, 2007, 28 (2): 305–27.

34 On Liang Qichao’s concept of *qun*, see Chang Hao, *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and intellectual transition in China, 1890–1907* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 95. For an overview of the evolving ideas about *qun* and *shehui* from the late Qing to the early Republic period, see Wang Fanshen, “Evolving Prescriptions for Social Life in the Late Qing and Early Republic: From Qunxue to Society,” *Chinese Studies in History* 29.4 (1996): 73-99.

35 See Liang Qichao “Lun gongde” [On public Morals] in *Yinbingshi heji* [Collected works from an Ice-Drinker’s studio], (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989) vol.3: 12-15.

36 However, it is unclear how exactly “society” was defined in this and the precise role of “society” in the project of construction of the nation remained unclear. See Michael Tsin, “Imagining ‘society’ in early twentieth-century China,” in Joshua A. Fogel and Peter Zarrow, eds., *Imagining the People: Chinese Intellectuals and the Concept of Citizenship, 1890–1920* (ME Sharpe, 1997), 212-23; Kai Vogelsang, “Chinese society: History of a Troublesome Concept,” *Oriens Extremus*, 51 (2012): 155-192.

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3 morals is posited as a new set of ~~behavioural~~behavioral ideas which was desired to equip the
4
5 population with the moral character for a nation-state.
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9 When articulating their ideas of education and learning, *Xin Shiji* also included a moral aspect
10
11 and used the binary of public and private morals. In *On Anarchy*, Chu Minyi examined the
12
13 question of morality and wrote:
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16 What is true morality? There are only two sorts of true morality: morality concerning
17
18 yourself and morality towards society. The first is private morality or small morality; the
19
20 latter is public morality or big morality...³⁷
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23
24 At first sight, it resembled the binary of public and private morals promoted by Liang Qichao.
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26 However, the contributors of *Xin Shiji* positioned themselves otherwise:
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28 When it comes to morality towards society, there should not be any distinctions between
29
30 family, nation and the world, so that morality will not be skewed. Otherwise, [each
31
32 individual] family might be looked after, but the country will not be well governed; or
33
34 [your own] country might be well governed, but the great peace of the world will be
35
36 lost.³⁸
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40 It is worth noting that this is a reference to the Confucian Classic *The Great Learning* (大學
41
42 *Daxue*) which states the sequential goals of pursued knowledge: “cultivating oneself,”
43
44 “regulating the family,” “governing the state,” and “harmonizing the world.” However, the
45
46 anarchists believed that the boundaries between family and nation were not only unnecessary
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48 but would make morality “biased” (偏依 *pianyi*). They particularly deplored the morality
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58 ³⁷ Chu Minyi, “Xu wuzhengfu shuo,” 4.

59 ³⁸ Chu Minyi, “Xu wuzhengfu shuo,” 4.
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3 established within the boundary of the nation-state and refused indulge in nationalist sentiment
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5 and discourse like Liang Qichao and other intellectuals of the time:
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7

8 Biased because of patriotism, it is not morality, but a mania. Morality is essentially
9
10 another term for benevolence and love. Benevolence begins by putting oneself in the
11
12 place of another, the pinnacle of love is to treat your enemy as your friend. However,
13
14 nowadays [we] are inhuman to other countries, and over-love our own nations, this is far
15
16 from being moral.³⁹
17
18

19 The achievement of true morality, therefore, had to encompass the abolition of all distinctions
20
21 between self and others. For Liang Qichao in 1902, moral principles were the means of nation-
22
23 state building and were almost utilitarian in nature and they were the key to the forging of
24
25 society and nation.⁴⁰ But for the editors of *Xin Shiji*, public morals were both the result and the
26
27 goal. The task of any revolution was not so much to create public morality out of nothing as to
28
29 abolish the institutions that stood in the way of the revolution's ~~realisation~~realization. In this
30
31 way, they rescued the concept of morality from the discourse of nationalism and associated it
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33 with a cosmopolitan vision that called for, and called forth, a political form that did not yet
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35 exist.⁴¹
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40 Furthermore, *Xin Shiji* disassociated morality from religion with several articles critiquing the
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42 concept and practices of religion. They claimed that “morality is merely decorations for
43
44 religion, but religion is an obstacle for morality.”⁴² Taking a strong stance against religion, Wu
45
46 Zhihui explained that religion used morality to make people believe in superstitions.⁴³ Hence,
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52 ³⁹ Chu Minyi, “Xu wuzhengfu shuo,” 4.

53 ⁴⁰ Liang later rethought the question of private morality and shifted from denying any legitimacy to private
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55 morality to ~~emphasising~~emphasizing the moral responsibilities of the individual to the self. See Liang Qichao,
56
57 “Lun side” [On Private Morals], in Yinbingshi zhuanji, vol. 3: 118-143.

58 ⁴¹ This is aligned with their political beliefs as the Paris group dismissed the argument that China needed
59
60 nationalism because it suffered from foreign aggression, or that their revolution would render China vulnerable
to further aggression. See Dirlik, 1991: 87-100.

⁴² Wu Zhihui, “Zongjiao wenti” [On the question of Religion], *Xin Shiji*, No. 54, 1908, 3.

⁴³ Wu Zhihui, “Zongjiao wenti,” 6.

he also rejected the separation between religion (宗教 *zongjiao*) and superstition (迷信 *mixin*), another dichotomy made popular by Liang Qichao, who regarded the first as acceptable and the latter unacceptable.⁴⁴

When Chu Minyi stressed the difference between education and religion in his long article *On Anarchy*, he emphasised that religion was no different from superstition and its “elements are gods and devils, its flavour superstitions, and its nature hypocrisy.”⁴⁵ He further declared that “religion should be substituted by appropriate education and superstition eradicated by scientific truth.”⁴⁶ As the title of the article “*There is no morality other than knowledge and learning*” heralded, *Xin Shiji* linked the question of morality to knowledge and learning.⁴⁷ This comes from an established anarchist view that a process of moral enlightenment is indispensable for social renewal, with education being the means to achieve the requisite degree of moral development.⁴⁸ For the editors of *Xin Shiji*, education, being geared towards fostering and developing desirable forms of moral conduct, would change human psychology, which in turn would lead to changes in ~~behaviour~~ behavior and morality:

Morality originates from people’s conduct, conduct is generated from people’s minds, people’s minds are determined by their knowledge. Therefore, to expand one’s

⁴⁴ For an excellent case study on Liang Qichao’s appropriation of these two terms from the Japanese language and his making of the modern political vocabularies, see Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, “Liang Qichao yu zongjiao wenti” [Liang Qichao and the problem of religion], in Hazama Naoki, ed., *Liang Qichao, Mingzhi Riben, Xifang* [Liang Qichao, Meiji Japan, and the West] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2001), 400-457. The concept of superstition and the separation of superstition and religion was crucial in the construction of the nation and the development of modernity. For an overview of the term *Mixin*, see Huang Ko-wu, “The origin and evolution of the concept of *mixin* (superstition): A review of May Fourth scientific views,” *Chinese Studies in History* 49, no. 2 (2016): 54-79; Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious regimes: Religion and the politics of Chinese modernity* (Harvard University Asia Center Publications Program, 2010).

⁴⁵ Chu Minyi, “Xu wuzhengfu shuo,” 4.

⁴⁶ Chu Minyi, “Zaixu puji geming” [On Universal Revolution], *Xin Shiji*, No. 18, 1907, 2.

⁴⁷ Wu Zhihui, “Lun zhishi yiwai wu daode” [There is no morality other than knowledge and learning], *Xin Shiji*, No. 79, 1908, 6-9.

⁴⁸ Judith Suissa noted that anarchists, such as Bakunin, exhibited an undeniable optimism with respect to the educational power of revolutionary society in terms of suppressing the selfish aspects of human nature. Judith Suissa, *Anarchism and education*, 32.

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3 knowledge is to reach one's mind, reaching one's mind means to asseverate one's
4
5 behaviour; which means to rectify one's morality. The meaning of education is to expand
6
7 people's knowledge.⁴⁹
8
9

10 The new education was supposed to provide knowledge, but its ultimate agenda was to improve
11
12 people's conduct and behaviour. In other words, education in the sense of learning became less
13
14 important than the moral influence it was supposed to exercise, and this, to a certain extent, is
15
16 not so different from the Confucian teaching which believes ~~that the essential meaning of~~
17
18 learning is ~~to learn to be a genuinely and authentically virtuous person~~ "not simply the
19
20 accumulation of knowledge but, rather, the process of understanding existence and morality."⁵⁰
21
22

23 However, the Paris group is less interested in the moral function of learning for individual, but
24
25 focused more on the public morals. They believed that, as the distinctive characteristic of
26
27 humankind, "public morals" were the goal of education, just as Chu Minyi put it in his long
28
29 essay *On anarchy*:
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34 As knowledge advances, morality becomes purer. As knowledge moves from
35
36 unenlightenment to enlightenment, morality moves from hypocritical to authentic. This
37
38 is the truth of progress.⁵¹
39
40

41 Therefore, true morality, it was believed, could be achieved through, and only through, learning.
42
43 Education was thus perceived as the chief agent for accomplishing this moral agenda as well
44
45 as an instrument of moral improvement of humankind, not citizens of a nation. The nature of
46
47 learning promoted in *Xin Shiji* was in essence ethical, but what form of learning was advocated
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49 in *Xin Shiji*?
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56 ⁴⁹ Chu Minyi, "Xu wuzhengfu shuo," 2.

57 ⁵⁰ Wang Bo, "A Discussion of Xunzi's "Encouraging Learning" and Its Significance for Confucianism," *Journal*
58 *of Chinese Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2016): 174.

59 ⁵¹ Chu Minyi, "Xu wuzhengfu shuo," 3.
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3 **“There is no such thing as education other than industrial science such as physics,**
4 **chemistry and engineering etc.” — Education as an instrument of material improvement**
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8 The learning advocated in *Xin Shiji* was not just any learning. The Paris anarchists denounced
9 traditional Confucianist learning and deemed it as controlling and constraining, but they did
10 not merely advocate for a simple acceptance of Western education. They opposed religious or
11 political control of education and found Western education problematic in its own right. They
12 wanted to pursue unselfish learning for the sake of the greater society — scientific learning.
13 *Xin Shiji* published two articles entitled “On Learning” to articulate their views on this issue.
14
15 In issue No. 21, Li Shizeng condemned “the learning for the sake of fame and fortune” and
16 rejected the “learning for the sake of the nation.”⁵² He concluded that learning should be to
17 advance the “humane evolution”(人道進化 *rendao jinhua*). Li distinguished “selfish learning”
18 (私學 *sixue*) and “public learning” (公學 *gongxue*), in issue No. 7, foregrounding the
19
20 omnipotence of science by claiming “there is nothing in European ~~civilisation~~civilization that
21 does not have its origin in science.”⁵² They argued that science is “legitimate learning” (正當
22 之學 *zhengdang zhixue*) and “nothing but truth” (不外真理 *buwaizhenli*). Science knew no
23 national differences, but politics, law, and literature varied from country to country, therefore
24 science is “universal” learning, whereas politics, law, and literature are “parochial learning.”⁵³
25
26 The purpose of learning science was the improvement of society, for the greater good, and for
27 the evolution of the world, not for achieving fame, getting rich or gaining a government
28 position. Therefore, the learning of science is not only the “true learning” but also unselfish
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57 ⁵² Zhen, “Tanxue” [On Learning], *Xin Shiji*, No. 7, 1907, 2. Zhen, “Tanxue” [On Learning], *Xin Shiji*, No. 21,
58 1907, 3-4.

59 ⁵³ Zhen, “Tanxue,” No. 7, 2.
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3 universal learning. Science was endowed with supreme significance as a means to social
4 transformation — it would improve the public morals of the population, as true morality, it was
5 believed, could only be achieved through learning. In other words, the Paris group viewed
6 science as the only possible instrument for achieving social goal -- not only bringing material
7 progress, but also moral transformation. For one, this was owing to the optimism of
8 modernism on science and technology which was believed to hold the key to a new future.
9
10 Secondly, this ~~believe-belief~~ is closely related to their faith in ‘progress’; a key word in the
11 early ~~twentieth~~20th century translated in Chinese as 進化 *Jinhua* which captured the optimism
12 implication of progressive evolution implied believing that the universe tends toward justice.
13
14 As James Pusey points out, in Chinese intellectual discourse, Darwinism was never simply “a
15 theory for describing the world”⁵⁴; but a ‘program for changing the world’⁵⁴ Li Shizeng asserts
16 that progress is decreed by science because “it is the principles of materialist science that shows
17 us the way of progress.”⁵⁵ This faith in science or scientific learning was a vital component in
18 the articulation of education and learning in *Xin Shiji* and its articles are imbued with a firm
19 belief in ‘progress’. Education would be transformative because the ‘true’ learning, scientific
20 learning, would replace superstitions and old beliefs, and therefore transform the population.
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22 This led to a rather strict and narrow understanding of education which manifested itself as a
23 desire to embrace, and to be defined by, strong scientism, as articulated in an article in issue
24 No. 15:

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There is no such thing as education other than industrial science such as physics,
chemistry and engineering etc. Only the above-mentioned subject deserves the name of

⁵⁴ James Pusey, *China and Charles Darwin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). p.5.

⁵⁵ Zhen yi, “Bakuning xueshuo” [The Teachings of Bakunin], *Xin Shiji*, 1907, No. 9.

education. They will facilitate the invention of new theories and new technologies day-to-day, bringing happiness to mankind and bringing about the progress of mankind.⁵⁶

D.W.Y. Kwok defines scientism as the view “which places all reality within a natural order and deems all aspects of this order, be they biological, social, physical, or psychological, to be knowable only by the methods of science.”⁵⁷ It can be understood as an ideological entity to replace the old cultural values. Scholars usually trace the origin of “scientism” in Chinese thought to the May Fourth Movement in 1919 when a “crusade” using science to oppose superstitions was launched by using the ~~anthropomorphised~~anthropomorphized figure “Mr. Science” (賽先生 *Sai xiansheng*). However, “scientism” was long ago articulated in the pages of *Xin Shiji*, and it was this “scientificity” of anarchism that gave birth to the “scientism” of the May Fourth Movement.⁵⁸

The contributors to *Xin Shiji*, or the Paris group, are well known as believers and promoters of modern science and technology. Their firm belief in science expressed in *Xin Shiji* is not difficult to understand as anarchism has long enjoyed a close relationship with science and education, and anarchists believed that science held the key to liberation.⁵⁹ *Xin Shiji* was an important venue for the translation and introduction of Kropotkin’s ideas of mutual aid.⁶⁰ Kropotkin argued that science is “the only ideology not bound to arbitrary stipulations about the proper functioning and ~~organisation~~organization of societies,” and that it is essential to

⁵⁶ Yurenshu [A letter], *Xin Shiji*, No. 15. 1907, 4.

⁵⁷ See D.W.Y. Kwok, *Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 21.

⁵⁸ Arif Dirlik also argued that this “scientificity” of anarchism was held forth by the Chinese anarchists throughout the history of anarchism in China. Arif Dirlik, “The New Culture Movement Revisited: Anarchism and the Idea of Social Revolution in New Culture Thinking,” *Modern China*, 11, no. 3 (1985): 251-300.

⁵⁹ For the relationship between science and anarchism in Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid, see Ruth Kinna, Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid in historical context, *International Review of Social History* 40, no. 2 (1995): 259-283. See also Elliot Murphy, “Anarchism and science,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 193-209.

⁶⁰ Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid, The Conquest of Bread, and Fields, Factories, and Workshops* were first translated in *Xin Shiji*, then reprinted in other radical journals.

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3 reject all metaphysics and, instead, develop anarchism in relation to scientific theories and
4
5 methods.⁶¹
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8 This intimacy with science was also moulded by the personal experiences of the Paris group.
9
10 While teaching at the Beiyang School in Tianjin, Wu Zhihui first encountered ideas of science
11 and revolution. Li Shizeng studied chemistry and biology in France. When Scalapino
12 interviewed him in Taipei in 1959, Li recalled that he was greatly influenced by the writings
13 of Lamarck and Darwin who opened new doors for him in history and philosophy, as well as
14 in science.⁶² In Paris, Li Shizeng met Paul Reclus, nephew of the French anarchist geographer
15 Elisée Reclus (1830-1905) who also had a strong faith in the power of science and education
16 to dissolve all social prejudice and allow all humans to ~~recogniserecognize~~ their common
17 membership of the planet.⁶³ Science, or scientific truth, as a keyword of modern Chinese
18 thought, also became the foundation for *Xin Shiji* to repudiate Confucianism and Chinese
19 traditions which were labelled as superstitions. As stated in an article entitled “Reasons for
20 getting rid of Confucius:”
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36 Science is the efficient instrument of progress, while superstitions are the shackles of
37 thinking...China is a caesaropapist country, full of fear and superstition...In order to
38 bring happiness to the world, we ought to eradicate superstition, to bring happiness to
39 people in China, we should have a ~~Confucius~~ Confucian revolution.⁶⁴
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46 They had moved from simply criticising Confucianism to a more radical stance calling for
47 the eradication of Confucianism in China. In 1907 an article entitled “Revolution in the three
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53 ⁶¹ Elliot Murphy, “Anarchism and science,” 193. Kropotkin’s *Modern Science and Anarchism* was a work based
54 on this approach. First published (in French) in 1913; translated and reproduced in Pëtr Kropotkin, *Anarchism: A*
55 *Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (NY: Dover, 2002), 145-191.

56 ⁶² See Scalapino and Yu, *The Chinese Anarchist Movement*, 5.

57 ⁶³ See the recollections of Paul Reclus’ son Jacque Reclus [Jacque Reclus] (1984) “Wosuo renshi de Li Yuying
58 xiansheng” [The Li Shizeng I Knew], *Zhuanji wenxue* 45 (3): 87-88. See John Clark and Camille Martin, *Anarchy,*
59 *Geography, Modernity: The Radical Social Thought of Elisee Reclus* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 4.

60 ⁶⁴ Jun Sheng, “Paikong zhengyan” [Reasons for getting rid of Confucius], *Xin Shiji*, No. 52, 1908, 4

constant relationships” (三綱革命 *Sangang geming*), science was used as the basis for equality in rejecting the “three constant relationships” in Confucianism and to condemn the “backwardness” of Chinese traditions:

The so-called three constant relationships were invented by some deceitful people, using superstitions of pseudo-morality to maintain the power of the Emperor and the patriarchy etc. Superstition and religion are the same thing, the opposite is the truth of science. If we take superstition and science to compare their similarities and differences, right and wrong will be easily seen.⁶⁵

This scientism peaked in the May Fourth movement and the affirmation of this scientism vision was coupled with uncompromising cultural iconoclasm. China’s traditions were its antithesis and repudiated as “ancient,” including its language and script. Another project animated by this “scientism” in *Xin Shiji* was the reform of the language as expressed through the promotion of Esperantism.

A universal language for education and learning: Esperanto and the [languagescript](#) debate

Xin Shiji Started its life with the Esperanto subtitle *La Novaj Tempoj* focusing on the question of language from its inception.⁶⁶ When outlining the relationship between progress and revolution, Wu Zhihui declared that China needed a “revolution of script.” ÷

The value of scripts lies in their practicality, therefore this element should be used to rank languages...Based on the evolutionary theory of survival of the fittest, only the superior

⁶⁵ Zhen, “Sangang geming” [Revolution in the three constant relationships], *Xin Shiji*, No. 11, 1907, 1.

⁶⁶ For a discussion on the history of the Chinese Esperanto movement after the introduction of anarchism to China in the 1910s, see Gotelind Müller-Saini and Gregor Benton, “Esperanto and Chinese anarchism 1907–1920: The translation from diaspora to homeland,” *Language Problems and Language Planning*, (2006, 30.1): 45-73.

will remain, therefore, pictogram and logograph should be replaced by phonemic orthography. This is the revolution of the script.⁶⁷

Agreeing that scripts should be judged by their “practicality” (便利 *bianli*) set forth by Wu, the editors of *Xin Shiji* saw Esperanto as a natural tool for promoting internationalism, declaring that “Esperanto must be spoken in all countries so as to end all the wars and Esperanto is a prerequisite for world peace and the foundation for the great unity.”⁶⁸ In its early issues, *Xin Shiji* devoted several laudatory articles to Esperanto, promoting the notion that “in order to achieve world peace, there should be a ~~standardised~~standardized written language.”⁶⁹ Later they even moved to a more radical stance, not only recommending the general use of Esperanto in China but also ~~polemicising~~polemicizing against the Chinese script, claiming that “China only has barbaric symbols, China does not even have a writing system. Esperanto will be China’s writing system.”⁷⁰ The justification for this claim was that alphabetic script was believed to be more advanced than logographic script on the evolutionary ladder, so European scripts were already “superior” (較良 *jiaoliang*) to the Chinese script, and as Esperanto refined European languages it was “finer” (尤較良 *youjiaoliang*). Adopting this evolutionary perspective, *Xin Shiji* therefore viewed the Chinese script as an obstacle for progress and called for “abandoning the Chinese script and opting for Esperanto.”⁷¹

After determining that China was lagging behind due to its “barbarian” script, solutions to the problem of the Chinese script were discussed by the editors and readers. A reader suggested

⁶⁷ Zhen, “Jinhua yu geming” [Evolution and Revolution], *Xin Shiji*, No. 20, 1907, 1.

⁶⁸ “Wanguo xinyu” [Universal new language], *Xin Shiji*, No. 6, 1907.

⁶⁹ “Wanguo xinyu chi jinbu” [The advancedness of Esperanto], *Xin Shiji*, No. 34, 1908, 3.

⁷⁰ Ran, “Xinyu wenti zhi zada” [Mixed answers to the questions on Esperanto], *Xin Shiji*, No. 44, 1908, 2-3.

⁷¹ Xing, “Xu wanguo xinyu zhi jinbu” [Continuation of the advancedness of Esperanto], *Xin Shiji*, No. 36, 1908, 2.

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3 that as it was impossible to replace the Chinese language with Esperanto overnight, the focus
4
5 should be on reforming Chinese written language.⁷² Wu Zhihui ranked three solutions:
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8 *The best way is to discard the written language of the Chinese and study Esperanto, the*
9
10 *second-best way is to adopt the script of the European countries that are advanced in*
11
12 *science, the third solution is to add pronunciation to Chinese script.*⁷³
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15 He ~~criticised~~criticized the proposal to reform Chinese script as being redundant and only
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17 complicating the issue. Instead, he believed that everyone should learn Esperanto and then
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19 switch directly to Esperanto, as the most perfect language.⁷⁴ The translation of the word
20
21 Esperanto is also a telling story in itself. It was translated into Chinese as *wanguo xinyu* 萬國
22
23 新語 (lit: the new language of ten thousand nations) leaving the impression it was already a
24
25 universal language used among many nations. Though initially called the “*lingvo internacia*”
26
27 (international language), Esperanto was not intended to serve as the universal language
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29 replacing all national languages, on the contrary, it was envisioned as a second language for
30
31 the world.⁷⁵
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37 How should we understand *Xin Shiji*'s fascination, or even obsession, with Esperanto? The
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39 inaugural statement of *Xin Shiji* declared a cosmopolitanism vision and goal (以世界為主義
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41 *yi shiji wei zhuyin*) and acknowledged the linguistic limitations of the journal “using only one
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43 script or focusing on events in one corner of the world due to having no alternative.”⁷⁶ Some
44
45 scholars point out that Esperanto works well with the world order the Paris anarchists imagined,
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53 ⁷² Qianxing, “Bianzao Zhongguo xinyu fanli” [General rules for the construction of a new Chinese], *Xin Shiji*,
54 No. 40, 1908, 3-4.

55 ⁷³ Wu Zhihui, “Xushu shenzhou ribao dongxue xijian pianhou” [Afterword to the Shenzhou Daily article “On the
56 rise of Eastern Learning in the West”], *Xin Shiji*, No. 102, 1909, 10

57 ⁷⁴ Ran, “Xinyu wenti zhi zada” [Mixed answers to the questions on Esperanto], *Xin Shiji*, No. 44, 1908, 2-3.

58 ⁷⁵ See Esther Shor, *Bridge of Words: Esperanto and the Dream of a Universal Language* (New York: Metropolitan
59 Books, 2016), 5

60 ⁷⁶ “Xin Shiji fakan zhi quyī” [Inaugural statement of Xin Shiji], *Xin Shiji*, No. 1, 1907, 1.

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3 an order ~~centred~~centered on internationalism. And Esperanto was believed to be a “perfect
4 vehicle for internationalism and world revolution.”⁷⁷ Certainly, since Esperanto is not the
5 language of any national state, it does not ‘belong’ to any people nor any state. As discussed
6 earlier, *Xin Shiji* dismissed nationalist sentiments and discourse, and imagined a world without
7 national boundaries and restrictions.

8
9
10 Another motivating factor behind the enthusiasm for Esperanto was education — the principal
11 vehicle to achieve the social revolution that anarchists sought. The Paris group regarded the
12 Chinese written language as simply unsuitable for education and learning. Chu Minyi’s article
13 devoted to describing the difficulty of the Chinese script and its inadequacy for education and
14 learning:

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17 The intricacy of Chinese script is well known. Reading is arduous because there is no
18 ~~romanisation~~romanization system to transcribe the sounds. Printing is onerous because
19 there is no alphabet to connect. Therefore, the consequence is that illiterates are in all
20 quarters of the country...⁷⁸

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23 Therefore, the Chinese script was thought to be a hurdle for education and knowledge
24 production because of these three flaws. First, Chinese script is not suitable for printing as does
25 not have a phonetic alphabet and unlike Western language is therefore not compatible with
26 typewriting.⁷⁹ Wu Zhihui was particularly vociferous on this subject, possibly due to his
27 painful experiences as a publisher. Secondly, the Chinese script was believed to be less suitable
28 for dictionary compiling and indexing compared to European languages due to the lack of an
29 alphabet.⁸⁰ Finally, the Chinese script was believed to lack rules and regulations and was

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⁷⁷ Gregor Benton, *Chinese migrants and internationalism*, 93.

⁷⁸ Min, “Xu Haogu zhi chengjian” [More on ‘The prejudice of love for old things’], *Xin Shiji*, 1908, No. 30, 2.

⁷⁹ Qianxing, “Bianzao Zhongguo xinyu fanli” [General rules for the construction of a new Chinese], *Xin Shiji*, No. 40, 1908, 3-4. It is worth noting that this idea was not upheld, as examined in Thomas Mullaney’s work on the quest for a workable Chinese typewriter, see Thomas Mullaney, *The Chinese typewriter: A history* (MIT Press, 2017).

⁸⁰ Xing, “Xu wanguo xinyu zhi jinbu” [Continuation of the advancedness of Esperanto], *Xin Shiji*, No. 36, 1908, 2.

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3 therefore not convenient as Western languages.⁸¹ *Xin Shiji* endorsed the superiority of
4 alphabetic language based on the premise that:
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8 Therefore, the reason that there is no illiteracy in Europe and America, it's due to the
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10 ~~popularisation~~popularization of education but also thanks to their language which makes
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12 reading much easier.⁸²
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15 Moreover, as discussed above, one of the essential components of education according to *Xin*
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17 *Shiji* was science. Following this line of thinking, not only could the world be divided into the
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19 scientific world (Europe and America) and the unscientific world (China), the languages of
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21 these two worlds also became incompatible:
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24 [We] should understand the scientific world which is totally different from the ancient
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26 unscientific world over the past thousands of years. Using the script of the unscientific
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28 world to represent the thoughts and things of the scientific world, is implausible and
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30 farfetched.⁸³
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33 Therefore, the script of China, as the language of the unscientific world, was deemed to be
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35 categorically different from, and inferior to, that of the West. It is incapable of articulating
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37 scientific ideas and ill-suited to the purpose of education and learning. The readers of *Xin Shiji*
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39 accepted this view on the unsuitableness of the Chinese language for education and called for
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41 the abolition of the Chinese script.⁸⁴ This position on the relation between language and
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43 education culminated in a radical attack on the Chinese language and further articles
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45 advocating the abolishment of the Chinese script were mostly built on the grounds of education
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52 ⁸¹ Xing, “Xu wanguo xinyu zhi jinbu.” 2.

53 ⁸² Min, “Xu Haogu zhi chengjian” [More on ‘The prejudice of love for old things’], 2. The voice of *Xin Shiji* is
54 only one facet of the language reforms in China that started in the late 1890s. Since the end of the 19th century,
55 many patriotic Chinese have come forward with theories for reforming the written form and formulated systems
56 for phonetic alphabets. For a review of the script reforms, see Zhong Yurou, *Chinese*
57 *grammatology: script revolution and literary modernity, 1916–1958* (Columbia University Press, 2019);
58 Elizabeth Kaske, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895- 1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 27-54.

59 ⁸³ Wu Zhihui, “Xushu shenzhou ribao dongxue xijian pianhou.” 9.

60 ⁸⁴ Sugelan jun, “Feichu hanwen yi” [On the abolition of Chinese], *Xin Shiji*, No. 69, 1908, 11.

and learning. This perception of the Chinese script was mainly dictated by the idea of utilitarianism and was best articulated in the long article written by Wu Zhihui published from issue number 101 to 103. He claimed that language was “simply a kind of utensil,”⁸⁵ if we insisted on using an unsuitable language, it was like using an outdated weapon, the same as using a bow and arrow instead of a gun, using a sailboat instead of a steamboat.⁸⁵

This utilitarian view of language being nothing but a means of communication was also the line of argument in the famous language debate between the editors of *Xin Shiji* and Zhang Bingling (1869-1936), editor of *Minbao* 民報, based in Tokyo.⁸⁶ Zhang opposed *Xin Shiji*'s endorsement of European languages' superiority and stressed national particularity as well as the relation to the Chinese classical language. He pointed out that Esperanto was primarily based on European languages and attested that language was much more than simply a kind of utensil; it was the vehicle and essence of national identity.⁸⁷ He also believed that the low literacy rate in China should not be blamed on the Chinese script, rather it was due to the lack of compulsory education.⁸⁸ This contrast between *Xin Shiji* and Zhang Binglin is an interesting one. The *Xin Shiji* group proclaimed a “revolution of script” with a total rejection of the Chinese written language. Zhang had faith in “revolution as restoration” to rescue and redefine pre-existing Chinese culture to suit new conditions.⁸⁹ However, both of them ultimately agreed on the importance of education to individuals and societies. The one view saw a total rupture with

⁸⁵ Wu Zhihui, “Xushu shenzhou ribao dongxue xijian pianhou,” 8.

⁸⁶ Zhang Taiyan [Zhang Binglin], “Bo zhongguo yong wanguo xinyu shuo” [Repudiation of the Use of Esperanto in China], *Minbao*, No. 21, Jun. 1908; Zhang Taiyan, “Gui Xin Shiji” [Answers to *Xin Shiji*], *Minbao*, No. 24, Oct. 1908.

⁸⁷ See Zhang Taiyan, “Bo Zhongguo yong wanguo xinyu shuo” [Repudiation of the Use of Esperanto in China] (Beijing: Wenzhi Gaige chubanshe, 1957 [1908]), 1.

⁸⁸ Zhang Taiyan, “Bo Zhongguo yong wanguo xinyu shuo,” 1.

⁸⁹ This is due to their different understanding of nation and political reform. The Paris anarchists called for abolishment all the boundaries, but for Zhang modernization had to occur in national contexts, otherwise China, and other countries facing Western imperialism, would lose its cultural distinctiveness, its national identity, and its very existence. See Young-Tsu Wong, *Search for Modern Nationalism: Zhang Binglin and Revolutionary China 1869–1936* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989).

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3 the past and its language as essential, while the other emphasized continuity and resuscitating
4 a supposed glorious cultural tradition.
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7 From 1909, *Xin Shiji*'s Esperanto subtitle was replaced by the French *Le Siècle Nouveau*,
8 indicating the zest for Esperanto may have dwindled. In the same year in a lengthy article
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10 refuting a report in the nationalist newspaper *Shenzhou Daily* defending the Chinese script, Wu
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12 Zhihui conceded the introduction of Esperanto in China would be too arduous and advocated
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14 for the creation of a phonetic notation system as “the most economical and practical solution”
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16 to start with.⁹⁰ However, the idea of a supra-language that transcended the boundaries of the
17
18 territorialised nation-state was pursued throughout *Xin Shiji*'s existence. In its final issue, this
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20 commitment to Esperanto was still evident in the publication of an article by Tolstoy followed
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22 by an editorial commentary. The editor advocated that all humanity would benefit from the
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24 abolition of the Chinese script. He believed this would influence other East Asian countries
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26 and eventually bring about the era of great harmony (大同 *datong*), a concept borrowed from
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28 the Confucian political vocabulary and imagination of Great Unity.⁹¹
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36 **The sequel – and conclusion**

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38 In the pages of *Xin Shiji*, the Paris group outlined a project of non-national emancipation and
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40 education was the key element to ~~realising~~realizing this imagined future. Nonetheless, there
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42 are two inherent contradictions in *Xin Shiji*'s articulation of education. First, while the editors
43
44 of *Xin Shiji* rejected Confucianism and Chinese traditions, they were among the last generation
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46 thoroughly educated in the Confucian classics which endowed them with an extensive set of
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48 political categories, metaphors, and terms that helped form and articulate their political and
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50 cultural views, especially their ~~theorisation~~theorization of education and learning. As Zarrow
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58 ⁹⁰ Wu Zhihui, “Xushu shenzhou ribao dongxue xijian pianhou,” 11.

59 ⁹¹ Mujun, “Taosidaojun zhi jingjiaoshi shu” [Tolstoy's letter to a pastor], *Xin Shiji*, No.121, 1910, 12-14.

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3 points out, the classic education the Paris anarchists received provided the materials necessary
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5 to make the transition to anarchism possible, and this is most obvious in their belief in the
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7 transformative power of education as he argues that the ideas of learning in *Xin Shiji* were not
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9 too far from the Neo-Confucian ideas found in Zhu Xi's understanding of the *Great Learning*.⁹²
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11 Indeed, education in the sense of learning articulated in *Xin Shiji* is less important than the
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13 moral influence it was supposed to exercise and is not so different from the Confucian agenda
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15 of learning.⁹³ Moreover, even the *Xin Shiji*'s imagination of the cosmopolitan world order is
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17 taken from the Confucian vocabulary and ideal of *Datong* (great harmony). It is evident that
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19 "old" Confucian learning and vocabularies still influence the new ideas presented in *Xin Shiji*.
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22 Therefore, declaring themselves as modern and all traditional thought worthless did not
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24 magically exorcise all traces of the educational and cultural traditions in themselves and in
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26 society.
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30 Second, and more paradoxically, in *Xin Shiji* the Paris group expressed their criticism of
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32 western-style education for its association with nationalism, patriotism, and militarism.
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34 Believing that science knew no national differences, they articulated their educational ideas
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36 from the perspective of morality and science for this new world, and even prepared to use a
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38 supra-language that transcended the boundaries of the territorialised nation-state.⁹⁴ Their stand
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40 on scientism, in which the primary disciplines to be taught were the industrial sciences of
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42 physics, chemistry, and engineering and appear to straightforwardly adopt Western
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44 disciplinary categories, would ultimately alienate them from their ambition of non-national
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51 ⁹² See Zarrow, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, 12-18.

52 ⁹³ Paul Bailey also argues that educational egalitarianism characterized reform discourse among some officials
53 and educators during the late Qing and early Republic period echoed the egalitarian implications of certain strands
54 of Confucian educational thought. See Bailey, "Globalization and Chinese Education in the Early Twentieth
55 Century," *Frontiers of Education in China* 8, no. 3 (September 2013): 412-14.

56 ⁹⁴ Nevertheless, we now understand how science is discursively attached to certain parts of the world and how
57 scientific knowledge is culturally connected to the West, as shown in a great number of studies. For
58 **exampleexample**, see Sandra Harding (ed), *The 'Racial' Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*
59 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Suman Seth, "Putting knowledge in its place: science,
60 colonialism, and the postcolonial," *Postcolonial studies* 12, no. 4 (2009): 373-388.

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3 emancipation. This made their ~~conceptualisation~~conceptualization of education susceptible to
4 assisting the imposition and legitimation of Western knowledge forms, contrary to their
5 original intent. Similarly, their views towards the Chinese language echo the grand narrative
6 of logocentrism that has prevailed in the West since Hegel. When promoting Esperanto as a
7 universal language for education, they accepted the superiority of European language on the
8 basis of social Darwinism. This second contradictory position appears to be implausible, but it
9 becomes conceivable if only we take the political position of the Paris group into consideration,
10 especially their willingness to compromise with republicanism. As Dirlik has shown that key
11 figures of the Paris group believed discordantly that republican revolution was to be supported
12 because the republican government was more advanced than monarchy therefore siding with
13 the republican revolution would move Chinese society a step closer to socialism and
14 anarchism.⁹⁵ In both politics and in education, the Paris group's idealism is also mediated
15 through pragmatic and utilitarian compromises between revolutionary goals and evolutionary
16 methods. This may explain their sort to evolutionary rhetoric for the script reform rather than
17 simply make revolutionary attacks on the Chinese script.
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40 Demonstrating such pragmatic spirit, the Paris group translated some of the visions articulated
41 in *Xin Shiji* into a series of education schemes.⁹⁶ The journal *Xin Shiji* ceased publication in
42 1910, but the educational discussions in the journal marked the beginning of a long period of
43 educational experiments in France by the Paris group. They facilitated the recruitment of
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51 ⁹⁵ There was some disagreement among the Paris group as Chu Minyi believed that constitutional government
52 would make the task of achieving anarchism more difficult. See Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*,
53 94-95

54 ⁹⁶ For Chinese labourers in Europe during the First World War, see Xu Guoqi, *Strangers on the Western Front*
55 (Harvard University Press, 2011). For studies on the “diligent-work frugal-study” movement, see Paul Bailey,
56 “The Sino-French Connection: The Chinese Worker-Student Movement in France, 1902- 1928,” in David
57 Goodman, ed., *China and the West: Ideas and Activists* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 72-
58 102; Nora Wang, *Emmigration et politique. Les étudiants ouvriers chinois en France 1919-1925* (Paris, Les Indes
59 Savantes, 2003); Ge Fuping, *Zhonga jiaoyu hezuo shiye yanjiu 1912-1949 [Study on the Sino-French Educational
60 Cooperation]* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2011).

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3 Chinese labourers to fill a ~~labour~~labor shortage occasioned by World War I and played a vital
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6 role, alongside the Young Men's Christian Association, in providing education
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8 ~~programmes~~programs for Chinese workers in Europe. They were also instrumental in
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10 establishing the “diligent-work frugal-study” movement that enabled Chinese youths to acquire
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12 an education in Europe, primarily France, as students-workers. In the 1920s and 1930s, they
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14 were responsible for the establishment of the Labor University in Shanghai, which offered a
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16 curriculum that combined classroom education with industrial and agricultural work and was
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18 viewed as a domestic parallel to the work-study program in Europe.⁹⁷

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21 The educational ideas that emerged and were ~~theorised~~theorized in *Xin Shiji* continued to
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23 transform and evolve through these educational movements organized by the Paris group.
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25 Moreover, just like their anarchist ideas, the themes of the educational discussions in *Xin Shiji*
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27 reached beyond the relatively small group of anarchists and found their way to leave an imprint
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29 on Chinese education reform. When Cai Yuanpei ([1868-1940](#)) became Minister of Education
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31 in 1912, he put forward an educational reform proposal with a strong cosmopolitan spirit which
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33 was like the one articulated in *Xin Shiji*. Cai proposed that the education of the newly founded
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35 ~~Republica~~Republic should include “education for a worldview” (世界觀教育 *shijieguan*
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37 *jiaoyu*) and “aesthetics education” (美育 *meiyu*) to transcend the nationalism inherent in the
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39 other three aspects of education which is physical, intellectual, ethical.⁹⁸ He
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41 ~~emphasised~~emphasized on the importance of moral education which could balance utilitarian
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51 ⁹⁷ Ming K., Chan and Arif Dirlik, *Schools into Fields and Factories: Anarchists, the Guomindang, and the*
52 *National Labor University in Shanghai, 1927–1932* (Duke University Press, 1991). The ~~labour~~labor university is
53 example of the comprise pragmatic and utilitarian compromises between revolutionary discourse and evolutionary
54 methods – ironically, it was the revolutionary situation crated by nationalism, which anarchists formally
55 repudiated, that had created fecund grounds for the diffusion of this anarchist idea within the revolutionary
56 discourse.

57 ⁹⁸ Cai Yuanpei, “Duiyu xin jiaoyu zhi yijian” [Opinions on the New Education], in *Cai Yuanpei Quanji* [Collected
58 Works of Cai Yuanpei] vol. 2 (1911-1916) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1997). 9-19. The article was
59 originally published in three periodicals: *Minlibao*, *Jiaoyu Zazhi*, *Dongfang Zazhi*. For discussions on Cai's views
60 on education and their impact, see Thomas Carrant, *Educational Reform*, 185-208.

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3 education to teach students to identify with humanity as a whole. The educational thought
4 articulated in Chinese-language journals published in France, including *Xin Shiji*, also made
5 significant contributions to the democratization of popular educational thought — for example,
6 the idea of “commoners’ education” and its potential role in the creation of a democratic
7 society.⁹⁹
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14 In this cosmopolitan moment of educational imagination, *Xin Shiji* elaborated a cosmopolitan
15 vision of education that did not situate itself within an existing tradition and refused to
16 presuppose the institutional and political forms through which education and learning should
17 be implemented. Regardless of their real limitations, it would be more appropriate to read *Xin*
18 *Shiji*’s educational thoughts as alternative possibilities and futures that were imagined before
19 being extinguished.
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57 ⁹⁹ See Paul Bailey, “Transnational Educational and Cultural Interaction Before and During the May Fourth Era:
58 The Chinese Francophile Lobby and the Sino-French Connection,” *Twentieth-Century China* 44, no.2 (2019):
59 161-173.
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