

Universities, Cultural Identity, and Democracy: Some Canada-China Comparisons

RUTH HAYHOE

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

ABSTRACT: This paper begins with some broad comparative reflections on the role of universities in Canada and China. While the two societies could hardly be more different, their modern universities came into being around the same historical period. Patterned on foreign models, they have nevertheless been expected to contribute to national cultural identity.

The second part of the paper considers the link between universities, cultural identity, and democracy in an increasingly globalized world community, and illustrates ways in which academic co-operation between China and Canada have the potential to enhance democratization, if principles of autonomy and intellectual freedom can be instituted in an international context.

The third part returns to the question of universities and national cultural identity, comparing the different ways in which scholars in the two countries have conceptualized this link, and suggesting areas where comparative research on universities in the two societies could be carried out.

Keywords: cultural identity, university, democracy, globalization, dialogue, communicative action, intellectual freedom, academic freedom, university autonomy, critical reflection

Some Canada-China Comparisons

In this paper I reflect on and attempt to identify common themes drawn from the university's historical experience and the contemporary challenges it faces in Canada and China. The reason for this choice of countries is a very simple one. After dedicating many years of my life to the study of modern China, especially its universities, I was given the challenge, as head of cultural and academic affairs at the Canadian embassy in Beijing, of developing and supporting small centres of Canadian studies in 21 different universities and research institutes in China. Inevitably, as I travelled around China on the job, I was invited to lecture, a favourite topic being Canadian higher education. As I pieced together my rather sketchy knowledge of our universities for these lectures, many comparisons with the history of Chinese universities, a much more

familiar topic to me, came to mind.

In both countries, modern universities came into being in the 19th century, somewhat later in China than in Canada. They were born under conditions of imperialism and therefore deeply influenced by various external models. In both countries there is the irony that these foreign implants were expected to contribute to the formation of a national cultural identity, though the circumstances were very different in each case.

Indeed you could hardly find two societies more different in their most obvious national features than Canada and China. While Canada's land mass is somewhat larger than that of China, our population of 28 million is around 4 percent of China's 1.13 billion. If we take such parameters of modernization as the structure of the population, Canada has 76.5 percent of its population living in cities, while 77.5 percent of the Chinese population remains rural. Despite the fact that a rapid industrialization process is going on in China's countryside, and that real GNP per capita is closer to 2,000 U.S. dollars than the 330 cited by the World Bank (Gordon, Liu, & Wang, 1991), there is still a huge gap between the economic development level of the two nations, with Canada's GNP per capita at about 12,300 U.S. dollars. Nevertheless both Canada and China are resource-based economies, and it has been most interesting to observe the development of CIDA projects in China in terms of the matching of interests in such areas as forestry, agriculture, and energy.

In terms of political system, again there could hardly be a greater gap. Canada's liberal democracy, and its participation in the G7 group of countries as well as the OECD, stands in stark contrast to China's socialist system, still outside of such regional organizations as ASEAN and characterized by autocratic patterns rooted in Confucian tradition and Leninist political organization. In spite of these striking areas of contrast, there is one aspect of political life where there are resonances between the two societies. The politics of geographical participation are as acute in China as in Canada and a constant balancing act is required in both countries over decisions about which regions will be given the opportunity of participating in CIDA projects.

Finally, if we move to the area of culture, at first appearance the contrast is enormous. While China's ancient monolithic culture is one of the treasures of world civilization, and has been studied in the West since it was introduced by Jesuits in the 16th century (Mungello, 1985), Canadian Studies as an integrated multi-disciplinary field reflecting Canadian culture only came into its own with the founding of the Association of Canadian Studies in 1973. Just a decade later this new field found institutional expression in China with the founding of the Chinese Association of Canadian Studies in 1984 and subsequently 21 centres of Canadian Studies have been established in universities and research institutes across the country.

Traditional China had an array of intellectual institutions whose history went back over two millennia. They ranged from the imperial college, which prepared scholars for the civil service examinations and so was integrated within the imperial bureaucracy, to private academies which depended for their

existence on local gentry support. These academies struggled valiantly for intellectual freedom in certain periods, yet were vulnerable to co-optation or closure by successive imperial regimes. The two kinds of institution thus had a role in Chinese history that was quite different from that of the university in European history. Neither institution enjoyed the autonomy and academic freedom that made the European university a third force between state and church. When the civil service examinations were abolished in 1905, these classical institutions disappeared permanently. In their place, modern universities, which were influenced by Japanese, German, French, and American models, took shape. Beijing University is one of the oldest of these. Its historical roots can be found in the College of Languages (Tongwenguan) set up by the Qing government in 1860, and the Imperial University founded on this base in 1898. For these modern Chinese universities, the preservation, development, and reinterpretation of the nation's vast cultural heritage has been a major task throughout the century, one fraught with contradictions and disparate views.

Canadian universities have historical roots in the European tradition, yet their founding goes back only a little farther than that of modern Chinese universities. For them also the cultural heritage has been substantial and sometimes controversial. The traditions of Greco-Roman antiquity as well as those of the Judaeo-Christian heritage dominated the 19th century university curriculum. In English Canada these were channelled through the English and Scottish university models, and in French Canada through the pre-revolutionary Jesuit college. Only the Scottish model was amenable from an early period to the introduction of practical knowledge related to the Canadian context (Harris, 1976, p. 33). History was probably the discipline to first lay the foundation for some understanding of Canadian culture, and only the post World War II years saw a recognition that native culture as well as the contributions of succeeding immigrant groups should be taken into account in any notion of a Canadian culture.

China too has a multicultural dimension to her national culture, due to the large number of minority groups whose language, arts, and traditions are quite distinct from those of the dominant Han culture. Thus, while the historical conditions have been different, in both Canada and China the dominance of one ancient literate culture in the definition of national culture has been problematic. (Here I am assuming that French and English Canada have inherited the same fundamental legacy, although clearly a crucial component in our "two solitudes" has been the distinction between a Jesuit-influenced pre-revolutionary European culture and an English-Scottish version of later European enlightenment values.)

In both Canada and China there is a strong conservative trend, linked to the culture. The French and the American revolutions shaped Canadian culture in the sense that Canada expressed a conscious determination to preserve pre-revolutionary patterns. While much of this changed with the economic changes in the post World War II period, there remains a flavour of the European past which visiting Americans often take note of. For China a whole series of revolutions has never really shaken the foundations of Confucian familial and societal

values. For both countries, it might be argued that this conservatism has been reinforced by a sense of external pressure. Canada has felt the need to build national identity in the face of the American economic and political challenge. China has experienced a whole series of external pressures over the modern period, from Britain and Japan in the 19th and early 20th centuries, from the United States and various European countries at different periods, and finally from the Soviet Union in the 1950s.

In both China and Canada, modern universities have had a critical and difficult role in the building of national culture. In their forms and patterns, borrowed or imposed from abroad, they have reflected several dominant external cultures. It has been their task to transform these givens in the service of national identity, yet at the same time to remain part of an international community of scholarship. For China, this has involved probing very deep-rooted differences in Eastern and Western thought and seeking a Chinese identity suited to the task of modern socialist development. It has proceeded under the pressure of political vicissitudes that greatly limited scholarly autonomy. For Canada, the university's relation to national cultural identity has involved research in Canadian history, literature, politics and society, including native and minority components. This research has provided a context for critical reflection on the European heritage, American patterns, and the formation of distinctively Canadian social, political, and foreign policy values. The real momentum for this task only started with the soul searching of the 1960s (Matthew & Steele, 1969).

There may thus be areas of dialogue and mutual learning between Chinese and Canadian scholars and university institutions. While such models of the university as the German, the American, the French, and the British can be clearly identified and defined, Canadian and Chinese universities are arguably still in the process of forming a distinctive model that can articulate aspects of the national culture.

Universities, Cultural Identity, and Democracy

At this point let me link up the three parts of my title — universities, cultural identity, and democracy — in some reflections on the present period. In the West, university autonomy and academic freedom were important principles which universities aspired to almost from their beginnings in the medieval period. Free cultural debates over many aspects of society and politics could go on in the university, provided some lines of distinction between a theoretical critique based on specialist academic knowledge and direct political activism were maintained. With the student and faculty radicalism of the sixties, this distinction was blurred and universities took a direct role in national political life. In China the distinction between academic and practical knowledge has always been less easily drawn due to the Chinese knowledge tradition and the fact that intellectual freedom is seen as a threat to Chinese socialism. As a result, university autonomy and academic freedom have been even more difficult to institutionalize in the Chinese context (Hayhoe, 1990). Nevertheless, in both societies

it could be argued that universities provided some space for reflection on fundamental cultural and social issues that has made possible a more informed and critical participation in democratic processes, whether they be those of capitalist liberal democracy or of a people's democratic dictatorship.

It is now no longer possible to think of democracy only in national terms, since an accelerating globalization raises the question of how universities are to contribute to democratic process at the international level. David Held (1991) describes the challenge in a recent article "Democracy and Globalization":

There are at least two key consequences of globalization that are essential to absorb: first, processes of economic, political, legal and military interconnectedness are changing the nature of the sovereign state from a number of directions; and second, global interconnectedness creates chains of interlocking political decisions and outcomes among states and their citizens which alter the nature and dynamics of national political systems themselves. Democracy has to come to terms with both of these developments and their implications for national and international power centres.

If the building of cultural identity through critical reflection is a vital aspect of the university's contribution to democracy at the national level, what about the international level? As our governments are caught up with gaining or retaining competitiveness in an increasingly integrated set of global markets and with the political aspects of international activity, how can universities contribute to the kinds of critical understanding that will make possible informed citizenship participation? Is university autonomy and intellectual freedom something to be fought for only at the national level, in the face of increasing financial and other constraints, or is there a place for it also at the international level? How can universities maintain these principles, when all of their funding for international activities comes from such agencies as CIDA or the World Bank in the case of Canada, and from a range of national and international donor agencies in the case of China?

The question of the university's international role led me to develop a course on international academic relations which examines perspectives on knowledge and culture within dominant paradigms of world order such as the Realist, Liberal, Marxist, and Global Modelling paradigms. In contrast to the other three paradigms, work done with the World Order Models Project (WOMP), one of the best known global modelling approaches, recognizes the possibility of knowledge and culture playing a role in transforming structures of dominance in the economic or political sphere towards greater equity and mutuality. The emphasis in this literature is on individuals and social groups as actors in the world community. Their interventions are seen as capable of making a difference to relations between nation states that have been determined by such factors as the history of capitalism or of socialist expansionism (Galtung, 1980).

Let me try to illustrate this point through a practical example of Canada-China relations. As mentioned earlier, it was my experience to be responsible for Canada-China cultural and academic relations in the period from 1989 to

1991 at the lowest ebb of Canada-China political interaction since the late 1970s and in a time when economic activity was also restrained. Ironically, these very conditions made space for a flowering of academic relations that were informed by principles of mutual respect, broad participation, and a commitment to understanding. They did not reflect narrow hierarchical patterns of political diplomacy, with its focus on the balancing of interests, nor were they mere accoutrements to economic relations, based on calculations of profit.

Through these academic activities Chinese scholars were supported in gaining a deepened knowledge of Canadian culture, economy, and society which gave them a context in which to evaluate and assess the technical and management knowledge introduced to support "development" through CIDA projects, as well as to understand the stand on human rights that lay behind the cooling of political relations after Tiananmen. Thus "Canadian Studies" in the Chinese context had the potential for fostering an informed and critical Chinese participation in international activity rather than either an unreflective acceptance of "advanced" technical-management know-how intended for economic modernization goals on the one hand, or a purely emotive response to Canada's political boycott on the other. On the Canadian side, a better dissemination of the results of Chinese studies in Canadian universities could make possible a more balanced popular understanding of China. Their use by CIDA and other government agencies could also enhance our national China policy. Through their research and teaching Canadian and Chinese scholars could thus contribute to fuller citizen participation in relations between the countries, which might be seen as an important aspect of democracy in the international sphere.

While the World Order Models framework sets some important norms for democratic interaction in the global order, it does not take into account the specific characteristics of knowledge and culture, seeing exchanges in these areas as more or less analogous to economic interactions. At the political level Hans Weiler has developed some very interesting work around the concept of legitimation, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between university knowledge and research on the one hand and governmental policy on the other that operates as much at the international as the national level (1984). To put it simply, university research can be used merely to give legitimacy to the "development" projects of national and international government agencies, while the university benefits from both the funding and the political leverage it gains in the process. Beyond this, however, I am convinced that there is a dynamic of interaction that is characteristically cultural and epistemological. If universities can retain some space for independent critical thought at the national level, in spite of being wholly dependent on state funding, why should this not be possible also at the international level?

How then are we to clothe the broad goals of greater equity and cultural autonomy in the world order with a more specific understanding of the kinds of knowledge relations that would contribute to these goals? This brings us to the issue of the critique of modernity and modernization in the West. With the collapse of the Soviet version of socialist modernity, there has been a disturbing

triumphalism evident in Western journalism with regard to the superiority of the capitalist version of development. The free market is made responsible for remarkable levels of economic prosperity, and little account taken of the historical conditions on which this prosperity has been based or of the degree of economic planning that now exists in most advanced capitalist nations. However, this cannot dispel the weight of scholarship coming out of the Western university that provides a critical assessment of the Western modernization experience and that may be of great importance for more democratic patterns of knowledge interaction in the international context.

I have found the work of Juergen Habermas particularly helpful in this regard. In his comprehensive reflections on the distortions of Western modernity and his search for redemptive tendencies and possibilities, knowledge and culture play an important role. Following Weber, he criticizes the hypostatization of instrumental-technical knowledge and the limited kind of rationality informing it. Unlike Weber, however, he regards this phenomenon as neither inevitable nor irreversible. He calls for a conscious rationalization of the moral-practical and the aesthetic-practical areas of knowledge in ways that would reclaim and shape technical-instrumental knowledge towards explicitly human ends. Looking at society in terms of a system, dominated by instrumental technical norms, and a cultural life-world, whose values have been inadequately examined, he calls for a rationalization of the latter in ways that would reconnect it to the system and restore cultural health. This process of rationalization can be achieved, in Habermas's view, through what he calls "communicative action" (Habermas, 1984, 1987).

While Habermas applies the notion of communicative action to a dialogue going on within western capitalism, one in which universities play an important role, I would like to suggest that it could also be applied to dialogue at the international level, especially between "developed" and "developing" societies, and that it could offer a framework for the kind of cultural and knowledge interaction that would contribute to greater mutuality. If we apply this more specifically to Canada-China academic relations, and we envisage Canadian university scholars in their role as critics of society, the argument would be that Chinese scholars could contribute to this critique from the perspective of their own cultural and social heritage. In turn they could invite reflection from Canadian colleagues on the direction modernization is taking in their own country. The interaction then consists not merely of a transfer of technology and knowledge from an advanced to a less advanced region, but mutual critical reflection on the dilemmas of modernity in both contexts. Such dialogue has transformative possibilities and could be a significant part of democratic process on the level of international society.

I have suggested earlier certain interesting parallels in the historical emergence of universities in both countries and the struggle for a characteristic national model, related in turn to national cultural identity. While the lines of the struggle have been very different in China and Canada, I believe there is much potential for a dialogue that could be a way of encouraging a more democratic

participation of the people of both nations in globalized decision-making. It seems to me that this participation goes beyond individual preferences, or the concerns of special interest groups, to some sense of national cultural identity which may be expressed within international democratic processes. The university, as the main institution that fosters reflection on that identity, has a crucial role to play.

On the Chinese side, a great deal is being said by the government now about national cultural identity, but it is largely a weapon of the political leadership for attacking critiques of Chinese culture that were associated with the student movement of 1989. With the present hardline leadership increasingly threatened by the collapse of socialism around the world, and by deep-seated internal discontent, it is a very difficult period for intellectuals and universities to carry forward their long-term task of re-assessing the culture. Nevertheless, the door remains open, academic exchanges continue, and the present leadership seems to recognize that its legitimacy depends on maintaining the economic progress that has resulted from internal reform and greater economic involvement in the world system. While they would prefer to do this by using technical means and to block the kinds of socio-political and cultural reflection on the economic change process which proved so threatening during the student movement, they cannot totally silence the university community.

For Canada, Paul Axelrod's conclusion to his study of Ontario universities in the post-war period seems still relevant in the nineties:

Although the universities proved to be imperfect instruments of economic development, the very efforts they devoted to this function badly compromised their vital role as an island of culture and critical thought in a materialistic society. (1982, p. 5)

As the sustainability of this materialistic society is increasingly threatened by perceptions of global competition and reduced trade barriers, universities are being called up to be ever more responsible for economic development, including direct service in research and teaching to the business community. The increasingly multinational nature of corporate life in the capitalist world means that this service goes beyond national borders to an international economic milieu.

If China's universities are expected to produce economic results under continuing political pressures that limit their freedom to examine the social change process, Canadian universities are struggling mainly with economic pressures that encourage subordination to a dynamic of technological change rather than a critical understanding of the change process. In this situation I believe a fruitful dialogue on the university, culture, and international democratic processes could develop between scholars on both sides. An overview of some of the positions that have been taken on the university and national cultural identity in both Canada and China may provide a starting point for such a dialogue.

Universities and National Cultural Identity in Canada and China

Let me begin with a characterization of various Canadian views, with the caveat that I make these comments as a Sinologist, not as a Canadianist, and am only too aware of the over-simplifications that may be involved. In reading and re-reading Alan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* I could not help thinking back to two great Canadian defenders of a conservative cultural vision, whose inspiration, in some sense, came from the American challenge. Writing in the early 1950s, Hilda Neatby explored the ways in which American pragmatism had come to dominate Canadian education, and gave a challenge to teachers which only the university could enable them to undertake:

They should be invited to base their philosophy on a thorough understanding of the whole civilization and culture of which they and Canadian society are products.... They might even forget for a moment the modern world in order to look at this whole civilization, at the spiritual and intellectual heritage of which they are, in a special sense, the custodians. (1954, p. 328)

Only in the university were there conditions to develop the "clear and precise statement of a Canadian philosophy of education based on the essential values of Western civilization" which she called for (p. 334).

In the philosophy of George Grant there is a profound development of this sort of conservative vision that not only analyzes the Canadian dilemma, but also contributes a characteristically Canadian viewpoint to wider philosophical debates on the increasing domination of technique in the modern world. Grant devotes two chapters to the role of the university in national culture, "Faith and the Multi-versity" in *Technology and Justice* and "The University Curriculum" in *Technology and Empire*. Seeing the curriculum as the essence of the university, determining its character and indeed the wider character of society, he exposes the ways in which contractual and technological sciences have squeezed out consideration for issues of virtue. Grant saw the danger of humanities becoming a smaller and smaller island in a rising lake, a kind of museum culture or a handmaiden to the performing arts. His challenge to the university was really a wider challenge to national cultural identity in face of increasing political and economic pressures for subordination to the technological imperative implicit in the American empire.

If we are to live in the modern university as free men, we must make judgements about the essence of the university — its curriculum. If such judgements are to be more than quibbles about details, they must be based on what we think human life to be, what activities serve human fulfilment, and what place higher education should play in encouraging the realisation of these activities. (1969, p. 127)

Although Grant became increasingly pessimistic about Canadian nationalism, as he recognized a certain inevitability in technological change, he called

upon Canadian universities to keep alive a "memory" of excellence from Canada's classical cultural heritage which could "transcend the aridity of the technological tradition" (p. 132). Clearly only the universities could carry out such a mission. Interestingly, he felt French Canada had better conditions for such memories than English Canada. We might ask at this point whether this idea could be linked up to Habermas's call for the rationalization of the moral-practical and practical-aesthetic realms of knowledge, given the classical rationalism of a pre-scientific age.

Let me turn now to the liberal vision of the university in Canada and take John Porter's work as an example. Like Grant and Neatby, the American challenge also dominates Porter's work but it is a positive model rather than a negative influence to be countered. Both in terms of social equality and manpower training for economic development, Porter felt Canadian higher education lagged far behind the standards set in universities south of the border. He also demonstrated how little historical claim Canada could lay to multiculturalism, with its real immigration policies differing little from those of the American melting pot. He saw Canadian universities as responsible for preserving elitism and stratification in the education system and criticized their inadequate response to both the economic needs of national development and the democratic need for greater social equality. Probably Porter's work laid the foundation for the economic and social achievements of Canadian universities in the sixties and early seventies, yet he had reservations about the emerging multi-versity. In 1970, he noted that "we are slowly emerging as a national society, but we still lack goals and a guide to wherever it is we are going" (Porter, 1987, p. 196). His solution was to call for a national system of higher education, with a few autonomous elite universities located in key regions, supported by provincial and local colleges/universities that would do much of the manpower training at lower levels. "What distinguishes us from the United States will be very much at the cultural level and in terms of our own positive contribution to the postindustrial world" (p. 196). Porter saw for the liberal university a role of developing the national culture in a way that could make possible a uniquely Canadian contribution to a postindustrial global society, in contrast to Grant's call for the university to keep alive a fundamental critique of postindustrialism.

A third important and distinctive thread in the Canadian university's self-understanding and understanding of Canadian culture comes from Marxist and socialist traditions of scholarship. Here the university is traditionally seen as a handmaiden to the capitalist state, justifying and making appear normal the domination of bourgeois culture at both national and international levels (Silva, 1980, p. 87). However, the recent work being done by Howard Buchbinder and Janice Newson within a broad socialist framework illustrates the possibility of an analysis that clarifies processes of change in the university as they relate and respond to broader social change and stimulate reflection on alternative futures. While Axelrod charts the development of Ontario universities in the 1970s as government supported instruments for economic growth, Buchbinder and Newson show how the fiscal difficulties of the eighties have led to increasing demands for a more and more direct relationship between the university and the

business world. The resultant changes in the university include a fragmentation of academic work, with research, teaching, and service separated and carried out by different kinds of intellectual workers, and a corrosion of the collegial character of the university as a community of scholars, with administrators borrowing more and more practices from the business world and scholars responding with unionization and collective bargaining.

Within this analysis, the solution is not a return to traditional academic values, but the formation of an alternative vision, one rooted in a careful analysis of the ongoing changes taking place in the university and society. "A guiding vision of the university on which to base an offensive stance must be strategically related to the present situation" (Buchbinder & Newson, 1988, p. 96). They suggest two possibilities. The first is to appropriate the "service university" model that is now being shaped by the pressures of the business community and transform it towards new ends. The other is to adopt a polytechnical university model drawn from Marxist thought, where the whole range of theoretical and practical knowledge in scientific and social areas is integrated. Since the polytechnical vision has proven difficult to realize historically, even in socialist societies, the more realistic option seems to lie with strategies to transform the service university towards more humane ends.

This is certainly a vision that could inspire both the academic community and the wider society to demand greater democratic participation in the change process and in efforts to shape it at both the national and international level. It is not clear, however, the extent to which the analysis is a distinctively Canadian one, embodying and reflecting particular aspects of Canadian society, or a universal one, equally applicable to university-society relations in other capitalist states. It is also unclear the extent to which critical cultural understanding can enable the university to play a transformative role, or whether greater economic autonomy has to come first, as classical Marxist theory would suggest.

If we return once again to Habermas's vision for the redemption of modernity, this socialist view seems to be calling for a re-integration of technique with science, which is one part of Habermas's prescription. Its cultural dimension in terms of university curricula and research may need to be more fully elaborated. How is it connected to a sense of national cultural identity that might provide a Canadian dimension both to the vision and the strategies suggested?

Let me turn now to China where a tradition of autocracy has combined with socialist patterns, introduced in 1949, to limit the university's autonomy and its role in China's modern development. Traditionally, Chinese higher education had been characterized by a scholarly monopoly of knowledge and intellectual authority, in contrast to the autonomy and academic freedom that comprise the heritage, if not the reality, of Canadian universities. After 1949, Chinese universities were expected to offer a direct service to both the economic and the political dimensions of socialist construction. It is difficult to find a single scholarly figure in the post 1949 period who has been able to articulate the kind of coherent philosophy of education that Neatby called for in the Canadian context. The thinkers whose views shaped the fate of Chinese universities over this period were rather such figures as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping. How-

ever, in the period between the fall of the last imperial dynasty in 1911 and the success of the Communist revolution in 1949, a wealth of debate went on over culture, the university, and Chinese modernity. This debate continued in a more limited and subdued form after 1949.

If we were to seek for a figure who might parallel George Grant within the Chinese context, it would be the philosopher Liang Shuming. Although he lived until 1984, Liang Shuming's most important intellectual work was done in the 1920s when the whole of China's classical culture was being taken to task by a new generation of young intellectuals in the universities who saw it as a major impediment to desired economic and political change. The two main ideologies which gave shape to these attacks on Chinese traditional culture were liberalism and Marxism. Chinese scholars of both persuasions saw themselves as responsible to stimulate a process of enlightenment in China parallel to the earlier European experience, and so lay the basis for "modernization" (Schwarz, 1986).

For Liang Shuming, however, the notion of a Western-style modernization was much less seductive and he saw the proper basis for change in China as a re-interpretation and re-claiming of the Confucian heritage. In his seminal book on Eastern and Western cultures, he analyzed fundamental differences among three concepts of the will in the West, India, and China. In the West, he suggested, the will goes in a forward direction to conquer the environment, in China it goes sideways to harmonize with the environment and achieve a balance, while in India it turns backward into itself, seeking its own negation and seeing the world as illusion (Alitto, 1986). He thus emphasized the primacy of consciousness and saw in the Chinese tradition a healthy balance between the inner and the outer worlds. His understanding of Confucianism focussed on the process of change and flux, as found in the *Classic of Change*, not the stringent codes of familial and societal morality which had characterized Confucianism as the ruling ideology. Thus he felt it was possible to find in Confucianism a flexible understanding of individual and social morality that could be the basis for a more humane modernity.

Like George Grant, Liang did not limit his critique to his own country, but directed it against what he saw as the ugliness and distortion of industrialization and modernization in a wider world context. His vision of a Confucian-based rural modernization process that could retain a due balance between the inner moral-spiritual life and the outer material life was not merely a model for his own efforts at rural change but one he felt China could give to a world ravaged by "modernization." In this sense Liang's vision had some parallels with that of George Grant in his belief that only the moral clarity of Western classical thought could save modernity from an encroaching technological nightmare.

Liang made great efforts to implement his ideas in several rural development projects, but the disturbances of the Nationalist period and the success of Communism, made it impossible for him to demonstrate the vision as fully as he had hoped. His work, however, remains of great interest in Chinese intellectual life up to the present, and may enable intellectuals in China's universities to develop a critical perspective on the dominant technological paradigm of our age without thereby conforming to the views on national cultural identity promoted by

the present leadership. These come close to a revived imperial tradition of Confucianism for the purposes of thought control.

If we consider the other two major ideologies that have shaped the university's relation to culture in the Canadian context, it is interesting to find them in a reverse role in the Chinese context. Marxism is the ruling ideology of the socialist state, while liberalism is probably the closest thing we have to an official Canadian ideology. Just as liberalism has tended to promote close co-operation between the university and government in the Canadian context, Marxism-Leninism has required even closer conformity of the university to state ends in the Chinese context. Thus real socio-political critique has tended to come more from those scholars influenced to some degree by a liberal vision rather than from Marxist scholars.

In the period between 1911 and 1949, different versions of liberalism had a wide coinage among Chinese scholars, and two names stand out in the university community. Cai Yuanpei, famous chancellor of Beijing University from 1917 to 1923 and later Minister of Education, was deeply influenced by aspects of both the French and German models of the university, and developed a form of Chinese liberal thought that drew heavily on German philosophy and advocated a new Chinese aesthetic to replace religion in Chinese society and guide China's progress towards modernity. The ethos Cai established at Beijing university during his presidency, which emphasized curricular patterns and faculty appointments based on autonomy and academic freedom (Duiker, 1977), has in some ways remained alive up to the present. It has been an important factor in the role Beijing University has played at crucial points in modern Chinese history right up to the student democracy movement of 1989. The other well-known Chinese advocate of liberalism, Hu Shi, was an admirer of American pragmatism and his philosophical synthesis of Western and Chinese thought also provided a significant base for Chinese liberalism (Grieder, 1970). Its persisting influence can best be seen in Taiwan, although the mainland has also seen a revival of "Hu Shi" studies in recent years.

In spite of rigorous thought campaigns in the early 1950s, a whole generation of scholars educated before 1949 in Nationalist universities or abroad retained some basis for critical reflection on the new Communist society in one or other veins of the liberal tradition. These perspectives were first revealed in 1956, when Mao requested critical comments from the scholarly-professional community on the Communist government's achievements, decreeing that "A Hundred Flowers should bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" (MacFarquar, 1960). The powerful critique of Soviet authoritarianism and rigidity in both the university community and the wider government bureaucracy revealed the frustration of these scholars in face of a mechanical transfer of social and scientific knowledge from the Soviet Union that allowed little space for creating a new identity for the Chinese university or contributing to the revitalization of Chinese culture. While Mao was able to use some of this criticism for his own political ends, the scholars fell prey to a ruthless Anti-Rightist campaign which consigned many to 20 years in exile between 1957 and 1978. In the period since 1978 it could be argued that some of these elder scholars, rehabilitated

under Deng Xiaoping and restored to positions of influence in the university, have revived the liberal perspective and passed it on to their students. In fact most have been through too much bitterness to risk such open defiance. It is probably more true that the accessibility of the Western social science literature, as well as many projects of academic co-operation and exchange, has fostered the "bourgeois liberalism" so fervently condemned by the Party authorities in recent years. It could also be argued that the democracy movement in the spring of 1989 lacked the deep understanding of Western concepts of democracy that characterized the liberalism of an earlier period.

The most important development of the 1980s may be the emergence of a genuine Marxist critique within the Party in the pens of such journalists, scholars, and writers as Wang Ruoshui, Liu Binyan, and Yu Haochang. This Marxist critique from within constitutes a challenge to Party authoritarianism even more disturbing than the liberal critique, since the latter can be dismissed through recurring campaigns against bourgeois liberalization. While great efforts have been made to suppress it through expulsions from the Party and ruthless indoctrination since June of 1989, the tendency towards more "emancipated" thought among middle and higher echelon Party cadres is probably irreversible in the longer term, and may make possible a different fate for Chinese socialism than that of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

It seems to me that Chinese Marxist scholars within the university may best develop a substantial social critique through the kinds of analysis of university-society relations that Buchbinder and Newson are doing in the Canadian context, seeking an understanding of the new conditions of commodity socialism and evaluating the demands these are making on the university community. As in the Canadian situation, the link with national cultural identity is a complex area to explore, but significant in relation to a more conscious commitment to democracy at the national and international levels, in contrast to a purely mechanistic response to the demands of government for economically productive forms of teaching and research.

An interesting example of this can be found in the Chinese Culture Academy, established as a private institution in 1984 by a group of scholars from Beijing University in the fields of philosophy, history and literature. In its early years it enrolled as many as 20,000 young people from all over China in correspondence courses designed to explore issues of cultural change in relation to modernization, and published an excellent series of journals and monographs in the areas of comparative education, comparative literature, and comparative law. Not surprisingly, many of the scholars associated with the academy were involved in one way or another with the democracy movement in the spring of 1989, yet the academy has managed to survive and is seeking ways to develop new programs under present harsher socio-political conditions.

As for the liberal perspective, probably the one way in which research would be acceptable in the present climate is if it were historical research, focussing on interpreting the ideas of such distinguished liberal thinkers of the Nationalist period as Cai Yuanpei, Hu Shi, and others. This kind of research would at least make possible a clearer understanding of the basic foundations of liberal thought than was evident in much of the student literature associated with the

democracy movement. Using this understanding to criticize socialism may remain sensitive and difficult for some time to come, but it could facilitate a deeper understanding of the motives and ideas that lie behind Western economic and cultural involvement with China. The Chinese leadership wishes to continue to gain as much political and economic capital as it can extract from Western democracies, while publicly excoriating "international hostile forces" for activities designed to seduce China into their camp through a process of "peaceful evolution." In this situation, scholarly research and publication on the Western liberal tradition could make possible a more sophisticated response to the dilemma, shared by the scholars themselves, of how to develop Chinese cultural identity while participating appropriately in international activities.

Conclusion

While Canada and China differ enormously, the parallels drawn here indicate, I think, the possibility for rich intellectual dialogue over issues of national cultural identity and a response to the challenges of globalization from the university community. In both cases it has been a difficult task to integrate the features of various external models of the university into a distinctive national model and to stimulate critical reflection on issues of national cultural identity. There are also parallels in the ideologies which have shaped differing responses within the university to this challenge in the two countries. Dialogue, whether carried out within or across conservative, Marxist, or liberal perspectives, could contribute to a deeper probing of the relations between the university, national cultural identity, and democracy.

More specific historical themes which could fruitfully be pursued on a comparative basis might include the role of French Jesuits in the history of the university in both countries, the effects of World Wars I and II on Chinese and Canadian universities, and the struggle to develop graduate programs that would preserve national identity and prevent domination from a neighbouring super-power.

Canada may be ahead of China in such areas as graduate study and scientific research within the universities, and so useful lessons could be learned by the Chinese side. On the other hand, China's commitment to sustaining alternative knowledge traditions, such as Chinese medicine, and preserving the literature and culture of a large number of national minorities through its universities may be of great interest for Canada.

Given the university's primary responsibility as a centre of thought and reflection, its contribution to democracy may be most important at the level of thought and analysis rather than active advocacy of specific national or international causes. It is precisely for this reason that scholarly dialogue between members of university communities as different as those of China and Canada may be particularly fruitful and provocative.

NOTE

1. China's National Natural Science Fund was modelled to some degree on the pattern of NSERC, and has been developed in close co-operation with Canadian colleagues.

REFERENCES

- Alitto, G. (1986). *The last Confucian: Liang Shuming and the Chinese dilemma of modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Axelrod, P. (1982). *Scholars and dollars: Politics, economics and the universities of Ontario 1945-1980*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Buchbinder, H., & Newson, J. (1988). *The university means business*. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Duiker, W. (1977). *Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei: Educator of Modern China*. University Park & London: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Galtung, J. (1980). *The true worlds: A transnational perspective*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gordon, M. J., Liu, F., & Wang, Z. P. (1991). On the international comparison of China's GNP. Unpublished manuscript. Faculty of Management Studies, University of Toronto.
- Grant, G. (1969). *Technology and empire*. Toronto: House of Anansi.
- Grieder, J. (1970). *Hu Shi and the Chinese Renaissance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action* (Vol. 1). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action* (Vol. 2). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Harris, R. (1976). *A history of higher education in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hayhoe, R. (1990). Some reflections on academic freedom in Japan and China: An essay review. *Higher Education Group Annual*.
- Held, D. (1991). Democracy and globalization. *Alternatives*, 16, 201-208.
- MacFarquar, R. (1960). *The hundred flowers campaign and the Chinese intellectuals*. New York: Octagon Books.
- Matthew, R., & Steele, J. (Eds.). (1969). *The struggle for Canadian universities*. Toronto: New Press.
- Mungello, D. (1985). *Curious land: Jesuit accommodation and the origins of Sinology*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Neatby, H. (1954). *So little for the mind*. Toronto: Clarke Irwin.
- Porter, J. (1987). Postindustrialism, postnationalism and postsecondary education. In J. Porter, *The measure of Canadian society*. Ottawa: Carlton University Press.
- Schwarz, V. (1986). *The Chinese enlightenment: Intellectuals and the legacy of the May 4th Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Silva, E. (1980). Maple leaf, British bough, American branch: Canadian higher education in developmental perspective. In I. Spitzberg (Ed.), *Universities and the international distribution of knowledge*. New York: Praeger.
- Weiler, H. (1984). Knowledge and legitimation: The national and international politics of educational research. Paper delivered at the Fifth World Congress of Comparative Education, Paris, July 1984.

Address of author:

Higher Education Group
OISE
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6, Canada