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THE CHINA DREAM IN QUESTION

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The 'China dream' has become a public topic open to debate this year, partly due to new chairman Xi Jinping's encouraging claim of it, reminding people of the Chinese pursuit of national revival for more than a century. Interpretation of the governmental message is not the aim of this paper. Instead, I will try to develop a historical and philosophical analysis of Chinese pursuits that might be said to be China's dreams. My understanding of China's dreams remains basically similar to my earlier discussion in a paper titled "American dream, European dream and China's dream" (*Transcultural Dialogue* No. 18, 2006). That is, China's dreams have been painful dreams during hard times, the dreams to survive by modernization (actually westernization), so as to catch up with the great powers, at the unhappy cost of self-devaluation of Chinese culture and tradition. Consequently, the China dream has not yet fully demonstrated its Chineseness as meant to be or expected to be, but rather partly, or mainly, has been a westernized dream up until now. The expression *China dream* (中国梦) may not always be *the dream of China* (中国之梦), unless it can develop the ideal of China. In this paper, I will examine challenging questions related to Chinese pursuits, practical efforts and theoretical ideals.

1. An ideal or a dream?

As usually meant, a dream indicates the pursuit of a change to make better life or great success. We had better prudently distinguish an ideal from a dream, though they are overlapping in some cases and share part of their meanings. An ideal is the pursuit of perfection of the things as conceptually expected, while a dream the pursuit of something considered better but still absent. In other words, an ideal is the pursuit according to a concept that explains the best of the possible, whereas a dream is not necessarily the perfect but rather the pursuit based on some desire or ambition to be better. It thus indicates that, an ideal could be taken as a dream but a dream is not always an ideal, and a dream without an ideal could sometimes be poor and obscure. It should be noticed that, in the post-modern "desert of post-ideology" (Zizek¹), most dreams, of revolution, of progress, of liberation, seem quite obscure or even blind, so that dreams could risk. The symptom of the obscure dreams is that, the dreamers want a change, while not knowing what they really want, nor knowing how they could make a good change. Most of the recent dreams in pursuit of emancipation or liberation after the end of cold war were more or less obscure and even blind, often betrayed and resulted in the unexpected turmoil, civil war, disorder and poverty.

¹ Slavoj Zizek: *The year of dreaming dangerously*. Verso, London, 2012. P. 47

Could or will the China dream be a successful exceptional? Now it is a question for China dream, which seems not blind but not yet completely clear thus still open to be questioned: will it be an exceptional *China dream* or a universal China ideal for the world? The slight distinction of them implies serious issues, not only for China, but also for the world. Will a China dream of exceptionalism or a China ideal of universalism be better for China or for the world? If this question looks complicated, so, does the world want an exceptional China dream or a universal China ideal?

A brief analysis on the China's dreams or the Chinese national pursuits that have been changing with times in the historical context must be helpful to understand China dream in question. The story began with very old days. The early China (about 3,000 years ago) created a universal system supposed to be of-and-for the world in terms of All-under-heaven (Tianxia), so designed to "create the compatibility of all peoples of all nations", so it could be said a Chinese ideal of perpetual peace. I have written about the unique situation and reason for this unusual systematic innovation in the very early days of civilization: with great fortune, Zhou dynasty had been established by a nation of small population to rule over many other nations of much greater population. This unusual situation was so challenging and practically excluded the feasibility of the stable rule by force in a long run, a naturally legitimated way to rule as used to be, therefore it impelled the king to design a netlike world system that would develop interdependence of all nations, considered to guarantee the related benefits and sharable goods so much attractive to every nation in the network so that no nation would refuse or betray the world system of all-under-heaven. As expected, the "great harmony" of all peoples would be hopefully to come, which approximately means the perpetual peace (the detailed discussion of all-under-heaven system could be found in my writings²). What should be mentioned here is that, the great ideal of all-under-heaven has shrunk to a less ambitious dream of an immortal empire, due to the establishment of the Chinese empire in 221 BC. This change indicates a political turn from the universal ideal of China to the confined Chinese dream, from an ideal for the world to a dream for China. The Chinese empire (221 BC to 1911) was self-esteemed as the central and leading empire of the world, a symbolic narrative in memory of the no more existing all-under-heaven.

The Chinese empire was, in most cases, a peaceful power lack of imperialism. It concerned with being everlasting much more than endless expanding, so different from the aggressive dream of typical empires in other places, mainly due to the usually recognized Chinese characteristics of non-aggressiveness as well as its extraordinary capacity to assimilate the other cultures. A historian Guo Moruo argues that the three basic characteristics of Chinese culture, "originality, capacity to assimilate and non-aggressiveness", makes Chinese nation to be of "greatest resilience that finds no match in the world", and China has only passively involved

² Zhao Tingyang: Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept All-under-heaven. *Social Identities*, Vol.12, Jan.2006. UK; A Political Philosophy of World. *Diogenes*, 221-Jan-2008; All-under-heaven and methodological relationism. In *Contemporary Chinese political thought: Debates and Perspectives*, ed. Fred Dallmayr & Zhao Tingyang, University press of Kentucky, 2012.

into the wars against the invasions³. Guo wrote it in 1938 when China was suffering from the bloody war against Japanese invasion.

The Chinese empire came reluctantly to a painful dream for great change in its late period when challenged by modern western powers. The unprepared old China was thrown into the modern game of competition by guns, steel and market. All traditional societies including China had been defeated by modern powers, so that modernity was considered the “advanced civilization” with the undeniable evidences of its power, force and success. The dream of modernization has become China’s new dream, ironically and painfully, a dream to survive. The open-minded Chinese imperial elites came to the recognition of a hopeful new China as a modernized China, which started the modernization of China, still not yet completely finished up to now since its first effort called “westernization movement”(洋务运动), followed by more movements of modernization through a century as times going on from the collapsing empire, the Republic of China to the People’s Republic of China.

Modernization has been such a painful dream for China because of its entangled self-contradiction to China: the China’s dream of modernization is essentially westernization so that it is not a dream of China, or not a dream with Chineseness, while it is the only way for the survival of China. The more challenging, westernization is the depressing devaluation of Chinese splendid traditions and the systematical transformation of China into a dependent of the western system and game. As believed, Chinese culture is of much wisdom, morality and virtues thus certainly of great value, definitely neither uncultivated nor poor, but it does not fit the modern game of military and commercial antagonistic competition, therefore it has to be changed. Being recognized the only available chance for China to survive at that times and revive someday, modernization, namely, westernization, has become a common dream of Chinese people up to now. According to the Chinese concept of political justification in terms of “the will of people” (民心所向), a concept close to the western “public choice”, modernization is exactly the China dream of democratic choice. It is a paradoxical dream of the revival of China by devaluation of China. As the modern history of China has demonstrated, Chinese great minds have made significant efforts to find a path out of this paradoxical situation by the innovation of a “Chinese way” to combine the western and the Chinese in compatibility, usually said as the “modernization of Chinese characteristics”, an awkward word but going to the key point.

2. Chinese dreams of modernization

As briefly argued above, China dream could be considered the revival of China by means of modernization or westernization with “Chinese characteristics”. It tells a story of the conflict of dramaturgy between rational consideration to save Chinese nation and emotional or spiritual concern to defend Chinese nationality. In order to survive as a “fittest”-----a most impressive then well received western concept in

³ 郭沫若: “复兴民族的真谛”。《中国社会思想史资料选辑·民国卷上》, 陆学艺、王处辉主编, 广西人民出版社, 2007, p.371

modern China (1860-now) ----- China has been puzzled with the problem of being westernized while maintaining the best genes of Chinese culture proved to be so resilient in the past of thousands year and of potentiality to work well in the future. It could improve our understanding of the problematic modernization with Chinese characteristics by some historical reminders.

The first effort to modernizing China was the “westernization movement” in industry (1861-1895), launched by some imperial ministers who saw the cruel truth through the shocking lessons taught by western powers since 1840, that a nation weak in military and economic capacity will never be a good player in the modern game. However they tried to protect Chinese culture from modernization by a compromising solution called “Chinese values and western means” (中体西用)⁴, a so influential strategy that most of Chinese minds tacitly take as the reasonable choice in the challenging modern game led by western powers. The reasons that argue for Chinese values in the central position could be found not only in the emotional adherence but also in the belief in the supposed potentiality in making a better society of peace, familyship and harmony. The composition of “Chinese values and western means” had expected a century ahead the revival of Confucianism as well as other traditions in latest two decades when China seems to rise to be a great power again.

Soon after China’s disastrous failure in the war against the systematically westernized Japan in 1894, which was publically considered an evidence to have exposed the insufficiency of the westernization only in industry, some radical reformers, including the famous scholars such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, suggested the further and deeper westernization by political reform to remake China a constitutional nation-state, considered the reliable condition for any convincing flourish of a new China. The reformers argued that the successful reform of China should be the “systematical changes” (变法) in the political, education and even values more than the limited and timid changes only in industry, that means the “complete change” (全变) in everything rather than some changes in something⁵. Liang Qichao dreamed even of a “new China of youth” (少年中国), a reborn nation to come by successful reform. The most important approach of the reformers was the “reform in name of revival” (托古改制), which is a magic “to be new in name of the old”, a very successful argument to reduce the conservative resistance to radical reforms, as well as to develop new ideas out of old ideals with reinterpretations, or over-interpretations at some cases, often partly true and partly magical. The reformers claimed that the most needed western values and systems, such as rule of law, equality and democracy, were essentially compatible to their similar Chinese prototypes in the very early times.

⁴ This slogan, “zhong-ti-xi-yong”, is often wrongly translated as “Chinese body and western applications”. It seems quite confusing and even misleading. The formula of “Chinese values and western means” could be traced back to Xu Guangqi’s earlier recommendation, in the late Ming dynasty, of the communication between Chinese and western cultures as “to reshape the western contributions in the Chinese mould”. See 王重民 辑校:《徐光启集·下册》,上海古籍出版社, 1984. p.375.

⁵ 参见: 梁启超:《变法通议》(1896)。华夏出版社, 2002; 康有为:“上清帝第二书”(1895), 见《康有为政论集·上》, 汤志钧编, 中华书局, 1981.

To be fair, the magic of “to be new in name of the old” is a productive way to rewrite the history, often criticized of its more or less misinterpretations, but it is also creative to establish the live links between the past and the present. And the somewhat fabricated stories would become the vital gifts in return to activate the forgotten old ideals of considerable potentiality, similar to the case that new experiences promote the evolution of the old genes. In this Chinese understanding of historicity, history is always alive and active in the present more than the memory and knowledge of the past. By this sometimes questioned methodology, Chinese minds could effectively take advantage of the alive and active tradition in response to all changes, passing through from the past to the contemporary with the cultural key message, the cultural genes, to transit the Chineseness even when China has been westernized in many aspects. However, we should be careful in using this magic way of reinterpreting the traditions, for it could be sometimes misused or abused in the too much over-interpretation beyond the reasonable implications of the traditions, for example, a newly fabricated Confucian story of a Confucian constitutionalism that did not exist, neither true nor logically consistent to the Confucian values. Of course Confucianism could be creatively reinterpreted and developed in its logically possible implications instead of suspicious fabrications.

In 1911, the nationalist group directed by Sun Yat-sen established the first Chinese republic in place of the Chinese empire, trying to introduce a modern system of some Chinese characteristics, supposed theoretically better than the original western system. It is said a new constitutional system in terms of the separation of the “five powers” including the Chinese traditional powers of examination and supervision (or impeachment in Sun’s saying) in addition to the western system of three powers. Sun was so proud of his “personal innovation” of this “improved constitutional system” of five powers, based upon the combination of the best institutional arrangements in the western and Chinese political cultures as he thought⁶. Unfortunately, Sun’s China dream did not work as well as argued theoretically, seemingly due to the poor situation and conditions not good for his imagination, or practically due to its failure to solve the urgent social and political disorder and to reduce the great pains of people in poverty and turmoil.

After many years of suffering and defeated, and the years of dreaming dangerously, the confused and disappointed Chinese younger generations were wondering which was exactly the final truth that will save China. With the radical self-reflection or self-criticism, the May 4th Movement and New Culture Movement in the 20’s of 20th century launched a far-reaching cultural battle against all supposed out of time cultures, especially the Confucianism then re-identified as a backward or conservative culture standing in the way to modern science and democracy. It indicates the Chinese desire to be completely reshaped by means of modernization in the “spiritual” as well as modernization in the “material”. Writer Lu Xun, a most influential figure of the New Culture Movement, advised the youth better not to read Chinese books, or not too read much of them, because they

⁶ 孙中山：“五权宪法”，《中国社会思想史资料选辑·民国卷上》，陆学艺、王处辉主编，广西人民出版社，2007，pp.162-173.

speak the words of “optimistic zombies”⁷. It is quite ironical that Lu Xun himself was an outstanding scholar in Chinese history and literature.

Mao Zedong gives a most interesting summary of the situation of China: from 1840 on, it was widely thought that the only way to save China was to reform and the only way to reform was to imitate the west. “But the western imperialists’ continuing invasions broke the Chinese addicted dream of imitating the west. Oh! So surprising that the teachers love to rob their students! Chinese have followed the leading west so long time, but nothing has helped China to realize its good dream. So many efforts including the national revolution have resulted in failure. Our country has terribly worsened so much so that people have no way to live on. Doubts have come and prevailing....At last the success of Russian Revolution let Chinese find the Marxism of a universal truth”⁸. Mao’s great success in establishing a new China under communist ideal has partly realized the China dream to be an independent sovereign state free from the invasion and control of western powers. As Mao announced confidently in 1949: “Chinese have stood up from now on”!⁹

Something looks strange but significant here. Marxism and its communist ideal could be understood by Chinese communists as a China dream in that it has saved China out of a failed state, but it is, after all, a western dream of modernizing the world by the communism in competition with the liberal capitalism, rather than a dream of Chineseness. Communism defeated and excluded its western competitors in China, but also devalued the Chinese culture. This is the paradox of the China dream of being modernized: to save China by the devaluation or betrayal of its Chineseness. But this absurd paradox could be somehow reasonably explained. The key point is that, the existence of China matters more than its identity, in other words, to be is more important than what it looks like. Therefore, the urgent survival of Chinese nation (保种) must be prior to the persistence of the Chinese cultural identity (保教), if a difficult choice had to be made between them in a critical moment.

Mao’s new China was actually more westernized than ever---to be reminded that Marxism and communism are the western. It was not only westernized in political system, industry, sciences and technologies, but also in philosophies and values, even in arts and literature (for instance, western classic music, ballet and modern novel were regarded by the public as the higher than the Chinese “folk cultures”, an alternative name for traditional cultures), whereas Chinese culture only remained as the heritage of the splendid past or the preserved resources in case needed. It was apparently a continuing consequence of the New Culture Movement in the early days of 20th century. Chinese communist party has tried to evade the dilemma of the westernization as the self devaluation of China by a strategy of de-westernization of Marxism with the strange recognition of Marxism as the “scientific” truth, supposed to be something “universal and objective” like the science of natural laws. The nationalist anxiety about Chineseness had been thus

⁷ 鲁迅：“青年必读书”，《鲁迅杂文集·卷1》，春风文艺出版社，1997，p.285.

⁸ 毛泽东：“论人民民主专政”，《毛泽东选集·第四卷》，人民出版社，1991，p.1470.

⁹ 毛泽东：“中国人从此站起来了”，《毛泽东文选·第五卷》，人民出版社，1996，p.342.

lessened by the consoling Marxist internationalism but never completely disappeared. In the late 80's of last century, a philosopher Li Zehou generalized the situation of Marxism in China as "the western doctrine with Chinese applications" (西体中用), but it seemed the Party took no interest in his interesting narrative that has exposed the western face of Marxism. It is a Chinese spectacle that the western character of Marxism has been made vague and even fading out since it was alternatively categorized as the objective truth above any culture.

Mao was a Maoist more than a Marxist after all. And he was a complicated radical thinker of an extreme modernist in terrible love of the newest and endless progress or revolution, mixed with his personal extraordinary far and wide horizon of history and world, so he was neither satisfied with a China dream in complete imitation of the western modernity, nor with a China dream ever defined in Confucianism, both of which were still not a newest society, at least not as new as the one he wants. Mao wanted to create a society that found no precedent as an example, a "newest and most beautiful" society out of "a country in poverty and shortage". Mao's dream is a radical utopia with obsessive moral demands of his people to be unselfish, devoted and "purified from any lower taste", in which everyone is devoted in "serving the people" (his most well-known slogan) with pure joy in soul. To set up a best example for his somewhat post-modern utopia, Mao fabricated an ideal man who happily helped any other in need, based upon the deeds of a soldier named Lei Feng. Given that it be true, the socialist visible hands of serving the people might work better than the capitalist "invisible hands" to benefit all and each. It seems that Mao wanted truly a utopia of universal equality, but unfortunately he had neglected the basic and primary problem to be solved firstly, that is, the China in poverty and shortage, which could not be eliminated by moral and spiritual pursuit. The truth is, no spirit could save a hungry body. On the contrary, the extreme poverty destroys morality and spirit.

After the hard times of ten years in unbearable poverty and shortage, China was again in need of being saved. Another great mind Deng Xiaoping saved China in time by his realistic economical reform taking advantage of global market. His slogan "to develop is the strongest truth" speaks his understanding of the reality and his utilitarian goal. But he was a realist instead of a utilitarian. Deng's successor Jiang Zemin has promoted the modernization of military force. Both of their efforts have made successes in reaching the China dream of modernization for a century. However it was an anxious dream of a quick escape from the nightmares of poverty and insecurity, still far from a triumphant dream of glory. Now the recent 30 years success of the rapid modernization of China has led to a more confident claim of "China dream" in terms of national revival by Xi Jinping, the new chairman of China. What is new as implied? Will it remain the dream of further modernization or of a new mission? There are many questions to be answered by the future.

Going through all the succeeded or failed China's dreams in a century, we see they are overlapping with some pursuits in common: modernization of China in imitation of the western successful modernity; the belief in the concept of progress; and the "Chinese characteristics" of modernization. Generally speaking, the key

point of China dream is, instead of copying the western systems as they were, to imitate the western achievements in the way of “mix-and-match”, of capitalism and socialism, of free market and governmental direction, of commercial domination and ideological orientation, to make a revisionary modernization with Chinese characteristics. In short, all modern China dreams focus on the modernization in Chinese way up to now. There are the questions in request of theoretical analysis: Why does imitation work well? What is the Chinese way?

3. A methodological China awaits the ideal of China

An explanation of the Chinese way-----a not yet clearly defined word in use to explain many or too many things-----depends on a relevant interpretation of what is the Chineseness. People could have different even contradictive but all good opinions about Chineseness based on their different experiences of the contradictive facts of China. The flexible faces of China indicate exactly the very nature of China, which is the *China as methodology* or the *methodological China*. If I am right, as China is concerned, its methodological existence means the essence of China more than its values, in other words, how it goes explains more than what it is, that is, Chinese methodology speaks Chineseness more than Chinese values. I take it a key point to understand China.

People might know more about Chinese values, although often misinterpreted thus mistranslated. Confucianism approximately defines the traditional Chinese values, most of them based upon the idealized familyship, such as the *circulating reciprocal humanization* between the other and self (Jen, 仁, meaning the reciprocal respect for the others as human beings that ought to be respected as such) and *human obligations* (Yi, 义, meaning the reciprocal obligations for the others as in debt). On the other hand, I-Ching (the Book of changes) and Taoism explain the Chinese general methodology of rational thinking and of taking actions, including the flexible ways to change with changes, the prudent consideration in dealing with challenges and risks, and the active strategies to fit with the situations and conditions, as well as the natural approach to understand and accept the future of unpredictable possibilities. It is well discussed by Lao-zi in terms of the metaphor of water, so I call it the *methodology of water*, by which Chinese minds consider the situations, conditions and possibilities to make their choices as flexibly as water finds the best way ahead to its destination.

This extremely flexible way of making choices could, as I suppose, explain a methodological China so flexible that never stuck to any concept, doctrine, belief or ideology as it were. In other words, the methodological China refuses the fundamentalism in any belief. Therefore, every concept or principle could be reinterpreted or redefined to fit the conditions, never taken for granted as the unchangeable by the given definitions. Instead, everything will be contextually understood in the always changing situation and its correlations with relevant things in question. According to this methodology of flexibility, everything should be changed *to be good* in order *to be for good*, as I-Ching suggests, the only ontological meaning of being is to be for good, therefore the greatest ontological virtue is “let

beings be” (生生)¹⁰.

It is thus not so surprising that all the concepts, doctrines or isms, no matter from the western or Chinese traditions, such as democracy, revolution, liberty or God, Marxism, liberalism, Confucianism or Buddhism, have been flexibly reinterpreted. As a result, you see the “Chinese Marxism”, “socialism of Chinese characteristics”, “market economy of Chinese socialism” or “democracy in Chinese way”. In a sense, the methodological China prefers the revisionism and makes successes by revisionism----it was ironical that revisionism was once critically imposed to the stubborn Soviet Union by Mao. In fact, Mao and Deng were the masters of revisionists who “dialectically” (it means the Chinese use of the Hegelian-Marxist dialectics) dissolved the Marxist doctrines into their flexible practice, regardless of the somewhat strange look. It seems that Deng had even a deeper insight beyond the ideologies. His influential claim of “no more debates about isms” fully displays the typical methodological China rather than a pragmatic or utilitarian strategy as usually misunderstood. Deng needed the efficient market and stable order, so he developed them. That is all. It seems in his consideration, the efficient market and stable order are necessary for any country to develop, nothing to do with the socialist or capitalist doctrines, and communist party could run capitalist market economy in absence of democracy. It looks unusual but working well.

China’s modernization has been successful in its revisionary imitations of the western different systems in form of mix-and-match rather than the simple copy especially in the reform times. The mix-and-match of socialism and capitalism, of market competition and governmental direction, seems to have reciprocally counterbalanced some weak points of both of them, or at least lessened the side-effects of them by the counterbalance of each other. This dramatic effect could be explained fundamentally by the methodology of water that sees the most effective way of least cost and risk. Now a further question: If the methodological China is of much innovativeness and efficiency, why does not it create a new and leading system instead of imitation? Or will it ceases to imitate and develop a really new way for China?

I try to argue, imitation of the more successful players is the best choice or the least costly strategy for an underdeveloped or developing country in the game with greater powers----the flexible revisionary imitation might be even better----since it is the only chance to share the information, knowledge, technologies, market and recourses with the greater powers, so that it will reduce the asymmetrical superiority and domination of the greater powers and relatively change the unfair distribution of interest and gains. The rise of China up to now is one of the successful examples of modernization in imitation of the western powers. And the flexible imitation has its unique Chinese characteristics in form of mix-and-match of different western elements reshaped or remade by means of Chinese methodology of water. I would like to emphasize on the often talked “Chinese characteristics” as the Chinese methodological characteristics instead of Chinese values, so as to keep

¹⁰ The detailed metaphysical argument could be found in Zhao Tingyang: First Philosophy: From Cogito to Facio (Chinese version), part 1, ch.8, Sanliang Books, 2013.

distance from the popular misrecognition of Marxism or Confucianism as the Chinese characteristics of reform, for the reason that Marxism or communism is but the other side of western modernity. The mistaking Marxism as a Chinese doctrine would be fundamentally misleading in understanding the essence and potentiality of China. For instance, Marxism is essentially a doctrine of revolution and liberation in the framework of antagonistic struggle, whereas on the contrary, almost all Chinese traditional political and ethical theories advocate peace, harmony and compatibility with least interest in war, struggle and hostility. As for Confucianism, it certainly remains in Chinese modern minds, but it has not yet fully recovered from its trauma in last century, still far from being the dominating values in the contemporary China. The truth is that, China is right now a methodological China with the mixed diversities of values that are conflicting and competing, therefore, it is a methodological China lack of the ideal of China.

The Chinese imitation of modernization might have brought China to rise, but the successful imitation has demonstrated the power of western model more than a Chinese model that is not there. China is still on its uncertain way of developing to somewhere unpredictable, so that we see only the Chinese way more than a so called China model. As argued, the imitation of the more successful is the best choice for the developing countries, but what China will do when it catches up, if it could, with the western powers one day? Will it make a balanced world? Or will it start a new game for the world? It is not the China dream but rather the dream of modernity to be questioned in turn.

Some more explanation about my theory of "imitation test" might make sense of the possible consequences of imitations. Let's begin the theoretical experiment with the game of independent powers (or players) in search of maximization of their self-interests as usually defined. Every power is supposed of good ability to learn and imitate any more successful strategy from the others. As a result logically expected to come, none of the ever successful strategies can stay dominating forever, since all of them would soon become the common knowledge shared by all players. The innovations of strategies take more time than imitations, so that imitators will soon catch up with innovators----it could explain the so called late-mover's advantage. The balance of knowledge (information) is most likely leading to the balance of powers (it says knowledge is power). And the extremely stable equilibrium will finally come when all players have learnt all available successful strategies and become equally smart or equally stupid, a phenomenon of "all are made donkeys". It is, by metaphor, a non-active situation like the Heat death of a universe----but the non-active equilibrium does not mean the death of game, but rather the dying of innovation. To be sure, innovations will be activated by a new game, but it is doubtful that a society should be always going on in active competition, so to be reminded, a non-active equilibrium is not always a disaster----Lao-zi dreamed of it as a peaceful world.

Here the fundamental challenge is rather that: a universally imitated dominating strategy that produces the stable balance could either be a good one that benefits all or a bad one that hurts all (for instances, the Prisoner's dilemma, the free-riders

and the tragedy of the commons or the tragedy of the anti-commons). Our test could be helpful to examine it: If a universally imitated strategy logically leads to negative retribution or retaliation, it will be a bad one that would probably ruin all players. So to speak, a strategy will be proved an undesirable choice for all, if it leads to the self-defeating consequence or disserving backfires when universally imitated. For instance, the strategies to defeat the others could become self-defeating when imitated by all others, as said being “beaten at one’s own game”. Therefore, a truly good strategy must be the one that can withstand any consequence of the universal imitation.

In the global times, our test seems especially useful to examine the dreams of alternative pursuits, say, American dream, European dream or modern China’s dream. As these dreams are concerned, they are unfortunately the typical, though somewhat different, dreams of modernity based on huge consumption of limited resources and unreasonable competitions, so that unlikely to be universalized without disastrous retribution. It is rather ironical that some of the modernized powers, especially America, are still trying to spoil others’ dreams by means of the never updated modern strategies, aged more than a century, in terms of containment, deterrence, sanction and war at last. On the global condition of netlike interdependence of powers, all that strategies to maximize self-interests would most likely result in inefficiency, if not become the failure of self-defeated. As it seems to me, the global disasters would come before any power win the self-disserving competition in the modern game.

The world is witnessing the fading of modernity and the developing globality. A dream of a nation will not work well if it does not take the global conditions seriously. In other words, a dream of modernity will be challenged by global conditions therefore it has to be changed into a dream of globality. One of the fundamental changes in the global times is the inevitable and necessary interdependence of all nations, all peoples and all powers. It makes the new ontological condition of coexistence, a sort of symbiosis, by which the survival and interest of all powers and all peoples be made possible. It requires the change of the rules of game, advantaged strategies and the basic concepts or values of the world. For instance, the negative concept of “externalities” has to be redefined on the new ontological conditions instead of being defined as the external obstacles, as the enemies or opponents, to be wiped out in the non-cooperative game, now that all peoples, all nations and all powers have become so much linked into the global mutual dependence so that the challenging externalities should not be understood as the “negative” external existences to be exterminated. In short, a cooperative game on basis of coexistence has become the only way for any nation to develop, and compatibility should replace competition to be the logic of global game. The world expects innovations in values, systems and technologies that could withstand the test of imitations and benefit all peoples. It could be said that the competing values and systems in the global times will not be that between the magnified clashing civilizations, the west and the east, not that between the overstated divergences of modernity in terms of liberalism vs. socialism, or democracy vs. authoritarianism, but that between the modernity of the

exclusive subjectivity and the globality of coexistential trans-subjectivity.

The serious question underlying the modern pursuits of China has emerged: the methodological China has spoken for the rational flexibility of the Chinese pursuits of its survival and revival by means of modernization in the last century, now the next mission of the methodological China must be, as reasonably expected, to develop the ideal of China so as to establish the order for sake of the globalized world, since China has played an important role in the global game. The revival of China awaits the renaissance of China, and the methodological China expects the ideal of China. It is impossible to foresee what the future will be, but I believe the future has sent us the message about what should not be. The global conditions do require a world of compatibility and cooperation.

4. Conclusion: what could be dreamed?

A radical dream could mislead a state, a nation and even the world into a tragedy, while misleading itself to be a comedy. We have to, perhaps reluctantly, recognize that all modern dreams are practically very radical, or unnatural, including capitalism, communism and liberalism as well as other isms, because all of them follow the same logic of modernity in terms of the highlighted subjectivity. Modernity itself is exactly the self-contradictive dream guilty of all the misled modern dreams. The tragedy, or comedy as its other side, is that the modern dreams are contradictive each other, although each of them seems reasonable if considered separately. As a matter of fact, it is impossible, at least infeasible, to realize all the demanding modern pursuits together: endless progress in technologies and economy, more and more democracy, equality, fairness, human rights, social justice and free-market, maximization of individual self-interests, individual freedom and social welfare, complete liberations from exploitation, oppression and discrimination, more and more restrictions on powers, privileges and social advantages, etc. It is obvious that the aggregation of all subjective demands overly exceeds the possible offers from the objective world, society and nature, in short, the subjectivity much exceeds the objectivity.

China dream is an epitome of the paradox of developing countries in pursuit of modernization: a nation has not yet fulfilled its goal of modernization while still suffering from the systematical exploitation, but it has to bear the negative consequences of modernity while facing the global challenges at the same time. Could the unbalanced modern world be changed into a balanced global world? Will the global game become a revolution to change the modern systematical exploitation of the disadvantaged countries? It is hard to know. But I believe that a reasonable dream in the global times should take the world into account. On the global conditions of inevitable interdependence, we have but to take the world seriously. Lu Buwei, a primer of an early state in China, had foreseen the importance of the global concern: "No state could be secure if the world in disorder, no family could escape misfortune if the state thrown into turmoil; and nowhere for one to be if his family ruined"¹¹. The world sees much of modern disasters in most places.

¹¹ 吕不韦：《吕氏春秋·卷十三·谕大》。

As far as I see it, a national dream must be related to a global dream, and a world of compatibility should replace the world of competition in time before “the world in disorder”. Unfortunately, the world is now on its way to the disorder. The financial crisis, protective economical wars, turmoil in the North Africa and Middle East, the spread of nuclear weapon and terrorism, the danger of climate change and pollution, are the disserving retribution of the modernity of greed, hostility and exploitation. Modern dream will not go too far because it cannot withstand its retributive consequences. Therefore, the world needs global dream. As I have often argued, a renewed all-under-heaven system (天下) and the relational rationality (关系理性) could be the universal ideals, because they could withstand, theoretically, the “test of imitation” and hopefully leading to a compatible and peaceful world. Relational rationality could reduce the hostile competition developed by the modern individual rationality in search of maximization of self-interest, and all-under-heaven system could make a world of the updated and improved perpetual peace on the global condition of multi-civilizations, more inclusive than the Kantian condition for peace. It invites a compatible world to come, or the one that would be nice to come. If a compatible world of all-under-heaven will become accessible someday, I hope it will be a world dream more than a Chinese concept.