

From the "Other" to the "Master Narrative": the Chinese Journey of the Frankfurt School

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Recommended Citation

Zhu, Guohua; and Meng, Xiangchun. "From the "Other" to the "Master Narrative": the Chinese Journey of the Frankfurt School." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.3 (2018): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3269>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3269)

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CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>
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Volume 20 Issue 3 (September 2018) Article 8

Guohua Zhu and Xiangchun Meng,

"From the 'Other' to the 'Master Narrative': the Chinese Journey of the Frankfurt School"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss3/8>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 20.3 (2018)**

Special Issue **Rethinking Critical Theory and Maoism**

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss3/>>

Abstract: In their article, "From the 'Other' to the 'Master Narrative': The Chinese Journey of the Frankfurt School," Guohua Zhu and Xiangchun Meng discuss the Chinese reception of Frankfurt School and the Maoist historical context. Chinese scholars take the narrow view of the Frankfurt School theories as a depoliticized instrument to explain Chinese practice, particularly in the realm of mass culture. Furthermore, the Frankfurt School has encountered the powerful political and ideological legacy of Maoism, which not only dictates instrumentalist view, but also predisposes to a nationalistic attitude that pits Chinese exceptionalism against universalism, including the Frankfurt School and other western Marxist theories. It is thus imperative to disentangle the complex relationship of Critical Theory and Maoism in China. Recontextualizing the broader history of Chinese reception and response to western theories and knowledge will help renew conversations with the West in humanities and social sciences.

Guohua ZHU and Xiangchun MENG

From the 'Other' to the 'Master Narrative': the Chinese Journey of the Frankfurt School

In September 2008, the conference on the reception and influence of the Frankfurt School in China convened at the Frankfurt Goethe University, attended by scholars from China, Germany, South Korea, Japan, the United States, and so on. (In this article, the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory are used interchangeably.) In the conference proceedings, two opposing views emerge. Axel Honneth, the current director of the Institut für Sozialforschung (Institute for Social Research) in Frankfurt, maintains that the Frankfurt critics, having overt Eurocentric biases, do not possess the power to elucidate or solve China's issues, but that Chinese intellectuals in general have more or less misread or misrepresented the school (1-4). Fabian Heubel, a German scholar of Chinese philosophy, argues that a possible way out of the plight of the trans-contextual validity of Critical Theory would be a return to contemporary Chinese philosophical resources, for instance, to a possible rediscovery of the intellectual potential of the 1958 Neo-Confucianist manifesto (12-28). On the other hand, Fu Yongjun, a prominent Chinese scholar of the Frankfurt School, points out that Critical Theory has been utilized in China merely as academic discourse rather than discursive practice in the reshaping of society (29-37). Another Chinese scholar, Zhao Yong, contends that the Frankfurt School in China is the "flowers of thought that do not bear fruit" (25). While most Western scholars are concerned with the loss of the validity of Critical Theory in its Chinese reception, Chinese scholars have a different reason to criticize Critical Theory. Those Chinese scholars who have invested so many of their resources in drawing on western theories to solve China's practical problems feel disappointed and frustrated. Western theories turn out not to be handy problem-solvers, but often further complicate the problems in China.

The reaction of these Chinese scholars reminds us of Edward Said's "traveling theory." In Said's view, Georg Lukács's theory is a response to the political context of his time. However, Lukács's ideas of revolutionary zeal then turned into a rather cold and objective literary theory via Lucien Goldman (Said, *The World* 241-2). In a similar situation, the value of Critical Theory lies in its political critique. In the Chinese context, however, Critical Theory has become an academic discourse detached from China's reality and historical conditions. Both German and Chinese scholars agree that the value of the Frankfurt School in China lies in its transcultural political relevance. Such an expectation seems legitimate, as the Frankfurt School's lineage to Marxism puts it squarely in the leftist camp of social and political critique. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels put it, "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however is to change it" (6). The Frankfurt School's mission is to change the world, not through violent political revolution, but through philosophical critique. If the critique misses its subject, then it becomes useless, like the allegory of the ancient Taoist sage Zhuangzi, in which a man tries to sell scholar's hats to the barbaric skin-heads.

Moreover, the journey of the Frankfurt School has set on the Chinese soil, where the powerful political and ideological legacy of Maoism not only dictates an instrumentalist view, but also predisposes to a nationalistic attitude that pits Chinese exceptionalism against universalism, including the Frankfurt School and other western Marxist theories. It is thus imperative to disentangle the complex relationship of Critical Theory and Maoism in China. In what follows, we first outline the Frankfurt School's Chinese journey with a focus on a few thematic issues, including: 1) the Chinese appropriation of Adorno's aesthetic theory and the critique of Culture Industry; 2) the transformation of the Frankfurt School from a political critique into a depoliticized, academic discourse in China; and 3) the recent Chinese assaults on western universalist theories, including the Frankfurt School. Second, we probe into Critical Theory's encounter with Maoism, in order to uncover the deeper political and ideological underpinnings for the reception of the western theories. Thirdly, we try to recontextualize the Frankfurt School's critique of modernity and the broader history of Chinese reception and response to western theories and knowledge, hoping to search for renewed conversations with the West in humanities and social sciences.

Let's begin with the distinct features of the Frankfurt School's Chinese journey. The Frankfurt School theorists are all concerned with the critique of capitalism, from diversified perspectives such as philosophy, economics, politics, social theory, literary criticism, psychology, and aesthetics. In their Chinese reception, some of the Frankfurt critics are no longer visible. The most highly regarded in China today is Jürgen Habermas, the foremost representative of the final, if not the finest result of the Frankfurt School. Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Herbert Marcuse are equally popular in China, and their theories deal with mostly literature, arts, aesthetics and popular culture. Habermas's theory is primarily studied in the disciplines of sociology, economics and political philosophy, and a

small proportion are scholars of Chinese language and literature. Chinese studies of Adorno, Benjamin and Marcuse focus predominately on fields of language and literature, art history, and, to a less degree, philosophy. Habermas's Chinese scholars have transformed Critical Theory into a political and social instrument, to serve the goal of constructing modernity or defending the legitimacy of Chinese state and improving its governance. By contrast, the scholars of Adorno, Benjamin and Marcuse are concerned with the aesthetic experience closely associated with the cultural fashions of consumption and bourgeoisie dispositions. Although the two groups seldom interact with each other, they have something in common: they both have abandoned the Frankfurt School's trademark critique of modernity, and transformed Critical Theory into an academic discourse, insulated and detached from social reality in China. Habermas's notion of modernity as an incomplete project and his proactive approach to modernization become the most attractive among all Frankfurt School theories. Our academic data base search in the category of philosophy and the humanities yields 1,673 scholarly papers on Habermas, compared with 803 on Adorno, 758 on Benjamin, and 780 on Marcuse. By contrast, Adorno, a "negative" theorist who vows heroically not to compromise, is seen in China largely as a radical, aesthetic icon of rebellion, and his aesthetic theories or negative dialectics are often viewed with skepticism.

In a sense, this trend has resulted from tensions within the Institute for Social Research. A genealogical predecessor of the Frankfurt School, Lukács, once a military commander on the Hungarian revolutionary front, never separated his scholarship from his revolutionary career. However, the Institute for Social Research claimed from the outset that it would remain detached from real social movements. When students, inspired by Critical Theory, tried to occupy the university campus, Adorno's response was to call the police. In fact, a social theory, when detached from social campaigns or political practices, is likely to be reduced to an innocuous academic discourse irrelevant to social reality. However, as leftists, the Frankfurt theorists are critics of capitalist modernity, after all. Although they seem to have missed all the opportunities to fulfil their goals of changing the world, they find some comfort in their conservation of revolutionary sparks and turn their political passion to the academia, in the face of formidable state power that prevents them from waging political warfare against capitalism. In other words, the revolutionary desires of the Frankfurt School morphed into scholarly inquires, registering the hope of change in the future.

As regards the Chinese reception of the Frankfurt School, one narrative would be that the Chinese academics have ignored the Frankfurt School critics' critique of capitalist modernity, and, as a result, Critical Theory is neutralized politically, and ultimately insulated from Chinese reality. However, there is another account of its Chinese journey. As Liu Kang argues, Chinese Marxists and the Frankfurt philosophers share the same historical context of the global transformation of modernity, and after China abandoned its utopian fervor and implemented reform and opening-up to the world, Chinese intellectuals began to feel the value of the Frankfurt school more keenly. For instance, from the 1950s to the 1980s, mass culture in China was almost invisible, if it existed at all, but in the early 1990s, it began to gain momentum. Chinese scholars at that time realized that Adorno's theory of Culture Industry had offered a rare vantage point from which to examine mass culture in China (Kang, *Aesthetics and Marxism* 564-5).

Adorno's critique of Culture Industry resonates in China, especially his criticism of pseudo-personality and standardization of the mass culture. However, as Tao Dongfeng, a leading Chinese cultural critic, warns us, the dogmatic application of Adorno's theory of the Culture Industry to Chinese mass culture inevitably leads to a mismatch between Western theory and Chinese practice. Tao argues that "the secularization and commercialization of Chinese society emerged in the late 1980s. As a result of the secularization and commercialization, mass culture flourished in China at the historical moment when the imprisonment of minds and ideological homogenization broke down. In hindsight, the rise of Chinese mass culture can be seen as a debunking of the ideological straitjacket" (4). In this sense, Chinese mass culture unleashed the long-repressed energy of the Chinese people and had significant liberating power.

Chinese social media is a case in point. Social media is now the primary vehicle of Chinese popular culture (流行文化, or mass culture, 大众文化, used interchangeably in China). Chinese netizens (internet users), especially those microbloggers, and enormous Wechat (微信) users (approximately 800 million) satirize, deride, parody, or even reject the mainstream discourse of the state owned official media, creating a carnivalesque cyberspace or virtual reality. Meanwhile, this sort of ambivalent, and ambiguous political and social carnival garners considerable economic profit. The celebrity blogger Han Han showcases the possibility of commercial success and political intervention (admittedly a risky business). On the one hand, Han Han's exhibits in his blogs a strong sense of social responsibility through his relentless critique of the corruption and social ills of injustice and inequality. Sometimes,

Han Han makes undisguised criticism of the government, which has been tolerated till now since Han Han never publicly attacks the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or socialism. On the other hand, as a pop culture icon adored by hundreds of millions of fans, Han Han is the epitome of celebrity making romance. His poignancy, rebelliousness, and his celebrity status as a racecar champion, as well as a public intellectual or social conscience, paradoxically reinforce the stereotypical icon of a rebellious pop cultural hero, and its underlying logic of capital. In analyzing Han Han's success story, Adorno's theory is apparently inadequate. Han Han is not manufactured by the Culture Industry for capital gains, but undeniably his social and political critique turns out to be an asset rather than liability in economic terms. The inadequacy of Adorno's theory, as an explanatory framework for Chinese popular culture and social media scene, is further shown by the complex relationships among the CCP state, the Chinese intellectuals, and the grassroots Chinese people.

However, it will be too hasty to declare that Adorno's critique of Culture Industry is of little relevance to China. A few principal premises of Critical Theory have not been seriously studied. Liu Kang notes that the critical theorists' critique of the Enlightenment, communicative rationality, and the legitimacy of capitalism have not been fully explored in China (*Aesthetics and Marxism* 565). Moreover, in the debates about "pure literature" that involved a large cohort of Chinese scholars around 2000-2010, hardly any of the Frankfurt School's great insights into the autonomy of arts were invoked. In short, the Frankfurt School Critical Theory has been primarily understood and appropriated as an outmoded theory of mass culture, based on the experience of the 1950s United States. Unfortunately, Chinese scholars have overlooked the seminal contributions of Critical Theory in the critique of modernity and its deep reflection on the epistemological and ontological foundations of the western civilization. These insights are invaluable for the reflection of Chinese modernity and Chinese intellectual history from the late nineteenth century onwards, as modern China and its modern intellectual trajectory have been influenced decisively by modern West. Immanent critique of the western tradition from Critical Theory affords an indispensable tool for the self-reflection of Chinese modernity.

Notwithstanding the critical appropriation of Adorno's aesthetics and theory of the Culture Industry, the Chinese reception of Critical Theory has been by and large a process of de-politicization. Critical Theory has apparently lost its battlefield in China. It fails to fully mobilize the Chinese intellectuals in their critical reflections on Chinese conditions of modernity, even though many Chinese scholars have been attracted to and inspired by the insights of Critical Theory. Its "failure," as such, is ascribable to the difference of contexts between China and western societies, affecting Critical Theory's immediate relevance to Chinese experience. Take the reception of Benjamin's theory of mechanical production of art as an example. When Chinese academics engage Benjamin's political theories, the academic discussion itself can be seen as depoliticized. The state allows Chinese scholars certain academic autonomy in their research, hoping that their political passion can translate into academic passion, so that they can better serve the interests of the CCP party state. Paradoxically, however, the Chinese academic discussion of Benjamin's radical political theory contains subtle and implicit critique of the repressive and coercive ideological state apparatuses. But this gesture of passive resistance, camouflaged by layers of esoteric, and pedantic academic jargon, often appears emasculated under the rubrics of academic professionalism (Zhu Guohua, "Reproduction" 71-84).

Even though the Frankfurt School was introduced to China in the 1980s at the height of the Chinese Cultural Reflection movement, the bulk of the writings of the Frankfurt School was mostly translated and studied in China in the late 1990s. By then, China's passionate embrace of modern western ideas, primarily Anglo-American liberalism and existentialism, gave way to the post-Tiananmen (1980) self-censorship and gradual acceptance of postmodernism. As Liu Kang puts it, "the irreversible trend over the last decade or so has been toward professionalization, in a market-driven, GDP-centered society akin to that of the United States and perhaps most of the Western world" (Liu, "Dinner Party" 126). The onset of postmodernism or the Western theories from the mid-1990s onwards marked an abrupt turn in reception of Western theories in the humanities and social sciences. One witnessed a peculiar "comeback" of leftist thinking to China, via Western theories of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism, only to be safely quarantined within, and confined to, the academic circles of literary studies.

In recent years, a more assertive and increasingly nationalistic China, especially after the 2008 global economic woes that showed the decline of Euro-American capitalism and China's simultaneous ascendance into the world's second largest economy, called forth renewed efforts for Chinese exceptionalism vis-à-vis Western universalism. Since Western literary theories, be they leftist, liberal, or conservative, are lumped together under the rubrics of Western ideas, they have become the targets of the CCP sanctioned campaigns against universalism.

The Chinese attitude towards Western theory has changed dramatically. Chinese academics now tend to be more critical of the western domination in cultural and academic arena. Their emphasis on Chinese experience is greater than their zeal for universal values. This tendency is compounded by the warm reception of postmodernism and postcolonialism, especially the latter, which aims at western cultural imperialism and psychological domination over the nonwestern world. Under such circumstances, Frankfurt School theory is faced with a conundrum of immanent critique of capitalist modernity without reaffirming Eurocentric assumptions. The fact that most Frankfurt School theorists are German scholars, thinking largely within the conceptual perimeters derived from western European traditions, makes them susceptible to assaults on Eurocentrism, as shown in Axel Honneth's remarks on the inherent Eurocentric biases of the Frankfurt School that this article mentions at the beginning. It seems that Chinese humanities scholars have abandoned their whole-hearted espousal of Western philosophy, ideas and theory, and have turned to a largely skeptical and critical attitude towards anything western. Such an abrupt change of attitude may potentially undermine their serious scholarly inquiry, a completely unintended consequence of some purportedly progressive move to de-fetishize the West.

The recent nationalist attacks on western theories has a different kind of twists and turns in China, and is linked to the Chinese Marxist or Maoist legacy. Marxist and leftist orthodoxy in China, largely scorned, and rejected by Chinese intellectuals in the 1980s, has been revived under the current CCP leadership. It provides a fertile and welcoming ground for the reception of the neo-Marxist and left-leaning Western theories. Ironically, while leftist or neo-Marxist American theorists such as Edward Said and Fredric Jameson, as well as French theorists such as Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou, and so on, are warmly welcomed in China, the Frankfurt School theorists, with perhaps the only exception of Jurgen Habermas, have not fared well among Chinese academics. One reason for the rather cold reception of the Frankfurt School is perhaps the lack, or even absence of the intellectual and political rapport between the Chinese and the Frankfurt School theorists. The extensive and even obsessive relationship between the French neo-Marxist theories associated with Althusser (and his U.S. disciples such as Jameson) with Maoism has long been a controversial, yet intriguing issue in the Chinese reception of western theory. In the Chinese social context, the powerful political and ideological legacy of Maoism not only dictates instrumentalist view, but also predisposes to a nationalistic attitude that pits Chinese exceptionalism against universalism, including the Frankfurt School and other western Marxist theories. It is thus imperative to disentangle the complex relationship of Critical Theory and Maoism in China.

It should be noted that Althusser and his cohorts actually invented western (French) Maoism, thus turning Maoism from a nativist, indigenous strategy of Chinese revolution into a revolutionary universalism. By contrast, there is no historical connection or contacts between the Frankfurt School theorists and Maoism. Among the members and those associated with the Frankfurt School, Karl Wittfogel is the only one who deals with China as his research subject. His famous formulation of "Oriental despotism," drawing on Marx's notion of the Asiatic mode of production and Max Weber's views on traditional China, is intended primarily as a historical critique of Oriental empires such as China (and to some extent Russia). Wittfogel had not studied Maoism even though his academic position had been a China historian. In fact, he remained quite hostile to the CCP regime under Mao, just as he denounced the Soviet Union and its satellite states of the so-called "really existing socialism." However, when the Frankfurt School entered China as a western leftist theory, it inevitably encountered the Maoist legacy with a powerful and enduring impact on the Chinese intellectual scene.

The recent revival of Maoism in China as a nationalist ideology and premises of Chinese exceptionalism (or "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics") is apparently related to the rising nationalism and antiwesternism. However, Maoism is not merely an indigenous nationalist ideology. It is a radical, revolutionary universalism, especially via the reinvention of the French neo-Marxist Althusser. Liu Kang shows in his study the significant structural similarities and parallels between Maoism and the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, in terms of their respective efforts to search for alternative modernity. Liu argues that "the fascination with cultural and aesthetic alternatives in both the Frankfurt School and Chinese Marxists is not coincidental and unrelated, arising from the same historical context of the global transformation of modernity at the twentieth century. It is not simply a resonance of the so-called 'cultural turn' of modern thinking, but also a radical expansion and alteration of the space beyond European continent and the linear temporality of the Western world" ("The Frankfurt School" 564).

In rethinking the growing dichotomy of Chinese exceptionalism and universalism, Maoism actually offers us an alternative way to break down such a binary opposition. Maoism (or Chinese Marxism) is a hybrid product of Chinese nationalism and radical, revolutionary universalism (Marxism). The so-

called Chinese exceptionalism under the various guises of Maoism, Chinese Marxism, or "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," turns out to be a local variation as well as an expansion of western universalism under the historical condition of modernity. The essentialist logic underlying the discourses of Chinese exceptionalism can be deconstructed by rigorously contextualizing and historicizing the formation of Maoism and other theories of Chinese exceptionalism. It is precisely in this sense that the Frankfurt School's immanent, self-reflexive critique of modernity, as well as various radical, leftist and neo-Marxist theories, can help us disentangle discourses of Chinese exceptionalism. In order to do so, we need to first reject the instrumentalist view prevailing in Chinese reception of the Frankfurt School, and then rediscover the value of the Frankfurt School's philosophical and theoretical reflection on and critique of modernity. As we try to recontextualize the broader historical conditions of the Chinese response to and reception of western ideas in the following pages, our hope is that, by doing so, we would be able to renew the conversations with the West in humanities and social sciences to the benefits of all concerned.

If Critical Theory has only limited relevance to Chinese experience and therefore has failed to fully perform its critical function as it once performed in Western society, how should its Chinese journey be evaluated? First of all, it is undesirable to return to the path delineated by Said. In his article, "Traveling Theory Reconsidered," Said argues that the expected fate of theory is to travel, to transcend its own restrictions, and to be transformed in the process of borrowing, as demonstrated by Goldman's depoliticized academic utilization, and Adorno's and Frantz Fanon's creative rewriting of Lukács (Reflections 436-52). By this logic, if Critical Theory is not accepted and reinvented by Chinese scholars into something new, then its Chinese journey is of little value. In fact, it has been more than thirty years since Critical Theory was introduced into China in the early 1980s, and Chinese scholars have good reason to expect that in the humanities and social sciences, they can establish their own theories by learning from the West. Unfortunately, unlike Goldman's and Fanon's creative misreading of Lukács, Chinese reception of Critical Theory largely fails to yield a brand new reinvention amenable to Chinese conditions. Such a failure, as we mention briefly before, is partially due to Chinese scholar's neglect of Critical Theory's overall goal of critiquing and reflecting on western modernity and searching for alternatives.

To be sure, the Frankfurt School theories are essentially preoccupied with western experience of modernity since the Enlightenment. Such an excessive preoccupation has resulted, perhaps inadvertently, in the negligence, or even exclusion, of other nonwestern experiences of modernity or modernities as plural, diverse historical conditions. Nevertheless, the profound insights of the Frankfurt School's philosophical and theoretical reflection on and critique of modernity far outshine its blind spots, overlooking other nonwestern experiences. By contrast, the Chinese scholars' instrumentalist and pragmatic attitude towards the Frankfurt School (and other western theories) prevents them from a holistic understanding of the value of Critical Theory. They may find limited value in Adorno's theory of Culture Industry and Benjamin's reflection on mechanical production of art. Beyond that, there seems little appeal for Chinese scholars to reinvent a Chinese version of self-reflexive and philosophical critique of Chinese modernity, drawing on the Frankfurt School's insights.

We now need to recontextualize overall Chinese reception and response to western ideas and theories. As Luo Zhitian puts it,

Around 1891, Kang Youwei found that his contemporary scholars with a little Western learning would be highly respected and even idolized as 'Westerners.' By 1895, the missionary Archibald Little asserted with confidence that 'there would surely be the time when Western thought reigns in China.' A comparison of Little's confidence and Griffith John's hesitation in 1869 shows the dramatic change in Chinese intellectuals. In the early twentieth century, Deng Shi, a cultural essentialist, described the academic community of his day as 'worshipping Westerners as God and all Western books as canons.' Thus, Ying-shih Yu concludes that 'the idea of Western theory as universal truth' was already rooted in the consciousness of Chinese intellectuals during the period from 1905 to 1911. ("New Worship," 47-8)

Moreover, the kind of idolization of the West continued after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The western gods for the Chinese then became Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin in the pantheon of revolutionary deities. Underlying such ideological idolization, is China's unconditional espousal of scientism as universal truth that began in the late 19th century first wave of westernization. Marxism-Leninism have long been revered as universal truth governing the human world, akin to that of Newtonian law of natural sciences ruling the natural world. Even though post-Newtonian modern physics and natural sciences have largely shattered the metaphysical foundation of scientism, the CCP leadership has insisted obdurately on the absolute truth value of sciences, as shown in the political doctrine of "scientific outlook of development" for the CCP.

In natural sciences and engineering, idolization of the West reigns supreme in China. However, it is a different story as far as the humanities and social sciences are concerned. Not only vast historical and cultural differences complicate the Chinese reception and response to western ideas. Value judgments, and subjective experiences in humanities and social sciences, also make the assessment of achievements in these fields extremely difficult. However, relatively objective measures do exist in evaluating humanities and social sciences of a given country. Despite its impressive achievements in modern sciences and technologies, China has almost no world-renowned social scientists or great modern philosophers and thinkers. A commonly used H-index (or H-factor) for measuring research impact would be helpful. According to our survey, based on GSC (Google Scholar Citations) conducted in February 2017, among the 1612 scholars with an H-index above 100, Sigmund Freud ranks first (higher numbers of H-index indicating higher reputation). Other highly visible scholars in the humanities and social sciences include Pierre Bourdieu (ranking 5th), Michel Foucault (7th), Jacques Derrida (40th), Karl Marx (72nd), Noam Chomsky (108th), René Deleuze (165th), Zygmunt Bauman (214th), T. W. Adorno (282nd), Max Weber (552nd), and so on. Yet there is no single Chinese scholar in the humanities or social sciences on the list. By contrast, in the sciences, on our list of the highest 500 H-index scholars, there are 73 Chinese scientists, 4 of whom are among the top 50. The gap between natural sciences and humanities and social sciences is quite telling.

To conclude, our account of Frankfurt School's Chinese journey reveals as much of the German philosophers' insights and limits as the complex political and ideological conditions in China for the reception of the Critical Theory. Perhaps the most compelling lesson we can draw from our critical account is the ways by which politics of theory can lead us with unexpected outcomes and directions. The narrow, instrumentalist, and depoliticized appropriations of the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, and then the recent nationalistic rejection of western theories, can be better understood with a rigorous historical and theoretical critique of Maoist, and radical leftist legacies in China. Maoism, however, may help us in further inquiries into the universal values of the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory, as both Maoism and Critical Theory, even without any actual contacts, are concerned with the critique of capitalist modernity and share a similar utopian vision for the future of humankind. Chinese humanities and social sciences may find new ways to reflect on the Chinese reception of western theories, and further probe into the Chinese response to western induced modernity and China's own historical passage into modernity.

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