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## THE LIVING PAST AND SELF-MADE FUTURE: LI DAZHAO'S METAPHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

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The paper offers a reconstruction and re-evaluation of the philosophy of history developed by Li Dazhao (1889–1927) – one of the first Chinese Communists. It is argued that despite its marginal treatment in scholarly literature, Li's philosophy stands out from the thought of other Chinese Marxists for its creative interpretation of historical materialism and a critical engagement with Marx's view of class struggle and the economic base. Furthermore, in his philosophy of history, Li Dazhao innovatively draws on the Confucian idea of Great Unity (*datong*), Daoist criticism of heroism, and, most importantly, the concept of 'life' in Lebensphilosophie. In addition, the article shows that Li's view of the historical process was consistently complemented with an exceptional meta-philosophy of history and the philosophy of historiography which shared the premises of the much later narrativist epistemology of history.

Keywords: Li Dazhao, Chinese Marxism, historical materialism, narrativism, mutual aid, historical optimism, *datong*

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## Introduction

The co-founder of the Communist Party of China, Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889–1927), created one of the most comprehensive philosophies of history to have been developed by a Chinese Marxist. What is more, he displayed an unprecedented theoretical and methodological awareness of the very domain of the philosophy of history, as well as hitherto unseen familiarity with the Western conceptions of history. This notwithstanding, and despite being one of the first martyrs of the Communist cause in China, his thought was rarely referred to during Mao's regime and did not become a subject of serious academic studies in the PRC until the 1980s, mostly "due to the fear that Li's sophisticated reading of Marxism might overshadow the image of Mao Zedong who was then regarded as the ultimate 'correct' theoretician of the Chinese communist revolution" (Lu, 2011: 172). Even still, Li's unique interpretation of historical materialism and his significant contribution to the philosophy of historiography is virtually unknown to a western reader, which only strengthens the stereotype that prior to Mao's 'deviation' from orthodoxy, Chinese thinkers were somewhat incapable of a creative interpretation of Marxist thought and did not go beyond its passive reception. Li's thought is given marginal treatment in the most comprehensive existing studies of Chinese Marxist philosophy (Chan, 2003; Knight, 2005; Dirlik, 2005), which still refer to its outdated and often inaccurate expositions from the 1960s (Meisner, 1965; 1967). The paper aims to fill this gap by offering the reconstruction of Li's philosophy of history and presenting it as an original engagement with pre-Leninist Marxist view of history that drew inspirations from Confucianism, Daoism, and the philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*). In doing so, a special emphasis is placed on Li's reflection upon metaphysical conditions of such a view of history, which distinguishes him from other Sino-Marxists and preceding Chinese philosophers of history.

### The Spring of the People: on Li's pre-Marxist views

Li's contribution to the development of the twentieth-century philosophy of history extends to his pre-Marxist view of history, without which it is difficult to understand his approach to Marx. In the essay *Spring* (*Qingchun* 青春), from 1916, Li identifies the universe with an unlimited flow, without

beginning or end, that runs through cycles – of life and death, progress and reversal, rise and fall, *yin* and *yang*, spring and senectitude. The only immutable thing among the changing events of the universe is the “infinite Spring,” the principle of rebirth itself. The same holds for the world of politics: it is clear from history that nations in decline (“old nations”) have to go down while others rise, and such is the case of China, which after its initial period of splendor under the Zhou has fallen into stagnation and now “all we see is corpses.” But this also means that China will soon be reborn, or as Li Dazhao poetically writes, that young China will be born out of the fruit of old China and initiate its new spring, which will have a profound impact upon world history (Li 1: 183–188).<sup>2</sup> Importantly, Li constructed his historical optimism not only upon reference to the well-tried cyclical scheme of traditional Chinese historical thinking, but also on the belief in the crucial role of the present and its constant potential for creating something new, referring to Bergson’s theory of free will and Emerson’s idea that eternity is expressed in the present moment (1: 190–191). In the essay *Now!* (*Jin* 今) of 1918, Li Dazhao developed this point in a manner typical of presentism: history consists of the infinite number of present moments; all unlimited ‘pasts’ have their ‘resting place’ in the present, just as all ‘futures’ originate in the present. The unexpected result of this dialectics of historical continuity is that all the moments “remain indestructible phenomena of the universe,” so “if one makes a mistake, it will necessarily persist to accumulate seeds of evil among innumerable people of the future” (2: 191–194).<sup>3</sup> It is unclear, however, in what sense such a conclusion would strengthen historical optimism and encourage political action.

In the essay *The will of the people and politics* (*Minyi yu zhengzhi* 民彝與政治) of 1916, Li Dazhao once more draws on classical Chinese thought, arguing that the eponymous will of the people<sup>4</sup> is the spirit that pushes the times forward and increases the level of social freedom. Unfortunately, in the course of Chinese history, the will of the people, as well as individual freedom, was suppressed in the name of Confucian ideology (which, as

<sup>2</sup> All citations and quotations of Li Dazhao are based on five-volume set of his collected works, *Li Dazhao quanji* (Li, 2006): page number after the volume. All translations are my own.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of ‘accumulating evil’ could have been inspired by the concept of ‘inherited guilt’ (*chengfu* 承負) in the Neo-Daoist *Classic of Supreme Peace* (*Taipingjing*), cf. Hendrischke, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Historically, *minyi* meant “the people’s disposition” or “demotic ethos,” which Li reinterprets in an activist manner.

Li believes, had nothing to do with the philosophy of Confucius himself and especially of Mencius, whom Li saw as an eager protagonist of the rule of the people). In opposing imperial ideology, Li Dazhao finds his allies both in Mill and Western democratism in general, as well as in the Daoist idea of non-interference (*wuwei* 無為) and their insightful critique of centralized power. Li cites Zhuangzi's remark that "until the sage is dead, big robbers will never cease to appear" (*Zhuangzi* 10.2)<sup>5</sup> and points out that the main cause of people's oppression and China's stagnation was the cult of the sages (*shengren* 聖人). Hence, despite that only the people can create history and bring social progress, the Chinese essentially lack self-confidence and the willingness to act. The truth is, Li concludes, that "separated from the masses, there will be no hero; divorced from the general intention of the masses, it is a hero who will have no power" (Li 1: 149–158).

During these years, Li Dazhao upheld his faith in the common efforts of the people, which led him to a decisive rejection of social Darwinism. He continued to stress the role of social co-operation to the extent that as early as in 1917 he had to throw aside his initial fixation with the youth, admitting that social development requires the fusion of two spiritual forces: the new ones, namely the vigor of the youth, and the old ones – the experience of older people. In fact, Li went further and argued that "the way of social evolution lies in securing order, on the one hand, and in promotion of progress, on the other," or simply in combining conservatism with progressivism (2: 32–33). Li's attempt at reconciling apparently opposing tendencies soon extended to the spatial dimension of history. Following the then-popular comparisons between China and the West, Li argued that the progress of the universe depends upon co-operation and harmony between natural, passive, conservative, intuitive and spiritual Eastern civilization, on the one hand, and man-made, active, progressive, rational and materialistic Western civilization on the other. Upon the fusion of these two, a third civilization will emerge, bringing the cure for Eastern stagnation and the Western crisis of materialism (2: 211–217).<sup>6</sup>

To better describe this future state of harmony between two formerly contrasting ways of social life, Li reached out for the well-known Confucian ideal of the Great Unity (*datong* 大同). In the article *Federalism and world*

<sup>5</sup> The formulation that with no sages there are no robbers appears already in *Daodejing* XIX.

<sup>6</sup> Gu Hongming (1857–1928), who shared Li's dream about the fusion of spiritual East and scientific West, argued at the same time that it is China that is active and progressive rather than materialistic and jaded West (Ku, 1921).

organization (*Lianzhizhuyi yu shijie zuzhi* 聯治主義與世界組織) from Feb. 1919, Li argues that all the tracks of human evolution lead to Great Unity, and that the spreading of democracy and federalism are signs of this tendency which will ultimately lead to the complete liberation of all individuals on the one hand and great social harmony on the other (2: 283). He reiterated this idea in the article *From vertical to horizontal organizations* (*You zongde zhuzhi xiang hengde zuzhi* 由縱的組織向橫的組織) from Jan. 1920, where he stated that in contrast to the coercive, 'vertical' organizations of the past, future social organization would be a "great horizontal association where every individual is free and equal, all live in mutual love and aid – such is the prospect of the Great Unity" (3: 168). As Lu Xiufen (2011: 176) aptly observes, Li's utopianism is similar to that of Kang Youwei (1858–1927) in its mixture of the Confucian characteristics of extended familial love and social harmony with Western ideas of democracy, freedom, and equality, although as an advocate of constitutional republic, Li Dazhao did not share Kang's adhesion to monarchy.

### Mutual aid as the base: Li's engagement with Marx

Interestingly, the ideal of *datong* was first expressed after Li's 'conversion' to Marxism. In *The Victory of Bolshevism* (*Bolshevism de shengli* 的勝利) from Dec. 1918, Li acclaims the triumph of Bolshevik revolution as a victory of socialism, democracy and freedom, a portent of the future union of the working masses and the dawn of a world federation. In fact, Li puts the Russian revolution on a par with early Christianity, in terms of its mass character, enthusiastic participation, world-shaking importance and even revealed nature. By looking upon Russians through a messianic lens, Li universalizes the particular historical experience of this revolution and argues that "the spirit it embodies can be regarded as that of a common awakening in the heart of each individual among mankind of the twentieth century." On the other hand, Li Dazhao struggles with such a semi-pacifist portrayal of the Bolsheviks, arguing that "although they are opposed to war itself, they are not afraid of it," therefore "all the dregs of history that could inhibit the progress of the new movement [...] will assuredly be smashed as though hit by a thunderbolt" (2: 258–263). In this manner, however, all those who 'do not want to unify' will be excluded from the future great unity of the people.

Ultimately, Li Dazhao was not satisfied with this legitimization of social conflicts and, as Huang Songkang (2018: 201) observes, "was most concerned with the theory of class struggle and made painstaking interpretations of it."

In his essay *Class struggle and mutual aid* (*Jieji jingzheng yu huzhu* 階級競爭與互助) of July 1919, Li Dazhao adduces the observations of Kropotkin, arguing that without mutual aid (progress is not possible. Marx's dictum that "the history of all hitherto existing societies has been the history of class struggles" seems to offer no room for reconciliation with the view of anarcho-communism, but Li points out that Marx speaks only about the past societies with a developed economic system. Primitive societies with undeveloped technology and autarkic husbandry (which barely fulfilled human needs and thus did not generate surplus value) were devoid of classes and imbued with the spirit of mutual aid. Similarly, along with abolishing social classes and establishing the future socialist organization, all "evil sprouts of selfishness and private profit" will be eradicated by mutual aid. Accordingly, people will finally start to enjoy their labor, which will not make them unequal. In other words, the theory of class struggle does indeed describe ongoing human history, but it does not apply to 'prehistory' and "the true history of man" that would only begin with establishment of socialism. What is more, without the spirit of mutual aid that will assist social associations, class conflicts will not be abandoned. For this purpose, the transformation of both matter and mind, "flesh and spirit" is required (2: 354–356). It is therefore clear that from the very beginning of his encounter with Marx, Li Dazhao was not interested in adapting Marxist 'truths,' but rather in their critical reconsideration and adjustment to his own, pre-Marxist worldview.

This attitude was fully expressed in the essay *My Marxist Views* (*Wode Makesizhuyi guan* 我的馬克思主義觀) of Sep. 1919, where Li emphasizes that Marx's view of history has to be "corrected" with regard to its sole reliance upon material transformations, for just as any changes in the sphere of human spirit will be ineffective without prior economic modifications, so without the proper spirit of mutual aid the people will not be motivated to overthrow current economic relations. Li reminds us that while historical materialism has a timeless value, the way it was articulated by Marx was a "product of his times" (3: 35). This notwithstanding, it is clear that Li's historicisation of Marx's views (which is very Marxist in spirit) was aimed at helping Marxism with achieving its own goals. Certainly, Li's need for a refinement of Marxism reflected the fact that "he understood Marx in a particularly mechanistic and economically deterministic fashion" (Meisner, 1967: 92). Li argues that according to the "economic conception of history," ideas do not have "the slightest influence" upon the economic base and always follow its course; as soon as there is a change in the productive forces, a congruous change in social organization has to occur, up to the

point when the revolution breaks out (3: 21.27). But historical materialism itself, Li continues, is far from fatalism, for it presupposes that all major social changes could be brought about through a restructuring of the economic organization by the people, as can be seen from trade unions. This activity has its economic limits and cannot completely oppose the base, but in essence both layers of historical process “influence each other.” Consistently, the ‘nature’ (*xingzhi* 性質) of history that historical materialists speak of is nothing but social life. Therefore, any references to the spirit of mutual aid and love, as well as suspending the class character of social relations for prehistory and the “true history” of mankind, does not go against historical materialism (3: 31–35.105.117.216–217).

Meisner (1967: 147) is, nonetheless, not convinced by Li’s explanation and argues that the contradiction between the independence of ethical ideals and treating morality as a mere reflection of the economic base is insoluble. At the same time, however, he fails to recognize that Li Dazhao distinguishes between institutionalized moral codes and practices, which are merely a function of economic reality, and a natural, in-born tendency of mutual assistance and social responsibility. In this way, Meisner (1967: 94) is right to assert that Li Dazhao consistently develops a pre-Leninist version of Marxism, yet not due to his (allegedly aporetic) determinism, but rather to similarities between his views and the views of the young Marx, who treated the proletariat as an active historical force able to reconcile freedom with historical necessity, arguing that “history is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends” (Marx, 1956: 63). What is ultimately un-Marxist in the thought of Li Dazhao is that ‘mutual aid’ is not relativized to the social class, as, say, solidarity of the workers, but is instead extended to the whole of humanity, which seriously undermines the idea of not only class struggle, but also class interest, which, in Marx’s eyes, is the only possible bond holding the workers together.

### **In search of optimism: Li’s meta-philosophy of history**

In all these essays Li Dazhao understood historical materialism in a broad sense – one that was not reduced to Marx’s standpoint. In fact, Li openly defines historical materialism simply as a philosophy of history that denies the historical significance of any factors external to social life, particularly all mental constructs, and explains history solely in relation to changes in “material conditions,” such as ethnic, geographical and, most importantly,

economic ones. In this sense, historical materialism can be traced back to Condorcet (4:339–340).<sup>7</sup> Quite symptomatically, seeing Marxism as an extension of Enlightenment thought is typical of Marxist humanism. Consistently, Li's interest in the Western philosophy of history and generally in views of the past was complemented by his lack of interest in schematizing the past itself. Li believed that attributing historical agency to forces beyond the power of ordinary people paralyzes their action, whereas historical materialism equips them with an optimistic self-consciousness of their own power and helps them overcome submission to their own constructs (4: 10.167). In this manner, the ideological closeness between Li Dazhao and the young Marx, with his theory of alienation, is even more apparent.

In his search for the predecessors of optimistic philosophies of history, Li Dazhao goes back to Jean Bodin (1530–1596), who – just as Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and Descartes (1596–1650) – rejected the regressive view of history and the idealization of the past, believing that humanity is heading towards a bright future. Montesquieu (1689–1755) was the first to think of history in terms of laws, particularly based on geographic determinism. It was only Condorcet (1743–1794), however, who started to believe that progress is unlimited, necessary and predictable, but he identified it merely with intellectual development. It was not until Saint-Simon (1760–1825) that progress was moved to the social sphere and it was argued that history can be explained only by the organization of property, although Saint-Simon did not succeed in delineating the exact laws leading to future socialism and eventually ended with his “obscure” idea of the religion of humanity. Such causal and scientific laws were only discovered by Marx, who applied them to the analysis of a *mutual* influence between the base and the superstructure of social life – grasped and analyzed in its complete shape. Nonetheless, according to Li Dazhao, Marx's idea of the laws of history was misunderstood and soon targeted by the Baden school of Neo-Kantianism: Windelband's ideographic image of history and Rickert's “neo-idealistic” concept of value-relatedness (4: 281.292.301.311.317.321.329.331.337–8). On the other hand, the severe criticism of Rickert could serve to obliterate the similarities between Rickertian logic of transcendental values of culture and Li Dazhao's view that philosophical conceptions of history pertain to certain

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<sup>7</sup> The quote comes from *Holy Family*. The *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* were first published in 1932, after Li Dazhao's death. This may be a reason why what Li considers his views to be a correction rather than a continuation of (caricaturally deterministic) Marx.



ideals (values) such as individual freedom and unity of the people, and those which obstruct or paralyze social action should be rejected on this basis.

Unlike the later, cut-and-dried Marxist historiography of philosophy, Li Dazhao does not draw the basic dividing line of historical thought across idealist and materialist camps, but prefers to speak of a rivalry between regressive and progressive positions. Echoing the anti-positivist image of a conflict between 'the young' and 'the old,' Li traces the presence of an influential belief in there having been a golden age of history in both China and the West, and argues that the pessimism and retrogressivism of this belief distracts people from the fact that it is they alone who create history and contribute to the efforts of previous generations. Instead, historical agency is attributed to seemingly superhuman figures, like sages, heroes and kings, or spiritual powers like God and Heaven. In general, Li believes that views on the direction, cause, substance and value of history merge into two clusters, one of which has to give way to another in the course of social development. In this manner, regressive, individualistic, spiritual and religious views of history are to be superseded by a progressive, social, materialistic (*wuzhi* 物質) and humanist outlook. Purely cyclical approaches are associated by Li with the side of 'the old,' but at the same time he asserts that by means of inscribing cycles into a line of progress one gets an optimistic, 'spiral' (*luoxuan* 螺旋) concept of history, which promises that after each period of decline there comes a rise, bringing us closer to the future unity (4: 10–14, 157, 252–254, 257–269).

As Meisner reminds us, however, Li did not apply his spiral scheme or any of his schemes to world history or Chinese history in particular, which also includes typical Marxist schematizations. He did not search for evidence of a slave society in ancient China, nor did he employ the concept of the Asiatic mode of production. He did not even consider imperial China to have been feudalistic, for he believed that private landed property had been the dominant type of landownership since the late Zhou period. While discussing the differences between the history of China and the West, he mainly referred to geographical factors and Western racism (Meisner, 1965, pp. 161–164).

### Living records: Li's philosophy of historiography

Li's unwillingness to apply rigid Marxist schemes, as well as his optimist activism, result from, as Zhang Rulun (2016: 86) aptly observes, "the influence of the then-popular philosophy of life, which led him to regard history

as a living entity.” As Li repeatedly claims, history is nothing but society grasped in a ‘vertical’ way, rather than ‘horizontal.’ “History is animate, it is a totality of human life,” Li adds, and emphasizes that as a totality and a “continuum” of social life, history covers not only the past, but also the present and the future. Inanimate relics of the past and chronicles, by means of which most cultures understand ‘history,’ are not to be taken as the meaning of this term. Of course, Li admits that by equating history with human life, this notion also includes all the culture produced by this life, and pointing out the importance of the economic materializations of social life is Marx’s main merit, but only because all these materializations are understood not as ‘congealed’ but as living and developing things; things that have their own life (4: 252.357–358.399–400).

This point is particularly important for Li’s understanding of historical facts. In his only book-length work, *The Essentials of Historical Studies* (*Shixue yaolun* 史學要論) of 1924, Li Dazhao writes:

It is not only this entire history that is currently in motion, but also every single historical fact day after day re-emerges anew (*fanxin* 翻新). There are actual facts (*shizai de shishi* 實在的事實) and historical facts; although actual facts have passed once and cannot return, my interpretation (*jieyu* 解喻) of them is moving incessantly, changing with time. In this way, the facts constituting history, the historical facts, turn out to be the facts from within interpretation (4: 403).

Undoubtedly, this passage was way ahead of Li’s times. Although Li’s distinction seems to correspond with Topolski’s later demarcation between historical and historiographical facts (Topolski, 1976, pp. 222, 230, 455), it has to be noted that at the same time it does not propose any methodological constraints for constructing new historical facts. On the contrary, Li sees them as changing mostly due to the changes in the dominant philosophies of history, in a way similar to Hayden White (1973, pp. xi, 268). In this manner, Li’s viewpoint genuinely gravitates towards the narrativist positions (Zhang Rulun calls them “post-modern,” Meisner – “highly relativistic”); however, there is no doubt – and both Zhang (2016, pp. 86–87) and Meisner admit this (1967, pp. 149–150) – that Li Dazhao did not question the objective existence of the past itself. Li states that no one would claim that Confucius did not exist, but also no one would hold that the Confucius (re-)emerging from our collective imagination and memory is identical with the “historical Confucius.” In fact, Li points out that even a complete historical record will not give us the historical truth due to the (as yet unknown) future understandings. Yet, once again, he distances himself from purebred

relativist positions and argues that successive understandings advance in their credibility, that they are more and more truthful. This means that historians have an obligation to rewrite history again and again in accordance with the latest knowledge; Li reverses the traditional Confucian maxim of “refreshing the past to know the new” (*wengu zhixin* 溫故知新) into “know the new in order to refresh the past.” The purpose of historical studies, Li writes, is not merely to record “contingent events,” but to provide “general explanations” (*yiban de shuoming* – 般的說明) and reconstructions of the cause and effect relationships within the historical process. And while the process of selecting and combining the elements to be explained in the form of narrative certainly has an “artistic nature” (*yishu de xingzhi* 藝術的性質) (another innovative idea bringing Li closer to narrativism), the theory has to be inductively generated rather than imposed, and should be aimed at discovering the laws and regularities governing human history, in compliance with the recent findings of other sciences (4: 254.403–413).

Generally speaking, Li Dazhao considered the methodology of history (*lishi yanjiufa*) and “historiography,” by which he meant the “art of compiling histories” (*lishi bianzuanfa* 歷史編纂法), as those parts of historical studies that prepare for making historical records, whereas the theory of history (*lishi lilun*) generalizes the results obtained using these methods and techniques. However, since all historians, even unconsciously, cannot do without a certain view of historical process, the theory of history has to seek support from the philosophy of history, which asks about the basis and nature of historical facts as such. Importantly, Li emphasizes that the philosophy of history cannot be reduced to a purely formal critique of historical studies, for it has to answer the fundamental questions regarding the meaning of historical facts: what makes them facts, based on what rules, and for what purpose. And since such a theoretical quest leads to particular visions of history, Li agrees with Robert Flint (1838–1910) that “the philosophy of history is not something separated from historical facts, but something contained in them” (4: 415–16.424–425). But then it also means that the philosophy of history is not opposed to historical studies, which are based upon these facts. Li believes that the seemingly unscientific character of the philosophy of history stems from its unclear realm and blurred borders (e.g., with the theory of history), but just as the philosophy of nature ceased to be mixed with the natural sciences and gradually established its own domain, so it is only a matter of time (and a proper attitude) until the philosophy of history becomes a necessary, well-accepted complement of historical studies. In this way, all the classical questions posed by the philosophers of history, starting

from those regarding the nature and our knowledge of the past up to the belief in the end and purpose of history, will come into the view of scholarly circles (4: 434–442). This intersection of Li's meta-philosophy of history and his philosophy of historiography certainly reached out to the Marxist idea of historical laws without losing all the activist and progressivist elements of his worldview.

## Conclusion

Li Dazhao stands out from the other Marxist philosophers in pre-1949 China for his imaginative and unique (re-)interpretation of historical materialism, which derived substantial inspirations from the Western philosophy of life, as well as Chinese Confucian and Daoist thought. It would be quite misleading and unfair, though, to treat Li Dazhao's philosophy of history as a 'mixture' of these currents. Not only because Li maintained consistency in his approach, but mostly due to the fact that, as an original thinker, he did not pledge fidelity to any of these schools, but rather selectively picked out the concepts and arguments that he found compatible with his worldview, furnishing them with ideas of his own. Note that the difference between the pre-Marxist and Marxist phases of his thought are more biographically than philosophically important. Most of the ideas expressed in the earlier period – the image of the conflict between the young and the old, optimistic progressivism, belief in the crucial historical role of the masses along with the criticism of historical heroism, and the conviction about the imminent future era of unity, equality and mutual love – all these points were actually expanded rather than extruded in his later thought. Certainly, Li Dazhao found in Marx his best ally in the philosophical articulation of his beliefs, who also helped him brace them on a 'scientific' basis. But Li's lack of interest in the Marxist periodization of history, his inclusion of non-economic factors under the umbrella of historical materialism, the incorporation of the anarcho-communist concept of 'mutual aid,' and most importantly, a significant weakening of the idea of class struggle, and the belief in mutual influence between the economic base and the superstructure, testify to the fact that his reading of Marxism, which was often unknowingly close to the views of young Marx, was quite critical and creative. The concept of the mutual interaction between ideal and material factors, as well as the idea of Great Unity and the image of a spiral pattern of the course of history were all taken from classical Chinese thought, which shows that despite his

fascination with the Western philosophy of history and his entirely modern (if not postmodern) approach to the nature of historical writing, All these ideas were rooted in a unique and explicit metaphilosophy of history, which treated the philosophies of history as *means* of both expression and motivation of social life in its march towards greater human freedom and unity.

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