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Appropriating Dewey: Hu Shi and His Translation of Dewey's "Social and Political Philosophy" Lecture Series in China

Abstract: The significance of the discovery of half of Dewey's most important China lecture series notes, "Social and Political Philosophy," cannot be overestimated. These newly-discovered lecture notes provide us with a unique opportunity to conduct a translation case study in both directions: first, to check Hu Shi's translation against Dewey's lecture notes; and second, to check *John Dewey: Lectures in China, 1919-1920*, "back translations" in the terminology of translation studies, both against Hu's translation and against Dewey's original notes that the back translators tried to reconstruct. More important, by treating translations as re-writes and as products of cultural and ideological manipulations, this case study enables us to analyze how Hu Shi appropriated Dewey's ideas to advance his own cultural and political agenda while acting as the latter's interpreter.¹

John and Alice Dewey's visit to Japan in 1919 and their subsequent sojourn in China from 1919 to 1921 are well documented and celebrated. Their *Letters from China and Japan* published in 1920 and his articles published in the *New Republic* and *Asia* and, later, reprinted in *Characters and Events* in 1929, contained many pithy observations and incisive analyses of China and Japan that remain useful to historians even today. Yet while his lectures at the Imperial University of Tokyo were published as *The Reconstruction in Philosophy*, his China lectures were unfortunately lost. In 1973, the University Press of Hawaii published *John Dewey: Lectures in China, 1919-1920*, which used the Chinese transcripts of Dewey's lectures and translated them back into English.

Until recently, whether *John Dewey: Lectures in China, 1919-1920* can be admitted into the Dewey *œuvre* has been a moot point. The discovery that I made in the Hu Shi (Hu Shih) Archives in Beijing of Dewey's most important China lecture series notes, "Social and Political Philosophy," changed the situation.² Hu Shi translated all of Dewey's lectures in Beijing and in the provinces of Shandong and Shanxi. Now, with three texts available to us – these newly-discovered Dewey's lectures notes, Hu Shi's Chinese translation of them, and the University Press of Hawaii's translation of Hu's Chinese translation back to English – we have a unique opportunity to conduct a translation case study in three directions: first, to check Hu Shi's translation against Dewey's lecture notes; and second, to check *John Dewey: Lectures in China, 1919-1920*, "back translations" in the terminology of translation studies, both against Hu's translation and against Dewey's original notes that the back translators tried to

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1. I would like to thank Mac Dixon-Fyle, my colleague at the History Department at DePauw University, for his keen comments on the paper.

2. The extant Dewey's lecture notes on "Social and Political Philosophy" can be found in "Authors Unidentifiable" Folder, the "Hu Shi Archives," E087-001 (Dewey 1919-20a). In this article, they will be referred to as "SPP" followed by the Roman numeral indicating the lecture number and the Arabic number indicating the page number.

reconstruct. More important, by treating translations as re-writes and as products of cultural and ideological manipulations,³ this case study enables us to analyze how Hu Shi appropriated Dewey's ideas to advance his own cultural and political agenda while acting as the latter's interpreter.

Dewey's "Social and Political Philosophy" lecture series consisted of sixteen lectures that he delivered at Peking University once a week on Saturday afternoons from 4 P.M. to 6 P.M. beginning on September 20, 1919. His lecture notes that are extant in the Hu Shi Archives consist of Lectures I, II, III, IV, X, XI, XII, and XVI, exactly half of this lecture series.⁴ Dewey's name does not appear on any of these notes. The words "Social Pol Phil Lecture I" appear on the first page of the first lecture, with the page number typed on the top middle of the page for this lecture. The rest of the extant lecture notes have "SPP" typed on the top left margin, followed by a Roman numeral indicating the lecture number in the series and then by a dash and an Arabic number indicating the page number of the lecture. These notes are typed by Dewey himself using the typewriter that he brought with him to Japan and China.

Hu explained the process of production in translating Dewey's lectures in China forty years later in a speech given in Honolulu:

Typing on his own typewriter, Dr. Dewey always wrote out his brief notes for every lecture, a copy of which would be given to his interpreter so that he could study them and think out the suitable Chinese words and phrases before the delivery and the translation. After each lecture in Peking, the Dewey notes were given to the selected recorders so that they could check their reports before publication. (Hu Shi 1962: 765)

Thus, the Dewey lectures as published in Chinese were a product of a three-party collaboration that was twice removed from the original version, that is, from Dewey's own typed notes and his delivery of them, through Hu's interpretation, and, finally, to the recorder's transcript. Interestingly, *John Dewey, Lectures in China, 1919-1920* was also a production of a three-party collaboration and was also twice removed from the Chinese translation: first, Chung-ming Lu, a graduate student from Taiwan who was studying the philosophy of education at the University of Hawaii in the early 1960s, made a literal translation back into English of Dewey's lectures as they appeared in the Chinese translation; then Robert Clopton of the University of Hawaii rendered them into idiomatic English; Tsuin-chen Ou, a Dewey scholar of the New Asia College in Hong Kong, compared Clopton's version for fidelity to the Chinese text; and, finally, Clopton incorporated Ou's suggestions for modifications.⁵ The aim was to replicate as closely as possible Dewey's own style and language.

For ease of following the analyses in this paper, I would like to define the terminology employed to refer to the three texts available to us. Following the

3. Andre Lefevre 1992.

4. Please note that the extant Lecture IV is missing the last page, which I suspect, by comparing it with the transcript of Hu's Chinese version, contains only the remainder of the sentence that begins at the bottom of p. 13, the last of the extant copy. The extant Lecture VI has only one page, that is, p. 1.

5. Robert Clopton & Tsuin-chen Ou (1973: 33).

terminology commonly used in translation studies, the newly-discovered Dewey's lectures notes will be referred to as the source text; Hu Shi's Chinese translation of them, the target text; and Clopton and Ou's translation of Hu's Chinese translation back to English, back translation. In analyzing Hu's translation and how he appropriated Dewey, I basically use the back translation, as it is published and is available for scholars to consult and to verify. However, because Clopton and Ou put a premium on recouping Dewey's elocution, they at times deviated from the target text when they deemed the latter patently uncharacteristic of what Dewey would have said. In the cases where the deviation was minor, I highlight the passages in question in bold and put my own renditions also in bold in the brackets and indicate that they are from the target text. In the cases where Clopton and Ou's back translation deviated too much from the target text, I offer my own translation, indicate it as such in parentheses at the end of the passage, and place it next to Clopton and Ou's for comparison.

While Clopton and Ou reported that many scholars complimented them for their success in replicating the style and language of Dewey's during that period,⁶ they sidestepped the issue of the content. This, however, may not have been a deliberate evasion, but rather a misplaced confidence on their part in the fidelity of Hu's translation. In this, Clopton and Ou were not alone. Given Hu's superstar stature in China – Dewey's most famous Chinese student and modern China's most celebrated intellectual leader – no one would be so impertinent as to suspect that his understanding of Dewey's ideas, his command of English and, least of all, his mastery of the vernacular Chinese could be less than perfect. To question the fidelity of his translation of Dewey's lectures would be tantamount to being sacrilegious.

Clopton and Ou's presumption of Hu's fidelity to Dewey's ideas was not the most damaging to the value of their back translations, however. In privileging the recouping of how Dewey may have remarked over what he actually said and, more to the point, what his Chinese audience and readers may have heard and read, they were completely oblivious of the role Hu Shi played in fashioning Dewey's messages to his Chinese audience, in addition to that of his competence as a translator.

To take up the issue of fidelity that Clopton and Ou addressed in their second round of back translation first. The irony is that fidelity was not the top priority in Hu's translation philosophy. In a letter written in 1933, Hu reflected on the translation practice common in his friends' circle: "Twelve years ago, translation practice was quite different from today's. Back then, literal translation had not become a practice. [...] We aimed for readability and often did not stick to the original language."⁷

Even as Hu began to accept literal translation as the practice by the 1930s, he continued to view fidelity as a misplaced fixation. He dismissed the three golden rules of translation made famous by Yan Fu in China since the turn of the 19th- and 20th-centuries – "fidelity," "lucidity," and "elegance" – as a false trichotomy. There was only one golden rule in translation, he contended, which was "to carefully discern the author's intention and to convey it elastically in Chinese." It was like asking oneself: "How would the author say it in Chinese if he were Chinese?" "Lucidity equals

6. Robert Clopton & Tsuin-chen Ou (1973: 9).

7. Hu Shi (1933: 24.154).

fidelity,” snapped him with a quip: “If lucidity is not there, what’s the use of fidelity? Wouldn’t it be better to read the original?”⁸

Hu’s dismissal of fidelity as a misplaced fixation reflected a situation that was both historical and idiosyncratic. As the foremost champion of vernacular Chinese, the colloquial language of the common people as opposed to the classical language used by the elite, Hu was keenly aware of the poverty of its vocabulary and the looseness of its syntax. He lamented in a diary entry in 1922 that he could not find appropriate words in Chinese to render such simple terms in English as “tone,” “rhythm,” and “form.”⁹ As late as 1935, he contended that only by fully assimilating the precise and fine syntax of the Western languages, could vernacular Chinese express complex ideas and intricate theories.¹⁰ In addition to being limited by the historical circumstances of the rudimentary state of vernacular Chinese, Hu was further constrained by an idiosyncratic aversion to use idioms from Classical Chinese, which he dismissed as clichés, and by an equally idiosyncratic insistence on being plain and simple so as to be accessible to everyone. When he had difficulty finding appropriate vocabulary and syntax of the vernacular to translate the sentence at hand, he would often settle for colloquialism to render the meaning without bothering to find a syntactic structure parallel to the source text to embed it.

I have analyzed elsewhere Hu’s works in translation, including his translation of Dewey’s “Social and Political Philosophy.” I illustrated with examples how his translation philosophy, the rudimentary state of the vernacular Chinese, and his idiosyncratic writing style combined to make him, though fluent, masterful, and elegant in Chinese and English respectively, a mediocre translator.¹¹ Suffice it here to say that his translations were marred by errors, imprecisions, emendations, elisions, and truncations. The most egregious examples happened to be from his translation of “Social and Political Philosophy.”

Before we look closely at Hu’s translation of “Social and Political Philosophy,” a little bit more information about the context of its production will be in order. The extant Dewey lecture notes are about twelve pages in average for each of the lectures, the shortest being Lecture XVI, which is six pages long. As these lecture notes were written in prose form, it is really a misnomer to call them lecture notes. Granted that they were not polished and ready for print, each lecture was fully written out, with the beginning, the main body, and the conclusion. In Lecture II, Dewey even wrote interlinearly in one place and on the margin in another with his fountain pen: “Will condense the above in lecture” and “Condense with p. 6.” I suspect that these extant notes were pretty close to what he actually spoke to his Chinese audience.

I have already mentioned that the translation was a three-party collaboration and that each lecture of this series lasted for two hours. Although the announcement of this lecture series indicated that it began at 4 o’clock in the afternoon, I inferred from other

8. Hu Shi (n.d.).

9. Hu Shi (1922: 3.503).

10. Hu Shi (1935: 12.294-300).

11. See Chapter 7: “Fidelity and Lucidity: A Dilemma in Translation?,” of the second volume of my Hu Shi biography series in Chinese, Yung-chen Chiang 2013.

announcements of Dewey's lecture series at Peking University that it lasted for two hours, with one hour of time allotted for Dewey and another for his translator. With Dewey having provided the lecture notes before hand, the translation apparently did not proceed sentence by sentence, but rather paragraph by paragraph. According to the reminiscences of the recorder, who collaborated with Hu Shi, for Dewey's "Types of Thinking" lecture series:

Interpretation was done consecutively, Dewey giving about a paragraph in English, then the interpreter turning this paragraph into Chinese. At times in the Peking lectures Hu Shih would stop interpreting to ask Dewey for clarification on some point, then continue the Chinese version.¹²

By all accounts, Dewey was a notoriously slow speaker, who spoke haltingly and often with long pauses between sentences. According to a *Time* cover story from 1928 about his China lectures:

Dewey doctrines are best not heard from the lips of the Second Confucius. His delivery is monotonous, halting, full of long pauses while the great mind ponderously moves careless of the impatience of auditors. But a printed page of Dewey is starred with diadems.¹³

In lecturing, Dewey apparently stayed close to his text. Irving Edman, Dewey's former student and, later, colleague at Columbia, described Dewey's classroom lecture style as follows: "He sat at his desk, fumbling with a few crumpled yellow sheets and looking abstractedly out of the window. He spoke very slowly in a Vermont drawl."¹⁴ Hu Shi, too, described Dewey's lecture style in the same vein in his diary entry for July 6, 1921, a few days before the Dewey's departure from China: "Dewey is not an eloquent speaker. When he speaks, it looks like every word is labored. If he has a prepared text, he can give quite forceful lectures; otherwise his lectures are quite dull."¹⁵

Thus, even though Dewey's lecture notes for each lecture were only about twelve pages in length and the two-hour time allotted for each lecture should give him and Hu Shi enough time for delivery in English and translation in Chinese, I suspect Dewey did not stray much from his prepared notes to elaborate and digress. There are, however, significant differences between Hu's translations and the extant Dewey's lecture notes. Some of these may indeed have reflected elaborations and digressions from Dewey when delivering his lectures. I believe, nonetheless, that these differences were derived mostly from the fact that Hu's translations were re-writes, but not translations in the conventional sense. As he put Dewey's ideas in words and phrases in vernacular Chinese – What Dewey would say if he were Chinese, as dictated by Hu's translation philosophy – he simplified, conflated, emended, rearranged, and even expunged Dewey's text, along with not infrequent translation mistakes. At the end, what he

12. Quoted in Barry Keenan (1977: 13).

13. "Foreign News: To Moscow," *Time*, June 4, 1928, quoted in Scott R. Stroud (2013: 106-7).

14. Philip Jackson (2000: 183).

15. Hu Shi (1921a: 3.166).

accomplished was, I submit, as much a translation of Dewey as an appropriation of Dewey to serve his own cultural and political agendas.

Space precludes the possibility of presenting a sufficient number of exhibits of Hu's translation samples from "Social and Political Philosophy." Many of the errors of and lack of precisions in his translations can be attributed to the poverty of vocabulary and syntax of the vernacular that was being elevated into the medium for scholarly and creative discourses, in addition to the fact that translation was not his forte. I will cite two sets of examples to illustrate the typical ways Hu simplified, rearranged, and conflated Dewey's argument until he completely distorted Dewey's ideas. The first set of examples illustrate Hu's tendency to simplify Dewey's nuanced analyses of contrasts or comparisons to the extent that they were often painted in stark black and white contrasts and impute with good and bad connotations. In Lecture I, Dewey began by saying that human beings were creatures of habits and customs and were averse to question them:

Men built up customs and transmitted traditions to their offspring for centuries before they tried to discover any rationale in what they did. They made no attempts at explanation. If asked what for one they would have said they had such and [such] customs because they liked them, or because their ancestors told them so to act or because their gods had established them. To question too closely was to be impious or disloyal, and might result as with Socrates in death. (SPP: I.1)

Hu's translation of this passage, with emendations, was longer:

We no longer think about what we do; we do not ask ourselves "Why do we do it this way rather than some other way?" If someone does raise the question, we reply that "everybody does it this way," or that "this is the way that is has always been done." As long as our way of dealing with a class of situations provides reasonable satisfaction, we do not need a theory to justify our action.

[T]here is a general tendency to shy away from examination and... to become annoyed at or resentful toward people who insist upon raising the questions of what? and how? and why? Men [**"Men with high ideals"** in the target text] who have raised such questions have often been unpopular [**"reviled"** in the target text], and some who have persisted in pressing their questions about existing institutions have even been put to death for their pains. The classic example, of course, is Socrates [...]. (Clopton/Ou: 46)

Clopton and Ou were right in taking out the prepositional phrase in the "Men with high ideals," for they correctly judged that Dewey would not have said that. Nevertheless, they could not change the fact that Hu in his target text was pitting the "men with high ideals" against a traditionalist society. In so doing, Hu conjured up a black and white contrast and a good versus bad contest that was not there in Dewey's lecture notes. Note the contrast on the origin of philosophizing between Dewey's original text and Hu's target text:

So men began to philosophize about their collective habits, their established institutions only when these began to cease [to] function satisfactorily. The difficulties might be

internal strife or external contacts and conflicts or both. But something threatening change or disintegration made men compare and inquire and attempt to select and hold on to the really good. (SPP: 1.2)

And,

It is only when existing customs and institutions cease to function adequately that we tolerate – and even then, quite unwillingly in many cases – questioning as to their form and function. When our laws, customs, and institutions no longer serve the purpose for which they were originally evolved, we are forced to ask “What’s the trouble?” or “Why aren’t they working?” [What follows in the target text is expunged in the back translation: **“Are there ways to remedy them?” Thus ideas emerge only when social institutions are not working or are diseased. Only when society is diseased will social philosophy emerge and only when politics is diseased will political philosophy emerge.”**]. (Clopton/Ou: 47)

The expunged passage in bold from the target text sheds light on why Hu was enamored with “men of high ideals.” For he believed that society, and China of his times in particular, depended on these “men of high ideals” to provide guidance to dismantle the anachronistic and defective institutions and customs. He took to heart Dewey’s point that “men began to philosophize about their collective habits, their established institutions only when these began to cease [to] function satisfactorily.” He was, however, completely oblivious of Dewey’s next point that “something threatening change or disintegration made men compare and inquire and attempt to select and hold on to the really good.” Thus he left out in his translation Dewey’s point on philosophy as an attempt to salvage what was good in the tradition and replaced it with his own notion of philosophy as reformative, as illustrated in his emendation in bold.

That Hu would expunge and emend as he did here in this case is understandable. He came to Dewey late in his education in the United States, after he had studied philosophy of the objective idealist school at Cornell for five years. Following Wilhelm Windelband, he believed that philosophy emerged in ancient China, as it did in ancient Greece, when the breakdown of the social, political, and intellectual systems prompted the search for remedies and guidance.¹⁶

The second example I use to illustrate the typical way Hu simplified, rearranged, and conflated Dewey’s argument until he completely distorted Dewey’s ideas is a composite example. In Lecture II, Dewey expounded on the rise of pragmatic philosophy under the influence of science. Dewey first discussed the new social sciences of the 19th century and their pretensions to discover universal laws in society as exact and inexorable as those in physics and astronomy. In so doing, the social sciences dismissed philosophy as speculative and unverifiable. Dewey argued that whereas the social sciences had fallen short of realizing their claims, the spirit of science and the scientific method had contributed to the rise of pragmatic philosophy.

16. Wilhelm Windelband (1919: 2, 13). For a detailed analysis of Hu’s education in philosophy at Cornell and his later transfer to Columbia to study under Dewey, see the first volume of my Hu Shi biography: Yung-chen Chiang 2011.

Hu's translation did not always follow the steps through which Dewey made his argument. He rearranged, mismatched, and conflated. The result was a chaotic jumble.

On the relationship between the social sciences and philosophy, Hu's translation reads as follows:

We must bring philosophy to bear on our present situation. Science operates from a purely objective viewpoint. It can describe and record natural phenomena, but it cannot guide them or change them according to human ideals. But **social philosophy** [**“the social sciences”** in the target text] cannot stop with mere recording and description; it must direct with thoughtful understanding the conclusions and recommendations which grow out of the records and descriptions of science. A certain amount of speculation is, therefore, necessarily present in **social philosophy** [**“the social sciences”** in the target text]. On the positive side is the tremendous change in the psychological attitude of people in general following the development of the social sciences. We have come to regard human activities as something from which law and principle can also be formulated, rather than something erratic and unpredictable. The social sciences have introduced the scientific spirit into social philosophy. Philosophy, former purely speculative, has been brought down from the clouds to dwell among men. (Clopton/Ou: 57)

Hu not only erred in conflating philosophy with the social sciences, he also mistakenly attributed philosophy's being “brought down from the clouds to dwell among men” – Dewey's major theme in “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy” and *The Reconstruction in Philosophy* – to the social sciences.

Dewey was at once more nuanced and precise. He called the new social sciences' claim to universality of their laws based on the observations of certain tendencies prevailing under certain historical conditions absurd, “a deification of local and possibly temporary circumstances” (SPP: II.3). The social sciences looked askance at classical philosophy without realizing their own pretentiousness:

When the positivistic matter of fact spirit invaded the consideration of society and politics, philosophy was condemned as speculative and pretentious, unverifiable. . . . The “sciences” may be called more artificial than the philosophes because the latter were more or less frankly imaginative and speculative, telling what should be, while the sciences claimed to give an account of things as they must be. (SPP: II.1, 3)

And yet, it was precisely in their frankly imaginative and speculative nature that lay the value of philosophes, which Hu completely expunged from his translation:

The great thing about the classic systems of philosophy is that they thought with a purpose in view. They were not satisfied with mere description or observation. They tried to deduce principle for the directions of life, principles to be used in judging the value of events and in projecting plans and purpose. Nothing less than this can content man in social affairs. For we are not mere outside observers; we are sharers, partners. Our own destiny and fortune is at stake in the course of events. We want them to turn out one way rather than in another way, and we use our observations of what is in order to make decisions about [what they] may and shall be. (SPP: II.4-5)

In conflating the social sciences with philosophy, Hu completely missed the focal point of Dewey in this lecture. Using the section heading, the “union of the scientific spirit with the moral and practical aim of philosophy,” Dewey spelled out the difference that distinguished the pragmatist philosophy from classical philosophy and, for that matter, the social sciences. Of the social sciences, with their pretension to become objective sciences – “spectator theory of knowledge,” as Dewey called it, Dewey scoffed: “It is absurd to suppose that we can have a coldblooded social science that eliminates desire and preference and emotion and bias” (SPP: II.6). In contradistinction to this “spectator theory of knowledge,” the pragmatist philosophy was “pragmatic, instrumental”:

That is, it aims to be an art, an applied science, a form of social engineering. Politics is an art, but [it] should not be a blind or routine or magical art, not directed by intrigue or vested interest, etc. [...] The building of railways and bridges, of canals and electric dynamos recognizes the supremacy of human aims and desires. It uses factual knowledge in behalf of collective human ends and purposes. But the use depends upon positive science, and hence is not blind, random, accidental, or merely traditional. It can conceive and execute new things in an orderly way that turns the course of natural phenomena in definite channels. In like fashion our social and political notions and theories and systems must be used for social constructions, for social engineering and must be subjected to the tests of such use. (SPP: II.6-7)

What this composite example reveals is as much about translation as about appropriation. As appropriation is the focus for the second half of this article, I would like to mention at this point two more issues related to translation. The first involved the difficulty Hu faced when neologisms or technical terms required to render foreign terms had not been coined or agreed upon. There is one good example in Lecture XII where Dewey discussed the early 19th century British political reforms under the influence of utilitarians. Of the three main ideas the utilitarians brought to bear on reforms, the third one was about constitutional government. Dewey said in part: “Paradoxical as it sounds, the lawmakers must themselves be under [the] law and act according to it” (SPP: XII.5). As Hu must have experienced difficulty in finding an appropriate word to render “paradoxical,” he settled – aghast! – for “superficial.” It should be pointed out that Hu’s translation of this sentence was faithfully translated back into English by Clopton/Ou, including the wrong choice of word in question “superficial”: “Legislators are also subject to the restrictions embodied in the law. At first glance this appears to be a superficial point, but actually it is extremely important.” (Clopton/Ou: 145).

The other issue concerning translation is a personal and ideological one, which speaks volumes about how translation is never a neutral operation. In Lecture XVI, Dewey said: “However much men may rightly differ as to the wisdom of schemes of socialism and communism, all wise and sympathetic persons ought to agree upon the need of the widest possible sharing of knowledge, including news, the knowledge as to what is going on in society, in the whole society of humanity, a **communism** of intelligence” (SPP: XVI.4). Hu’s translation with emendations reads: “Many people

naturally are opposed to socialism in economics. Because it impinges upon private interests, opposition is to be expected. Yet even though many people would object to the equal division of properties, there is one area for which all would be willing, which is **socialism** of knowledge. Whereas a property becomes smaller the more it is divided, knowledge increases the more it is distributed.”¹⁷ Clopton/Ou’s back translation in this case, though not quite faithful to Hu’s translation, is closer to Dewey’s usual practice in specifying the class component: “We can understand why some members of the privileged classes oppose socialism in the realm of economics – It is simply that they don’t like the idea that their possessions will be shared with others. But the same objection does not apply to what we might call **socialism** of knowledge. Where material possessions are concerned, the more people who share them, the less each will have; but just the opposite is true of knowledge.” (Clopton/Ou: 178).

That Hu would substitute “socialism” for “communism” had nothing to do with fear of censorship. China was then divided, with regional warlords vying for power among themselves. They were too weak and too preoccupied with other priorities to exercise thought control. Hu’s decision to substitute “socialism” for “communism” was purely a personal one. While Hu was averse to Communism throughout his life, for almost thirty years until the early 1940s, he believed that socialism represented the latest phase of the development of the democratic ideal. In “The Civilizations of the East and the West” published in *Whither Mankind* in 1928 edited by Charles Beard, he contended:

The ideals of Socialism are merely supplementary to the earlier and more individualistic ideas of democracy. They are historically part of the great democratic movement. [...] Hence the rise of the socialistic movements which, when freed from their distracting theories of economic determinism and class war, simply mean the emphasis on the necessity of making use of the collective power of society or of the state for the greatest happiness of the greatest number.¹⁸

He proclaimed that “[t]he world is becoming socialistic without being aware of it.” Citing as evidence the social legislations enacted in England, “the mother country of capitalism,” and the United States, “the champion of individual liberty,” he argued that these great democracies had elevated the liberal ideals to the highest level akin to a “religion of Democracy” that “not only guarantees one’s own liberty, nor merely limits one’s liberty by respecting the liberty of other people, but endeavors to make it possible, for every man and every woman to live a free life; which not only succeeds through science and machinery in greatly enhancing the happiness and comfort of the individual, but also seeks through organization and legislation to extend the goods of life to the greatest number.”¹⁹

Such effervescent celebration of utilitarian political philosophy, though coming from an essay written ten years later, reveals only the tip of the iceberg of the problems

17. Dewey (1919-20c: XVI.42.93). (Translation mine.)

18. Hu Shi (1928: 36.344-345).

19. Hu Shi (1928: 36.345-346).

in Hu's translation of "Social and Political Philosophy." I will analyze now how Hu manipulated and appropriated Dewey's ideas to advance his own cultural and political agendas in the following four areas: the utilitarian political philosophy; the modern state as the best instrument to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number; society as an organicist entity; and, last but not the least, democratic realism.

In the extant lecture notes on "Social and Political Philosophy," Dewey referred to utilitarianism only once, that is, in Lecture XII, where he analyzed the utilitarian political philosophy in the context of the development of British liberalism. Yet in Hu's translated version, utilitarianism appeared in two other places through his emendations. In all three, including where Dewey referred to utilitarianism both as a historical movement and as a critique, Hu made Dewey appear to be a utilitarian. In Lecture II where Dewey characterized the goals of pragmatic philosophy, he said,

Politics is an art, but should not be a blind or routine or magical art, not directed by intrigues or vested interest, etc. It rests on the possibility of introducing more conscious regulation to the course of events **in behalf of the general or public interests.** (SPP: II.6-7)

It is perhaps no longer a surprise to readers of this article that Hu's translation did not exactly follow Dewey's text. In fact, Dewey's references to "intrigues" and "vested interest" were generally expunged from Hu's translation, the reason of which will be analyzed below. At any rate, this particular paragraph in Hu's translation differed quite significantly from Dewey's original. It may have been the result of Dewey's impromptu elaboration, or Hu's rearrangement of Dewey's lecture notes, or Hu's emendation. The point here, however, is to compare the phrases in bold in Dewey's original and Hu's translation in Clopton/Ou's back translation:

It is not enough, for example, for economists merely to describe the production and exchange of goods, and stop there; they must indicate the directions, based upon their study of economic situations and events, in which men are to move so that **the greatest number of people may achieve the maximum satisfaction** ["**the greatest happiness of the greatest number**" in the target text]. (Clopton/Ou: 59)

Note that Clopton and Ou did not render in their back translation the entirety of that famous utilitarian dictum: "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." They substituted "the maximum satisfaction" for "the greatest happiness." The reason for this substitution is not hard to find; they knew Dewey was no utilitarian.

In lecture X, Dewey discoursed on the nature of the state and the use of force. Toward the end of this lecture, he discussed one of the moral criteria for judging the state:

It must be admitted that the historic state has been conducted largely in the interest of an exploiting governing few, a reigning house or dynasty, or an economic class that could use political power to further its own interests. But it must also be admitted that political struggles for democratic government have been waged against these conditions, and the political struggle for democratic government has been in the main an attempt to see that

the state functioned **in behalf of the public interest** – that it legislates and administers **in the interest of the people at large**. (SPP: X.7-8)

Hu's translation reads as follows:

To sum up what we have said, the state is judged to be good when it represents **the general public welfare** [**“the broadest public interest”** in the target text]; but it is not good, no matter whether it be called a democracy or something else, if it represents the interests of a minority of its people, or of a monarch and his relatives, or of one political party, or of one economic class. The fundamental problem in politics is to build a state which consistently works for **the welfare of all its people** [**“the broadest public interest of the greatest number”** in the target text]. (Clopton/Ou: 132)

The phrases highlighted in bold clearly indicated that this second time, Clopton and Ou eschewed completely Hu's utilitarian language. Yet even though the back translators could vindicate Dewey by stripping off mistaken or misleading emendations in the target translation, they could not restore what had already been expunged in the first round of translation if the source text is no longer extant, as had been the case of Dewey's "Social and Political Philosophy."

This was exactly what Hu did. In Lecture XII, Dewey did not merely analyze liberalism and the utilitarian political philosophy. He presented his critique as well. None of Dewey's critique of utilitarian philosophy and his larger critique of liberalism, however, appeared in Hu's translation. As Dewey's critique of utilitarianism was embedded in his critique of liberalism in general, it is easier to reproduce both at the same time to see what Hu expunged:

The great error in the *theories* of liberalism is [that] they tended to make political organization a means of purely individual welfare, the rights of individuals conceived apart from the social ties and connections through which alone the individuals can attain a full life (Hence reduction of happiness to pleasures in utilitarianism, and emphasis upon security, upon possession). (SPP: XII.6; emphasis in the source text)

And:

The error in liberalism in thinking that the state originated in the choice of isolated individuals and aims to protect them as individuals in their rights resulted in two other errors. The first was in thinking of government as a kind of necessary evil, a surrender of some rights and liberties in order to be more certain of others – especially of physical existence and property. [...] The other great mistake of liberal philosophy was in supposing that the individual is an adequate judge of his own interest, and this self-interest of each may be counted upon to secure a regard for the net welfare of all. (SPP: XII.7-8)

What Hu left out was not simply Dewey's discussion of the shortcomings of utilitarianism and liberalism. He excised from his translation long paragraphs in which Dewey pointed out the dangers that threatened democracy and his cherished goals for democracy. Toward the end of this lecture, Dewey recapitulated what he referred to as

the “three planks” of liberal political philosophy: suffrage, representative legislature, and constitutional government. It is true that Dewey said that “they are the best devices yet invented for keeping officials responsible to the public will.” At the same time, he insisted that “they are not ends in themselves,” that “they have no intrinsic sacredness,” and that “these means are not perfect and will doubtless be improved” (SPP: XII.6-7). On the positive side, he cited the extension of suffrage irrespective of sex, wealth, and education as one area of improvement. He even referred to referendum and initiative as experiments in combining the ideas of representative democracy with that of pure democracy. On the negative side, he warned of the danger of dynastic, family, and business interests in subverting democracy and thereby hampering “the full use of the government as a democratic tool.” Then, finally, capping his lecture was the quintessential Dewey: the reminder that political democracy was but part of the broader moral and social democracy. He insisted,

The *ulterior* justification of political democracy, that is[,] of popular government, is its educative effect. That is, its effect in broadening the interests and imagination, in extending sentiments from personal and local and family, clique interests, to take in the welfare of the country, producing a public conscience and civic loyalty and its effect in stimulating thought, ideas, and their expression about social matters. (SPP: XII.9; emphasis in the source text)

None of these – Dewey’s critique of utilitarianism and liberalism, dangers that threatened democracy, and Dewey’s ideal about democracy as a moral and social democracy – appeared in Hu’s translation. In place of them all was a Dewey who concluded this lecture celebrating liberalism as the crowning achievement of the humankind and to admonish his audience to count their blessings:

These issues – general elections, direct election, terms of office, revision of election laws – are nothing sacrosanct in themselves, but are moving in the same direction. Many procedures are naturally the result of common sense political experiences and are important. Considering the long and hard struggle humankind has gone through to develop such a mechanism to make the state responsible to the people and to abide by laws when dispensing its power, these procedures are the gems humankind has distilled from years of political experiences! (Translation mine)²⁰

Clopton and Ou obviously thought these pronouncements were so blatantly unlike Dewey that they toned them down until they were quite innocuous, if also vacuous:

Political liberalism poses a host of down-to-earth problems – general elections, direct election, terms of office, revision of election procedures, and many others – and solutions to these problems vary from time to time and from place to place. However, treatment of such problems is fundamentally based on the theory we have been discussing. Even when solutions must be sought in our everyday experience and on the basis of political common sense, they are still important problems. We must not allow ourselves to forget that both the concept of a state that is response to the people and the methods by which the people may effectively control the government are the fruit of many years

20. Dewey (1919-20b: XII.42.69).

of laborious struggle. Even the everyday practicalities which we sometimes take as a matter of course represent the crystalized and accumulated political experience of many generations. (Clopton/Ou: 146)

That Hu would excise completely from his translation Dewey's critique of democracy and of utilitarian political philosophy was not surprising. It is not just that democracy was a rallying cry of the New Culture Movement, of which Hu was its foremost leader, and he would not want to see its luster tarnished. He genuinely believed democracy embodied the highest value of modern Western civilization, as testified by his hyperbolic phrase of the "religion of Democracy" cited above. His faith in democracy was closely linked to his belief that the modern state was the best instrument to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

It was perhaps fitting that the first time Hu publicly spelled out his belief in the modern state was at the conference held to celebrate Dewey's eightieth birthday in New York in 1939. While it is well known among Dewey scholars that Sidney Hook, Dewey's "Bull Dog," attacked Hu on that occasion, there is no paper trace that allows them to reconstruct what had happened. The only direct reference to it was in a letter from Dewey, who was not present at the celebration, to Roberta Lowitz in which he said, "I hadn't heard about S[idney]. H[ook].'s attack on Dr. Hu – The latter sent me a copy of his remarks, & I wrote him an appreciative letter – there was nothing to object to in his criticisms."²¹ As for Hu himself, he left only a terse note in his diary entry, "I went to the so-called 'Conference on Methods of Philosophy.' [...] The atmosphere was very disagreeable [...] I read my short paper, participated briefly in the discussion, and left."²²

Hu's presentation was revised and published in the celebration volume under the title, "The Political Philosophy of Instrumentalism."²³ I discovered in the Hu Shi Archives in Beijing the transcript of his original paper, "Instrumentalism As A Political Concept," which offers us concrete evidence to suggest what may have prompted Hook to attack Hu. More germane to our discussion here, this paper provides us with an argument, albeit developed twenty years afterwards, which was in germination when Hu translated Dewey's "Social and Political Philosophy." This latter point is not a speculation, for Hu himself said as much. A year after the Dewey birthday celebration, Hu gave another revised version of the same essay, reverting back to use his original title, "Instrumentalism As A Political Concept," at the bicentennial celebration of the founding of the University of Pennsylvania.²⁴ After having revised the same essay three times, he was happy with the result and noted with satisfaction in his diary, "This has been a subject matter that I ponder over often in the past twenty years. [...] Having worked on it three times within a year enables me to have a pretty good grip of it. It has taken shape, having torn apart some old ideas and staked out some of my own."²⁵

21. John Dewey (C2) 2, 1919-1939.

22. Hu Shi (1939: 7.718).

23. Hu Shi (1940a: 205-19).

24. Hu Shi (1941: 1-6).

25. Hu Shi (1940b: 8.66).

Hu did not abandon his thesis in the revised version that appeared in the Dewey birthday volume, which was strikingly similar to what he put into Dewey's mouth at the end of Lecture XII quoted earlier: "The state is a tool for us to use, to experiment with, to master and control, to love and cherish – but not something to be afraid of."²⁶ It differed from the original version, in the first place, in that it invoked for support Dewey's own ideas, particularly his two essays that differentiated force, coercion, and forces written in 1916. More interesting, however, was in what it had deleted. A few of these deleted passages would suffice to illustrate why Hook may have found them objectionable:

All institutions are tools for definite actions and for definite ends. The judge, the king, the law, the state, are tools invented by men for the purpose of performing actions which cannot be effectively performed by private and separate individuals.

The modern state is probably one of the greatest inventions ever made by the intelligence of men. It is the instrumentality that makes use of all instrumentalities; it is the machine of machines.

And,

The state may originate as a mere Vigilante Committee for protection against horse thieves. It may develop into a tribal organization for common defense against a threatening enemy tribe. It may at one time be dedicated to the establishment of Justice and the securing of the Blessings of Liberty. At another time it may be inspired to undertake positive endeavors for the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.²⁷

Hu had become a committed utilitarian before he returned to China in 1917. In 1921, he coined the English term, "Euarchism" ("good-government-ism" or, literally, "good-men-in-government-ism" in Chinese), to refer to the ideal modern state he had in mind. In a diary entry for August that year, he gave a *précis* of a talk on euarchism that contained exactly the same premises that would underpin his paper at Dewey's birthday celebration: Euarchism as political instrumentalism; government being the biggest invention by man as *Homo faber*; government as a force that, when properly organized and directed, could prevent waste and conflicts and lead to purposeful actions being executed efficiently; government so organized and directed having the greatest effect in leading social progress; euarchism providing a criterion for evaluating the performance of a government; euarchism providing a rationale for political participation by people as inventors of government as a tool; and, finally, euarchism providing a justification for mending, retooling, or even overthrowing the government when it failed to perform.²⁸

I argue that the locus classicus of Hu Shi's euarchism can be found in the passage in Lecture II of Dewey's "Social and Political Philosophy" quoted above, where Dewey

26. Hu Shi (1940a: 219).

27. Hu Shi (1941: 4, 5, and 6), Hu Shi (n.d.) "Hu Shi Archives," E17-055.

28. Hu Shi (1921b: 3.259-261).

referred to the pragmatic social philosophy as “pragmatic, instrumental, that is, it aims to be an art, an applied science, a form of social engineering” and that politics as “an art [...] rests on the possibility of introducing more conscious regulation into the course of events in behalf of the general or public interests.”

Euarchism prevented Hu from appreciating Dewey’s analyses of the nature of the state. He had no problem following Dewey’s differentiation between the state and the government. He also appreciated Dewey’s reminder that “the government is itself composed of human beings having their own private interests, their own love of power and gain” (SPP: XI.1). Both of these points appeared in his translation. In fact, euarchism was his clarion call to a few “good men” to enter government in order to transform Beijing government that was hopelessly mired in an endless cycle of chaos, scandals, and incompetency.

Yet, Hu had difficulty seeing the state as anything but an instrument invented for the benefit of society in general. He cared not who invented “the judge, the king, the law, and the state.” Nor would he consider it important to raise the question as to whose interests these inventions served. That the earlier inventions may have been crude, parochial, or even brutal, he would readily grant. As he postulated in his paper at the Dewey birthday celebration, if this string of inventions could result in a linear progression – from the vigilante committee, to tribal, to the founding of the United States with the goal of securing the Blessings of Liberty “to ourselves and our posterity,” and, finally, to the modern state bending on the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number – it would seem to more than compensate for whatever social cost and even sufferings these experimentations may have incurred historically. For the modern state, “the greatest invention ever made by the intelligence of men,” had been perfected to deliver “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” It is thus not surprising that he did not translate what Dewey said about the state in the past:

Historically it must be admitted that the state originated in violence and oppression, in conquest of one people by another usually, and [in] the desire of the victorious people to hold the conquered in such subjection that they could exploit them. It must be admitted that the historic state has been conducted largely in the interests of an exploiting governing few, a reigning house or dynasty, or an economic class that could use political power to further its own interests. (SPP: X.7-8)

Nor was he interested in Dewey’s comments on how the modern state and its instrument, the government, could be held hostage to private and corporate, as well as militaristic and industrial, interests at the expense of the public. The following paragraph was similarly discarded:

This survival after the political organization has become democratic hampers the full use of the government as a democratic tool. It fosters private disregard of the public interest in social undertakings, economic and otherwise, the feeling that one['] business, one’s affairs are his own private and exclusive concerns, that any public supervision or regulation is an impediment, interference, and encroachment upon proper personal

liberty. This attitude tends not only to weaken government, to render it incompetent, but also tends to corruption – the strong private organizations, corporation cliques, militaristic or industrial, use governmental power to promote their special interests at the expense of the public. (SPP: XII.7-8)

Hu's belief in the state as an instrument that could be harnessed to serve the public interest regardless of the power relations in society was closely tied to his organicist view of society, the third of the preoccupations that underpin his appropriation of Dewey. In February 1919, three months before Dewey's arrival in China, Hu published "Immortality – My Religion" in *Xin Qingnian (La Jeunesse)*, the most celebrated journal of the New Culture Movement. This was an article that Hu was so proud of that he penned an English version and continued to lecture on it in the United States until the 1940s. The major theme of this article was immortality, which Hu began to articulate when he was a student at Columbia University. It represented his critique of traditional notions of immortality, particularly of what Hu viewed as an obsession in Christendom: the immortality of the soul. None of the traditional notions of immortality was sufficient to serve as guiding principles of life. In their places, Hu proposed the notion of social immortality. The individual, the "Lesser Self," has a finite life span, but will leave his legacy, positive as well as negative, on society, the "Greater Self" or the "Social Whole," and thus achieve immortality. He summed up this guiding principle of life in the form of an imperative: "[T]o act in order that I may not disgrace the great social past, that I may contribute my humble best to the great social present, and that I may not do injustice or injury to the great social future."²⁹

There are two paragraphs in the original version of "Immortality – My Religion" where Hu waxed lyrical about organicism that most readers will not know they existed. Chastened by a critic's remark, Hu left them out completely from the English version and yet, most revealingly, only perfunctorily edited out of the Chinese version that was eventually included in his *Complete Works*. He removed the first paragraph that was an all-out celebration of society as an organism and replaced or softened the offensive word in question in the second paragraph and yet keeping the organicist argument intact:

Society is like an organism. An organism can live only when each of its components performs the function assigned to it and when all these special functions coalesce. If a component becomes detached, that part of the organism would suffer or would at least become severely impaired. The prime example is the human body. We live because of the various functions the different parts of our body perform together. None of these functions can operate independently, except when the whole body is intact. Take away these special functions, the whole will cease to exist. Conversely, when the whole disappears, so are these various functions. This is organism.

The life of society **is an organism** ["like that of an organism" in the revised version], whether viewed cross-sectionally or longitudinally. Looking at society longitudinally, the history of society is organicist. Our predecessors left imprints on us and we, in turn, on

29. Hu Shi (1919c: 35.273).

our descendants. [...] From the cross-sectional view, the life of society is also **organistic** [**“interpenetrated”** in the revised version]. Individuals make up society and society molds individuals. Social life depends on the division of labor among the individuals. Likewise, no matter how different individual lives are, no individuals can live without being influenced by society. A particular kind of society produces a particular kind of individuals; and a particular kind of individuals make up a particular kind of society.³⁰

Hu believed that society had to be viewed as a whole. There exists in society inequalities in the distribution of wealth, power, and intelligence, to be sure. But what look like inequalities at the individual level are nothing but nature’s way of fitting individuals to tasks suitable for them that resulted in the division of labor, which is necessary for society to function. Hu was by no means callous. Ever since his student days in the United States, he had come to believe that nature and humanity were locked into a bitter struggle and that the level of a civilization was to be measured according to its ability to bring humanity triumphant over nature. An ardent admirer of Thomas Huxley, Hu was familiar with the former’s analysis of the eternal struggle between the “cosmic process” and the “ethical process.” It should be pointed out that Hu most likely had never read Dewey’s 1897 essay, “Evolution and Ethics,” in which Dewey took Huxley to task for a false dichotomy between the two processes and for failing to see that “man is an organ of the cosmic process in effecting its *own* progress,” which “consists essentially in making over a part of the environment by relating it more intimately to the environment as a whole; not, once more, in man setting himself against that environment.”³¹

At any rate, while Hu could invoke social legislation as the “ethical process” to address inequalities in society, his organicism left no room for accommodating social conflicts. From organicist viewpoint, social conflicts were anomalies and had to be resolved for society to return to normalcy. Note how Hu manipulated Dewey’s analyses of social conflicts. In Lecture III, Dewey made a number of observations as he proceeded to analyze social conflicts:

Theory began in disturbance, confusion, friction. It attempts to discover causes and project plans of reorganization that bring about unity, harmony, freer movement. (SPP: III.1)

And,

In dealing then on the basis of theory with any particular social condition we need first to ask what pattern of human association tends to be central and regulative; what are the one-sidednesses and arrests, fixation [and] rigidities thereby produced; where are the suppressions from which society is suffering in consequence; what are the points of conflict, strife, antagonism of interest. (SPP: III.8)

And, finally, toward the end of this lecture:

30. Hu Shi (1919a) (February 15, 1919), 6.2:100. For the revised version, see Hu Shi (1919b: 1.663).

31. John Dewey (EW: 5.38).

That the unequal and unbalanced development of forms of life is the source of social difficulties in general and that the problem of theory is to detect these causes in detail and provide plans for remedial action thus appears. (SPP: III.11)

As usual, Hu's translation here did not follow Dewey verbatim. The closest I can find is a long paragraph that combined these quotes and read like a summation toward the end of this translated lecture:

The time has come, however, when we can no longer afford to wait for our society to become disjointed and then seek means of putting it back together again; we must rather devise methods and instruments to forestall disaster, to prevent infection rather than waiting to try to cure it when it occur. We need to observe, first of all, the causes of social conflict, to find out what groups have become too dominating and have come to exercise disproportionate power, as well as to identify the groups that have been oppressed, denied privilege and opportunity. Only by making such an accurate diagnosis can we hope to prevent social infection and build a healthier society. We must devise means for bringing the interests of all the groups of a society into adjustment, providing all of them with [**“equal”** in the target text] opportunity to develop [**“and to advance”** in the target text], so that each can help the others instead of being in conflict with them. We must teach ourselves one inescapable fact: **any real advantage of one group is shared by all groups; and when one group suffers disadvantage, all are hurt. Social groups are so intimately interrelated that what happens to one of them ultimately affects the well-being of all of them** [**“When one group benefits, all groups will benefit; and when one group suffers, all will suffer. This is because social relations are interlocked.”** in the target text]. (Clopton/Ou: 71)

Note the contrast between Clopton and Ou's back translation and mine that I highlight in bold. Clopton and Ou's back translation in this particular case tried to restore what Dewey may have said. But in so doing, they obscured the fact that this was Hu the social organicist who was speaking, but not Dewey. Dewey had no illusion about all social groups in society having “equal opportunity to develop and to advance.” In fact, Dewey stated in this lecture that such vision was utopian and counterfactual, which, not surprisingly, did not appear in Hu's translation:

We can frame in imagination a picture in which there is a proportionate equal development of all these forms of associated life, where they interact freely with one another, and where the results of each one contribute to the richness and significance of every other, where family relations assist equally the cooperation of men in science, art, religion and public life, where association for production and sale of goods enriches not merely materially but morally and intellectually all forms and modes of human intercourse – where in short there is mutual stimulation and support and free passage of significant results from one to another. Such an ideal picture is of use only because it helps us paint by contrast the state of things which has actually brought about social divisions and conflict. (SPP: III.3)

Nor would Dewey suppose that “when one group benefits, all groups will benefit; and when one group suffers, all will suffer.” In concluding his Lecture IV, Dewey characterized the pragmatist as reformer:

The innovator has a case to prove. He is the propounder of a hypothesis that the welfare of society would be promoted by the adoption of a certain change, that if this harms a special class for a time, this loss to the class is in the interests of the community of the whole, and is the measure of justice to some other class now suffering from inadequate social recognition. He does not present himself as a mere rebel, hostile to the authority as such, willing to tear down recklessly in a blind hope something better may appear. His claim that certain defects exist, and that they may be remedied by the adoption of certain proposed measures of change are propositions to be examined in the light of facts. (SPP: IV.13)

Hu translated this paragraph as follows:

The function of reformers then becomes that of advancing diagnoses of social ills and of formulating and propounding suggestions for changes which will improve the situation; and, given the theory we have advanced, they can then join forces with other elements of society in assessing the accuracy of their diagnoses, and the probable efficacy of their proposed remedies. (Clopton/Ou: 80-1)

While Clopton and Ou's back translation here, as is elsewhere, is not literal, the important point here is that it accurately reflected what Hu had left out in his translation, that is, class interests are not mutually compatible, which is a far cry from Hu's belief that "when one group benefits, all groups will benefit; and when one group suffers, all will suffer."

Not only was Hu oblivious to group and class interests, but he was also convinced that one day would come when society would transcend group and class interests to become unified in thinking. In Lecture XVI, Dewey began by discussing free speech and attempts, whether by the government or by special class, at controlling and manipulating public opinion. He averred:

Private, local and class interest will govern men[']s actions until through the communication of knowledge the whole society, nay, the whole of humanity, becomes spiritually one.

Common or like thoughts cannot in the present stage of the world be secured either by suppression or by direct inculcation, by trying to stamp one set of ideas on alike. Divergence of opinions is necessary for progress, and the only real unity is that which comes by exchange, based on toleration. Intellectual freedom is a true calculation of social life. In it individuality gets its best expression. Only where there is intellectual freedom can communication, the give and take of thought and feeling be full and varied. (SPP: XVI.4-5)

What follows are two versions of back translation of Hu's translation:

It would be a splendid thing that the people of a nation would think and believe alike. But in this time of change, such unity can only be a goal in the future through gradual development and could not be achieved by force. Why is it that this goal can only be achieved through gradual development? Just let everyone expound freely his/her ideas

and let those that are not satisfactory be eliminated one by one in the process, unity of ideas will eventually be achieved. (Translation mine)

Ideally, of course, it is a good thing to have the people of a nation thinking about the same problems and moving in the direction of agreement. But – and this is especially true of a time like the present – this sort of consensus can be achieved only through gradual development, as the result of free discussion and evaluation of conflicting ideas and claims; it can never be achieved by force. The reason this is true is that free discussion brings to light the irrelevance, the inconsistency, or the contrariety of ideas that are inimical to the development of associated living, and thus serves to eliminate these ideas through the action of human reason instead of by governmental suppression. True unification is the result of free communication and interaction, never of force. (Clopton/Ou: 178)

Whether we follow my back translation or Clopton and Ou's, which attempted to approximate what Dewey might have said without the benefit of seeing the original, it is clear that something at once nuanced and precise was lost when crucial words and phrases were left out of the translation. Banished from view for the Chinese readers were Dewey's insistence on how "individuality gets its best expression" in a social life characterized by free communication and exchange, on thought and feeling be "full and varied," and that "[d]ivergence of opinions is necessary for progress." What gets foregrounded in Hu's translation was a millenarian future when people would "think and believe alike."

A case can be made that Hu's social organicism had its roots in the Chinese tradition. That society is an arena where different classes and groups compete for ascendancy or advantage is an anathema to traditional Chinese. What interest groups and class interests conjured up was a specter of people forming cliques for selfish purposes, which was condemned by traditional Chinese political philosophy. In the Chinese tradition, the "public" and the "private" were two antithetical concepts, with the former connoting "openness" and "fairness" and the latter "concealment" and "unseemliness." Only by "sublimating the 'private' into the 'public,'" – "*huasi weigong*" as the traditional saying goes – could the "private" have a redeeming value. Hu's social organicism complemented well this traditional ideal of "sublimating the 'private' into the 'public'" in that it enabled him to envision a society in which all members would follow their callings – a natural division of labor – without being riven by class or group interests.

This brings us to the fourth and final point of this paper, that is, how Hu's democratic realism shaped his interpretation of Dewey's notion of democracy. There is no doubt that Hu was in complete agreement with Dewey about democracy and the role of education in fostering democracy in society. Dewey went further, however. For Dewey, democracy was not merely a political concept, but rather a moral and social ideal. As early as 1888 when he was teaching at the University of Michigan, Dewey had already enunciated in no equivocal terms his democratic ideal:

To say that democracy is *only* a form of government is like saying that home is a more or less geometrical arrangement of bricks and mortar; that the church is a building with

pews, pulpit and spire. It is true; they certainly are so much. But it is false; they are so infinitely more. Democracy, like any other polity, has been finely termed the memory of an historic past, the consciousness of a living present, the ideal of the coming future. Democracy, in a word, is a social, that is to say, an ethical conception, and upon its ethical significance is based its significance as governmental. Democracy is a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association.³²

Not only was democracy a moral and social ideal, it was also an ideal that had to begin and end with the individual:

It admits that the full significance of personality can be learned by the individual only as it is already presented to him in objective form in society; it admits that the chief stimuli and encouragements to the realization of personality come from society; but it holds, none the less, to the fact that personality cannot be procured for any one, however degraded and feeble, by any one else, however wise and strong. It holds that the spirit of personality indwells in every individual and that the choice to develop it must proceed from that individual.³³

As a democratic realist, this was where Hu parted with Dewey. Hu cherished his public image as a staunch champion for democracy. He talked about democracy often, but mostly in general terms, never in the sustained and systematic manner as Dewey did. On a few occasions, however, he did let slip his frank assessment of the general public. In 1926 when he went to Europe by traveling on the trans-Siberian railway through Moscow, he was greatly impressed by what the Soviets were able to achieve through economic planning. Until the early 1940s, he continued to extol the New Deal in the United States and the Soviet Five-Year Plans as representing the two alternative approaches to increasing the productive forces in society. His enthusiasm about the Soviet experiment caused consternation among many of his friends, who thought he was deceived by the Soviet propaganda. In a vigorous defense of his position, he made a comment that revealed what he thought of the public:

Whether it is under communistic or private property system, men with talent will always endeavor to improve themselves. [...] As for the great majority of the common people, their unwillingness to improve, exert, and better themselves is such that even “riches and power can’t entice them” or, conversely, “threats and force can’t subdue them” [a flippant use of two of the triplet stock phrases usually reserved for the vaunted Confucian gentleman]! What difference does it make whether they live under the system of private property or Communism?³⁴

Hu’s democratic realism differed fundamentally from Dewey’s uncompromising conviction that democracy was a moral and social ideal in which every individual, “however degraded and feeble,” should take charge to work out his or her individual development. Hu’s interest was in political democracy, pure and simple. Not surprisingly, he did not feel the need to translate any of what he may have considered

32. John Dewey (EW: 1.240).

33. John Dewey (EW: 1.244).

34. Hu Shi (1926: 3.56).

Dewey's pontifications on superfluous fine points. One case in point was in Lecture XVI where the entire paragraph was left out of the translation:

Freedom of speech is precious, but it is not an end, only a means. To be able to put thought into operation in what we *do* and to find that what we do contributes to our life of thought and satisfactory sentiment and not merely to material products is the important thing. This ideal is manifested in the work of an artist and scientific man. The painter, the laboratory worker, is free to act upon his interest, to embody his thought. His limitations are due only to his ignorance, and lack of skill. Also what he does brings a return wave of thought and emotion back to him. He learns and gains intellectual skill through what he does. The tangible, material product is secondary to this intellectual enlargement and emotional enrichment. This basic problem of industrial society is to establish conditions that will place all men in their labor on the plane which the small class of scientists and artists now occupy. Then there will be a real consummation of social life in full freedom. There will [be] a true social democracy. (SPP: XVI.5-6; emphasis in the source text)

Even Dewey's summation in this culminating lecture did not escape Hu's act of deletion and attenuation:

Every individual is a centre of conscious life, of happiness and suffering, of imagination and thought. This is the final principle upon which democracy rests. But this conscious life cannot be developed or realized except in association with others, interchange, flexible intercommunication. The relations of *friends* illustrates the meaning of this. If on the personal side, democracy means that all should have the opportunity for mental realization which artists and scientific men have, it also means that they shall be in the relations of free unobstructed intercourse with one another that friends are. *Political* democracy provides the machinery, the form of this intercourse; it makes it possible. Education, companionship, the breaking down of class and family walls and barriers make it actual. (SPP: XVI.6; emphasis in the source text)

What a beautiful vision it was, "[D]emocracy means that all should have the opportunity for mental realization which artists and scientific men have!" But Alas! Look at what an impoverished version the Chinese readers were given:

The fundamental idea of democracy rests on a profound belief in education in that the majority of the common people are educable: the ignoramuses can be made knowledgeable and the unskilled can be taught crafts. Democracy means education, continuing education. After the individuals leave school, they will work in a democratic society where they will receive training no matter what they do, as if they were still in school. In this way, individual ideas will extend to the entire society and, eventually, the entire world. The day education achieves its goal will be the day when the whole world reaches consensus on the common interests of the humankind. When that day arrives, it will not just be one society or one nation that reaps the benefit. (Translation mine)

Education is basic to democracy, because democracy, by definition, is based on the conviction that most people have the capacity to be educated, and that they are capable of learning. In fact, democracy means education; it is, itself, a process of continuing education of all the people. A democratic society provides schooling, but it also calls for

those who have had the privilege of schooling to dedicate themselves to public service, and at the same time, to continue learning as they did while in school. Each person is called upon to make his contribution to his own society, and ultimately to the whole of humanity. If we had effective education, we would have a world in which each person would recognize that his own welfare is intimately interrelated with that of his fellow men. The entire world would benefit from this sort of education, not just one nation or a single society. (Clopton/Ou: 180)

We can see how Clopton and Ou tried very hard to salvage Hu's translation to make it passably look like what Dewey might have said. Now, with Dewey's lecture notes, we can see how little Hu's translation of this paragraph resembled what Dewey actually said.

The significance of these newly-discovered Dewey "Social and Political Philosophy" lecture notes cannot be overestimated. These lectures notes enable us to check them against Hu's translation and to reach the conclusion that the messages the Chinese readers received differed significantly from what Dewey intended to impart to them. Any future research on Dewey's lectures in China will have to use these lecture notes, albeit incomplete, rather than Clopton and Ou's back translation.

Roberto Frega's "John Dewey's Social Philosophy: A Restatement" in this issue is a salutary case in point. He compares Clopton and Ou's back translation of Lectures III and IV with the corresponding lectures in Dewey's original and finds significant divergences between the two. He cites one particular passage in which Dewey discussed the conflicts within the Chinese family to demonstrate how the back translation has distorted Dewey's original ideas, viz., whereas "equality" that was not there in Dewey's original text was foregrounded in the back translation, Dewey's focal point on groups as embodying basic interests was totally lost. This was a typical case of emendations and elisions typical of Hu's translation strategy, driven by his New Culture Movement agenda to challenge the traditional Chinese family structure.

The pitfall of using back translation based on seriously flawed target translation is well illustrated by the recent study by Scott Stroud of Dewey's visit to China.³⁵ Stroud is perhaps the first scholar to have made use of these newly-discovered lecture notes to analyze Dewey's lectures in China. His otherwise sensitive analysis of Dewey's rhetorical activities is marred, however, by an indiscriminate use of Dewey's lecture notes and Clopton and Ou's back translation, as if the two were interchangeable. For instance, instead of using Dewey's own Lecture XVI notes in which he expounded eloquently on democracy as a moral and social ideal, Stroud used the greatly impoverished version in Clopton and Ou. Then reading it teleologically against the eventual triumph of Communism in China, he reached the mistaken conclusion that Dewey was using intellectual freedom and toleration of dissent to exhort the increasingly radicalized Chinese students to engage in political reform through discussion and persuasion, but not violence or coercion. More erroneous, Stroud went on to contend that Dewey adapted the content and form of his message to address his Chinese audience. As a percipient rhetor, it was only natural that Dewey would in his

35. Scott R. Stroud (2013: 97-132).

lectures to the Chinese audience use Chinese philosophers and tradition as reference points to explicate Western social and political philosophy. These are familiar rhetorical tactics, which do not affect the content itself. What these extant Dewey lecture notes elucidated were exactly the same major themes that he expounded in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, which he had delivered a few months earlier at the Imperial University of Tokyo. Dewey did not adapt the content or the form of his message because he was addressing the Chinese.

To sum up, these extant Dewey's lecture notes on "Social and Political Philosophy" enable us, first of all, to appreciate the difficulties early 20th century Chinese encountered when they first attempted to translate foreign works using vernacular Chinese, which had never been a medium for scholarly or academic discourse before. The many errors, together with the lack of precision and loss of nuance, which vitiate Hu's translation of Dewey, have to be considered in this larger context. More important, no translators are neutral or transparent conduits that decode ideas from one language to another. And when that translator happened to be the most celebrated intellectual leader of modern China, he was poised to stamp his imprint unequivocally on the translation. He tweaked, rearranged, and even expunged at will the source text. He was translating Dewey, to be sure. But it would be more accurate to say that he was using Dewey to advance his own cultural and political agenda.

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