broader lesson here may be that there is no easy way out of the dilemmas opened up by modern science, but that a constructive dialogue, such as that which this volume attempts to foster, is essential.

Tu Wei-ming (ed), *China in Transformation,* special issue, *Daedalus* 122 (2) (March 1993).

Reviewed by
David A. Kelly
Department of Politics,
Australian Defence
Force Academy

Culture in De-center Court

To say that contemporary China studies is in a state of flux is massively oxymoronic. While China refuses to settle down into a recognizable shape, there is little else to hope for. To be sure, squabbling between those holding economic, political, and historical-cultural views, while a constant background noise, does little more than register in cameo the general state of the social sciences. But it seems to be inevitable that even concepts hotly contested elsewhere—civil society, public sphere, cultural identity, and so forth—get even shorter shrift here, even as heuristic aids. We were taught to understand scientific revolutions as the interchange of paradigms. But the shifts in our field take place with few or no paradigms to provide even a semblance of science. As China daily looms more prominently in global calculations, the need for understanding outstrips our ability to deliver it.

The collection of essays under review is an interesting and often valuable snapshot of this situation. In an introductory essay, Tu Wei-ming notes that while the transmutation of China as a "civilization-state" is older than a few decades, China, now "roaring for recognition," is for the first time capable of profoundly influencing the outside world. Given that "the volatile economic situation renders political and cultural perspectives on China shifting and indeterminate," we are compelled in consequence to rethink not only the distinction between the private and public spheres, but also that between state and society. However, the present volume is wisely modest in its aims. The focus Tu proposes to follow is a cultural one, and the method hermeneutical: the purpose is neither to judge nor to predict, but to understand.

Tu draws attention in particular to the anomalous identity of the TVE (township/village enterprise), and the rise of regional autonomy. Correlated with these come both a political and an ideological decentering that (to coin a paradoxical phrase) occupies center court in many of the subsequent chapters.

The essays here are a mixture of macro- and microlevel concerns. Exemplifying the widest angle of approach, Wang Gungwu and Yü Yingshih monitor subtle changes in what one might call the historical pathos of mainstream thinking in China, so long stamped by a revolutionary or radical imperative. In "To Reform a Revolution: Under the Righteous

278

Mandate," Wang Gungwu finds that *geming* (revolution) is for the present regime already a word of the past, and that *gaige* (reform) has replaced it as the key to salvation and progress. Wang notes that reform is by no means anodyne: for all its abdication of sweeping, violent change, reform may endanger the regime which promoted it. There is some prospect, he argues, for a new generation of political leaders allied to "loyal and experienced technocrats, ready to produce an improved, more representative, responsible and accountable system of government that might win over liberal and democratic lobbies." But, he concludes skeptically, this would assume a radical inner assimilation of Western concepts of social change, whereas in reality the acceptance of reform appears to signify the cooling not only of political activism but of deeper cultural transformation as well. If there are to be no more volcanic eruptions, we must assume that the lava flows of 1949 will continue to define the terrain. One might argue against this that the regime's own rhetoric against liberalism holds very little that is identifiable as uniquely Chinese: it relies increasingly on standard antiliberalism, more reminiscent of Burke than of Marx, and is, paradoxically, evidence of the cultural assimilation Wang is inclined to write off.[1]

This is a point which finds interesting parallels in "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century." Yü Ying-shih finds that twentieth-century China has been so inundated with radicalism from the West that thorough and rapid radicalization was hardly avoidable. Even groups conventionally regarded as conservative such as the *Guocui* (National Essence) scholars like Zhang Pinglin, Liu Shipei, and Huang Jie were enthusiastic in reviving premodern iconoclasts like Bao Jingyan (ca. 227–357) and Li Zhi (1527–1602). "Often what they identified as China's essence turned out to be basic cultural values of the West such as democracy, equality, liberty and human rights."

Clearly at work, then, is a dissolution of the clichés of the East/West and modern/traditional dichotomies. Another case in point is Myron L. Cohen's "Cultural and Political Inventions in Modern China: The Case of the Chinese 'Peasant'." Here, the historical reality of diversified family enterprises (in which shops and firms were run by families who also owned farms and had some of their members working for them) is contrasted with the imposed idea of the peasant as comprising a distinct and backward cultural category. "An approach to Chinese economic culture emphasizing the family as a corporate unit creating, deploying, and managing its human resources and its property in a highly commoditized environment so as to provide for family survival or enhance family welfare," argues Cohen, "better explains the continuity between the late traditional culture and modern economic trends than does focusing on the supposed inability of families to adapt to modernization due to their backward peasant status."

Book Reviews

279

Two essays make useful advances in our knowledge of political culture in the broad. Andrew J. Nathan and Shi Tianjian's "Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China: Findings from a Survey" is a positivistic exercise in survey research, whereas William P. Alford's "Double-edged Swords Cut Both Ways: Law and Legitimacy in the People's Republic of China" offers a broad interpretation of a number of decisive instances. Nathan and Shi find no evidence for the assumption that Chinese political culture is an absolute bar to democracy. The more urban and educated sectors showed more democratic attitudes, supporting general-issue modernization theories. "Once in place a democratic regime could speed the pace of cultural change by actively inculcating the popular attitudes it needs to survive." The methodological terseness of this essay marks it off from some others in the collection; some readers may miss the revisionist significance of the sentence just quoted, which takes aim, in fact, at a large body of conventional wisdom. Alford looks at a number of recent court actions in the PRC, concluding that in seeking to deploy formal legality for highly instrumental purposes, the regime has unwittingly handed to its opponents a keenly honed instrument through which to seek to accomplish their own, very different ends. Unfortunately, this reverse instrumentalism tends to tarnish the dissidents who use it (like Wang Meng, Dai Qing, and Guo Luoji) as well as the regime.

Constructivism—the investigation of culture and identity as socially invented—is a consistent theme in the book. In "A Failed Chinese Modernity," Edward Friedman addresses a post-Marxist China in which surface tranquillity hides "moving tectonic forces that are reshaping China's national project." The forces are primarily new expressions of ethnic-national identity that belie the imagined community of the Mao-inspired Yan'an era. Friedman finds continuity rather than radical contrast between the ethnic tectonics of China and the former Soviet Union. As he has argued elsewhere recently, this opens up a Pandora's box in which democracy is not necessarily the most popular alternative. What is authentically Chinese, to those newly disabused of the Maoist-Leninist myth, is often patriarchal, nativistic, and authoritarian. Friedman is not entirely consistent on this point as he elsewhere stresses how the emerging ("reprivileged") South Chinese culture sees itself, in contrast to quasi-fascist Beijing, as a haven of individualism and wheeler-dealing.

Helen F. Siu explains this emergence of Southern culture at greater depth in "Cultural Identity and the Politics of Difference in South China." She, too, finds a hidden tension between it and the official national identities. Pretended identification with the "center" was a natural strategy in earlier times, but whereas terms once were delicately negotiated, the modern state now has the means to dictate them. In so doing, local elites react by revalorizing the local ethnic labels that they once used to marginalize weaker groups in their vicinity. "Southern" things become

good, and subsume major political categories (southern "reformers" versus northern "revolutionaries"). The point is added to this by Siu's argument that Hong Kong, never really adrift even at the height of British colonial self-confidence, now presents an "ever dynamic cultural kaleidoscope" that directly confronts Beijing's renewed efforts to essentialize, to define China in self-contained terms.

Li Tongqi's "A Search for China's Soul" confines itself to the cultural high ground of "existential" notions (if we accept this as a gloss for the increasingly popular phrase *rensheng*, "[concerned with the ultimates of] human life"). Contemporary philosophical discourse has revolved around two fundamental notions: subjectivity and culture, but there is something of a gap in the sense of culture between the philosophers and the social scientists. In the former, Li maintains, culture is primarily seen as a "source of the self."

This question recurs in Perry Link's "China's 'Core' Problem." Link finds the culture to be far more resistant to modernist or postmodernist decentering than some of the earlier contributors would give it credit. The regime has been able to sell its "flatly contradictory" formula of a socialist market economy because the behavioral concomitant, money-making, offers a kind of freedom that has been in short supply. But this can only be a stopgap. The culturally induced metaphysical hunger will return, and with it the demand for a satisfying ideological sheet anchor of shared values.

Finally, David E. Apter, in "Yan'an and the Narrative Reconstruction of Reality," brandishes a kind of Operation Desert Storm arsenal of (largely Paris-sourced) constructivist theories in search of a theater of operations. "Mao's Republic"—the Yan'an period (1936–1947)—is a promising candidate. Mao is presented here as master of narrative dramaturgy: "a kind of magic realism matched by ruthlessness." The invocation in this discussion of Bourdieu's "symbolic capital" as a theoretical rubric is oddly disappointing. As Apter explains in a footnote, Bourdieu had in a mind a highly organized and precisely valued set of nonmonetary exchanges. One might add that such capital requires a "field"—that of art or education in modern France, or village-level kinship politics in Algeria—to take on its full theoretical significance. This might be applied to, say, the eremitic tradition of ancient China, where one can clearly see how remaining true to the hermit ideal was precisely balanced, over a well-formed time series of instances, against the value of being recognized and becoming drawn into official service. The nascent Mao cult in wartime Yan'an may provide similar "fields" of cultural action, but this is not what Apter attempts in the essay in question. Nonetheless it neatly closes a volume in which the constructivist notion of "imagined community" emerges, declared or undeclared, as the candidate "killer paradigm" for China studies.

Book Reviews

281

Note

1 – Barrett McCormick and David Kelly, "The Limits of Antiliberalism,"
Journal of Asian Studies 53 (3) (August 1994).

Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language in Alfārābī. By Shukri B.
Abed. New York: SUNY Press, 1991 Pp. xxv + 201.

Reviewed by
Tony Street
Arabic and Islamic
Studies
Australia National
University

Aristotelian Logic and the Arabic Language in Alfārābī is an interesting
book on Fārābī's treatment of the relation of logic to language or, more
precisely, of Greek logic to the Arabic language. As such, it does not
deal with that part of Fārābī's logical work which is concerned to trace
implication, but with the part devoted to the examination of the logical
form of certain words and sentences. Consequently, particular attention
is paid to those books and commentaries of Fārābī that deal with or
touch on the *Eisagoge, Categories,* and *On Interpretation.* Among them
are two books whose titles to some extent conceal their contents, namely
the *Utterances Employed in Logic* and the *Book of Letters.* Of all the
relevant books, it is especially these last two that merit close attention,
due to their originality, and they are probably the sources to which Abed
most often refers in the course of his study.[1]

Abed's book comprises an introduction, six chapters, and a con-
clusion. In the Introduction, Abed sketches one aspect of the intellectual
life of Baghdad, that is, the tension between the grammarians and the
logicians. In the most famous manifestation of that tension, the debate
between Mattā and Sīrāfī, the question was asked whether Greek logic
had anything more to offer the Arabs than did Arabic grammar. When
Fārābī's works are read in light of this debate, they may be seen as an
attempt to classify the technical terms and central concerns of the logi-
cian and to lay out his project relative to that of the grammarian more
clearly than had been done by Mattā.

In the next five chapters, Abed examines the way Fārābī presents a
number of logical doctrines, noting the Arabic terms of central impor-
tance. The first chapter begins with the distinction between particular
and universal terms, then examines the way in which the two types of
terms can fill subject and predicate gaps in a sentence to form Fārābī's
divisions of scientific discourse, and culminates in a treatment of Por-
phyry's five predicables. The second chapter deals with definition and
description and how they are made up from the singular predicables.
The third chapter analyzes a number of interrogative particles, how they
relate to the five predicables, and how a definition must deploy the
predicables to bring about a conception of the essence of the defi-
niendum. In the fourth chapter, the interrelation of demonstration, defi-

282