

LI ZEHOU'S VIEW ON CHINESE MODERNIZATION AND THE PRECARIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARX AND CONFUCIUS

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Abstract. *Li Zehou is one of the most significant and influential Chinese philosophers of our time and one of the rare Chinese intellectuals whose work has acquired a wide readership abroad. He dedicated himself to the task of finding a sensible, suitable way of harmonizing past and present, tradition and modernity, China and the West. In this context, he tried to create a synthesis between early Marxist and classical Confucian discourses. Through a critical analysis of these attempts, the present article reveals some crucial theoretical problems underlying such efforts. Considering the fact that in contemporary China, the link between Confucian and Marxist philosophy is a much discussed (and rather controversial) topic, the paper also represents a contribution to the clarification of this topical problem.*

Keywords: *Li Zehou, Confucius, Confucian revival, Marx, methodology of Chinese philosophy*

1. Searching for New Ideologies and New Patterns of Modernization

One of the main reasons for the recent decline of the normative authority of the Communist Party of China (CPCh) can be found in the fact that the values it asserts within its central ideologies are no longer in contact with social reality. Jürgen Habermas called such states “crises of rationality” (1973: 87), for these states appear in every society that finds itself at a crossroads between actual practices and the ideological assumptions that suited previous practices. Since Confucianism is an important part of the traditional Chinese intellectual heritage, a revival of its values seems to be an appropriate filling for this axiological void. On the other hand, Marxism still belongs to

the theoretical and ideological foundations of the CPCh. Thus, a proper synthesis (or combination) of Marxist and Confucian philosophies might prove itself to become a well-rounded footing for a new ideology of the “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”. This topical theme became even more relevant after Xi Jinping’s opening speech at the 5th Congress of the International Confucian Association, which on the very next day was published on the front page of the *People’s Daily* and in which he noted:

Members of the CPCh are Marxists; they uphold the Marxist scientific theories, and they follow and develop Socialism with Chinese characteristics. They are neither historical, nor cultural nihilists. We believe that the basic principles of Marxism must be tightly linked to the concrete reality of

China. We must deal with our own traditional culture and the cultures of other nations in a scientific way in order to benefit from all great cultural achievements of humanity. In the long historical practice of leading the revolutions, constructions and reforms, the Members of the CPCh have always been loyal successors and supporters of China's best cultural traditions, consciously absorbing their vital elements from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen. (Xi 2014: 1)¹

The speech was followed by a lively public debate, which led to several controversies carried out in the media. Hence, in the past two years a lot of research has been done with the goal of finding the right solution to a fusion of the two discourses, separated from each other by huge ideational, spatial, and temporal distances. Irrespective of these fashionable tendencies, Li Zehou elaborated on these questions already more than 30 years ago. His proposal of a theoretical synthesis is grounded on his general philosophy on the one hand, and on his views on the Chinese modernization process on the other.

Regarding the necessary social and cultural transformations of modernity, Li advocates the middle way:

Changes and transformations do not imply that we completely continue our tradition, but they do not mean we should completely abolish it either. It means that we must infiltrate traditional sediments and cultural-psychological formations based on the new substance of our social existence and by virtue of our awareness of this new substance. (Li 2016a: 361)

He argues that Chinese modernization passed through three interconnected phases between the mid-19th century and the May Fourth movement, a view that endows it with a significant historical dimension, in

¹ All quoted translations of Chinese original texts are my own.

which the enlightenment was always suffocated by the urgent need to protect the state from foreign aggressions (Li 2016a: 334). In China, the historic reflection on these issues began in the 1980s, when a new search for modernity emerged. With respect to the central issue that defined modern Chinese philosophical discourses, i.e. what position to assume towards Western thought, Li Zehou has inverted the famous slogan “(preserving) Chinese substance and (applying) Western functions”² proposing that China should rather “(assume) Western substance and (apply) Chinese functions”.³ We shall examine this position in detail a bit later; however, we can note here that Li's view does not differ essentially from those many thinkers who advocated the appropriation of Western technology and the preservation of Chinese institutions, ideologies and value systems (Li 1998: 174-177). For Li, the function is namely of great importance, for it determines the concrete circumstances of people's lives. In this context, it becomes evident that he was searching for a synthesis between tradition and modernity (or between Chinese and Western discourses) through a creative combination of Confucius and early Marx.

2. Marx and Confucius? An Impossible Love Affair!

Li was clearly following the basic principles of materialistic philosophical approaches, on which Marxism is also founded. In his at-

² 中体西用

³ 西体中用. In his article “A Short Explanation of the Motto ‘Western Essence, Chinese Functions’” (“西体中用” 解释) (Li Zehou 2002: 154), Li Zehou states that Li Shu 黎澍 was the first to “invert” this slogan. Both were widely criticized for proposing this “inversion”.

tempt to reconcile Marxism with traditional Chinese philosophy, however, he appears to get caught in his own snare. He believes that his new explanation of substance (*ti*) in the sense of social existence leads back to classical Confucianism as well as to classical Marxism and claims: “The question of how to connect these two ‘classics’ is the problem I want to elaborate on” (Li 2016a: 379). However tempting this endeavour must appear, we must also agree with Wang Jing, who noted:

The marriage of the Marxist view of a tempered nature with the Confucian aesthetics of the happy continuum of the noumenal and the phenomenal promises a rocky relationship from the very start. (Wang 1996: 103)

In Li’s view, these two discourses could thus be linked on the basis of the very fact that they both belong to materialistic philosophies.⁴ For him, the pragmatically oriented Confucian philosophy was namely, in essence, materialistic, for it was founded

⁴ In this respect, Modern Confucian philosophers (Xin rujia 新儒家), especially the main representative of their second generation, Mou Zongsan, have seen even more reasons for the incompatibility of the two discourses. As Peng Guoxiang points out (2016: 296), Mou’s critique of Marxism was focused upon its historical materialism, which is, in his view, completely incompatible with the theoretical and axiological heritage of Confucian philosophies, which are based upon the highest valuation of established, i.e. cultivated human beings (*li ren ji* 立人极). In Mou’s view, the greatest flaw of Marxist theory is that it reduces people to their collective features, thereby completely neglecting their individual value, as well as the importance of human nature, which is a very crucial element of all Confucian philosophies (ibid: 297). For Mou, Confucianism is the basis of the humanistic idealism, which represents the highest potential for the material development and ethical fulfillment of human civilization. Hence, Peng Guoxiang concludes that in Mou’s view, “the essence of communism is in complete contradiction with traditional Chinese culture, especially with Confucianism” (ibid: 302).

upon the (almost exclusive) treatment of the concrete, material conditions of human life. However, his view of Confucianism as a materialistic system (Li 1998: 175-177) is difficult to substantiate. While it is certainly true that Confucianism (especially in the original teachings) is defined by a pragmatic and very worldly philosophy, and that it generally does not deal with issues of metaphysics or transcendental religion, this still does not make it a materialistic philosophy. In Marxism, materialistic philosophy is based upon the materialistic conceptualization of history in which material conditions (the particular developmental stages of the means of production) determine the mode of social production (i.e. the unification of the productive capacity and the productive relations) or the manner of producing and reproducing the means of human existence. These material conditions essentially and absolutely define the development and organization of societies, determining and reflecting, inter alia, a particular society’s political structures, ideologies, and ways of thinking (Marx 1977: 1-3).⁵ The Confucian classics, on the contrary, rather stress the important role of ideational and axiological elements like relational ethics or virtues of humaneness and justice (*renyi* 仁义), and the crucial role of education as a basic means of cultivating and thus improving (inborn) humanness (*ren xing* 人性) achieving in

⁵ The basis for this view rests in Marx’s fundamental supposition according to which the existence (or the being) determines human consciousness and not vice versa (in German “Das Sein bestimmt das Bewusstsein”). In his famous statement written in his *Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx emphasizes: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (Marx 1977 /1859/: 1).

this way human progress and development in society. Here, we can also point to the problematic nature of Li Zehou's equation between his own "Philosophy of Eating" (Li 1998: 142, 176-177), and materialistic philosophy, noting that an awareness of the crucial importance of the material and physical conditions of life for human (or any living) existence is not sufficient to confirm a materialist worldview.

The problem underlying these conceptualizations is simply a problem of intercultural methodology; materialism and idealism are Western categories. As it is well-known in modern and contemporary Sinological research in Chinese philosophy, these categorizations cannot be applied as designations of specific Chinese categories, which are based on different paradigms and apply different concepts⁶. However, many Western educated scholars are still interpreting Li's philosophy through the lens of these categorizations:

Although Li subscribes to the vulgar Marxist theory of levels and gives more weight to the infrastructure in his proposition of Western substance and Chinese means, he cannot resist making sporadic references to Western "superstructure" (identified as "self-consciousness" or "ontological consciousness") and specifying it as an indispensable part of the "Western substance" that needs to be transplanted to China simultaneously with means of technological and material pro-

⁶ Mostly, they are more dynamic, changeable, contextual, situational and relational. For readers who are not trained in intercultural methodology of Sinological research, these special features defining the specifically Chinese philosophical discourses or frameworks of references are explained in detail by many fundamental Sinological theoretical sources, as for instance by Zhang Dainian (2002: 71-90), Graham (1992: 60-64), Rošker (2012: 275-28), Duh Bao-Ruei (2013), etc.

duction. The integration of such an idealist perspective into an otherwise materialist framework reveals apparent imprints of eclecticism. (Wang 1996: 98)

However, as we shall see below, Li Zehou's application of *ti* and *yong* cannot be identified with the Marxist juxtaposition between matter and idea (or basis and superstructure) in the first place. According to Li, the substance of any society embraces its material practice, labour relations, technology, and its ideational production⁷, i.e. theories and ideologies. Li holds substance to be the basis that constitutes all elements of everyday life. While in Marxist thought the contradiction between matter and idea thus comprises a central dual opposition within his ontology, in Li's model there is only a duality between the social existence and the mode of its realization, or, in other words, the substance of social life (*ti*) and the method of its fulfillment (*yong*). In his "substance" matter and idea, material and ideal stuff are intermingled, amalgamated, and correlative. The same holds true for the category of "function" (*yong*). As the implementation of substance or that which brings substance into a concrete existence, function also pertains to both matter and idea. Just like substance represents the – material and ideal – basis of (everyday) life, function, which also embraces material and ideal factors, is the concrete way of life, the *modus vivendi*, that is culturally, linguistically, historically, and environmentally conditioned. It is hence doubtful whether the material base and ideational superstructure can truly be incorporated into Li's model of substance, as some interpreters consider:

⁷ 精神生产

Li Zehou's subscription to the fundamentally materialist law of cause and effect manifests itself in many ways. It is revealed in his definition of *xiti* as the sum total of both spiritual (ontological consciousness) and material (science and technology) production, with the former understood as a superstructural system that mirrors and reproduces the latter. (Ibid.)

Although Li's theory is certainly materialist in terms of "cause and effect", he actually never speaks about the ideational elements of his system in terms of "superstructure". All he says is that different modes of spiritual substance⁸ and ontological consciousness⁹ do not belong to the substance. Hence, although for Western scholars, it is tempting to interpret Li's "substance" in terms of the material basis, and his "function" in terms of ideal superstructure, he has never mentioned such an ontology in his elaborations on *ti* and *yong*. He limits the Marxist materialist ontology to the "social existence" (社会存在), which appears in form of the "social substance" (社会本体).

It rather appears that for him substance (*ti*) refers to his idea of the ontology of human beings and their social practice. As already mentioned, Li's "substance comprises material as well as ideational or spiritual productions" (Li 1999: 1160). Hence, in a larger scale, matter and idea both participate equally in a broader structure of complementary dual collaboration, namely in the correlative process of interaction between substance and function:

Substance and function cannot be separated. Chinese tradition also emphasizes that "*ti* and *yong* are not two things". Substance cannot exist outside of the function, for it is a part of it. (Ibid.)

In the light of this dimension, it is hardly possible to reproach Li with the application of a "naive orthodox Marxist faith in the one-to-one correspondence between base and superstructure" (Wang 1996: 98), and even less so if we take into consideration that Li Zehou openly distances himself from economic determinism. He highlights that he does not believe that social existence necessarily defines social ideologies, cultures, values, or politics¹⁰ (Li 2016a: 387).

Since in Li's dialectical model, the substance of society implies its material, as well as ideational elements, we cannot help but wonder why Li Zehou still regards himself as a materialist philosopher. We will illuminate this question from two angles: first from the external viewpoint of the historical and ideational background that has necessarily influenced the shaping of his ideas, and, secondly, from the internal viewpoint of his own system.

3. Two Types of Duality

In the Chinese tradition (even after the introduction of Marxist thought at the beginning of the 20th century) dialectics has always been chiefly understood in traditional Chinese sense as a co-relative interaction of complementary oppositions. In its earliest form this model goes back to the oldest Chinese proto-philosophical

⁸ *Jingshen benti* 精神本体。Besides "spiritual substance" the term is sometimes also translated as the "substance of mind".

⁹ *Benti yishi* 本体意识 The term could also be translated as "consciousness of the substance" or "substantial consciousness".

¹⁰ He does not believe, for example, that the establishment of a market economy automatically leads to the establishment of a democratic system. However, he still believes that the opposite is true, namely that a market economy is a necessary precondition for the establishment of a democratic system.

classic, the *Book of Changes* (*Zhou Yi*), where it appears as a model of “continuous change” (*tongbian* 通变, Tian 2002: 126). It functions by applying binary categories¹¹ and the principle of correlative complementarity. The oppositions it contains are interdependent and do not negate but rather complete each other. They are oppositional dualities, but not dualistic contradictions. Hence, the model of their mutual relationship and interaction cannot be denoted as an abstract form of dualism, but rather as a process of a dynamic duality.

In such understanding, the “imported” modern European model of dialectic thought was slightly, but significantly altered. “The peculiarities of the Chinese language actually led the discussion of Marxist dialectics through a new process, into a new context, and onto a new field of focus” (Ibid.: 142). On the other hand, the Marxist variations of the Western dialectics have had a huge doctrinal effect on the *tongbian* discourse,

the consequence of which has been the application of a completely new terminology to a school of traditional thought and an indigenous Chinese version of Marxist dialectics that can be seen to have existed as far back as the *Yi jing*. This process also shows that there are fundamental differences between the original European terminology and the Chinese translations; the Chinese concept came closer to the concept of *tongbian* that is discussed here as the Chinese began to employ Chinese philosophical expressions in their reading and especially as they became engaged in the campaign to “Sinify” Marxism. (Tian 2002: 126)

¹¹Complementary and co-relative pairs of categories, such as *yinyang* 阴阳 (“sunny and shady”), *benmo* 本末 (“roots and branches”), *tiyong* 体用 (“substance and function”), etc.

Li Zehou was educated in such modes of reasoning, in which traditional Chinese variations of dialectical thought were – more or less unconsciously – incorporated into the model of Marxist dialectics, even replacing in this process some of the parts that did not “fit well with the model of correlative dialectics” (Ibid.: 137). Understanding Li’s thought requires comprehending that in these patterns of synthesizing Marxism and Chinese thought the traditional correlative worldview, which was based upon a presumption of an interconnectedness of all things, has naturally led to an elimination of the ontological split between the determinative principle and that which is determined by this principle (ibid). In his analysis of the semantical connotations and developments of the terms, with which concepts such as “matter” (物质) and “materialism” (唯物论) have been translated into Chinese, Tian Chenshan has clearly shown that the “conceptual significance of ‘materialism’ and ‘matter or substance’ is not given any significance in the Chinese translation” (Ibid.: 134).

As we can see, a crucial difference between Marx’s ontological¹² and Li Zehou’s

¹² However, we must bear in mind that speaking of Marx’s “ontology” and in this context about his “ontological materialism” is controversial, because in a certain sense Marx also understood ontology in a “historical” way, i.e. as an anthropological or empirical discourse (which is linked to human material practice). Hence, we must be careful when applying various later interpretations, which attempted to draw various “ontologies” directly from Marx’s theories. The most shallow (and unfortunately, also the most widely known) version of these attempts is the Stalinist “diamat”. For a more detailed explanation of these problems, see Karl Korsch’s book *Marxism and Philosophy*. According to Korsch, the crucial notion of Marx’s theory was the so called principle of historical specification, which means we should understand all things as being social in terms of a concrete historical period (see Korsch 2008). In this context, Korsch also stresses that Marx treats all categories of his

empirical materialism manifests itself in Li's specific dialectical relation between matter and idea, in which the social and existential substance – in the sense of *ti* – is not something that absolutely determines the concrete mode of existence or the function (*yong*) that serves as its antipode. Even worse (or better): in Li's view, the two oppositional notions still seem to be interdependent, because in spite of the primary role of the substance (*ti*) Li namely often highlights the significance of the function (*yong*). Following this string of thought, it is not difficult to understand that without it (i.e. without the method of implementation), there could be no substance, for the latter can be preserved, maintained and developed only through interaction with the former. In this regard, substance and function are well situated in a complementary inter-relation that would even fit into a traditional description of the correlative association between *ti* (substance) and *yong* (function), as provided by the pioneer of Modern Confucianism, Xiong Shili:

While we can say that substance is a substance of function, this does not mean that it is an independent entity, which can go beyond function or exist somewhere outside it. The fact that substance is the very substance of function means it cannot be found outside it. (Xiong 1992: 362)

This is why Li Zehou's reversed slogan of Western substance and Chinese function dif-

socio-historical and economic theories in that specific form and in that specific context in which they occur in modern bourgeois society. He never deals with them as with formal, eternal, and universal categories. However, in spite of these issues (which ultimately lead to problems of terminology, or, better, of philology), Li's materialism differed substantially from Marx – not only regarding the abovementioned dialectical relations, but also regarding Li's highlighting the role and function of human subjectivity and incorporating it into his dialectical system.

fers substantially from the Marxist concept of basis and superstructure. Li sees the above-described correlative interplay between the two oppositional notions in a similarly traditional way as Xiong, even though he denotes *ti* as the social existence and *yong* as the function that defines its realization.

What is important here is the fact that the notion *ti* – even when in the position of the level of primary existential – lacks an ontologically determinable dimension. Although mostly translated using the term “substance”¹³, *ti* as a part of the dual opposition (or binary category), in which it appears as the antipode of function (*yong*), has no ontological dimension and cannot be identified with *noumenon* in the traditional European sense. It is fundamental in the sense of the ultimate reality, which, however, is not something external to human life. This specific feature belongs to the basic difference in the Western “two worlds” and the Chinese “one world” theory¹⁴.

¹³ Li has translated the term *ti* 体 in the sense of substance with the word *shiti* 实体 (Li Zehou 1999c: 1161). The term *benti* 本体, a notion, which also commonly serves as a translation of the Western term substance, was commonly applied in Li's philosophy in regard to substantial consciousness (本体意识), emotion-based substance (情本体), the substance of mind (心理本体), etc. *Shiti* 实体 refers to the actual, and *benti* 本体 to the original substance. In this context, it is clear that although both kinds of substances belong to the one-world scheme (or immanent metaphysics), which means that none of them is static or isolated and they are all rooted in empirical life, both kinds of substance are profoundly different from one another. The former (which is also the *ti* 体 in the correlative relation with *yong* 用) is namely a category whose content is modifiable, whereas the compounds composed by the term *benti* 本体 denotes an absolute and irreducible origin of things.

¹⁴ With these two terms Li Zehou usually denotes the difference between the “Western” philosophies, that are based upon a clear distinction between *noumenon* and phenomena on the one hand, and Chinese philosophy, which is in his view of a purely immanent nature, on the other.

Therefore, Li's materialism is not ontological, but rather pertains to the empirical realm and is rooted in life itself¹⁵. In contrast to modern European understandings of materialism, Li sees the primary role of matter (or better, physicality) differently, namely in a very direct and elementary way: following a common sense, it becomes clear, for instance, that without food, which is very material and guarantees one's survival, nobody can create art, construct science, or investigate theory. This is also the main reason that Li named his materialist viewpoint "philosophy of eating". This empirically materialist position is actually based upon the well-known Marxist presumption that Marx wrote of in one of his letters to Engels in 1868, stating that "it is absolutely impossible to transcend the laws of nature. What can change in historically different circumstances is only the form in which these laws expose themselves" (Marx, cf Swiderski 1979: 159). It is, on the other hand, also grounded in pragmatic Confucian philosophy, which was also focused upon material or physical life (see Lunyu s.d. Xian Jin: 12).

4. What Happened to the Synthesis?

Li's elementary starting point, which he expressed in the axiom that "people are alive" (人活着) and his situational, emotion-based substance (情本体), was formed on this very elementary, existential basis. For Li, it is the strictly material practice, which gives

rise to the coming into life, evolution, and progress of human beings. However, the basic material circumstances that enable human life are only the sufficient, and not the necessary, conditions for the development of humankind. They are not mechanically determining human life and even less directly defining the particular mode of human existence.

In Li's anthropo-historical ontology of human life, the concept of subjectivity¹⁶ is the very link that connects the multifarious dualities of human existence, i.e. social existence and its *modus vivendi*, the material and the ideal sphere of human life, human reason and emotion, etc. In Li's system the subject of humanity appears through the social realization of material reality, which is based on material production. This is the elementary, objective level of subjectivity, which manifests itself in the structural link between technology and society and in concrete social existence. At the same time, subjectivity also generates the subjective level of social consciousness, i.e. in mental structures that differ from period to period, from culture to culture and from one language to another. In this sense subjectivity is precisely that "magic link" that sophisticatedly, but powerfully, connects not only the material sphere with the ideal one, but also, on a more basic level, the complexity of human life with its existential foundations. In Li's framework the material basis does not determine human life, but rather provides the essential conditions for its

¹⁵ One of Li's main critiques of the Marxist model is also its direct connection between ontology and empirical life, for Marx (like Hegel) projected his theoretical models upon history and society, which was, in Li's view, a very problematic flaw (Li 2016c: 13).

¹⁶ In Chinese: 主体性. Because in English, the term didn't exist, Li has coined it by himself; it denotes a specific feature of human beings, which allows us to evolve through our autonomous actions and practices. See for instance Gu (1996: 207-209).

realization. This basis is an origin of existence and must be maintained and sustained through practice. However, this existential level of the material basis does not imply that in Li's view it also possesses ontological nature. The categories *ti* and *yong*, or substance and function of societies, refer to the sublime material and ideational implications, or in other words, to the innumerable exquisite products of human subjectivity. This framework places technology and culture in an active mutual correlation and they are both equally rooted in the physical world, which provides basic necessities for their sheer existence.

Thus, in Li Zehou's pattern of dialectic development, synthesis is not an automatic product of mechanistic laws of reason, but rather a result of human subjectivity and its actively chosen decisions and practices. Ultimately, the development of human societies and cultures is to a large degree defined by such decisions and the actions resulting from them. As we have seen, the best possible way to choose is always to choose in accordance with the aforementioned concept of proper measure (*du*):

This is what I often defined as the "Chinese dialectics". It is not $P \vee \neg P$, but rather $P \neq \neg P$. If you do something exaggeratedly well, it is the same as doing it lousily. This is the State of Equilibrium or the Mean. (Li 2015: 38)

This principle arises in the process of the humanization of consciousness, which

creates the dialectics of the oppositional concepts of *yin* and *yang* as well as the idea of the "proper measure" of the Equilibrium or the Mean. The "proper measure" contains the ability or potential of choosing names and organizing explanations. This is a model, a structure, a form of reason, constructed by people. (Li 2016a: 130)

With his notion of subjectivity Li emphasizes that people's decisions and actions are not only the critical factor in human life, but also in the existence of the universe. Life is not entirely governed by the mechanic laws of reason and even less by the will of an external supernatural power. It is us, human beings, who can and should try to find in our lives and in the development of our societies the proper measure that enables us to choose the way of equilibrium. Li maintains that this is the only way that guarantees human progress and well-being.

In Li's dialectical model, there is no negation, no sublation, and no qualitatively new stages or "phases" of development. A synthesis is latently hidden in the very process of correlative interaction between opposing antipodes and must be created, brought out, and realized by subjectivity, this conscious and aware activity of humankind, which is able to choose the main direction of further development by virtue of proper measure. This ability to choose and to create is a specific feature of humanness (*ren xing* 人性) and manifests itself in human subjectivity. Unlike the Hegelian or Marxist model, Li's Chinese dialectics does not lead to anything "qualitatively new". Its procedures, which guide humans to advanced ways of life, are as old as the history of humankind. Precisely because they are old they are also verified and deep-rooted. Hence, they can lead humankind to always-new forms of well-being and progress.

5. A Happy Ending

In the mechanistic scheme of Marxist dialectics, even revolution as such is namely somehow predetermined. The unjust condi-

tions in class societies, the mutual negation and contradiction between the owners of the means of production on the one hand, and the productive forces, who have “nothing to lose, but their chains” (Marx and Engels 1992: 34), on the other, must necessarily lead to revolution. It is the necessary social and economic outcome of class contradictions, which determine all class societies. In this view, the final sublation – and the final resolution – of these social contradictions can only be achieved in socialism, which is a preparatory phase for a genuinely communist society. In contrast to such a view, Li emphasizes that people can choose by themselves how they want to resolve existing conflicts in their societies. Li Zehou throughout recommends reforms instead of revolutions and reason instead of violence. Hence, Li’s inversion attempts to attenuate the ultimately mechanistic and deterministic nature of Marxist theory. Proceeding

partly from traditional Chinese thought, which is based on a correlative relation between matter and idea, Li clearly saw that Marx’s absolute and static distinctions can only be drawn in formal theory. In real life, matter and idea always appear as interconnected and inseparable from each other.

On this basis, his elaboration of the relation between tradition and modernization, between physically determined social existence and the ideational conditions of social life, becomes much clearer and theoretically much better comprehensible. Li is strongly aware of the fact that these dichotomies are dynamic and continuously changeable parts of the complex social and ideational networks, which define contemporary social pluralities. On the basis of his conviction that “societies are systems of organic structures” (Li 2016b: 359), he emphasizes that in the process of modernization, the understanding of Chinese tradition is of utmost importance.

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LI ZEHOU POŽIŪRIS Į KINIŠKĄJĄ MODERNIZACIJĄ IR ABEJOTINOS MARXO IR KONFUCIJĀUS SĄSAJOS

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Santrauka. Li Zehou yra vienas svarbiausių ir įtakingiausių šių laikų Kinijos filosofų, vienas iš nedaugelio Kinijos intelektualų, kurio darbai sulaukė gausių skaitytojų už Kinijos sienos. Jo interesų sritis apima proto ir tinkamo būdo suderinti praeitį ir ateitį, tradiciją ir modernybę, Kiniją ir Vakarų paieškas. Tokiame kontekste jis mėgino sukurti ankstyvojo marksizmo ir klasikinio konfucianizmo sintezę. Straipsnyje kritiškai analizuojant šiuos bandymus atskleidžiamos tokioms pastangoms išskylančios teorinės problemos. Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad Konfucijaus ir Marso filosofijos sąsajos yra šiuolaikinėje Kinijoje plačiai aptarinėjamas ir itin prieštaringas klausimas, šiuo straipsniu siekiama kiek praskaidrinti šią problemą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Li Zehou, Konfucijus, Konfucijaus atgimimas, Marxas, kinų filosofijos metodologija

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