

A Symposium on Intellectuals in China

Abstracts

Recasting Modern Chinese Intellectual History: Ideological Moments, Intellectual Worlds and Enduring Ideas

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The challenge for understanding modern Chinese intellectual history is to get beyond our assumptions and the big stories. For many, Chinese intellectuals are dissidents and democrats, people trying to be like us. The big stories are tied to what China is today. Recasting modern Chinese intellectual history requires us to find ways to break out of these set story lines. Looking at China's thinkers and writers in terms of ideological moments and intellectual worlds can help us understand what intellectuals in different decades thought they were doing, what the problems were that they were addressing, and thus how to assess their contributions to enduring ideas in Chinese thought from the nature of "the people" to "Chinese" to "democracy."

二十世纪中国六代知识分子的知识背景及其在二十一世纪的启发
The Knowledge Background of the Six Generations of Intellectuals in the 20th Century
and Their Implications in the 21st Century

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主要由成长时代的教育体制及社会运动判断这些知识分子的行为方式。主要谈1930年后出生的几代知识分子（以三届政治局常委的知识背景为切入点）的行为方式，以此推测中国未来变革的时代特点。

This talk explains the behavior of intellectuals in the 20th century based on the educational system and social movements at the time. The focus will be on the generations after the 1930s, especially those in the CCP politburos. This analysis has important implications for China's future reform.

Professors as Intellectuals:
A Case Study of a University in Mainland China

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In what seems to be a Xi Jinping era, ideological control in China is tightened and political dissent has become increasingly difficult. This is especially true in universities. Under the circumstances, what can professors do, then? In our research of one university in central China, which is fairly typical of Chinese universities, we find that professors as intellectuals largely play what we define as an organic role to the Party-state, but they are also playing professional and critical roles at various degrees and in different forms. Our research is based on 36 interviews of mostly professors from various disciplines and some students and administrators and on an analysis of the research professors do. We hope that our paper will shed light on how professors as intellectuals engage themselves in contemporary Chinese political discourses, and that it will contribute to the sociology of intellectuals and of higher education.

Left and Right, and Organic and Critical:
Understanding the Politics of China's Intellectuals

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In this article, we will first define the term “intellectuals” and their political positions and roles to play, or their subjectivities, in terms of organic, critical, and professional. Then we will define the left and right intellectuals in combination with their organic, critical, and professional positions. Thirdly, we will examine contemporary Chinese intellectuals’ political positions. We will find that the left intellectuals are more likely to be organic to the government, and the right intellectuals are more likely to be critical of it. Fourthly, we will emphasize the complexity, subjectivity, dynamics, and hybridity of intellectual politics in terms of the changeability of their political roles, the organic intellectuals’ living for or off politics, and the commonality between the left and right intellectuals. Finally we will speculate on the possible future development of intellectual politics and their implications for China’s democratization. The method of analysis in the paper is typological, i.e., we are categorizing intellectuals into left and right, and organic and critical. The representative texts we are analyzing to substantiate the typologies are mainly from the Internet and the traditional media because this is where the battle between the left (organic) and the right (critical) over the politics of the government is mainly waged.