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The Chinese Challenge :: 中国挑战

"The Chinese Challenge"-Teamblog is opening up a discussion about a possible new rationality hidden in the Chinese writing. The main question is: What can we learn from China that China is not teaching us? It is proposed that a study of polycontextural logic and morphogramatics could be helpful to discover this new kind of rationality. Topics of polycontexturality, morphogramatics and trans-computation are presented at my website and can be discussed at the Blog. Start with the "Pamphlet".

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- [Rudolf](#)
- [Steve](#)

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 2006

China, USA, Europe: In the Media

Questions to Fareed Zakaria

Brooklyn, NY: How can young people best prepare themselves for a future where China is dominant?

Fareed Zakaria: Learn about China, learn about Asia. Travel. It's not just the rise of China. It's a whole new world out there, much more important, anxious to be heard, unwilling to be ignored. Americans really need to wake up to this.

Manila, Philippines: And what about the European Union? Are they not also the next superpower? What issues can you give about EU and China?

Fareed Zakaria: Europe is a prosperous trading and economic grouping. It can not and will never act as one country on foreign and security policy. Also, it is having great trouble restricting and even greater trouble taking in immigrants. This will limit its future growth. Europe may turn out to be the superpower that just couldn't.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7690882/site/newsweek/>

When China awakes, it will shake the world.

- *Napoleon Bonaparte*

Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict With China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc, 1997), p 203

Great Powers

China's history in the 20th century has been marked by occupation and civil war. This experience has fueled its strong desire for Great Power status and at the same time put it decades behind the West in technological development. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China has undergone a transformation, which has produced a tremendous economic turnaround. China is now a major trading nation which has built up an impressive foreign currency holding and is predicted to be the world's largest economy by 2010. The Chinese leadership has recognized that economic reform is the only way to achieve the status it desires on its own terms.

<http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/china/doctrine/0046.htm#n1>

US-Education deficit

Get Smart, by Norman Augustine
Next to war, the greatest threat to American power and prosperity is our acute education deficit.

<http://www.the-american-interest.com/cms/contents.cfm>

Language bridge

The major writing systems of East Asia do hold complexities not encountered in the languages of the West. However, it is the beauty and challenge of these writing systems that makes them so fascinating. By accepting this challenge of comprehension, we take the first step—not only economically—but also culturally, toward greater understanding. Language is the most tangible bridge between the divide of East and West.

<http://www.globalz.com/info.aspx?PageID=30>

U.S. Perceptions of a Chinese Threat

George Friedman

Today, it appears to be the Pentagon's view that China is following the Soviet model. The Chinese will not be able to float a significant surface challenge to the U.S. Seventh Fleet for at least a generation -- if then. It is not just a question of money or even technology; it also is a question of training an entirely new navy in extraordinarily complex doctrines.

Therefore, China's actions and America's interpretation of those actions must be taken extremely seriously over the long run. The United States is capable of threatening fundamental Chinese interests, and China is developing the capability to threaten fundamental American interests. Whatever the subjective intention of either side at this moment is immaterial. The intentions ten years from now are unpredictable.

Each side is defensive at the moment. Each side sees a long-term possibility of a threat. Each side is moving to deflect that threat. This is the moment at which conflicts are incubated.

<http://junkpolitics.blogspot.com/archive/2006/06/01/what-does-america-think-of-china.html>

posted by Rudolf | [4:41 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) | [links to this post](#)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2006

Alphabetism

***Alphabetic script is in itself the most intelligent.* Hegel, Enzyklopädie**

The term alphabetism as used in the Pamphlet is mainly in the sense of deconstructivism and grammatology (Derrida). Obviously, this use is not the only use of the term alphabetism, more common meanings of alphabetism are *acronym*, *initialism* and *alphabetic discrimination*.

Alphabetism as Acronym and Initialism

Acronyms and initialisms are abbreviations, such as NATO, laser, and ABC, written as the initial letter or letters of words, and pronounced on the basis of this abbreviated written form. [...] The word alphabetism is sometimes used to describe these "letter name" abbreviations.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acronym>

Alphabetism as Discrimination

Over the past century, all kinds of unfairness and discrimination have been condemned or made illegal. But one insidious form continues to thrive: alphabetism. This, for those as yet unaware of such a disadvantage, refers to discrimination against those whose surnames begin with a letter in the lower half of the alphabet.

It has long been known that a taxi firm called AAAA cars has a big advantage over Zodiac cars when customers thumb through their phone directories. Less well known is the advantage that Adam Abbott has in life over Zo&Zysman. English names are fairly evenly spread between the halves of the alphabet. Yet a suspiciously large number of top people have surnames beginning with letters between A and K. (Text 2)

<http://bbs.eol.cn/archive/index.php/t-143856.html>

Another alphabet related discrimination mentioned by Matthew Yglesias:

[...] after the featured speakers said what they had to say, did a question and answer session for reporters with questions asked in alphabetical order! Alphabetism is, truly, the last socially acceptable form of discrimination in America. Liberals, really, need to do a better job of reaching out to the alphabetically challenged.

<http://yglesias.typepad.com/matthew/2005/03/index.html>

Analphabetism is then an opposite to alphabetism. Analphabetism as a discrimination of non-alphabetic cultures.

Alphabetism as Western Ideology

Hegel writes in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*

Part III: The Philosophy of Spirit (1830)

Alphabetic writing is on all accounts the more intelligent: in it the word – the mode, peculiar to the intellect, of uttering its ideas most worthily – is brought to consciousness and made an object of reflection. Engaging the attention of intelligence, as it does, it is analysed; the work of sign-making is reduced to its few simple elements (the primary postures of articulation) in which the sense-factor in speech is brought to the form of universality, at the same time that in this elementary phase it acquires complete precision and purity. Thus alphabetic writing

retains at the same time the advantage of vocal language, that the ideas have names strictly so called: the name is the simple sign for the exact idea, i.e. the simple plain idea, not decomposed into its features and compounded out of them.

Hieroglyphics, instead of springing from the direct analysis of sensible signs, like alphabetic writing, arise from an antecedent analysis of ideas. Thus a theory readily arises that all ideas may be reduced to their elements, or simple logical terms, so that from the elementary signs chosen to express these (as, in the case of the Chinese Koua, the simple straight stroke, and the stroke broken into two parts) a hieroglyphic system would be generated by their composition.

[...]

A hieroglyphic written language would require a philosophy as stationary as is the civilisation of the Chinese.

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/sp/suspirit.htm#S>

Jacques Derrida, Speech and writing according to Hegel, 1971

2. The critique of every philosophical or scientific project of non-phonetic writing. The most eminent example is, of course, the *Leibnizian project of universal characteristics*. One of the essential arguments of the Hegelian critique is precisely that the word and the name would be dislocated, no longer constituting the irreducible and dialectical unity of language. Speaking of the hieroglyphic or *Chinese writing*, Hegel notes (as he does in other texts, notably in the *Logic*): 'this feature of hieroglyphic - the analytic designation of representations - which misled Leibniz to regard it as preferable to alphabetic writing is rather in antagonism with the fundamental desideratum of language - *the name*'.

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/derrida1.hi>

Grammatology and Alphabetism

Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, 1967

What can a science of writing begin to signify, if it is granted:

1 that the very idea of science was born in a certain epoch of writing;

2 that it was thought and formulated, as task, idea, project, in a language implying a certain kind of structurally and axiologically determined relationship between speech and writing;

3 that, to that extent, it was first related to the

concept and the adventure of phonetic writing, valorised as the telos of all writing, even though what was always the exemplary model of scientificity — mathematics — constantly moved away from that goal;

4 that the strictest notion of a general science of writing was born, for nonfortuitous reasons, during a certain period of the world's history (beginning around the eighteenth century) and within a certain determined stem of relationships between "living" speech and inscription;

*5 that writing is not only an auxiliary means in the service of science and possibly its object — but first, as Husserl in particular pointed out in *The Origin of Geometry*, the condition of the possibility of ideal objects and therefore of scientific objectivity. Before being its object, writing is the condition of the epistémè.*

*6 that historicity itself is tied to the possibility of writing; to the possibility of writing in general, beyond those particular forms of writing in the name of which we have long spoken of peoples without writing and without history. Before being the object of a history — of an historical science — writing opens the field of history — of historical becoming. And the former (*Historie* in German) presupposes the latter (*Geschichte*).*

The science of writing should therefore look for its object at the roots of scientificity. The history of writing should turn back toward the origin of historicity. A science of the possibility of science? A science of science which would no longer have the form of logic but that of grammatics? A history of the possibility of history which would no longer be an archaeology, a philosophy of history or a history of philosophy?

[...]

With regard to this unity, writing would always be derivative, accidental, particular, exterior, doubling the signifier: phonetic. "Sign of a sign," said Aristotle, Rousseau, and Hegel.

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/derrida.htm>

Kenogrammatics and Alphabetism

Gotthard Gunther in: The logical structure of evolution and

emanation, 1967

The logic discussed in all previous confrontations between Logic and Time was invariably the classic two-valued logic; but it might be proper to raise the old issue again when a logician claims that our traditional theory of thinking is not the only one and that a trans-classic system of rationality might be able to tackle the problem of time if more powerful methods of investigation were available.

Since the classic theory of rationality is indissolubly linked with the concept of value, first of all one has to show that the whole "value issue" covers the body of logic like a thin coat of paint. Scrape the paint off and you will discover an unsuspected system of structural forms and relations suggesting methods of thinking which surpass immeasurably all classic theories.

Alphabetism and Technology

Today, it is convenient to think that a language is simply a tool for communication. Even if we understand that language is more than a communication instrument, but a medium, too, language is still considered as one and only one of many different other media and techniques of communication. With such an instrumentalistic view the importance of language and script as disclosing and enclosing a world-view for thinking and living is obscured and lost. It is a simple step then to believe that language and script are only a way *coding* and *codification* which is best realized by the binary code of digitalism. Linearity and digitalism as achievements of alphabetism are foreclosing future developments.

Interestingly, Leibniz' misunderstanding of Chinese language, according to Hegel, and his project of a *Lingua Universalis* led ground for modern technology. Hegel's approach had no technological influence at all. This doesn't mean that his analysis was wrong. What he wanted with his dialectics, thought against any form of formalization, was much too speculative to be understood in a scientific way, and conceptually, it was also ahead of its time. At least, Karl Marx was close enough to Hegel to apply dialectics in a productive way in his analysis of capitalist economy.

Computation matured to a degree that Hegel's dialectical themes of reflectionality are becoming central for Artificial Intelligence and robotics. Now, computer scientists are studying Husserl, Heidegger and Merlau-Ponty, 20th century

European philosophers which are more accessible than Hegel, to tackle highly philosophical problems of cognitive, volitive and even conscious computing systems.

Hegel's deep insight into alphabetism led him to become its strongest defender. Ironically, this was possible only by surpassing the limits of reasonable or common sense use of alphabetic language and script. His use of German language is of such a high speculative complexity that it is simply not translatable into other languages. Existing translations are more or less remained as highly misleading jokes.

posted by Rudolf | [8:13 AM](#) | [0 comments](#) | [links to this post](#)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 26, 2006

Closure, Decline, End

End and Closure

This, for me, is the main situation, horizon or context of thinking that we have named Heidegger/Derrida. I want to maintain that this is still the most radical position that 20th century Continental thought has attained in anticipating the end of metaphysics and mapping out its closure.

(Jussi Backman)

Obviously, closure doesn't mean end. Western cultural history is not coming to a simple end but is moving into its closure (Abschluss, Auflösung). There will be many endings, also ends, like the end of being the only super-power, but some beginnings, too.

The world as the Ultimate Yellow Pages

In his 1989 essay "Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology," Derrida very subtly studies Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus and emphasizes that Heidegger retains from this fragment two features that could – even though Derrida does not say this out loud – be deemed "logocentric." First of all, even in this "original" Heraclitean form, logos is something to be heard, a voice. The plenitude of auditory

*metaphors in the economy of
Heidegger's thinking is one of Derrida's
favorite deconstructive targets. Being
as logos is something that is heard,
something whose address needs
listening to. (Jussi Backman)*

Avital Ronell: Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric
Speech.

University of Nebraska Press. December 1989, 465 pp.

Logocentrism

*What is "logocentrism?" It is, obviously, a
certain approach to logos – discursivity,
language, articulation of meaning, rationality.
Derrida does not really define logocentrism but
instead specifies its workings at the outset of Of
Grammatology:*

*[...] what we will call logocentrism: the
metaphysics of phonetic writing [...] that has
fundamentally been nothing [...] but the most
original and the most powerful ethnocentrism,
[...] commanding, within one and the same
order,*

- 1. the concept of writing where the
phonetization of writing must disguise its own
history in producing itself;*
- 2. the history of metaphysics which [...] has
always attributed the origin of truth in general
to the logos: the history of truth, of the truth of
truth, has always been [...]
abasement of writing and its repudiation outside
"full" speech;*
- 3. the concept of science or of the scientificity
of science – which has always been determined
as logical [...]. (Jussi Backman)*

Heidegger on logos

*This, for Heidegger, is precisely the original
Greek sense of logos, the original essence of
reason, of rationality, of discursively articulate
meaningfulness – originally understood not as
some subjective faculty but as the very way in*

which meaningful reality in itself is articulated. This also allows him to call logos an original Greek name for Being, i.e., for the articulation of meaningfulness as such:

The Logos of which Heraclitus speaks is, as reading [Lese] and collection [Sammlung], as the One that unifies all, not a feature among beings. This Logos is the original gathering that preserves [verwahrt] beings as the beings that they are. This Logos is Being [Sein] itself, where all beings [das Seiende] hold sway [west].

In Heidegger's reading, this original sense of logos is best captured by Heraclitus' famous fragment 50:

"Having heard not me but discursive articulation [Logos] itself, it is well-advised [sophon] to go along with it and, in so doing, to articulate [homologein]: All is One [hen panta]."

<http://www.helsinki.fi/filosofia/tutkijaseminaari/backman.doc>

<http://www.medienwissenschaft.hu-berlin.de/theorien/skripte/pader2.200406.pdf>

posted by Rudolf | 8:13 AM | [0 comments](#) [links to this post](#)

Hallucination or Vision?

Response to Jo Winters

I have just finished reading your piece on China. I will have to read it again with a dictionary as some of the language in it was unrecognisable to me, i assume this is because i am not a philosopher. But i think i got the general gist of it. The parts of it i feel i did understand i found very interesting, although i was unsure whether the word "hallucination" was exactly what you meant, or whether there is another interpretation of the word that i'm not aware of. I wondered whether the word "vision" was a more apt interpretation of what you and the other theorist meant?

Get back to me on this one. I am intrigued to find out what your response is. This is because of my understanding of what an hallucination is. I know there are people in the world who believe that an hallucination is something other worldly but i suspect that this is not what you mean, i may be wrong.

I

I

The choice of the word "hallucination" in the title is surely not motivated by its literal meaning but by its connotation to some literature about Westerners which are writing about Chinese writing without any native knowledge of the writing in question. Since Moliere, thus, we know that the use of a language is not yet the knowledge about its use. Our poor Mr. Jourdain didn't know at all that what he did all the time when he was speaking is called "prose". He was speaking "prose" and not French. Very intriguing. But Han-liang Chang knows both. He is Chinese and he is English educated. His English text *"Hallucinating the Other: Derridean Fantasies of Chinese Script"* was very inspiring for me to hallucinate my own text, voluntarily. Neither being a Chinese nor an English native speaker. I like to be in the in-between of "neither/nor". Thus the choice of this word was motivated by some subversive pleasures which I didn't wanted to neutralize.

My pamphlet may not be in prose but a literary textual montage with complex connotations and references. Some I try to "enlighten" with my annotations and links. To put it in a more prosaic form, say for translation, the word "hallucination" could be replaced by *vision*, *phantasy*, *hope* or similar terms. Not being prose, it is nevertheless not a "mind-fuck". Stylistically I would be happy if my textual adventure wouldn't be in any case a "journalistic essay". I'm not writing a report about China. Sorry, I know you want to become a journalist. But there are different ways of writing, elsewhere, too.

To chose the term "vision" would force a very different text. Today, every company has a vision and even a mission statement. The vision strategy comes as "I have a vision!". With emphasis on both, "I" and "vision". "Pay me properly, and I will solve all your problems, thank to my vision." OK, I don't have a vision. What I'm writing is not so much depending on me or my personal phantasy or vision, but on the possibilities to compose texts given by other texts. Maybe, that's my "vision"?

Hallucination in the context of my pamphlet (flyer) referring to "Derrida", the "other" and "script" is not part of a psychological or psycho-pathological

terminology but "melanged" with the French "post-structuralist" or "deconstructivist" way of "playing" with words and intellectual traditions. There is nothing "other worldly", I was writing "wordly", in my use of this word because its action is involved in a "kind of an experimental hallucination capable of permanent self-deconstruction". Again, "self-deconstruction" could be replaced by "self-critics". But this would open up, again, not another story but a different textual undertaking. As far as I know, the Chinese don't have an "other worldly" world like a Christian or Muslim Heaven. But they have their Dragons.

Han-liang Chang, *Hallucinating the Other: Derridean Fantasies of Chinese Script*

<http://www.lttc.ntu.edu.tw/academics/changhl/hallucinating.pdf>

Thanks for your reponse, it's brilliant and intriguing. Your right, there are many other "worlds" out there, many other ways of describing things, and many other angles to see life from, and i, as you so rightly pointed out to me, am seeing the world from a literal point of view, like a reporter, rather than a philosophical or literary point of view, or both. I think i should use up part of my time before i go to university reading more of a variety of writing. You've inspired me!

posted by Rudolf | 7:33 AM | [0 comments](#) [links to this post](#)

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2006

Pamphlet

The Chinese Challenge: Hallucinations for Other Futures

***What can we learn from China that China
is not teaching us?***

It is the paradigm of writing on which main cultures are depending. Their kind of rationality, their efficiency of technology, the way they organize society and communication, arts and sciences, all are not to separate from their paradigm of writing. How people are involved in writing and scriptural practice is enabling their possibility of thinking and living. Main cultures always depend on their paradigm of writing. Writing in general is the most abstract mechanism and technology of cultural, political

and technological formations.

European culture, the first hallucination

European culture depends on alphabetic writing and the Indian concept of Zero with its mechanism of positionality enabling arithmetic, a rational economy of calculation, formal and programming languages in general.

Leibniz had a first European hallucination about Chinese writing. He conceived in his hallucination the idea of a *Lingua Universalis* as a base of negotational and calculable communication between peoples and nations. He proposed his idea in analogy to the Chinese hieroglyphs which are mediating between different spoken languages by their scripturality. To realize his dream he invented the binary number system as the most non-redundant concept for number representation and calculation. He speculated it as an European answer to the I Ching. Consequently, he invented on this base language-independent calculi, logic and a prototype of a mechanical calculator (computer).

Modern European science and technology followed Leibniz ideas and produced binarism and digitalism in technology which is, today, the basic technological and economic force in the Western, but also in the Asian, world. But the development of technology in Europe stayed regulated and constraint by the framework of Old European theology, metaphysics and ethics.

The US-American dream

In America, European thinking and technology could get rid of its constraining metaphysical roots. Inventing "*Ubiquitous Computing*", technically realized as Artificial Intelligence, Artificial Live, Cognitive Systems, Robotics, etc., it was able to realize digitalism without frontiers.

Today, the US-American dream is exhausted. In its successful realization it has come to a closure. While Old Europe is still occupied with its Greek roots, US-America, who got rid of these European limitations, now, is missing roots as inspirational resources to design its futures. The necessary decline of America is rooted in its lack of roots. The total detachment from Europe, the lack of own grounds, culminated in digitalism and brought it to its extremes. A more radical technical speculation than the reduction of immortality of the human soul on the base of 1 and 0, as conceived in digital metaphysics, seems not to be accessible. All the following future US-American developments will appear as reiterations of its pragmatistic world-view of digitalism. Thus, the European and US-American dream, based on Greek

alphabetism, Indian number theory and Leibniz hallucination of a European adoption of the Chinese Model of writing has been dreamt out and lost its power to design planetarian futures.

Chinese Model of Writing

China, which didnt develop similar philosophy, science and technology because of the hyper-complexity of its writing, is now adopting the fruits of Western achievements. But China, for the next epoch, has an advantage to the West: it has its scriptural resources not yet exploited. Chinas writing, which always was the base and guarantee of its culture and politics, is not limited by alphabetic linearism and digitalism. Linearity of Western thinking is easily mapped onto the tabularity of Chinese rationality. The process of mapping linearity onto tabularity is not producing any kind of identity-disturbance for Chinese self-understanding. The Chinese concept of writing is tabular, multi--dimensional, embodied, open, complex and based on the experiences of the oldest cultural tradition of mankind. These characteristics of Chinese writing are exactly the criteria for a science, capable to deal with the problems of modern society and opening up new futures.

Hence, the challenge of China today is not its new economic power as the West is fearing and economically exploiting, but lies in the possibility of a re-discovery of its own rationality as the base of a revolutionary technology for the future. Leaving everything American far behind.

The Chinese Challenge to the West is not economical, political or military. It is not the event of a re-awakening economic and technological China which is the Grand Challenge to the West but the possible re-discovery of the operationality of its writing system for the design of new rational formal systems, like new mathematics and new programming languages.

Because of its occupation to adapt, at first, to the Western technology and economy, China is not yet, officially, aware about these possibilities of a new main culture for the future.

Maybe, the 19th century was European, the 20th US-American, at least the 21st century will be Chinese.

Morphogramatics, the second hallucination

Thus, my thoughts may occur, until now, as a second, post-European hallucination about the paradigm of Chinese writing. What I propose, as a first step, is to study polycontextural logic and morphogramatics as a possible new understanding of notational systems for Chinese rationality and technology

emerging beyond exhausted Western paradigms. This, with the knowledge of its risk, is a kind of an experimental hallucination capable of permanent self-deconstruction as a strategy to surpass Western, and Asian, phono-logo-centrism and metaphysical mono-contextualism in thinking and technology. Morphogramatics and polycontextuality as including and surpassing the Western design of thinking, computation and programming are satisfying the structural criteria of tabularity and complexity needed for the operative rationality of a new epoch.

Hallucination always had been at the beginning of cultural revolutions.

It always has been the job of cultural administration to deny it.

http://www.thinkartlab.com/pkl/media/The_Chinese_Challenge-CN.pdf

翻译：韩宪平 (Steve Han) <http://hanxianping.bokee.com/5557607.html>

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