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Teaching with *Liangxin* (Virtuous Heart) Held in Hands or Not

Untangling Self- and State-Governmentalization of Contemporary Chinese Teachers

Contemporary Chinese teachers are being transformed into morally divided subjects by institutional teacher-evaluation governance. They claim such institutional governance can “devour” their basic professional ethics of “teaching with liangxin” (良心), a reinvoked Confucian ethical notion. Then, how does liangxin work as a cultural governing thesis in historical and present Chinese society? How does such “devouring” become possible? In what ways are teachers mobilizing their ethical liangxin to encounter and counter institutional governance? Borrowing Foucault’s governmentality theory, and historicizing the reinvoking of Confucian liangxin, this paper aims to answer these questions.

Following a global step, the Chinese government has recently experimented with various “scientific” teacher-evaluation models. The intention is to upgrade teachers’ salaries. However, these models are claimed to be “devouring” teachers’ ethical *liangxin* (良心—a reinvoked Confucian notion) and teachers are becoming morally divided subjects. Shall

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they seek better evaluation and higher salaries or teach with *liangxin* held in hands? Surprisingly, teachers' *liangxin* is mobilized by teachers themselves as their "ethical resort" to encounter and counter institutional governance.

Such a way of reasoning is exemplified in the following excerpt from *100 New Suggestions to Teachers* by Zheng Jie (2004), a well-known middle-school principal in Shanghai:

What truly concerns me is that teachers' precious *liangzhi* (良知, inborn and good conscience) would be devoured by *scientific evaluation models* and that a school in its control would murder teachers' unique nature. . . . *Liangxin is the last moral line of defense for school education; once it gets lost, everything else will collapse.* Teachers should strive to maintain their *liangxin* as the *source* of all their virtuous qualities, protecting it as if protecting their eyes . . . to save our current already-bad education from getting worse (we) must rely on teachers' *liangxin*, which is to be awakened by students. [emphasis added]

Principal Zheng's reasoning poses a few questions. In what ways are such external scientific teacher-evaluation models "devouring" teachers' inner *liangxin* and turning them into morally divided subjects? Why is *liangxin* reinvoked and mobilized as the last moral line of defense for school education; and once it gets lost, everything else will collapse? And how can Foucault's notion of governmentality help in thinking about the reasoning about the divided self in such a context of Chinese education? To answer these questions, a word is in order here, especially for English readers, about the cultural textures of the Confucian notion *liangxin*.

Confucian *liangxin* as an internalized ethical rule

Chinese *liangxin* (良心), generally translated as "conscience" in modern English, has its own cultural sensibilities (e.g., He, 2012; Li, 1993; Oxfeld, 2010, pp. 51–52; Strohm, 2011). Conceived by Confucian thinker Mencius over 2,000 years ago, the first ideogram *liang* (良) nurtures a sense of "being naturally inborn" which has since picked up a dominant moral sense of "good or virtuous" while the second ideogram *xin* (心) points toward a biological heart as well as a cultural-moral site for the "heart-mind" in the Western sense. As a fundamental graphic form constituting most Chinese characters related to thinking and emotions, the ideogram *xin* mirrors a conjoining of emotion and reason, heart and

mind, thinking and feeling in the Western sense (Hall & Ames, 1987; Sun, 1991; Yu, 2009).

According to Mencius, *liangxin* registers a humane “human heart” endowed with four inborn and intuitive qualities: *ceyin* (惻隱, compassion), *xiuchi* (羞恥, shame), *cirang* (辭讓, modesty), and *shifei* (是非, right–wrongness), which are also the four incipient beginnings for Confucian virtuous qualities of *ren* (仁, humanity), *yi* (義, righteousness), *li* (禮, propriety) and *zhi* (智, wisdom). These four natural dispositions of the human heart are further depicted as the four limbs of a human body and a lack of any of them marks a division line between human and nonhuman (*Mencius: Gongsunchou Shang*).

In historical and present Chinese society, maintaining or failing to maintain *liangxin* functions as an ethical rule ordering the conduct of Chinese people vis-à-vis themselves and in relation to others. If a person’s conduct toward others betrays a lack of *liangxin*, it is widely believed that some *baoying* (報應, punishment) will sooner or later befall this animal-like person or his/her descendants. This implies that Chinese *liangxin* governs as a largely tacit and internalized ethical rule such that a verbal call on maintaining one’s *liangxin* tends to be unnecessary. This is also why little research has been done on Chinese *liangxin* as an ethical rule compared to other governing theses such as *guanxi* (關係, relations) and *mianzi* (面子, face).

Starting with Foucauldian governmentality

My main purpose is to unfold two aspects related to teachers’ mode of being of becoming morally divided. First, I discuss how such a divided mode of being happens as an effect of the claimed confrontation between inner *liangxin*-governing and outer institutional-governing. Second, I examine how such a divided mode of being further gets materially enacted in engagement with students through a historical dialogue.

I start with Foucault’s notion of governmentality as a way of reasoning rather than a concept to apply, to help me think about governmentality as “the conduct of conduct” effected through “the contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (Foucault, 1988, p. 19). Then, its focus on how governing is carried out rather than on who does the governing (Foucault, 2003) allows me to situate my examination of Chinese teachers’ mode of being within a negotiation or confrontation between forms of power, rather than institutions of

power or groups or classes. I examine the economy of power relations through “the antagonism of strategies” (Foucault, 2003, p. 129) rather than from “the point of view of its internal rationality” (ibid.), namely, self-governing *liangxin* and institutional governance. Thus, the questioning of teachers’ status does not regard individual teachers but governing individualization.

Besides, Foucault’s “technology of self” permitting “individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves” (1988, p.18) helps me inquire into how *liangxin* functions as a technology of self to mold and remold teachers’ mode of being and conduct in their engagement with students. That is, how can teachers justify the presence or absence of their *liangxin*? In what ways is their troubled *liangxin* materially embodied? How can they put their troubled *liangxin* at peace?

Foucault, in his later works, developed his theory on technology of self and others by genealogically unpacking the Western ordering of “care of self” and “knowing self” as self-managing technologies in various historical periods (2009; 2010). In such studies, the production of a subjective mode of being is often seen as an effect of discursive power (Rose, 1996; 1999), technologies of power (Dean, 1999), and often situated away from outer toward inner spaces of the self (Knights & Willmott, 2002). With empirical examples, Bjerg and Staunæs (2011) recently showed that such insightful critical studies of management often “take a macro perspective on normative and moral orders and discourses” and affectivity theory “focused on the precise machinery of productive processes as they play out in life” rightly enriches Foucault’s governmentality. While it is true that the turn toward affectivity in Western academia adds welcome enrichment to reasoning founded on mind, in this paper I show that the Chinese Confucian governing thesis *liangxin* does not clearly disengage such a separation in the first place.

Foucault’s governmentality theory has also been used to examine Chinese education. Kipnis (2011) investigates the “specific cultural, economic, political and social circumstances” that causes a governing Chinese “educational desire” (p. 2). Instead of arguing that the governing logic is a Western import, he shows that China’s many traditional treatises on governing can easily “relate to the problematics of governing from a distance, subjectification, population, sovereignty, law and conducting conduct” (p. 6). Similarly, Farquhar & Zhang (2005) find that traditional Chinese

yangsheng (養身, body-cultivation) theories of governing still manifest in the practices of self-cultivation among contemporary Beijing residents.

While Kipnis comprehensively examines the Chinese educational desire as a total social phenomenon from multiple perspectives, I particularly scrutinize the governing dynamics of contemporary Chinese teachers, namely, how they are caught up between institutional governance and self-*liangxin* and how such entanglement gets enacted in engagement with students. Mainly focused on how *liangxin* works out as a cultural thesis of governing in this particular grid, I do not delve into other teacher-governing factors such as *yingshi* (應試, testing-focused) and *suzhi* (素質, quality-oriented) curriculum reforms. Instead, I will historicize the Confucian notion *liangxin*, not only to see how it was affectively reasoned and enacted in historical contexts, but more to use it as a cross reference to better show contemporary teachers' entangled *liangxin* engagement with students. Such a cross-examination also shows the extent to which *liangxin* works in Chinese society as a tacit governing principle.

I collect *liangxin*-related narratives from historical texts, current governmental policy documents, media reports, teachers' weblogs, and journal papers as my data. I treat them all as discourses, namely, both reasoning and practices in a Foucauldian sense. Structurally, I unfold my analysis in two steps. I first examine the power economics realizing Principal Zheng's and other teachers' positioning of *liangxin* as resisting institutional teacher-evaluation system. Then I historicize Confucian *liangxin* to show its material conditions as an ethical technique of self-government and examine how *liangxin* is enacted and reenacted by contemporary Chinese teachers. In so doing, I discern a potential alignment of the two forms of government on Chinese teachers. Such a cultural sensitivity, I argue, enriches Foucault's governmentality thinking.

***Liangxin* reinvoked to resist institutional teacher-evaluation governance**

The Chinese government has recently experimented with various teacher-evaluation models. Its latest expression is the new *Jixiao Payment* (績效工資) reform in which total compensation is equal to employment position salary plus extra work credit. It was initiated and enforced by Premier Wen Jiabao's administration in 2009 with state-run universities, public K-12 schools, and public medical institutions. This *Jixiao* payment model currently involves as many as 12 million work units and

about 300 million working people. It symbolically marks a change from an honored “iron bowl” (鐵飯碗), signifying a stable job in a state-run unit in early post-Mao China, to a breakable “porcelain bowl” (瓷碗) in current reform-era China.¹

This credit-based payment system, claimed to be scientifically and quantitatively more accountable, more practically workable, and ideally more motivational to teachers, aims to increase teachers’ salaries up to the average level of public officials in the same local regions. Elementary and middle school teachers now receive a 70 percent basic salary in alignment with a locally set governmental standard and a 30-percent credit-based award. This latter award is to be democratically decided by each school based on individual teachers’ work credit and actual contributions to the school. Though what counts as teachers’ work credits and contributions and how much credit is given for each piece of work may vary from school to school, general guidelines include what subjects and how many courses (new or old) a teacher teaches, what role a teacher plays, what extracurricular activities a teacher organizes, how many exams a teacher audits, what educational awards a teacher receives, and how many students sit in the classroom. Each item is numerically calculated into quantitative credit. For example, if a teacher teaches 2 seventh-grade literacy studies classes, each with 45 students and 25 lessons every month, then the earned credit for this teaching load is $24 \times 0.9 \times 1.0 = 21.6$.²

These numbers function as a technology of government subjecting Chinese teachers to an instrumental economization. While Chinese teachers have been expected to dedicate their *liangxin* to their engagement with students, this humanistic *liangxin* falls short of the “objective” quantification, as there is simply no yardstick to numerically quantify or exchange one’s invisible heart into visible monetary credit. The practical complexity, both mathematical and political, involved in applying this credit-based quantitative evaluation model in grass-roots schools actually intensifies tension among teachers and runs a risk of eating up teachers’ *liangxin*. Below is one example of a commonly heard outcry from many teachers:

Though a well-intended state-level reform act with a decent state plus local budget (37 billion RMB in 2009), in grass-roots common schools it is simply impossible to operationalize the Jixiao payment system equitably. In recent years, numerous quantitative evaluation models have actually devastated teachers and this one has set them into another fire pit. It has empowered school leaders in assigning credited awards, built up the ten-

sion among teachers, and created another hotbed for corruptive educational buying of “excellent title.” *However, for most common teachers, to become excellent teachers means nothing but pressing students harder to force out good scores. To some degree, the unbearable workload on students’ shoulders during these years is directly related to all the “scientific” teacher-evaluation models. To save our kids, we would first have to save our teachers, who are being unbearably tormented and morally divided by various quantitative evaluations.* [emphasis added]³

Referenced in this outcry are the various forms of institutional governance entangling teachers’ mode of being: a testing-focused schooling system, the newly stipulated student-oriented curriculum, and credit-based teacher-evaluation models. These governing procedures are transforming contemporary Chinese teachers into morally divided subjects, deprived of the high social status that teachers have historically enjoyed when Confucian teaching is highly honored. Here is what a teacher says in his blog: “It is true that teachers’ *liangxin* is indeed significant; however, can students, leaders, parents, and the whole society understand teachers’ *liangxin*? No! They even calumniate and slander it. To make things worse, media reports often exaggerate the lack of teachers’ *liangxin*. Bit by bit, the dignity of teaching and teachers are discarded and teachers’ social position downgraded.”⁴

The above outcry also realizes Principal Zheng’s expressed concern in 2004 cited in the beginning of this paper: Teachers’ *liangxin* would be devoured by the “scientific” teacher-evaluation governance. Teachers’ *liangxin* is indeed being constrained, tested, and even devoured when teachers buy teaching credits or press students harder for good scores. However, no matter whether it can be understood by the students, parents, and the whole society, and even though it is already endangered by the “scientific” evaluation governance, teachers’ *liangxin* can never be lost because it is the “last resort (moral defense) to save current Chinese teachers and education. As the “source” of all other virtuous qualities, it has to be saved and is to be awakened by students. Once *liangxin* gets lost, everything else will collapse” (Zheng, 2004). Echoing such a call to maintain teachers’ *liangxin* and overwhelmed by various forms of institutional governance, many contemporary Chinese teachers are resorting to their own *liangxin* for protection. The statement “as long as I teach my students with my own *liangxin* held in hands, I am a good teacher” is becoming teachers’ popular discourse as a way to self-construct, self-protect, or self-judge their own identity.

Reinvoked and mobilized with a salvational mission yet endangered by the monetary evaluation system, teachers' *liangxin* is still to be saved and awakened by students (Zheng, 2004). Why is it to be awakened by students, and how? How does it play out in ordering current teachers' practical engagement with their teaching, their students, the broader social milieu, and themselves? How can teachers continue "teaching with *liangxin*"? To answer these questions, let me now move to historicize the Confucian–Mencius *liangxin* as a technology of governing self and others.

Teachers' (re)enactment of *liangxin* through a historical dialogue

In this section I juxtapose *liangxin* narratives of the historical Mencius and contemporary teachers to analyze how *liangxin* contextually works as a governing technique ordering a person within her/himself as well as from others. Such juxtaposition neither assumes that *liangxin* does not work at all in the intervening 2,000 years, nor assumes that *liangxin* never changes in its form, rule, and structure as a governing thesis in Chinese history. Rather, the historical unpacking aims to better delineate the way *liangxin* works in current Chinese society as an internalized ethic rule. Then I unpack the ways in which one's inner *liangxin* is intertwined with social face of honor and shame. Finally I explore how teachers measure the presence or absence of their own *liangxin* in their engagement with students. This brings my attention to a potential alignment between *liangxin* self-government and institutional evaluation state-government in the governmentalization of contemporary Chinese teachers.

Liangxin can be bodily manifested and heartily felt by others

According to Mencius, *liangxin* is a humane heart endowed with intuitive senses of compassion, shame, modesty, and right–wrongness. The story below illustrates how Mencius is able to tell that King Xuan of Qi is a ruler with *liangxin* (compassion) that can guarantee his becoming a virtuous king for his subjects.

King Xuan: Can I have a peaceful kingdom with rule of virtue?

Mencius: Yes.

King Xuan: Why would you say that?

Mencius: I was told that one day Your Majesty saw a cow being led by

your court and you asked “where is it going.” “To be killed for a sacrifice ceremony.” “Set it free! I *don’t have the heart to see it tremble with fear* and be killed for having done nothing wrong.” “Then no more sacrifice ceremony?” “Of course not, get a lamb.” Is this story true?

King Xuan: True.

Mencius: With such a humane heart, you can surely rule the *tianxia* (天下, world under the sky). Others may take this story as an expression of your lack of generosity, but I see it as an embodiment of your compassionate heart.

King Xuan: I heard of the comments. But I really didn’t have a heart to see the cow tremble with fear (at that moment)....

Mencius: Never mind their comments. They could never really understand your feelings deep inside your chest. Moreover, they think if you take mercy on a cow, then what is the difference between a cow and a lamb?

King Xuan (smiled): Right, I myself am not clear why I made that decision.

Mencius: It doesn’t matter. Your bearing-no-heart-to-see-it-tremble is an embodiment of your humane virtue. [Your decision to use a lamb instead was] just because with your own eyes you saw the cow tremble, not the lamb. *Junzi* (君子, humane person) *doesn’t have the heart to see any live flying birds and walking animals die and doesn’t have the heart to eat their meat when hearing their desperate call*, so *junzi* stays away from kitchen—from places for killing and cooking live animals [emphasis and translations added]. (*Mencius: Gongsunchou Shang*)

According to Mencius, King Xuan has an intuitively compassionate heart (*liangxin*) simply because *he doesn’t have the heart to see with his own eyes the cow tremble with fear*. Even though he decides to use a lamb instead, he still has a compassionate heart because he doesn’t really see the lamb tremble in front of his eyes. In other words, his *liangxin* is set at peace. Though sounding logically a bit funny today, this story indicates that according to Mencius, a spontaneous and affective visual or aural contact can help to manifest one’s well-disposed *liangxin* naturally.

Interesting, this trace of reasoning still echoes in Principal Zheng’s narrative on how teachers’ *liangxin* (in-born sense of compassion and mercy) can be and is to be awakened by students. Using a parallel of statements all containing the Chinese character *kan* (看, literally to look with the eyes) as underlined below, he develops his argument that teachers’ *liangxin* can be awakened by students through “looking at (treating) students for the students’ sake” (not for money’s sake):

to *look at* students for their sake: to *gaze upon* students' knowledge-thirsty eyes, to *notice* students' naivety and loveliness, to *recognize* students' most sincere respect for teachers, to *watch* them all grow into human beings, and also to *look ahead at* the uncertain future of those naughty students! To *look at* students for students' sake is teachers' inborn nature, as who else would look at others' kids for the kids' sake? The more fully awakened a teacher's compassionate and merciful heart, the better teacher he/she would become. Therefore, "to *look at* students for the students' sake" becomes "to *look at* our own *liangxin*." (Zheng, 2004; emphasis added)

That *liangxin* can be awakened (or troubled) as a felt affect of visual interaction is further demonstrated in this next narrative titled "educational instrumentality: examining my own *liangxin*" by Principal Guo of a high school. He had been enjoying his teaching with "good students" before he was sent to take charge of a newly established high school with lots of "bad students." Hoping to send at least some good students to college through the College Entrance Examination, the school decided to sacrifice some "bad students" by putting them into a different classroom so that the good ones could have more help from teachers and study in a better classroom atmosphere. However, one day when one "bad student" entered Principal Guo's office and questioned whether the school was indeed planning to give them up, it pricked Principal Guo's *liangxin* for once and a whole lifetime. Four years later, Principal Guo published his examination of *liangxin* in a journal paper:

The student I faced that day was hungry for knowledge, and yet apparently dissatisfied with his classroom atmosphere. That was a *naively honest face and his eyes bespoke a mixed look of worry, expectation, helplessness, and anger...* I shed tears and my tears told of both helplessness and a guilty *liangxin*. He didn't get into a college then, and I don't know where he is now. The school is in a much better situation now, but that "bad student's" questioning still haunts my ears, and *his worried, expectant, helpless, and angry look was forever imprinted on my brain like a painting.* (Guo, 2006; emphasis added)

Just as the trembling cow pricks King Xuan's heart, the student's mixed glance is imprinted on Principal Guo's brain like a painting and it gnaws his internal *liangxin* for years. Principal Guo's scruple of *liangxin* results from his failing to help the "bad student"; this is similar to the English conscience when you do something wrong and later suffer from your guilty conscience. However, in Chinese *liangxin* means "more than thinking about what you should do, must do, or could have done, and

besides an inner voice, Chinese *liangxin* contains the actions that it should prompt” (Oxford, 2010, pp. 51–52). Even though Principal Guo examined his scrupled *liangxin* after the event, his failing to help the bad student back in 2000 is a marker of his particular action, conducted without *liangxin*, that he would carry with him forever. On the other hand, King Xuan, when seeing the trembling cow, did the right act as an embodiment of his *liangxin* (heart of compassion) and put his *liangxin* at peace. Apart from this aftereffect of guilty shame pricking one’s *liangxin*, which is self-reflexively experienced, *liangxin* is also historically intertwined with a sense of social shame and honor as an externally imposed government of the self. This is discussed in the next section.

Bodily liangxin intertwines with social shame and honor

In historical agrarian and current Chinese society where interpersonal relationship is largely performed bodily and heartily felt (Fei, 1998; Sun, 1993), the *liangxin* governing technology of self and others is also intertwined with a sense of social honor and shame. Historically, the Confucian sense of shame (恥, *chi*), together with *li* (禮, propriety), *yi* (義, righteousness), *lian* (廉, integrity), are treated as four dimensions that can nurture one’s *liangxin* and rectify one’s self-cultivation and state-governing. In Confucian self-cultivation, this sense of shame can become an honorable quality in that “an eagerness to learn brings one closer to knowledge, modeling one’s knowledge in real life brings one closer to humanity, and knowing shame brings one closer to braveness” (*Zhongyong*). Confucian self-cultivation paves the way to becoming an inner sage and an outward king that can, in a concentrically outward way, rectify oneself and then one’s family, govern one’s nation and level the whole world under the sky.

The intertwining of *liangxin* and social honor–shame still orders and conducts the conduct of contemporary Chinese people in their social life. As Oxford (2010) rightly points out after spending time in a Chinese village over a decade and a half, Chinese *liangxin* is commonly viewed as a moral obligation to remember and appropriately repay past moral debts. If someone forgets or fails to repay past moral debts, that person would be judged to be without *liangxin*, like a rescued dog that ungratefully returns and bites its former patron. Such an animal-like *liangxin*-less person would often suffer from social shame, disdain, and isolation in communal villages and society.

It is worthy noting that such social punishment through shame, disdain, and isolation is different from punishment through law in that shame does not say that you are wrong, but you are shamed before others. In other words, social shame rests its judgment with what others say about your act, not your own principle. Social shame is a matter of losing one's face and dignity, and losing face through social shame can literally mean one's clean face is disparaged by words or signs. For example, during the Cultural Revolution, teachers and intellectuals were paraded through the street with humiliating words or signs painted on their faces as a symbolic/ritual punishment through social shame. A disparaged face in public marks an extreme sense of humiliation and shame even to common people, let alone "face-loving" Chinese intellectuals. Such externally imposed and self-reflexively reinforced shame indeed put many Chinese intellectuals to death.

Similarly, Chinese public figures can never lose face in public. That is why on Chinese media screens, captions will never cross over the face of a host or hostess and no cartoon of Chinese governmental leaders would appear in media reports. Such a feature cannot be totally attributed to political regulation; rather, it has become possible as an historical effect of a dynamic intersection between various forms of political, social, cultural, and ethical governing principles.

In contemporary Chinese civic education, shame is also portrayed as a potentially positive affect, a catalyst of (self-) improvement. For example, in 2006, the Hu Jintao administration proposed the eight honors and eight disgraces socialist core-value in the format of a rhythmic poem.⁵ The cartoon below shows five kinds of shameful acts symbolically embodied as a burden whose weight bends a person's back. The more shameful the act is rated, the more bent is the back. As the caption says, ask your heart and it feels guilty and shameful. That is, you can't stand straight with a burden of heavy shame on your back—you are physically, mentally, socially, and morally lower than others. The common Chinese statement "a straight body is not afraid of a strained shadow of itself" (身正不怕影子斜, *shenzheng bupa yingzi xie*) is a vivid expression of the conflation between physical and social categorization (see Figure 1).

In this line of thinking, distinct from Bjerg and Staunæs's claim that governmentality can be united with a sense of shame along with the current affective turn (2011), in Chinese heart-mind thinking, there is no separation of the affective gesture from rational governmentality. In fact, the Confucian accent on affect has always played an important role in ordering the social conduct of conduct of and among people.



Figure 1. “Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces Cartoon: The Heart Feels Guilty” (by Wan Yong)

Source: <http://news.163.com/10/0716/08/6BMUCQP0000146BC.html>.

Still, with *liangxin* discourse becoming popular, a nuanced shift in the rule of classifying people is visible, from the stratification between *junzi* (humane/virtuous person) and *xiaoren* (nonhumane/nonvirtuous person) toward the division between humans with *liangxin* vs. *liangxin*-less animal-like humans. In October 2011, a nationwide campaign “Maintaining the Bottom Line: Commonplace *Liangxin*” was launched by China’s largest website sohu.com, the Jinghua News Agency, and over thirty provincial media groups.⁶ Continued in 2012, this campaign is calling out grass-roots Chinese *liangxin* from the brink of collapse as the current *Chinese Spirit*. Such a politicization of *liangxin* begs further investigation.

The autonomous agency of Confucian liangxin rationality

Given that *liangxin* can be externally connected with social face, how can it be internally measured to check its absence or presence? How can teachers balance the claimed confrontation between a testing-based evaluation system and their own ethical *liangxin*? Here I cite two eighth-grade teachers as an example—Teacher Fan and Teacher Feng—from Cai and Liu’s ethnographic paper on teachers’ identity published in the Chinese journal *Teacher Education Research*. Both teach literacy studies and feel they have dedicated their whole heart to their students and thus

their *liangxin* can rest. Teacher Fan's pedagogy is tailored for testing objectives and his dedicating teaching always wins very high scores for his students in district exams. He says, "I teach according to what is tested." However, Teacher Feng strives to relate the textbooks to real life and help students think about themselves and their life. She says "like others, I also want my students to score high in tests, but I always want to teach them something about how to be a person, to model my own teaching on the educational idealism of *jiaoshu yuren* (teaching books and nurturing students/humans)" (Quoted in Cai and Liu, 2010, p. 8).

These two examples vividly show the two most general yet distinct attitudes toward *liangxin* and the instrumental testing-focused pedagogy. With sharply different attitudes, both teachers can feel their *liangxin* at peace. How is this so? This brings out a theme with a long history in Chinese Confucian *liangxin* rationality: the individual is morally accountable for his own conduct. The Confucian expression *Wei ren you ji* (为仁由己) testifies that enacting virtuous deeds or not doing so is ultimately in one's own hands. This self-autonomy justifies Teacher Fan's statement "as long as my *liangxin* is at peace and what I do is paired with students, I am a good teacher," to defend his testing-oriented pedagogy targeted at teacher-evaluation models. In other words, it plays a decisive role in mediating the relation between one's own *liangxin* and the institutional evaluation form of governance: sometimes in confrontation while other times in potential alignment. Such a cultural finding helps me rethink the methodological issue of using Foucault's theory in a Chinese context in the following section.

Rethinking Foucault's governmentality with Confucian self-autonomous *liangxin*

Earlier I said I begin with Foucault's governmentality theory as a way of reasoning, rather than as a concept to apply onto a Chinese context. Now let me explain what I mean by such a claim. Seemingly, such cultural alignment between Chinese teachers' *liangxin* and institutional teacher-evaluation governance realizes Foucault's warning that a possible merging can occur between "the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures" (2003, p. 134) in modern nation-state governing. In his reading, Foucault positions such a technology of self as a strategic outlet in latent, if not apparent, compliance with state rationalities and procedures. For example, neoliberalism brings

forth a new regime of government and a new entrepreneurial form of self-government wherein the main task of the state becomes creating and controlling a market environment to enable an entrepreneurial freedom (Simons and Masschelein, 2006).

However, Teacher Fan's justification of his *liangxin* in alignment with institutional governing happens as an effect of different historical and cultural principles and raises a methodological issue. Even though Confucian *liangxin* is reinvented as a form of resistance against institutional governance, notions like self-autonomous agency, resistance, and institutional governance cannot be viewed as structural given concepts to be applied. Rather, they are effects of a dynamic intersection between various forms of political, cultural, and historical principles through which the ordering of conduct is accomplished in contemporary Chinese society. Understood this way, governmentality is a way of thinking but not reducible to particular universalized concepts to be applied onto other cultural historical events. In this sense, this paper shows a way of thinking about Foucault's governmentality that is not merely a reproduction of the notion but extends as it redefines it.

Notes

1. Zhongguo Jingji Zhoubao, September 8, 2012 (<http://news.hexun.com/2009-09-08/120992450.html>).
2. Jixiao Gongzi Zhidao Yijian [Guideline on Jixiao Payment]. <http://ymc1413.blog.163.com/blog/static/1236022200912210248608/>.
3. Jixiao Gongzi Nan Gongping [Jixiao Payment can hardly be Equitable]. http://www.360doc.com/content/10/11/12/18/2863631_68824858.shtml.
4. Keke Diary 148: Teachers' Liangxin. March 21, 2008. <http://eblog.cersp.com/userlog22/144806/archives/2008/798104.shtml>.
5. Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces Socialist Core-Value Education. http://english.gov.cn/2006-04/05/content_245361.htm.
6. The 2011 campaign collected about 55,000 grass-roots liangxin stories with 105,828 web-posts and over 0.4 billion web-hits within 66 days and was one of the 10 online hot topics in November 2011. <http://news.sohu.com/s2012/7346/s353333553/>.

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