

On Micro-political Philosophy

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Heralded by the publication of *A Theory of Justice* by Rawls, research on political philosophy has been reviving on all fronts since the 1970s. Around the turn of the century, political philosophy became one of the most lively areas in philosophical study in China. Contemporary Western political philosophy is growing more diversified, progressing in different directions. I think that there is an important development trend among the schools of contemporary Western political philosophy that differs from the traditional political philosophy – a shift from macro-political philosophy to micro-political philosophy. A careful analysis of this trend will open up a new horizon for political philosophy.

I. The rise of micro-political philosophy

To get a clear view of the research paradigm shift in contemporary political philosophy, we need first deal with some basic concepts such as macro-politics and micro-politics, macro-power and micro-power. Generally, political philosophy studies the prescriptive nature of political phenomena or political matters and the legitimacy of political systems. It also makes value judgements about the construction of political systems and the deployment of political activities, and furthermore, it supplies philosophical reflections based on *logos*. Political phenomena or political matters are richly meaningful, yet the main function of politics is their diffusion among the people by means of a rearrangement of the social order through varied systems. Hence, the core of politics is power and control.

'Macro-politics', so-called, deals with macro and centralized power structures and control mechanisms such as the arrangement of a state system and the operation of state power; the so-called 'micro-politics', on the other hand, concerns itself with the dispersed and micro-power structures and control mechanisms that are internalized in the plane of social activities and everyday life. In the modern view, macro-politics appears to encompass the rationalized operation of power and the arrangement of

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systems while micro-politics includes various forms of knowledge power and spontaneous cultural power.

In terms of the above-stated classification, traditional political philosophy, historical studies, sociology and other related studies are dominated by the research paradigm of macro-political philosophy. They deal with the operation of state power, the arrangement of political systems and closely related basic political concepts such as justice, equality, freedom, democracy, legal systems, authority, rights and obligations, while neglecting the marginalized power structures in other planes of social life and the micro control mechanisms governing everyday life, or, if giving consideration to them at all, they consider these micro-powers as effectively determined by macro-powers or as attachments of macro-powers. However, though study of macro-power is still an important research theme, a shift toward the micro can be detected in the study of political philosophy. In the micro-politics of M. Foucault and G. Deleuze, as well as in Post-Marxist political philosophy, attention has been consciously directed towards micro-political phenomena and micro-political power structures. Foucault's analysis of the disciplinary, normative and dispersed micro-powers in the marginalized fields of the military, the prison, the hospital and the school, the analysis of Deleuze and others of the politics of desire, and J. Baudrillard's analysis of the politics of marginalization and differentiation all are typically micro-political critiques. In their *Postmodern Theory*, S. Best and D. Kellner (1991: 24) state that after the uprisings of May 1968, many new left-wing social movements started 'embracing micropolitics as the authentic terrain for political struggle'. They point out that 'Micropolitics would focus on the practices of everyday life and would involve revolution in lifestyle, discourse, bodies, sexuality, communication, and so on that would provide the preconditions for a new society and would emancipate individuals from social repression and domination' (p. 116).

Of course, it must be noted that the differentiation between macro-politics and micro-politics, between macro-political philosophy and micro-political philosophy is only relative. There are no macro-politics and micro-politics that are absolutely distinct and clearly separated. Even postmodern thinkers, like G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, who advocate micro-politics, also emphasize that there are no solid differences between macro-politics and micro-politics, and that politics is at once both macro and micro. We are emphasizing micro-political philosophy here not to negate or replace macro-political philosophy, but rather to open up the horizon of political philosophy to a broader reflection. For in the sense of a reflection from an enlightened, modern perspective, we must admit the innate limitedness of traditional macro-political philosophy. Specifically speaking, macro-political philosophy devotes itself to the macro and constitutes a universalized meditation on centralized macro-power and its rational construction. Due to its denial or neglect of the complex interactive mechanisms linking the multivariate and dispersed forms of micro-power with macro-power, macro-political philosophy tends to preferentially describe rational power and macro-politics as the universal and decisive power of history. As a consequence, macro-political philosophy of this type is plagued with the theoretical symptoms which characterize the crises of modernity.

First, according to macro-political philosophy, macro-politics or macro-power constitutes the core of the grand narratives of the modern rational culture. In other

words, macro-power and grand narrative are essentially associated and inseparable. Critiques of modernity by contemporary schools of cultural criticism are often concentrated on grand narratives or meta-narratives. Grand narratives, such as the various rational designs based around human freedom and human liberation derived from enlightenment rationality and the contractual spirit, interpretations of absolute truths centered on the catholic movement of absolute reason, and historical determinism based on historical purposiveness and regularity, are all considered valid and act as a powerful rational design for modern social history, mainly because they are constructed, on a deep level, on a faith in macro-power. In other words, it is precisely the belief in the necessity, the catholicity and the power of determinism of macro-politics and macro-power that provides support for the various grand narratives about modernity. It is this fundamental belief that leads Deleuze and Guattari in their micro-politics to criticize the organized and stratified subject and its power, describing it as a 'state machine'; in so doing, they speak out against what they perceive as a 'philosophical imperialism' that embraces state-thought and emphasizes universal order, totality and caste systems. In his *Negotiations, 1972–1990*, Deleuze (2002) clearly demonstrates that he does not like the abstract, the One, totality, reason, subject and so on. In his opinion, 'This kind of thinking has already identified with the model that it borrowed from the state machine; therefore, its goal and way, its whole research methods of conductor, canal, mechanism and so on, is defined by the state machine.' Setting aside the extremities in these statements, one can see that their realization of the relation between state power and general philosophy is profoundly inspiring.

Second, against the backdrop of modernity, macro-politics has become a typical embodiment of the paradigm of the pure philosophy of consciousness and speculative theoretical philosophy. W. Windelband in his *A History of Philosophy* declares that since ancient Greece two different philosophical paradigms have been apparent in the history of Western philosophy: one is the paradigm of theoretical philosophy or philosophy of consciousness that pursues universal knowledge; the other is the paradigm of practical philosophy or cultural philosophy that concerns itself with the worth or meaning of life. The former's mining of thought strives for strict rational logic, universal truth and knowledge system, in the forms of metaphysics and epistemology. The latter, a paradigm of practical philosophy set up by Socrates and the Sophists, strives to understand man's mission in life and the life's proper worth and meaning, in the forms of ethics or ethical philosophy, social philosophy, aesthetics, religious philosophy, and so on. From this point of view, political philosophy falls under the paradigm of practical philosophy and it should therefore have resisted the over-universalization consequent upon rational speculation, and rather dealt with the rich content of human society and its life-world. However, with traditional macro-politics, political philosophy has unwittingly become another theoretical philosophy, thus coming under the influence of the paradigm of theoretical philosophy or the philosophy of consciousness that have become more like 'natural sciences'. Near-modern theoretical philosophy is quite used to borrowing the image of a limitless world proposed by natural sciences in the construction of its philosophical system: it has taken from the natural sciences such conceptions as the cause-effect relationship, necessity, linear determinative characteristics, reducti-

bility, computability, and universality, adopting them as the uniform, unitary and boundless universal rules by which the world is determined and thus establishing a metaphysical and epistemological system centered on rational logic, absolute truth and universal rules. At the same time, it conceptualizes the life-world, the ethical world and human history as conforming to the mathematized and rationalized models provided by the limitless natural world by pairing off their specialties and individualities by means of abstraction with corresponding components within these theoretical systems. Along with this, traditional macro-political philosophy also tends to wipe out the polymorphic, multiform, marginal and micro-power structures and control mechanisms internalized in every level of social life and the everyday life-world, while it raises to the level of universal rules and universal processes of historical change within human society those macro-political activities such as the operation of centralized macro-power and the arrangement of the state system, as well as the mechanism determining periodic economic processes, thus asserting the reality of a rationalized political power or economic power.

But, as mentioned earlier, various postmodern political philosophers have challenged this view. In the light of their analysis of the internal limitedness of the paradigm of macro-political philosophy, we are led to the conclusion that if we stick to the viewpoint of macro-political philosophy and remain under the influence of the theoretical philosophy paradigm or that of a philosophy of consciousness that pursues universal knowledge, then any desire to reject grand narratives or reconnect with the realities of the life-world will remain a vain aspiration. Consequently, we should adopt a different stance, one which attaches considerable value to the paradigm of micro-political philosophy.

For one can be assured that neither the birth of modernity nor its revision will simply be found in the establishment of a totalized, centralized macro-power that neglects or rejects various micro-powers. Similarly, to safeguard the free, just, equal and democratic social order and an autonomous life-world system against 'colonization' by some totalized political power or economic power, it will not do to substitute one macro-power with another centralized macro-power, but rather to revive the discourse and energy of various micro-powers on every level of the society and life-world, so as to give substance to a multivariate social control system.

II. Theoretical resources of micro-political philosophy

In fact, the research paradigm of micro-political philosophy was not completely a new phenomenon when we first presented it; it had emerged as an important trend in many theoretical fields such as philosophy, historical studies, sociology and politics in the 20th century. But in the Chinese context, micro-political philosophy, micro-history, the critique of everyday life and other such theories are relatively new. People are still used to constructing universal theories that are 'valid everywhere' and narrating grand events, leaving out of the theoretical field of vision the everyday life-world that relates intimately to people and forms the cultural basis on which individuals survive and thrive. As a result, our social sciences are stuffed full of general, vacuous, floating signifiers, presenting a veritable 'carnival of signifiers'.

In a sense, abstraction and escape from the life-world has become a persistent plague in our philosophical and social studies.

Therefore, in order to discuss micro-political philosophy studies in the Chinese context, we ought first to summarize and list the theoretical developments of micro-political philosophy in 20th century Western culture and theories, integrating and absorbing them to determine what inspiration they may yield. In my assessment, at least the following four theoretical approaches have helped lay a solid foundation for micro-political philosophy.

The first of the four is the New History generated by the French *Ecole des Annales*. It is generally recognized that historiography and politics or political philosophy are closely related. In some sense, traditional historiography is a kind of diachronic politics or political philosophy. We might note in particular that traditional historiography and traditional macro-political study often have shared subjects and preferences, both centering on macro-politics. The former centers on monarchs, great men and significant events, and usually emerges as a history of macro-politics. The latter focuses on the structure of the state system and the operation of political power, and as a result usually turns out to be an accumulation of traditional historiography. Therefore, when the *Ecole des Annales* staged a challenge to the traditional historiography in the first half of the 20th century, its far-reaching New History research paradigm was at the same time a challenge to the traditional macro-politics and its associated political philosophy. The *Ecole des Annales*, over three or four generations of historians, presented many important ideas of history and classic historical analyses, which we cannot elaborate on here. But we will look into the significance of two of the basic concepts it derived — ‘total history’ and ‘long-term history’—as constituting the basis of a research paradigm.

‘Total history’ is one of the main research paradigms of New History proposed by the founders of the *Ecole des Annales*, Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. In appearance, ‘total’ or ‘totality’ seems to indicate a totalized, linear and deterministic view of history. But it is not the case. What they advocated was a position opposing the traditional view of history as the history of political events. They asserted that historiography should be expanded to cover every detail and every level of human history, and be introduced into every research field of the social sciences, instead of being confined to political activities.

The long-term’ (*longue durée*)’ history is the contribution to ‘total history’ by Fernand Braudel, a representative figure of the second generation of the *Ecole des Annales*. It played an important role in the 20th century revolution of historiography. Braudel thought that in social reality there is a multivariate social time in which both the immediate and the long-term, two opposite timeframes, are worth special attention. Generally, traditional historiography deals with short-period history, concerning itself with events or political time, i.e. revolutions, wars and other eruptive events in history. So it is a history of events. Yet, human society is involved with long-term historical phenomena, too, mainly derived from structural or natural timeframes – phenomena that do not change or change only extremely slowly over long periods of time, such as the geological, climatic or ecological environments, social organization, thought and tradition. Braudel unequivocally opposed the traditional history as a history of political events. He claimed that short-period history is

incapable of revealing those steady on-going phenomena and their changes, or of interpreting them. It is long-term phenomena that constitute the deep structure of history, that lay the basis of historical development and determine historical processes.

The significance as a research paradigm of New History as proposed by the *Ecole des Annales* lies in the fact that it does not base its interpreting mode for history on isolated macro-political events. Instead, it relocates political phenomena back into the geographical environment, cultural tradition, economic structure and other deep-structure and long-term historical realities within which they express themselves. This total history and long-term history reveal to us the deep-structure cultural basis for socio-political movements and economic developments. The researcher's attention is turned from large historical events and grand narratives about politics, economy, military matters and diplomacy to the concrete and micro everyday life-world and to areas of social movements, in order to draw out the greater historical significance and more important historical role played by culture, everyday life and geographical environment. The very first volume of Braudel's three-volume *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century* is entitled *The Structures of Everyday Life*, and is devoted to discussions of people's everyday life in the period from the 15th to the 18th century, covering every aspect and detail of life such as clothing, food, housing, and traveling, and taking everyday life as the key to interpretation of this period of history.

The second of the four developments in micro-political philosophy in the 20th century is life-world theory and the critique of everyday life. The analyses undertaken by the New History of the *Ecole des Annales* of long-term history elements like everyday life, modes of production and culture that lie behind major events of a political or military nature are fundamentally similar to life-world theory, especially in relation to the critique of everyday life. To extract the everyday life-world from the latent background and set it on the horizon of rationality whereby one might consciously apply rational thinking to that life-world was a significant realization of 20th century philosophy. Husserl, Wittgenstein, Schütz, Heidegger, Lefebvre, Habermas, Heller and other theorists contributed on different levels to this philosophical reorientation. The key point of the critique of everyday life is that it will no longer study the determinative functions of macro social-historical elements like politics and economics in an isolated sense, but will locate all social-historical elements within the cultural structure of the life-world for inspection and evaluation.

Life-world theory and the critique of everyday life represent the general reorientation of philosophy in the 20th century that gave rise to various theories about everyday life. Specifically, for Husserl, the life-world constructed by meanings as intersubjectivity is a cultural world which includes various cultural structures such as given, non-thematic, pre-scientific and pre-logical values, meanings and pre-thoughts. Wittgenstein's theories about everyday language and language game proposed in his later years take everyday language as a basic form of life. This is very close to Husserl's life-world theory in value orientation. Heidegger's world of the everyday *Mitsein* of *Dasein* is a world in which subjects exist and communicate with each other through being-in-itself, subsidence or alienation. What he focuses on is obviously the form of everyday *Mitsein*, a special form of existence. Sartre's theory

of 'the other' demonstrates the same understanding of communication in the life-world as that of Heidegger. Lefebvre defines the everyday life-world as a plane on which individuals exist and reproduce; individuals are created and discovered on this plane, with its focus being the basic form of existence, i.e. the cultural mode. Schütz clearly defines the everyday life-world as a given intersubjective world, a world of culture and a structure of meaning. When analyzing everyday life as a field of individual reproduction, Heller has always considered it a form of survival and existence, an objectification of the categorical nature of the things-in-themselves. K. Kosik in his *Dialectics of the Concrete* criticizes 'the world of the pseudo-concrete' and deeply explores the characteristics of the everyday life-world and its relation with history. Habermas simply takes culture, a means of knowledge storage, as the basic constitutional element of the life-world.

Though different in their approaches to the life-world, these theorists share a fundamental understanding in that they consider the life-world as a cultural world. That is, philosophical rationality focuses on given human knowledge storage, cultural pre-thought, value orientation, non-thematic sets of rules, and traditions and customs that are shown through everyday activities such as obtaining the basic necessities of life, falling in love and negotiating marriages, mourning the deceased, and daily communication with others. Thus, the life-world is closely associated with the meaning of existence and base values, and hence the internal mechanisms of social history. As the area where individual reproduction takes place, as the background or context within which intersubjective communication occurs, as the basis of social reproduction and the fundamental environment within which social-historical movement takes place, the life-world influences and regulates all individual and social reproduction and social-historical evolution. It is easy to see that the critique of everyday life provides an important theoretical framework for micro-political philosophy. This cultural basis is indispensable for the retrospection of modernity and the understanding of political activities and system edification in human society.

The third of the four developments is postmodern micro-politics. If the New History paradigm of the *Ecole des Annales* and the critique of everyday life paradigm are something that micro-political philosophy can use, then the postmodern micro-politics derived by analysts such as Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Lyotard are exemplifications of micro-political philosophy. The most noticeable aspect of the analyses of modernity undertaken by Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Lyotard is the shift of focus from centralized macro-power to multiform micro-powers. This has led to important changes in people's understanding of patterns of power and operating systems, of the hot issues relating to modernity and strategies against rational power. To be concise, we will discuss briefly Foucault's critique of modernity from the micro-political perspective.

Foucault begins his 'preface' to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* with a comment on the 'long-term' ('longue durée') history paradigm of the *Ecole des Annales*. He thought that the immediate consequences of the widespread adoption of long-term history by historians were the rejection of the idea of linear continuity and the assertion of fracture and discontinuity. Related to the issue of discontinuity, Foucault clearly opposes his postmodern concept of a general history to the modern concept of a total

history. He summarizes the difference in this way: 'A total description draws all phenomena around a single centre – a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of a dispersion' (Foucault, 1972: 10). It is within a narrative space of dispersion and discontinuity that Foucault, drawing upon an archaeology of knowledge instead of linear determinism, reveals to us the new micro-power structures. In Foucault's eyes, the power of modern knowledge or rational power is not the centralized, oppressive and juridical macro-power that is formed around state power, but micro-powers, in essence, ones that are dispersed, ever-changing, multiform, subjectless and distributed over different social levels and throughout everyday life. He believes that the operation of micro-powers has also undergone great changes. It does not resort to law and physical power. It appeals to different hegemonic norms, political tactics and modeling of the body and the soul. Therefore, micro-power is a power network that is disciplinary, normative and omnipresent. For this very reason, Foucault is not keen on a general critique of modernity or enlightenment. Rather, he is focused on disclosing the omnipresent and all-embracing micro-power systems in some special and marginal areas such as mental hospitals, the military, schools, prisons and humanities disciplines.

Corresponding to the state of micro-power, postmodern micro-politics adopts a different strategy from that of macro-politics for critiquing modernity or enlightenment. The crisis of modernity does not occur in the totalitarian oppression of all levels of society by a centralized state power system; it is found in the surveillance, judgement, evaluation and discipline of the individual by a micro-power network that is complex, disciplinary, normative and omni-inclusive. This is an all-encompassing prison without 'basic free space'. To Foucault, since power is dispersed and multivariate, political struggle is also dispersed and multivariate. There is absolutely no center generating large-scale rejection nor are there core sites of rebellion. What pertains is only multivariate resistance and multivariate autonomous struggle. When commenting on rebellions like the ecological movement, Foucault once pointed out that the struggle for everyday life power is not aimed at the seizing of state power but at the rejection of all kinds of powers.

The last of the four developments is post-Marxist political philosophy. It is popular opinion that after the May 1968 uprisings in France, the cultural critique of western Marxism gave way, to a large extent, to a discourse of political philosophy. A most convincing case is that of E. Laclau, C. Mouffe and B. Jessop and others who effected a change to political philosophy in western Marxism by way of a study of hegemony, socialist strategies, capitalist states and other issues. And micro-political philosophy is an important aspect of post-Marxist political philosophy. We can get a glimpse of this in Laclau's and Mouffe's theories of hegemony.

Though post-Marxists intend to rethink basic concepts in classic macro-political philosophy such as those of state, society and class, Laclau and Mouffe consider it wrong to take the state as a real and independent factor in the theoretical interpretation of society. They oppose the practice of understanding the state in terms of economic determinism, superstructure theory, class instrumentalism and state autonomy theory. They think that hegemony should be the core concept in political philosophy. Hegemony is at the core of the conception of western revolutionary

strategy elaborated by A. Gramsci, one of the early western Marxists. We will not expound Gramsci's theories of civil society and hegemony, but would like to point out that when Gramsci placed the civil society and its culture between the super-structure and the economic foundation of the state, he might or might not have known that he was breaking the predominance of the traditional macro-politics by isolating hegemony from the macro-power structure of the state, political power and government activities and associating it with the social-cultural structure. We find that in their discussions of hegemony and socialist strategies, Laclau and Mouffe also attach an implication to hegemony that is different from that of the traditional macro-politics. Starting from their anti-essentialist standpoint, they emphasize the logic of contingency in social relations, the centrality of hegemony established upon the interconnection of various political factors, the ineradicability of authority relationships, and the impossibility of constructing a society of harmony. Thus they do away with linear determinism based on macro-power, essentialism and objectivism, and make it possible for the emergence of a radical and multivariate democratic struggle that is basically confrontational. It is not difficult to see that their socialist strategy is, in some sense, that of a micro-political struggle for hegemony. They clearly state that what is worth special attention and rethinking are multivariate social movements. For instance, special attention should be paid to 'the rise of the new feminism, the protest movements of ethnic, national and sexual minorities, the anti-institutional ecology struggles waged by marginalized layers of the population, the anti-nuclear movement, the atypical forms of social struggle in countries on the capitalist periphery – all these imply an extension of social conflictuality to a wide range of areas, which creates the potential, but no more than the potential, for an advance towards more free, democratic and egalitarian societies' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 1).

III. Key points in the paradigm of micro-political philosophy

We have surveyed the theoretical resources and assimilated their main ideas. For reasons of lack of space, however, we have left aside discussion of many other aspects of these theories. But the brief introduction and commentary above is sufficient to present us with an initial impression of micro-political philosophy. Here, as the conclusion to this paper, we will present the features and key points of the research paradigm of micro-political philosophy.

First, in the context of the history of human society, micro-political philosophy, by deconstructing all universalized grand narratives through demolishing the centrality of macro-politics and macro-power, and by utilizing the research paradigm of total history and long-term history proposed by the *Ecole des Annales*, sets politics within the context of the multivariate history of human society for purposes of inspection and understanding, and forms a multi-angled and multi-dimensional theory of social history. In this sense, micro-political philosophy is also a special theory of social history.

Firstly, micro-political philosophy is opposed to abstracting macro-political power or macro-economic factors from the nexus of social history and elevating

them to the status of unconditional determinants of history while pushing other factors to the margin of the determined and the minor. By extension therefore, micro-political philosophy is against ruling out the diversity of historical factors and the plurality of historical choices by means of generalization as used in natural sciences, and is against the idea of history as something similar to natural processes that are governed by laws of positive causation and linear determinism. Micro-political philosophy gives full credit to all the various possible connections, including accidental ones, between socio-historical factors in the long-term historical processes, to all kinds of choices and imitations, including formations of power patterns and mechanisms, in historical processes, and to the resistance to power and the performance of other factors. Thus, micro-political philosophy truly takes human history to be the history of the production of man, a process quite different from natural processes.

Secondly, micro-political philosophy places great emphasis on the roles and functions of all kinds of marginal, micro, multiform and multivariate political powers in its study of political phenomena and matters, forming an interpretive mode of politics that combines the micro and the macro. This should be considered micro-political philosophy's most important contribution. It fully reveals the characteristics of multivariateness and differentiation of political systems and power mechanisms, and opposes the reduction of political operations to the establishment and replacement of centralized macro-powers. It asserts on the one hand that we cannot establish any political system or social control mechanism, for instance, democracy and the rule of law, simply by proposing well-intentioned theories. If neglecting the value-orientation and characteristics of the various micro, multivariate and different power structures on all levels of social life, including everyday life, no establishment will have a firm basis. On the other hand, reformation and renovation of an unreasonable political system or social control mechanism cannot be the simple replacement of one macro-power by another. In other words, no such reformation and renovation will truly be successful if the functions of various micro and marginal power mechanisms are ignored.

This realization is very instructive for us in understanding the issue of modernity, a core issue surrounded by theoretical and practical controversies in the 20th century. In the view of micro-political philosophy, neither the institution of modernity nor its crisis indicates a centralized macro mechanism. Specifically, modernity contains multiple interrelated micro dimensions, for instance, individual subjectivity and self-consciousness, a rationalized and contractualized public cultural spirit, ideologized socio-historical narratives, rationalizations of economic operation, bureaucracies in administrative management, the autonomy of the public sphere, the democratization and contraction of public power, and so on. Meanwhile, the crisis of modernity, i.e., the crisis of rationality, is not about the autocracy of a centralized macro-power, but the rational discipline and specification of micro-powers permeating social life and everyday life. When commenting on the politics of desire theory of Deleuze and Guattari, Best and Kellner (1991: 77) pointed out 'Like Foucault, their central concern is with modernity as an unparalleled historical stage of domination based on the proliferation of normalizing discourses and institutions that pervade all aspects of social existence and everyday life.' Therefore, modernity is not a concrete

identity out there that we can decide either to defend or denounce. Just as Habermas shows in his analysis, although there exists a danger which is inherent in the system and can be self-generated in modern society and economic development, modernity still 'possesses a prescriptive, trustworthy connotation'. Likewise, in the Chinese context, the debate on modernity and enlightenment should not be about the general question whether it should be engaged in or rejected; it should not be a grand narrative by theoretical philosophy. On the contrary, the primary task is to decide how well the multivariate dimensions of modernity are established on every micro-level of social life and everyday life, how effective the resultant control mechanism is and how serious the crisis is. Then we need to decide to what extent we can mobilize various global and local cultural resources in its revision and perfection.

Thirdly, micro-political philosophy penetrates deep into the everyday life-world by way of analyzing all micro-power mechanisms, and thus highlights the connection between politics and culture. Therefore, micro-political philosophy is, in some sense, a cultural philosophy that aims at the life-world. G. Lukacs, a founder of western Marxism, in his *The Specificity of the Aesthetic*, compares everyday life to a river. He thinks that the sciences, the arts and other higher objectified forms all come from this river. It is true that non-everyday worlds like the world of philosophy, the world of art, of science, of political systems and economic systems do grow out of the life-world. Compared with the relatively isolated states of politics, economics and other fields in the non-everyday worlds, the everyday life-world appears in the form of an unspecialized structure of cultural meanings. So the various micro-power mechanisms in everyday life are in fact also cultural mechanisms and cultural hegemonies. Because of this, though post-Marxism achieves its conversion to a political philosophy in western Marxism, it equally goes back to and enriches cultural critique in its concern with micro-political issues such as hegemony. Similarly, we find that though the revival of political philosophy by Rawls and others takes macro-political notions such as justice, equality, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and rights as its theme, it lays emphasis on their cultural significance against the backdrop of modern history. Therefore, their political philosophy can be viewed as value philosophy and moral philosophy as well.

The fusion of the fields of vision between micro-political philosophy and cultural philosophy is an event of great significance, making the study of the life-world richer and more meaningful. The true paradigm of the critique of everyday life aims at taking philosophy and the social sciences back to the concrete life-worlds of different ages and historical conditions, back to the concrete activities of the everyday life-world such as obtaining the basic daily necessities of life, negotiating marriages, taking care of the aged and sick, and every communication, and returning to the innate values, meanings, traditions and customs, knowledge storage, accumulation of experiences, and norms of the life-world. Yet it does not stop at this. What is more important is to critically examine how the individual in every age and culture consumes, communicates, thinks and lives in everyday life, how this individual brings his cultural background into public social life, and how the innate patterns, knowledge storage and norms interact with that public social life and system environment. On the micro-level of the everyday life-world, we can find out how, in underdeveloped countries, the cultural mechanisms of everyday life delay the estab-

lishment of macro modern political, legal and economic systems, and how, in developed countries, the colonization of the life-world by macro-political and economic systems can be resisted, and how the rational control of the social free space can be fought against. The macro-political notions, like justice, equality, freedom, democracy, rule of law, and power and rights, will change from being simply abstract slogans and generalized grand narratives only when they are integrated into the internal cultural mechanisms of the micro-levels of everyday life.

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