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

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Abstract

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 morphogrammatics could be helpful to discover this new kind of rationality.

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2006

The Chinese Challenge. Hallucinations for other futures

Rudolf Kaehr

The Chinese Challenge: Hallucinations for Other Futures

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

-DRAFT PAMPHLET-

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ThinkArt Lab Glasgow August 2006

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"Interactivity is all there is to write about: it is the paradox and the horizon of realization."

The Chinese Challenge: Halluzinations for Other Futures

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

Dr. Rudolf Kaehr, Glasgow 2006

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-DRAFT PAMPHLET-

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 formations [1].

European culture, the first hallucination

European culture depends on alphabetic writing and the Indian concept of Zero[2] with its mechanism of positionality enabling arithmetic, a rational economy of calculation, formal and programming languages in general[3].

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.[4] 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[5]. Consequently, he invented on this base language-independent calculi, logic and a prototype of a mechanical calculator (computer)[6].

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[7].

Today, the US-American dream is exhausted[8]. In its successful realization it has come to a clo-

1. Gotthard Gunther, Villem Flusser, Arnold Gehlen, McLuhan
2. http://saxakali.com/COLOR_ASP/discoverof0.htm
   http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/HistTopics/Zero.html
   http://home.ubalt.edu/ntsbarsh/zero/ZERO.HTM
3. http://www.csee.umbc.edu/help/theory/lang_def.shtml,
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried_Leibniz
5. http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/leibnitz.htm
6. http://www.idsia.ch/~juergen/leibniz.html

sure. While Old Europe is still occupied with its Greek roots[9], US-America, who got rid of these European limitations, now, is missing roots as inspirational resources to design 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[10]. 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 didn't develop similar philosophy[11], science[12] and technology[13] 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. China's 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[14]. 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[15], 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[16].

7. Mark Weiser, http://www.ubiq.com/hypertext/weiser/acmfuture2endnote.htm,
   G. Gunther, Die amerikanische Apokalypse, Kurt Klagenfurt (Ed), München; Wien 2000.
8. http://www.the-american-interest.com/cms/contents.cfm,
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    see: Ed Fredkin, Stephen Wolfram, Holtzman
11. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comparphil-chiwes/#1
12. http://www.formalontology.it/chinese-philosophy.htm,
    http://saxakali.com/COLOR_ASP/chinamh1.htm
13. http://hanxianping.blogchina.com/886414.html
14. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-03/28/content_4356764.htm
15. http://www.thebusinessonline.com, Andrew Neil, What China can teach the West,

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.

Morphogrammatics, 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*[17] and *morphogrammatics*[18] 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[19] and metaphysical mono-contexturalism[20] in thinking and technology.

Morphogrammatics and polycontexturality as including and surpassing the Western design of thinking, computation and programming are satisfying the structural criteria of tabularity[21] 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.

16. Han-liang Chang, Hallucinating the Other: Derridean Fantasies of Chinese Script http://www.lttc.ntu.edu.tw/academics/changhl/hallucinating.pdf

17. http://www.thinkartlab.com/pkl/lola/PolyLogics.pdf
18. http://www.thinkartlab.com/pkl/tm/MG-Buch.pdf
19. Archive for Derrida and Deconstructivism, http://www.hydra.umn.edu/derrida/
20. www.thinkartlab.com/pkl/media/SUSHIS_LOGICS.pdf
21. Gotthard Gunther, http://www.thinkartlab.com/archive/Cyberphilosophy.pdf

《中国的挑战：一个新猜想》
—— 对“中国挑战“的一个注释

我们能从中国人学到些什么；有什么中国人没有教我们?

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主流文化依赖于书写的模式。他们的理性特质， 技术的有效性，他们把社会组织起来，交流信息，艺术和科学等等这一切到跟书写模式分不开；人们在书写和创建自己作为典籍的文化实践中学会了思维和生活。所 以，主流文化总是依赖于某种书写里包含的理性和技术模式。一般来说，书写是一种文化形成的最抽象的机制和技术（1）。

欧洲的文化及第一次猜想

欧洲的文化依赖于字母书写和印度的零占位机制（2），这种占位机制使得算术、计算的经济合理、形式化和编程语言成为可能（3）。

莱布尼茨提出第一个关于中国文字的猜想。他设想了一种“普遍语言”（4）作为国家和人民之间沟通的可信赖的通信基础。他的这个想法类似于中国的象形文字，中 国象形文字通过典籍在不同口头语言之间起着桥梁作用。要实现这一梦想他发明了凝练的数字表示和计算系统，这就是二进制系统，依此作为欧洲对古老的中国“易 经”（5）的一个回应，最终他发明了独立于任何民族语言的运算方法和逻辑，还有作为计算机的原型的计算机器（6）。

现代欧洲科学技术遵循了莱布尼茨的想法，产生了技术上的二进制主义和数字主义，并形成了今天西方——以及亚洲——的基本技术和经济力量。但是，欧洲的技术力量停留在“老欧洲”的意识形态、形而上学和伦理学框架和限制当中。

美国的美式梦想

在美国，欧洲的思维和技术形式摆脱了她的形尔上学老套子，发明了”无所不在的计算“，实现了人工智能，人工生命，认知系统，机器人等等；实现了无限扩张的数字主义（7）。

今 天，美国的美式梦想气数已尽（8）！美式梦想的成功已经接近了尾声；而老欧洲还由她的古希腊起源（9）支配着，摆脱了欧洲限制的美式梦想现在迷失了根本， 失掉了设计未来的精神源泉。美国的必然衰落是由于”无根“！与欧洲分道扬镳，成了无本之木无源之水，在数字主义达到了她的颠峰。在沉湎于”数字形而上学 “中并归结为 0 和 1 的不朽精神世界中，展望更先进的科技发展似乎是不可能的了（10）。全部美国式发展会在”数字实用主义“世界观中万劫不复!

中国书写模式

正 在采用西方科学技术成就的中国没有发展出类似的哲学（11）、科学和技术（12）（13），这是因为她的超复杂的书写模式。但是，中国在下一个时代自有对 西方的优势：有没有被开发的丰富典籍资源。中国文字永远是她的文化和政治的基础和保证，没有”字母线性主义“和数字主义的限制。西方思维的线性性质是更容 易映射进入中国理性的”表式样式“的。这种映射过程，在中国文字的自明性质方面不会导致任何混乱。

中 国文字概念是表格样式的、多维度的、嵌入式的、开放的、复杂的和基于民族古老文化传统的（14）。而这些特征正符合科学技术在处理现代社会问题和开创新未 来的要求的。因此，为今而言，所谓中国的挑战，不是为西方视为危惧新的经济实力和经济扩张，而是在作为未来技术革命基础的中国理性重新发现的可能性方面。 中国理性把任何美国式的东西远远地甩在了后面。中国对西方的挑战不是经济的、也不是政治的或者军事的（15）；苏醒的技术中国和经济中国这个事件并不构成 对西方的所谓的”大挑战“，而是重新发现她的文字系统，并设计出新的理性形式系统，就像创造新的数学和新的编程语言（16）一样。

因为忙于适应西方的技术和经济，中国官方还没有意识到这种形成未来主流文化基础的可能性。可能吧，十九世纪是欧洲世纪，二十世纪是美国世纪，而二十一世纪将是中国世纪。

形态语法学 —— 第二个猜想

我的想法作为后欧洲的第二个关于中国文字的猜想由此而生。第一步，我提出“多结构逻辑”（17）的理论和“形态语法学“理论（18），作为西方模式走到尽 头时对中国理性和技术的概念系统作的一个新的可能的理解。这一工作——我知道她的风险——是某种实验性的猜想，具有永恒的自结构能力，超越西方、亚洲在思 维和技术方面的”具象中心主义“（19）和形而上学的单一结构主义（20）。

形态语法学和多结构理论包含并且超越西方的思维、计算和编程语言的设计，能够满足新时代对操作理性提出的表格样式（21）的处理和对复杂性处理的要求。

猜想总是文化传统革命的前奏，总是被文化管理者所拒绝

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3. http://www.csee.umbc.edu/help/theory/lang_def.shtml,
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gottfried_Leibniz
5. http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/leibnitz.htm
6. http://www.idsia.ch/~juergen/leibniz.html
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