SOME CHINESE REBEL IDEOLOGIES*

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The belief that a study of an ideology is a key to the understanding of the society in which it takes form is based on the assumption that ideas are functions of the subject who expresses them, and that "the shape ideas take is relative to the culture and era in which they develop and are used", although "there are internal standards of validity in ideas themselves". But ideas, whatever their status, are in fact efficacious in history. They have influenced

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2) Max Lerner, Ideas are Weapons, N.Y., 1939, p. 8. See also Max Scheler's Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie, Leipzig, 1923, p. 48, where he takes the position that all knowledge is determined by the social conditions out of which it arises; and Emile Durkheim's The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, translated by Joseph Ward Swain, N.Y. 1926, in which Durkheim holds that "they (principal categories without which no thinking is possible) are born in religion and of religion; they are a product of religious thought" (p. 9). He also holds that "religion is something eminently social" (p. 19). Hence his general conclusion is: these categories are social in character.

3) Max Lerner, loc. cit. Philosophers since the time of Aristotle have been trying to map out our intellectual life in terms of fundamental categories of understanding: ideas of time, space, class, number, cause, substance, personality, etc. Even Max Scheler attempts to escape the sociologicist implication that the social factors which condition knowledge also determine the validity of that knowledge by the metaphysical device of constructing two separate realms of existence: value essences and concrete existential facts. See his "Erkenntnis und Arbeit" (included in his Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft, Leipzig 1926, p. 347 f. The study of the fundamental categories distinguishes philosophy from ideology, the latter being a system or systems of ideas always conceived in conjunction with social, economic and other concrete and objective conditions.
and determined the action of men with or without their being conscious of their influence; and men’s actions have been the leading factor in determining the nature of society. Thus the circle of mutual influence of ideas and social conditions is complete. Without committing ourselves to the question which of the two is to be conceived as the cause and which the effect, it seems safe to assume that a study of ideas will lead one to an understanding of society.

This, however, does not mean that ideas and social conditions follow each other’s changes *pari passu*. Ideas and conceptual schemes have a certain relative stability and often persist in the face of social and economic changes. This persistence makes them sometimes a conserving and stabilizing force and sometimes an obstructing one, depending on the nature of the change, whether it is for chaos or for a new order. There are occasions when changes in ideas take place (either under the impact of new ideas derived from a foreign source or because the existing institutions have spent their usefulness and become a bondage instead of the structural counterpart of the life of ideas) without the corresponding changes in social institutions and conditions in general. When these latter persist while ideological changes are taking place, we may find ourselves on the eve of a social upheaval. Whether as a conservative force or as a progressive incentive, ideas are forces, shaping the lives of individuals and societies alike.

Ideological systems of any definite period in history are never of a simple or atomic nature. A careful observer will not fail to detect layers of conceptual systems and schemes, piled one on top of another, making up a highly complex structure. This seems to be due to the fact that ideas cannot be put on and discarded at will like a garment. Neither their hold on the human mind nor their acceptance is a completely conscious and rational affair. However, we should not because of this be blind to the conscious use of ideology as a