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China's Modernization I

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Class, Citizenship and Individualization in China's Modernization

Björn Alpermann

Abstract:
Against the backdrop of China's rapid social change in recent decades, this article explores the social categorizations of class and citizenship and how these have evolved in terms of structure and discourse. In order to do so, possibilities of employing Beck's theory of second modernity to the case of China are explored. While China does not fit into Beck's theory on all accounts, it is argued here that his individualization thesis can be fruitfully employed to make sense of China's ongoing process of modernization. It may provide a welcome new starting point for analyses of China's current social developments beyond the "simple" modernization theories that still dominate in China studies.

Most experts would agree that over the past three decades China has undergone an unprecedented social transformation propelled by three general forces: economic development, especially a shift from agriculture to manufacturing and services accompanied by urbanization; an economic system transition from a socialist planned economy to a market economy; and globalization, meaning China's increasingly close integration into world markets and its related social and transnational consequences. This has led some authors to see China as falling into an East Asian pattern of "compressed modernity" (Beck and Grande 2010: 409–43; Han and Shim 2010: 471–4). What makes China's transformation all the more remarkable is that it is taking place under the unbroken leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and with only limited reforms of its Leninist political system. This combination of a market society and communist politics directly challenges long-held assumptions regarding modernization (Roetz 2006). It also prompts us to rethink our ideas about how society is ordered and reordered during processes of rapid modernization that give rise to new social hierarchies.

This article discusses social categorizations in China and how these have evolved over the past three decades. It specifically focuses on class and citizenship because scholars have held these categorizations to be of particular importance in understanding how China's experience of modernization relates to that of other societies. The article stresses the interdependencies of these two social categorizations. Moreover, the article argues that the theory of "second modernity" (or "reflexive modernization" as it has been referred to by Beck and his collaborators) is useful in getting past the "simple," i.e. non-reflexive,

modernization theories—still commonly utilized in the China studies field—that hamper rather than advance our knowledge of social change in China.

The article proceeds as follows: The next section gives a brief overview of Beck's theory of second modernity and reflexive modernization and discusses how it diverges from "simple" modernization theory. It also reviews the theory with respect to its applicability to East Asia. The second section of the article addresses class and citizenship in China and analyzes how the content and delineations of these categorizations have recently changed. The third section concludes the article by reflecting upon the possibilities of using second modernity to develop an analytical perspective on contemporary China.

Beck and Second Modernity

First and Second Modernity

Starting in the early 1980s Ulrich Beck published a number of highly critical and controversial challenges to contemporary sociology, starting with an assault on so-called "zombie categories" such as class, stratum or family (Beck 1983).[1] Step by step the contours of his own sociology became clearer. Beck distinguishes between two types of modernity. "First modernity" is brought forth by the meta-changes in society of rationalization, standardization, and normalization. In his view it is characterized by clear-cut social categorizations and distinctions, a straightforward, usually dichotomous, logic of "either/or." However, the root causes of the demise of first modernity are already contained in its very successes, which then lead to a radicalization of modernity itself in what Beck describes as a reflexive process: the modernization of modernization. This in turn gives rise to "second modernity," characterized by fuzzy concepts of belonging, an ambivalent logic of "both/and," and multiple meanings (Beck 1993; Beck and Lau 2005: 526–9). Metaphorically speaking, Beck likens the unequivocal logic of first modernity to Newton's laws of physics, while the ambiguous logic of second modernity is compared to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010: 200).

Crucial to understanding this transition from first to second modernity are three interlinked theorems, one referring to forced individualization, one to

1 This section is not intended to present a full picture of Beck's extensive theoretical and empirical contributions to the theory of second modernity. On the contrary, only a brief and necessarily superficial overview of the most pertinent issues Beck raised can be presented (for a fuller treatment see the critical appraisals contained in Berger and Hitzler 2010).

a (world) risk society, and one to multidimensional globalization (or "cosmopolitization"). World risk society means that large, "industrial-scale" risks of first modernity are getting out of hand. And as ever more unintended consequences of unintended consequences become visible, the previous certainty that modern development will provide an answer to these challenges is undermined by the rise of "manufactured uncertainties" such as climate change (Beck 1993). However, the global distribution of the generation of risks on the one hand and their consequences on the other is highly unequal, thus creating the need to overcome "methodological nationalism" and adopt a cosmopolitan analytical perspective (Beck 2008: 16–24; Beck and Grande 2010). But it is the theorem of forced individualization that is most pertinent to this article. Before we turn to this, however, I need to clarify some points regarding Beck's theory that frequently invite misinterpretation.

First, despite their orderly numbering, Beck does not conceive of first and second modernity as clearly distinguishable historical phases with a visible or sharp break between them. Rather, the major principles of first modernity such as rationalization, standardization, and normalization by no means simply disappear but carry on into second modernity. The *coexistence* of institutions and principles of both first and second modernity is one of the reasons for the "both/and" logic of reflexive modernity. In fact, finding out how this coexistence gives rise to new social patterns is one of the major aims of Beck's research. Beck and Lau (2005: 541–9) list eight different patterns—developed through inductive empirical research—of reflexive solutions to this mixing of old and new. Second, the transition to second modernity proceeds neither smoothly nor abruptly, but rather "in fits and starts." And third, Beck does not posit that first modernity actually ever realized the standardization and normalization of social order it aspired to. There were always exceptions to the "dominant standard and normal forms"; the point Beck stresses is that these exceptions were seen to be just that: deviations from the commonly accepted modes. By contrast, in second modernity the plurality and ambiguity of social patterns have become accepted and recognized (Beck and Lau 2005:533–7). This is, in fact, the hallmark of second modernity.

Individualization

According to Beck, individualization is one of the meta-changes in society that bring forth the shift from first to second modernity. Individualization is seen here as a process radically altering individual–society relations. *Individu-*

alization is not to be confused with *individualism*: it is not about voluntary lifestyle choices of individuals or self-realization; on the contrary, it describes "a meta-sociological phenomenon" that is "imposed on the individual by modern institutions," hence "forced individualization" (Beck 2007: 681). Individualization consists of three dimensions:

> disembedding, *removal* from historically prescribed social forms and commitments in the sense of traditional contexts of dominance and support (the 'liberating dimension'); the *loss of traditional security* with respect to practical knowledge, faith and guiding norms (the 'disenchantment dimension'); and—hence the meaning of the word is turned into its opposite—re-embedding, *a new type of social commitment* (the 'control' or 'reintegration dimension'). (Beck 1992: 128; emphasis in original)

Thus, while "the individual is set free from most previous all-encompassing social categories in industrial society, such as family, kinship, gender, and class, and has emerged as the reproduction unit for the social in a risk society" (Yan 2010:439–40), de-institutionalization, the creation of uncertainty, and re-institutionalization in fact go hand in hand.

Critique and Applicability

Several questions naturally flow from this brief outline of Beck's sociological thought. First, is it a valid description of what has happened in advanced Western market economies against whose development the theorem emerged? Almost three decades after Beck's programmatic essay "Beyond Estate and Class" was first published, this question has not yet been settled. Most relevant to the present article is the part of Beck's theorem that refers to class and other social categories losing their distinctive importance with the individual him-/herself becoming the major unit for reproducing the social. This hypothesis has received a very critical reception, especially among scholars of social inequality (Atkinson 2007; Becker and Hadjar 2010). On the other hand, it has not just been forcefully defended by Beck and his collaborators (Beck and Lau 2005; Beck 2007), but has also received a lot of support from other sociologists (see overview in Berger 2010; Nollman and Strasser 2002). What we can take away from these debates is that class and other social categorizations continue to matter under conditions of individualization, but their *meaning* may have changed.

This becomes most clear when analysts distinguish between a structural level—at which class clearly has not disappeared, but is still determining life

chances—and the level of representation and symbols (Degele 2010). At this latter level, individualization has led to a reevaluation of class: It can no longer claim to have explanatory power over all other aspects of social life. In the words of Nollmann and Strasser (2002: 6–7), the "totalism of class theory"—according to which we can only speak of *structured* social inequality, if economic and symbolic inequality in the sphere of production directly results in differences in the reproductive sphere of classifications, ways of life and lifestyles (a causal relationship)—has been called into question. These authors propose to bridge the gap between the two approaches by restricting Beck's individualization thesis in scope to just the latter sphere of reproduction and lifestyles, while they complement studies in social inequality (so far mostly conducted in sophisticated quantitative frameworks) with hermeneutic research that aims to elucidate *actors' perspectives* of class and inequality. They see this not just as a nice-to-have but as an indispensable complement to the current research mode, arguing that this would be an absolute necessity in order to arrive at a meaningful understanding of the statistical correlations under scrutiny (Nollmann and Strasser 2002: 19–22). Similarly, Kieserling (2010) draws attention to the fact that the perspectives of social scientists may differ from those of actors in terms of attributing causality to social inequalities: What scholars may trace back to an individual being a member of a certain social group, the individual him-/herself often blames on his/her own choices, contingencies, etc. Thus, even if Beck's theses may not be accepted by the majority of scholars working on social inequality from a structural perspective, they do at least hold important insights from the perspective of representation, symbolism, and meanings.

Furthermore, we must determine whether Beck's analyses and hypotheses—so obviously drawing on Western European experiences—can be applied to non-European, non-Western contexts. Again, this is a question that has raised intensive discussions, quite similar to broad debates on the "multiple modernities" approach closely linked to Eisenstadt (see contributions to Schwinn 2006; ProtoSociology 2007). Beck himself has come to increasingly recognize the limitations of his theory of second modernity in this respect and has since the turn of the century come around to forcefully call for a "cosmopolitan turn" in social research to overcome "methodological nationalism" (Beck 2000; Beck and Grande 2010). By this he means that not just "class," "family," etc., have become "zombie categories" devoid of previous meanings, but that even "nation" as a category and unit of analysis has to be questioned. According to him, using nation-states as generally accepted units of analysis for studying social inequality leads to "institutionalized looking-away" in the sense that it legitimizes global inequities: Because national borders are taken for granted,

social inequalities are only addressed as internal problems in individual nation-states; at the most, comparison is made between countries using aggregate figures at the national level. Instead, he proposes using the "principle of unintended consequences" (*Nebenfolgenprinzip*) to determine the unit of analysis so that it comprises all those people—irrespective of national borders—who are collectively affected by risk decisions made by actors in other nations (Beck 2008: 29–30). One could object to this proposition and maintain that Beck is somewhat sidestepping the assertion of Eurocentrism by simply proposing a paradigmatic shift and a new research agenda that has yet to become a reality. However, in recent years he has also begun to more directly address the problem of applying his theses to other world regions, especially East Asia (Beck and Grande 2010). Moreover, other authors have contributed to this debate.

For instance, Han and Shim (2010) argue that Beck's theory can be read in a constructivist sense to understand the special characteristics of East Asia's compressed modernity in which first modernity is developed and transformed into second modernity almost simultaneously. They see modernity as being propelled forward by a bureaucratic-authoritarian state pushing an economic growth agenda. Calhoun (2010: 600), however, objects by arguing that the notion of "compressed" modernity implies some sort of "normal-duration" modernity—obviously another instance of using European experiences as a yardstick to judge non-European modernizations. More generally, he asserts that accounts of "varieties of second modernity" all reflect a tendency to place clearly diverging social patterns on a Procrustean bed by analyzing them through the same lens—that of second modernity (Calhoun 2010: 599–607). And yet, there are two compelling reasons why the attempt is made here to use Beck's hypotheses as analytical tools to shed light on Chinese social development: First, there is a good number of studies on individualization in the Chinese case that—at least to this author—demonstrate that the concept can be fruitfully employed in this specific context (Yan 2010; contributions in Hansen; Hansen, forthcoming and Svaverud 2010). Second and more importantly, Beck's framework of "varieties of second modernity" opens up a plane for comparisons between different kinds of modernization processes globally, also allowing for "varieties of individualization" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010: 201–2). If it still contains elements of Eurocentrism, then it nevertheless constitutes progress from earlier versions of modernization theory that are still being regularly employed to study China's social changes. This will be demonstrated below using China's discourses on class and citizenship as cases in point.

Changing Social Categorizations in China

Class and Citizenship in Mao's China

After China's communist revolution, class naturally became the most important category of category ordering society. And it was to be determined by the party-state itself, not by social forces, much less by the individual. Therefore, it was also a political categorization that in effect determined citizenship rights.[2] In the 1950s the CCP carried out campaigns in urban and rural China to attach "class labels" to all families. Ironically, with the socialist transformation of economy and society underway at the same time, the newly affixed class labels became immediately devoid of their economic basis (So 2003: 364). Instead they became a purely political and *hereditary* status ascription. Moreover, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), as Mao Zedong unleashed "class struggle" within a socialist society, class became even more volatile, as anyone—up to the highest leadership echelon—could be labeled "bourgeois" for deviating from Mao's (ever shifting) party line—in effect for committing "thought crime," to use Orwell's term. Thus, undoubtedly, the party-state played the most crucial role in determining the "class position" and social identity of individuals (or families) during the era of state socialism.

Beyond the class label system, in structural as well as political terms, during most of the state socialist era the major dividing line in society was that of urban versus rural, leading some authors to speak of an immobile "estate" society (Scharping 1995) or even a "caste system" (Potter and Potter 1990). Peasants were tied to the soil as members of people's communes, just as urban workers were subjected to "organized dependency" (Walder 1986) in their work units, which also enforced spatial confinement (Bray 2005). Access to resources and life chances was distributed highly unequally among urban and rural populations, but also among urban work units of different standing within the organizational hierarchy (Walder 1992). Thus, even though workers were hailed as "masters of the country," i.e. at least in theory enjoying the most complete citizenship, they were organized in a stratification system by the state's economic bureaucracy.

2 Citizenship is here simply taken to mean that a person enjoys the full rights of a citizen as defined under the constitution and other relevant laws. In the institutional context of an authoritarian state such as the People's Republic of China, this "socialist citizenship" of course still falls far short of the liberal ideal of full guarantees of human rights and civil liberties since these are granted only conditionally even in legal documents. But citizenship so defined provides a yardstick to measure the (degree of) exclusion or inclusion of persons or groups by the state.

Therefore, employing the analytical lens of Beck's individualization thesis, Yan (2010: 492–3) sees the party-state as the major force in China's initial individualization: disembedding the individual from traditional kinship, community and morality and re-embedding them in the structures of socialist modernity. Their strong commitment to creating the modern in China is something CCP leaders (to this day) have in common with elites of the late 19th century to today (Gransow 2006). But it was of course a particular kind of modernity that Mao-era leaders had in mind. This included a liberating dimension, especially for youth and women, as "the individual was called upon to participate in party-state sponsored political, economic, and social campaigns in public life and to reinvent herself/himself as a citizen of the nation-state instead of being just a member of the family" (Yan 2010: 493). Nevertheless, political status of being part of "the people"—and therefore having the rights of a socialist citizen—or being an "enemy of the people," without such citizenship rights, was in large part a function of the class label attached to one's family. And this status could quickly be lost in the vicissitudes of the countless mass campaigns conducted during the Mao era. Therefore, although this period was "the first stage of China's path to individualization" (as Yan (2010: 494) asserts), it only amounted to "institutionalized individualization cut-in-half" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010: 202).

Class and Citizenship in Reform Era China

After the passing of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping inherited the leadership mantle. The party returned to the 1950s practice of using Stalin's dictum of socialist society as consisting of "two classes and one stratum"—the workers and peasants, and the intellectuals, respectively. Thus, the actual ruling class of party and state cadres was conveniently omitted (on elite composition see Walder 1995). However, shortly after assuming power, Deng set in motion reforms of the economic system that fundamentally altered all aspects of China's socioeconomic composition. Hereditary class labels were lifted, and class struggle shelved to free up the necessary forces to push the reform program of the "four modernizations." This led to China's second phase of individualization, creating new opportunities for social and spatial mobility (Scharping 1995). This entailed disembedding the Chinese people from the institutions of state socialism and re-embedding them in the stratificational order of an emerging market society (Yan 2010: 497–9; Bian 2002). As communes were being dismantled and replaced by family farming, peasants left

the countryside and entered the cities as low-paid workers or peddlers. There, they created a new (lower) social class of "peasant-workers" (*nongmingong*). This was just one sign of the comprehensive mobilization and diversification of Chinese society: As economic reforms progressed and the "socialist market economy" became entrenched, Chinese sociologists at the turn of the century distinguished no less than ten social strata (Yan 2002).[3] Significantly, the term "class" (*jieji*) has by now been completely sidelined in Chinese discussions of social formations. Instead, the less politically charged "strata" (*jieceng*) and the even more innocuous term "social group" (*shehui qunti*) are being used (Guo 2008). More importantly, these processes have been accompanied not only by a large-scale reduction in absolute poverty and an overall rise in living standards, but especially since the 1990s also by rapidly increasing levels of income inequality and urban–rural disparities (Riskin, Zhao and Li 2001). This is strongly reminiscent of what Beck called the "elevator effect" of rising overall living standards accompanied by unchanged or worsened levels of inequality (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010: 204). Thus, without going into greater detail, reform-era China has seen tremendous changes on the structural level in its social makeup.

These structural social changes also had to be reflected at the level of representation. For a government still espousing communism as its guiding ideology, the relative decline of urban state-sector workers and the concomitant rise of new groups, especially private entrepreneurs, clearly presented a challenge. The CCP at first permitted private business only reluctantly, but since the turn of the century private businesspeople have become accepted, not as capitalist exploiters, but as "builders of socialism with Chinese characteristics." This gradual reassessment of businesspeople was completed when the CCP's then-General Secretary Jiang Zemin in 2001 in effect opened up party membership to them (Heberer 2001). Of course, this represented a significant ideological volte, and one that not all CCP members were willing to accept, at least at first. However, it needs to be stressed that many of the so-called private entrepreneurs were in fact former cadres or state-sector managers who took advantage of the privatization gaining ground in the second half of the 1990s. Many of those were in fact already CCP members before they became private sector businesspeople. And upon closer inspection, many "self-made entrepreneurs" (Chen 2002) also had intimate connections with the party-state to begin with, earning these groups the moniker "red capitalists" (Dickson 2003). Popular prejudice against "profiteers" or "low-quality people" in the private sector cer-

3 Due to limitations of space, the discussion below will focus on just two strata—namely, migrant peasant-workers and private entrepreneurs.

tainly lingers (Hanser 2006: 463), but this prejudice is nowadays primarily directed at proprietors of small-scale businesses, such as street peddlers, not the more clamorous private company bosses. The success of the latter is rationalized by attributing higher "quality" (*suzhi*) to them, with *suzhi* being the key characteristic of a valuable member of modern society according to both public and popular discourses (Hsu 2007: 122–56). In sum, the meaning of being a private entrepreneur has changed completely since the start of the reform era from being social outcast without any political rights (a target of "class struggle") to being a fully accepted member of the *new* socialist modernity that comprises a market economy, even becoming a "role model" for others to emulate (Carillo 2008: 102–4). The leading ones among them are even being recruited into the party or representative posts such as the people's congresses and hence awarded full citizenship rights (Dickson 2003).

At the other end of the social spectrum, rural-to-urban migrants in the past were also subject to severe prejudice and marginalization, and often they still are. But their representation in public discourse improved dramatically from original derogatory designations such as "hooligan" (*liumang*) and "blind floater" (*mangliu*, the inversion of the same Chinese characters, referring to the so-called "floating population" [*liudong renkou*], i.e. migrants). Both terms carry strong negative connotations and are closely linked to official disapproval of rural–urban migration (Florence 2006). But as this group became a more permanent phenomenon and officials began to realize their enormous contribution to industrialization and urban modernization (most construction workers are migrants), the more neutral expression "peasant-worker" (*nongmingong*) came into use. Sometimes this is abbreviated "*mingong*" (literally "people's workers"), which can be read as an opposing category to state-sector workers (*gongren*). But when the term "*nong*" ("peasant," a social group often looked down upon by urbanites) is omitted from the word *nongmingong*, the remaining word *mingong* is actually a further slight improvement in the representation of migrants in official discourse: In this concept they are no longer defined by their rural origins, but by their current place in urban society. This is a discourse somewhat closer to reality, because most of the current generation of migrant workers never actually engaged in agriculture (Pun and Lu 2010; Cui 2010). Their raised status in public discourse under the current leadership of Hu Jintao (CCP general secretary since late 2002) can also be gleaned from debates on protecting their "legal rights and interests," for instance with respect to the common problem of wage arrears, as well as from the (well-publicized) fact that the party inducted some of their representatives into the National People's Congress.

None of this, however, can disguise the fact that migrant workers are far from enjoying the fruits of full citizenship.[4] Material rights are the cornerstone in Chinese citizenship discourse (Keane 2001), and in terms of access to these, migrant workers are still being held back by the system of household registration, or "*hukou*"—and this in spite of an array of recent central government policies and some local experiments to address this problem (Davies and Ramia 2008; Chan and Buckingham 2008; Zeuthen and Griffiths 2011). The *hukou* system was instituted in the late 1950s to control urban-to-rural population flows, and it formed the basis of the above-mentioned bifurcated society of the Mao era. Although it ceased to function as an effective means to prevent migration, it still is the major impediment for migrants to blend into urban society, creating what has been called "local citizenship," which is only available to urban *hukou* holders (Smart and Smart 2001). Unable to get an urban *hukou*, migrants are still commonly shut out from nascent social security systems and other services, such as schooling for their children. Nevertheless, recent studies of dispute resolution behavior among migrants hint at subtle changes: Migrants seem to be becoming more aware of their rights and more willing to fight for them, even when compared to urban and rural counterparts (Tang and Yang 2008). Therefore, some authors analyze the behavior—especially of the second generation of migrants—under the analytical lens of class formation, calling it an "unfinished proletarianization" (Pun and Lu 2010; Chan and Pun 2009).

The analyses of both private entrepreneurs and peasant workers, taken here as examples of similar discussions on other social strata, show that disembedding and re-embedding have gone a long way in contemporary China: Previous socialist institutions have been weakened or dissolved, thereby setting their members free—for better or worse—just as the theorem of forced individualization would suggest. However, studies on these new social forces in China often still use a "simple" modernization approach that is not capable of adequately addressing these social changes, as I will argue below.

Second Modernity with Chinese Characteristics?

Studies on China's new social strata—especially by political scientists—regularly take "simple" modernization theory as their starting point. For instance, they argue that industrialization and the rise of middle classes, in particular

4 This ambiguity was most dramatically displayed when central leaders praised migrant workers' contributions to sprucing up Beijing for the 2008 Olympic Games, while local officials nevertheless ruthlessly "cleaned" the city's streets of them before foreign visitors arrived.

private entrepreneurs, "normally" give rise to increasing demands for economic and political rights (or citizenship) and find their "research puzzle" in the fact that this has not (yet) happened in China (Dickson 2003; Tsai 2005, 2007; Alpermann 2006; Wright 2010). Scholars then explain this "deviation from the standard pattern" by citing the CCP's strategy of coopting these new social forces, or by referring to the special characteristics of late industrialization and so forth.

Although insightful analyses, these studies leave the reader with a nagging feeling that "simple" modernization theory may not be the most germane starting point for such an exploration of new social forces, especially when the so-called "puzzle" is being solved over and over again (Dickson 2008; Chen and Dickson 2010). Beck's theory of varieties of second modernities may offer a way to overcome this. First, it opens up the possibility that multiple combinations of first and second modern principles and institutions might coexist, even one in which state-regulated capitalism coexists with post-traditional authoritarian rule (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010: 202). Therefore, it leads out of the dead-end street of teleological arguments: Even if these are just being built up as straw men in the first place, only to be refuted over the course of the examination, I would argue that this blinds researchers to the possibility of genuine diverging forms of modernity. Second, this new perspective would redirect the research focus in two ways: (i) away from the structural level towards that of meanings and representations that lead to a deeper understanding from the perspective of social actors themselves, and (ii) away from the realm of production towards that of reproduction and consumption as new spheres in which class is formed. It is in this latter area that we find a number of fine analyses—though not yet linked to Beck's theory—that deal with the rise of middle-class tastes and hint at the potential of such an approach (e.g. contributions in Goodman 2008; Hanser 2007; Zhang 2010). These studies explore the social meanings of "individualization cut-in-half" and provide us with the necessary context to make sense of correlations between occupation and political values discussed in the studies cited above. An example can be found in Elfick's (2011) analysis of middle-class consumption, which strikingly underlines Beck's point about "individualism without genuine individuality." Similarly, studying middle-class families' educational choices for their offspring, Crabb (2010: 389) observes:

> As the hailed material beneficiaries of reform, urban middle-class families find themselves in the equivocal position of not just being 'free to choose' in the pursuit of an imagined lifestyle, but rather being 'forced to choose' in order to secure lives that reflect their capacity and worth as modern subjects.

Unwittingly, it seems, she is echoing Beck's individualization thesis. Thus, studies such as these highlight the potential for a more thorough integration of these different perspectives for which Beck's individualization thesis may provide an appropriate framework (see also Hansen, forthcoming).

A similar point can be made in regard to studies on migrant workers and other disadvantaged groups in Chinese society. There is a burgeoning literature on collective protests by such groups often employing the perspective of their fight for citizenship rights (Solinger 1999; Cai 2005; O'Brien and Li 2006; Lee 2007; O'Brien 2008; Hsing and Lee 2009; Brandtstätter 2011). Yan (2010: 501) interprets these protest movements and other kinds of social activism as "the emergence of identity politics" under China's individualization, while also noting the strong role still played by the party-state. But this should not be taken to mean that migrant workers, peasants or urban workers are attempting to achieve modernity by realizing only or primarily their economic or political rights. Rather, actualizing themselves as modern persons is a goal in their consumption practices and private lives as well (Griffiths 2010; Lin and Tong 2008; Alpermann 2011). This would suggest exploring the possibilities of migrants as promoters of elements of second modernity in China. On the contrary, casting them as "unfinished proletariat" (Pun and Lu 2010) presupposes a logical endpoint of proletarianization that is located in first modernity. Arguably, this endpoint has never been fully realized, even in the West, and has long since been replaced by new forms of working-class identities. In other words, the underlying assumption here is that individualization will result in the same social patterns as has happened (or rather, *not* happened) in the West.

Instead, China's gradual evolution of class and citizenship may result in patterns quite different from those. An example of this can be found in the development of village self-governance, a system that since the 1990s has given rural dwellers the right to elect their own councils to administer local affairs (O'Brien and Han 2009; Alpermann 2009; Schubert and Heberer 2009). Though far from perfect in design and implementation, this system provides "peasants" fuller citizenship rights than those of their urban counterparts (O'Brien 2001). This is in stark contrast with the general discourse employed by policymakers (and generally accepted by the public) that casts "peasants" as having low "quality" (*suzhi*) and being in need of active state intervention to help in their "modernization" (Murphy 2004; Lin 2011; Brandtstätter 2011). This paradox of granting citizenship rights to those deemed most unfit to live up to the expectations is compounded by unexpected findings on grassroots governance reforms in urban areas. Here, instead of an active citizenry pushing for democratic participation, Heberer and Schubert (2008) find that inhabitants remain aloof

and disinterested with regards to community affairs. Rather it is the state that pushes urbanites to increase their involvement. The authors interpret this as an attempt to create citizenship in a top-down fashion. It is hard to come to grips with this dual paradox in terms of "simple" modernization theories, but it is exactly the "both/and" logic of second modernity that seems to be at play here: being both "backward" and "progressive" at the same time. The important Chinese characteristic of these nascent identities is, however, the crucial role of the party-state as the one who *grants* rights, in contrast to a liberal democratic understanding of citizens as *possessing* rights that the state has to acknowledge and protect. This points to the possibility that elements of modernity that appeared in the West in a seemingly logical and coherent order can be combined in very different ways, and some—that were deemed essential to modernity before—may even be missing (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2010: 203–5).

It is certainly too early to pass judgment on whether Beck's theory of second modernity holds water in respect to China. In fact, almost three decades of debate over and development of the theory have not ended the controversy over whether it applies in its place of origin. However, this article has argued that some elements of this theory, such as the individualization thesis, can be fruitfully used to ask new questions in China's rapidly changing context and can help us to escape from certain dead-end streets of theoretical reasoning. It may be well worth it to look at China from this different analytical perspective to bring out the intricacies of the ongoing social changes and reflect upon the modernization experience of the West from a new angle.

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Contextualism in Philosophy: Knowledge, Meaning, and Truth

Gerhard Preyer, Georg Peter (eds.)

In epistemology and in philosophy of language there is fierce debate about the role of context in knowledge, understanding, and meaning. Many contemporary epistemologists take seriously the thesis that epistemic vocabulary is context-sensitive. This thesis is of course a semantic claim, so it has brought epistemologists into contact with work on context in semantics by philosophers of language. This volume brings together the debates, in a set of twelve specially written essays representing the latest work by leading figures in the two fields. All future work on contextualism will start here.

Contents

Oxford University Press: Oxford 2005, 410 pages

Context-Sensitivity and Semantic Minimalism

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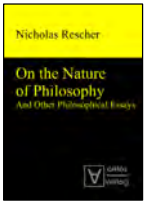

This book continues Rescher's longstanding practice of publishing groups of philosophical essays. Notwithstanding their thematic diversity, these discussions exhibit a uniformity of method in addressing philosophical issues via a mixture of historical contextualization, analytical scrutiny, and common-sensical concern. Their interest, such as it is, lies not just in what they do but in how they do it.
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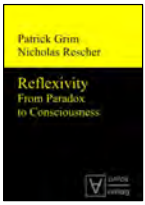

The book seeks to characterize reflexive conceptual structures more thoroughly and more precisely than has been done before, making explicit the structure of paradox and the clear connections to major logical results. The goal is to trace the structure of reflexivity in sentences, sets, and systems, but also as it appears in propositional attitudes, mental states, perspectives and processes. What an understanding of patterns of reflexivity offers is a deeper and demystified understanding of issues of semantics, free will, and the nature of consciousness.

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Philosophical Analysis 47

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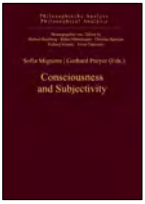

Issues of subjectivity and consciousness are dealt with in very different ways in the analytic tradition and in the idealistic–phenomenological tradition central to continental philosophy. This book brings together analytically inspired philosophers working on the continent with English-speaking philosophers to address specific issues regarding subjectivity and consciousness. The issues range from acquaintance and immediacy in perception and apperception, to the role of agency in bodily 'mine-ness', to self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*) through (free) action. Thus involving philosophers of different traditions should yield a deeper vision of consciousness and subjectivity; one relating the mind not only to nature, or to first-person authority in linguistic creatures–questions which, in the analytic tradition, are sometimes treated as exhausting the topic–but also to many other aspects of mind's understanding of itself in ways which disrupt classic inner/outer boundaries.

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