

Tao Xingzhi's Non-Communist Mass Education Movements in 1930s China

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Abstract

This paper attempts to reveal both the historical and the historiographical significances of a non-Communist mass education movement by challenging the existent scholarships in studying Tao Xingzhi's educational theory and practices in 1930s China. My research indicates that the emergence and the development of Tao's "Life Education" theory was the immediate response to the interwar history as it was shown in everyday life that had been changed under global capitalism, imperialism, and war. As it was closely engaged with the issues of inequality, exploitation, and human emancipation, Tao's theory founded upon searching for solutions to the current structural crises in Chinese society and the world. Specifically, it dealt with how to transform the social hierarchy that had been reflected in the existent educational system. Therefore, Tao's educational theory should be seen as one of the various political efforts during the interwar period that simultaneously perceived education as the effective means to transform society anew, which corresponded to the ongoing socio-political changes in the interwar period. To synchronize Tao's educational theory with other educational ideas, I aim to challenge the arbitrary relationship between the West teaching and the East learning and the state/the powerful vs. the society/the powerless relationship that was presumed by the aforementioned approach. Indeed, Tao's contribution to China's educational modernization could not be seen as a failed resistance to state-institutional politics, rather it must be examined historically as a leftwing intellectual consideration of the present and longing for a future of social equality, which contrasts with the Chinese Communist Party's mass education movement oriented by the Marxist class categories and class struggle.

Keywords: mass education; everyday life; Tao Xingzhi; non-Communist leftism; the 1930s China

1. Introduction

This paper attempts to reveal both the historical and the historiographical significances of a non-Communist mass education movement by challenging the existent scholarships in studying Tao Xingzhi's educational theory and practices in 1930s China. I argue that Tao's "Life Education" theory should be considered synchronic, equally significant, and mutually overlapping with the concurrent principles and ideas on mass education in interwar China. Literatures on Tao's educational theory have stressed that he adopted and modified his advisor in Columbia University, John Dewey's pragmatic educational theory—an American liberal-democratic model from the bottom up in order to resist against the more institutionalized models from the top down embraced by Cai Yuanpei's French University-Colloquium model, Tang Hualong's Japanese military education model and Fan Yuanlian's Confucian-Classical model. Tao's resistance to institutional education has been understood as a failed but respectable elite class struggle against state politics for public voices since the elimination of the Civil Examination in 1905.²

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²Pui-wan Cheng, *Tao Xingzhi: His Education Theory and Practice*, Department of Religion and Philosophy, Master Thesis, McGill University, 1982, pp.76-80. Tai Chen Hwa, *A Critical Study of the Resolutions of the Chinese Federation of Educational Association, 1915-*

This approach perceives Tao Xingzhi and his educational theory as secondary to either the Western influence or state politics, separates it from the economic, social and political context of the interwar period. Instead, my research indicates that the emergence and the development of Tao's "Life Education" theory was the immediate response to the interwar history as it was shown in everyday life that had been changed under global capitalism, imperialism, and war. As it was closely engaged with the issues of inequality, exploitation, and human emancipation, Tao's theory founded upon searching for solutions to the current structural crises in Chinese society and the world. Specifically, it dealt with how to transform the social hierarchy that had been reflected in the existent educational system. Therefore, Tao's educational theory should be seen as one of the various political efforts during the interwar period that simultaneously perceived education as the effective means to transform society anew, which corresponded to the ongoing socio-political changes in the interwar period. To synchronize Tao's educational theory with other educational ideas, I aim to challenge the arbitrary relationship between the West teaching and the East learning and the state/the powerful vs. the society/the powerless relationship that was presumed by the aforementioned approach. Indeed, Tao's contribution to China's educational modernization could not be seen as a failed resistance to state-institutional politics, rather it must be examined historically as a leftwing intellectual consideration of the present and longing for a future of social equality.

2. Human Emancipation in Everyday Life: Life Education Campaign (*Shenghuo Jiaoyu Yundong*), 1931-1936

From 1927 to 1930, the CCP led by Mao Zedong and Zhu De developed into an economically self-sufficient military power in the Chinese Communist Jianggang Mountain Revolutionary Base, a rural area in Jiangxi province. At the same time, in 1928 in northern China, the warlords Yan Xishan in Shanxi and Feng Yuxiang in Beijing started an "anti-Jiang" war against the Nationalist Nanjing government. Meanwhile, a group of Nationalist party members and followers of Sun Yat-sen, such as Shen Junru, Hu Hanmin, and Li Renchao, criticized Jiang Jieshi's "Party-Nation" politics and called for the end of pedagogical politics. Meanwhile, China's northeastern borderlands were threatened by both Russian and Japanese troops. In 1931, the Japanese troops invaded Manchuria and the Man Zhou Guo was established. Most importantly, from 1925 to 1929, the anti-imperialist mass movements flared up in the coastal cities. After the Hong Kong and Canton Great Strike against imperialism and exploitation in 1925, the Chinese workers of Nanjing's foreign trade companies in 1929 in collaboration with students took to the street against imperialism in China and urged the Nanjing government to "end the party-nation politics and return politics to people". Among these oppositional politics and movements, the revival of communism and the establishment of the Red Army were considered as an imminent threat to the Nationalist Nanjing regime. Jiang Jieshi issued the anti-communist policy in 1930 as the primary task for the Nationalist government.

At the same time when the Nationalist regime launched military campaigns to eliminate "the communist bandits" (*jiaofei*), it also carried out the so-called "white terror" to purge the opposition within the Party and arrest the non-partisan left-wing activists by labeling them as "becoming-red elements" (*chihuafenzi*) or "reactionists" (*fandongpai*).³ In May, 1930, the Xiaozhuang Normal School was labeled as a "communist school" threatening the security of the Capital Nanjing and was banned by the Nanjing government. Tao Xingzhi fled to Shanghai and hid himself in the French concession where he was exempt from punishment. The national crisis and state censorship urged Tao Xingzhi to rethink of the meanings and the relationship of everyday life and mass education, both philosophically and politically, in the light of democracy and human emancipation based upon the experiences in the Xiaozhuang School. Upon the closure of the Xiaozhuang School, Tao proposed his widely known "life education" theory (*shenghuojiaoyulilun*) or Tao Xingzhi-ism (*Tao Xingzhizhuyi*).⁴ For Tao, everyday life and education must be united, a prerequisite condition for the proliferation of democracy and human emancipation. Nevertheless, this condition demanded the redefinition of society and the relocation of education into social life, which posed a challenge to the existent educational system. Tao wrote, Society, as the totality of diverse lives, is school. In this regard, we admit that one's education depends upon what kind of life one is living. Life education comes when we are born and goes when we are dead.

1926, (unpublished Ed. D. Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1954), *passim*. Barry Keenan, John Dewey in China: His Visit and the Reception of His Ideas, (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Claremont Graduate School and University Center, 1969), pp.48-50 ff. Also See, Su, Zhixin, Teaching, learning, and reflective acting: a Dewey experiment in Chinese teacher education, *Teachers College Record* v. 98 (Fall 1996) p. 126-52.

³Historical Archives of the Party (*Dangshi ziliao*), Historical Archives of the Party Research Institute, 1955, pp.137-157.

⁴According to Deng Chunmin, one of Tao's followers, Tao's educational theory was widely accepted and practiced as an ism. Deng Chunmin, *On Tao Xingzhi-ism*, *Minguo congshu*, Bai Tao ed., Shanghai Bookstore, 1941, vol. 4: 83, p. 56-66,

In the great school of society, everyone can be our teachers, our classmates and our students. Everything can be a living book (*huoshu*), knowledge and skill.⁵ In this regard, by redefining society as the totality of lives, Tao's life education theory embodies the critique of the modern education reforms in the early Republic era that has been mentioned in the first section. Education is neither confined by a particular space—school—nor is it limited to a certain period of life. Rather, because everyday life belongs to everyone and exists everywhere and at every time, education would take on different forms according to the subject's specific interests, needs and desires. By the same token, with life education, knowledge is no longer produced and reproduced in written books through teachers; it could be generated in living experiences and everyone could become a teacher. Therefore, as education was relocated into everyday life and society, everyone equally has the ability to produce society anew. Education, though, exceeded the boundaries of the prescribed categories like public and private that were officially sanctioned by the state. That is, education, like society, i.e., the totality of everyday lives, unfolding in the present, was always unpredictable and heterogeneous according to specific time and space.

Viewed from this perspective, life education can be characterized from three perspectives in the light of human emancipation and social transformation. First, life education is the education of the masses, by the masses, and for the masses. Tao defined the masses as the majority of the population in the world (*dazhong*) apposed to the few who "are rich and can read books for reading books and belong to the education of the few" (*xiaozhongjiaoyu*).⁶ Tao asserted that the education of the few not only dispossessed of the majority's right to share knowledge, the property produced and possessed by all the human beings, but also repressed individuals' productive capacity. It only reproduced "dog-sons" of books (*shuquanzi*), who were separated from life and became "the bird" in the "cage of dead books".⁷ This kind of education, Tao criticized, "is not education, but enslavement, which derives human right from making any progressive development for individual and society."⁸ For Tao, the education of the few was not education because it was "fake" and "dead" because it only produced slaves for the privileged few masters. The "true" and "alive" education was the education of the masses, i.e., life education, in that "struggle for living is the masses' only education and it is the education for emancipation and for the masses' own interests".⁹

Second, life education must be "modern" (*xiandai de*) and "progressive" (*qianjin de*) because everyday life is always moving forward. Tao differentiated it from the elite education—the education for leisure and the non-productive—life education, for Tao, aimed to progress and productivity because it was practiced by the conscious and capable modern subjects and contained endless possibilities of transformation. Tao insisted that while the modern life was marked by endless developments, a modern man must be always progressive.¹⁰ However, in the same society, some are living a progressive life while some are living a backward life. Tao wrote, "we should use the progressive life to direct the backward life and all of us can have the progressive life and gain the progressive education."¹¹ Progress, namely carrying life forward, is equally important to life and to education in that "living a progressive life is the way of gaining a progressive education."¹² On this view, neither life nor education was considered separated and fixed. Rather, both of them had been seen as verbs and historical; they were in progress and in the process of making and remaking. Third, life education is about transforming social spaces, which provided the necessary conditions for the progress of the world. For Tao, to make life education become of the masses and progressive depended upon the transformation of social spaces. Where to get education was central to establish an education for the masses in that education as it was preserved by the few, the elite and the rich relied upon the infrastructures—institutions and schools. He criticized that under the current educational system, "classrooms expel life and reject the massive masses; they don't allow one making a move and they only let people move backward."¹³

⁵Tao, p.1.

⁶Tao, p.6

⁷Tao, p.1

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p.6.

¹⁰Ibid., p.8.

¹¹Ibid., p.1.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

Therefore, Tao argued, Society is our only school. Streets, alleys, countryside, factories, shops, prisons, battlefield, and every location of life are the sites for us to educate ourselves. We can lose our 'birdcages' and have the great 'forest'. In order to have a meaningful life, our living power (shenghuoli) must break down the gates of school, the gates of city, the gates of nation, and the iron gates that the selfish people build. Therefore, our Chinese nation and the whole world are our true schools.¹⁴ On this view, while society became the site of education, the functions of social spaces in everyday life must be simultaneously transformed in order to break down those spatial boundaries of labor divisions manipulated by capitalism—production, consumption, and circulation—and those of interests, ideologies, and nations that were sanctioned by state or rulers. For Tao, tearing down these various "gates" that separated and restricted the communications between people, communities, and nations was key to making the condition of social life possible, in which life education could be realized. That is to say, as Tao wrote, "Frictions (moca) between life and life will immediately lead to educational consequences. Both the frictionating and the frictionated get transformed and therefore are educated."¹⁵ In other words, to relocate education in society and in everyday life aimed to reconstruct a social relationship between subjects that allowed the subjects' transformation by themselves to occur, while maintaining their heterogeneity

Finally, life education is both historical and collective. The historical lessons "must be attached to individual and collective lives"; they "must be 'filtered' by the present life in order to direct life."¹⁶ In so doing, these historical lessons "would not depend upon life of a particular individual or of the few."¹⁷ Meanwhile, the historical mission of life education is "for human emancipation", in which "every comrade in life education now must promote mass culture in order to strive for human emancipation in the world and to defend the Chinese nation."¹⁸ In this regard, the values of lessons and knowledge that were produced in the past must be assessed by the collective present life. While the present and the majority/collective were centered as the starting point of decision-making and practices, life education was considered historical and collective, which must be oriented by the current tasks of "removing the barriers of human emancipation and China's national defense".¹⁹

As life education presumed democracy, emancipation, society, progress/modern, and the present situation, from 1931 to 1936, Tao's education campaign had shifted its focuses from the rural reconstruction to the total social transformation, from the emancipation of peasant to the emancipation of everyone's productivity, and from the survival of the rural society that had sacrificed for industrialization and urbanization to China's national defense. According to Tao, the life education movement demanded a new form of practice, by which the necessary conditions to realize these goals could be generated. According to Tao, gan (幹, doing) was prioritized as the central means to make social life—the conditions of education—possible. Tao elaborated the meaning of gan by reevaluating the relationship and the division of manual labor (laoli) and mental labor (laoxin). Tao wrote in "Mental Labor upon Manual Labor" (zailaolishanglaoxin), The Confucian teaching and our current modern education showed that mental labor and manual labor have been divided into two classes (jieji). ... While manual laborers concentrate on doing, mental laborers close eyes to think. Therefore, manual laborers are subject to dominance, mental laborer become the 'advanced vagabonds' (gaojiyoumin) to fool the ignorant. This fact leads to 'mental laborers rule people, while manual laborers are ruled'. Besides, laboring by hands but not by brain will turn practice into routine, which cannot open new paths. Laboring by brain but by hands, however, makes thoughts abstract, which cannot be tested by experiences. The divide of manual and mental labor will lead to no progress and creation.²⁰ From Tao's point of view, the hierarchical relationship and the divide of the manual labor and the mental labor revealed how education as it was preserved by the ruling class became the means of social domination, which suppressed human being's creative capacity. Yet, Tao further self-criticized that gan did not mean that the mental labor and the manual labor were equally important, yet separated, parts that could be mechanically combined together as the previous rural education movement presumed.²¹

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid..

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p.7

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Document dated 1928, reproduced in Collections of Tao Xingzhi's Educational Theses, Minguo Congshu, Vol.5, issue 41, p.19.

²¹Ibid., p.20

Rather, Tao asserted, The real *gan* is mental labor upon manual labor: using mental intelligence to manage manual power. People who do things in this way will use mental power to direct manual power in order to strategically understand the meanings of the changes of an object...*Gan* means to use mental power to direct manual power in order to transform an object. In other words, the real *gan* presumes a brain and hands are one; it is to transform both the object and the subject.²² On this view, by overthrowing the divide of the mental and the manual domains, *gan* (doing) was considered a kind of practice that could not be located in the existent hierarchical social system. That is, it was a surplus that had no place in the officially sanctioned ruling and ruled classes; it also exceeded the boundaries of ideologically divided categories like the mental labor and the manual labor. In this sense, *gan* (doing) itself as a new form of practice had its own right and was different from any other modes of practice—by hands or by brain—that functioned to reproduce the existent system. Rather, it was both the means and the ends in that it could take on different forms and generate unpredictable consequences according to specific time and space. Meanwhile, it was a practice of both destructing and reconstructing. That is to say, as for the life education campaign, *gan* (doing) served as a political practice, destructing the current hierarchical social relationship or social system that delegated duties and determined conduct and behaviors. At the same time, it was also the practice of reconstructing a new kind of social relationship and social body that presumed democracy and human emancipation. In other words, *gan* included all the practices to remove of barriers to democracy and human emancipation.

Gan (doing) as the practice of life education was also a practical solution to the political and economic difficulties in the 1930s mass education movements under the historical context of the Nationalist state censorship over the progressive social reforms, the Japanese invasion into inner China, and the imminent threat imposed by global fascism from 1932 to 1936. Tao wrote, “life education campaign is the only way to solve the current social, national and world crises. It is an urgent mission because it is about the survival of the masses, national liberation and the world anti-fascist movements. We need a ‘poor solution’ to continue our endeavor: *gan!*”²³ It is important to note that Tao realized the significance of *gan* (doing) from the experiences of seven children from 12 to 15 years old who were students at Xin’an Element School in Huai’an County, Subei Province. In 1932, they themselves organized a “life education” group, traveling from Subei to Shanghai. They were learning skills in order to work and support their travel expenses. Along their trip, they went to factories, schools, and institutions and were welcomed by the public, even giving a speech to share their travel experiences in Hujiang University. Newspapers and magazines interviewed and reported the 8-months trip. Tao Xingzhi met the travel group and was deeply impressed by the power of children’s capacity and creativity in dealing with the problems of survival and in educating themselves in social life. When the Xin’an Children Travel Group’s diaries were edited and published into a book “Our Travelogues” (women de lvxingji) by the Children’s Bookstore in 1935, Tao wrote in the preface, “the Xin’an children open a new era for all of us. They have truly realized ‘life education’ through *gan*. During the trip, various kinds of life became their textbooks. They were educated and transformed by this social university (shehuidaxue). More importantly, they break down the gate of age (nianling guan) and transform us because they now become the little teachers (xiaoxiansheng) of our adults. Everyone must learn from them, go to the social life, and ‘*gan*’ with a fearless spirit.”²⁴ In this regard, *gan* (doing) in its political and practical sense included all the practices to remove various barriers to social interactions/communication, human emancipation, and social transformation.

As the Xin’an children’s experiences were publicized from 1932 to 1936, the “Little Teachers’ System” (xiaoxianshengzhi) emerged and developed into a nationwide movement to popularize mass literacy. According to Tao, China’s large illiterate population was the result of the Confucian hierarchical system that sustained few literate male elites’ dominance over society. To tear down this gate of literacy could not depend upon few intellectuals because the process would be slow and the scale would be limited. The “Little Teachers’ System” was practical and efficient because children were more movable and their schedules were more flexible. The little teachers were particularly crucial for the popularization of the women’s education. While women had to work at the household during the day, they usually came to night schools. However, in order to do so, women had to pass several “gates”, such as fear of ghosts, husbands, mother-in-laws, and childcare.

²²Ibid.

²³小野三郎, An Interview with Tao Xingzhi, conducted in 1934, Minguo Congshu, Shanghai Bookstore, Vol.4:83, p.239.

²⁴Our Travelogues (women de lvxingji), Children’s Bookstore, Shanghai, 1935, p.2-3.

The little teachers were able to pass these gates because they were able to teach women at their houses at any time they could. In order to teach, children must figure out how to teach what they just learned in classroom, so they must imitate their teachers.²⁵ Another well-known example of the “life education campaign” was the “Gong-Xue-Tuan” movement (working-learning-grouping) that was spreading out from Shanghai in 1933. Tao explained the meaning of “gong-xue-tuan” as such, Gong means working—working in order to sustain life. It is to teach the masses how to work to feed themselves without depending upon the others. Xue is to study science in order to understand life. It is to teach the masses to study social sciences and natural sciences. One is to understand why they are suffering and are suppressed by the others and understand how to find a path out. The other is to use natural sciences to improve production and to break away from superstitions. Tuan means grouping so as to protect life. This means to teach the masses to consolidate into a group in order to defend their right of living. If there are bastards coming and bullying the masses, our masses can stand up and ‘gan’ with them.²⁶

From this view, the “Gong-Xue-Tuan” was considered a new form of self-sufficient community that tore down the boundaries of education and social life, of the manual labor (working) and the mental labor (learning), and of production, circulation and consumption. A “Gong-Xue-Tuan” as a totality of a factory, a school and a society was of the masses and for the masses, in which the means of survival, independence, democracy, and productivity were able to be actualized. Based upon the heterogeneity of everyday life, this new social body would take on different forms that were demanded by specific lives, needs, and desires. The first “Gong-Xue-Tuan”—“Shan Hai Gong-Xue-Tuan”—was established by Tao Xingzhi in 1933 at the Mengjia Wood Bridge near Shanghai. The students and the teachers learned from peasants and built up three classrooms, two dorms, a clinic, a kitchen, a library, and a small factory. Both the teachers and the students were working in the factory every day in order to support their daily and study expenses. Meanwhile, according to the various lives and needs among the Mengjia peasants, they helped the peasants to organize the “Cotton Gongxuetuan”, the “Fish Gongxuetuan,” the “Vegetable Gongxuetuan,” and the “Women Gongxuetuan”, etc.. For example, in the “Cotton Gongxuetuan”, while the students and the cotton peasants studied how to plant cotton in order to increase productivity, they worked together to market cotton. They also organized a cotton peasants’ workshop that allowed them to learn from each other and to study how to self-defend collectively.

3. Conclusion

The ethnical studies in the United States and the cultural studies in P.R. China on Tao Xingzhi have focused upon how he developed a unique Chinese version of public education by fusing Deweyan (John Dewey’s education theory) and neo-Confucianist tradition developed in the Ming dynasty.²⁷ Like the former approach, the ethnical and cultural studies on Tao’s educational philosophy have separated his intellectual consideration of education from the interwar history. By combining intellectual history with social and cultural history, my research shifts away from the examination of the continuity and comparison of Tao’s thought with the Chinese intellectual tradition. Instead, I examine how Tao’s theory and methodology on life education were closely engaged with the contemporary structural problematics and the collective practices in transforming society anew in the interwar world and China. The Ming neo-Confucius linked individual practices to self-cultivation in grasping the principle of “li” and “dao” in order to maintain the Han-Confucian elite dominance over the multi-ethnic society.

²⁵Bai Tao, Remembering Mr. Tao Xingzhi, Mingguo Congshu, Mingguo Congshu, Shanghai Bookstore, Vol.4:83, pp. 102-103.

²⁶Ibid., p.97.

²⁷Wang Weijia and Zhang Kaiyuan, Tao Xingzhi and the Emergence of Public Education in China, in Ethical Visions of Education: Philosophies in Practice, ed., David T. Hansen, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York and London, 2007, pp.95-111. Yusheng Yao, The Making of a National Hero: Tao Xingzhi’s Legacies in the People’s Republic of China, Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, Volume 24, Issue 3 July 2002, pp. 251 – 281. Alexander Woodside, Some Mid-Qing Theorists of Popular Schools: Their Innovations, Inhibitions, and Attitudes toward the Poor, *Modern China*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1983), pp. 3-35. Among the large number of literature on the Confucian root in Tao’s education theory, the exemplary works are: Research on Tao Xingzhi’s Educational Thoughts, (Tao Xingzhi Jiaoyu Sixiang Yanjiu), The Chinese Tao Xingzhi Studies Association, ed. (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 1985); Liang Xiaofeng, On Tao Xingzhi’s Education Reform Thought (Taoxingzhi jiaoyusixiang yanjiu), Zhengjiang Industry and Commerce University Press, 2009; Wang, Rongguo, Tao Xingzhi’s Educational Thought and the Enlightenment of the New Culture in the May-fourth, Dongnan Culture, issue 2, 1992.

However, Tao's educational theory on practice claimed a form of collective and secular/daily practices, in which the structural hierarchy—the divides of the rural and the urban, of the elite/the mental and the masses/the manual, of brain and body, of the colonized and the colonizer, of men and women and of adults and children—imposed by the present feudalism, capitalism and imperialism could be revealed. Meanwhile, my research on various local educational practices indicates this form of collective and secular practices aimed to produce a new kind of knowledge. This chapter suggests the secular knowledge that was produced by the masses through collective practices not only constantly urged Tao Xingzhi to rethink and modify his theory, but also ultimately provided the solutions to transforming society anew and to the survival of the masses under the global war and social hierarchy. My research indicates that incorporate the individual into collective practices and production of new knowledge, Tao's life education theory and campaign should not be considered trans-historical under the rubric of the binaries of ethnicity, of theory and practice, and of China and the West. Rather, they should be historicized and analyzed according to their mutually constitutive relationship with the concrete mass social movements and experiments in the interwar China.

In addition, contemporary Chinese scholars in the post-Mao era have revived Tao's mass education theory under the rubric of Marxism and socialism by labeling him as "A Great People's Educator"—an evaluation made by Mao Zedong upon Tao's death in 1946. This school insists that there are essential differences between Tao and Dewey: Dewey's ideas belong to the old democratic pragmatism in capitalist societies while Tao's ideas belong to the new democratic culture in socialist countries; Dewey's purpose of education is to produce a labor force that serves bourgeois interests whereas Tao's purpose is to enlighten the oppressed working class so that they become masters of their own fate and strive for a socialist future.²⁸ This chapter indicates that although overlapping with the emergence of Soviet socialism and the establishment and development of Chinese Communist revolution, Tao's theory and educational campaign contrasted to the Marxian analysis of class and class struggle. Nor were they oriented by the communist revolutionary agenda to overthrow capitalism, longing for a socialist future. Rather, they were the political and cultural responses to the interwar masses life-or-death struggles to sustain their everyday life that had been changed and destroyed by global fascism, the Great Depression, war, as well as the old forms of social hierarchy and newly-emerged state-party dominance over society. By combining mass education with life and mass society, everyday life for Tao and the "Life Education Campaign" advocates was not merely an objective form where to identify the potential working masses who waited to be awakened. Nevertheless, as my research shows, the unity of everyday life and education presumes everyday life as both an objective and a subjective form: it is about how people, both collectively and specifically live with the unprecedented objective situations generated by the interwar global capitalism, imperialism, and war. In this regard, everyday life is highly uneven and contingent because it constantly changes according to time and space; it is also specifically, subjective as it has been practiced consciously by collective individuals; and ultimately, it provides the dynamic material basis to produce new and endless knowledge.

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