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Theorists and actors: Zhang Shizhao on "self-awareness" as political action

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Democracy implies, if nothing else, citizen participation in crafting the political institutions those same citizens inhabit, even if the actual contours of such participation have been widely contested. Majoritarian voting procedures and public deliberation are the two most popular implementations of the ideals of democratic rule, but they do not exhaust the entire field of possibilities. Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1885-1973), an early twentieth century Chinese political thinker, uses the participatory promise of democracy to challenge China's traditional elitism and bureaucracy, but he privileges "self-awareness" (自覺) rather than a form of collective action as foundational to this democratic practice. Although Zhang wrote shortly after the establishment of republican government in China, and during a time of unprecedented Western influence, his "self-aware" individual bears a more than superficial resemblance to the literati-bureaucrats who were the primary political actors under the Chinese dynastic empire. However, while contemporaries invoked the literatus ideal to claim a right to educate and manipulate the masses, Zhang recasts the literatus posture to formulate a new form of political action: one that disaggregates the "group" (群) concept central to contemporary elite political thinking, and in turn opens greater spaces for political participation. In the process of elaborating the requirements of self-awareness, and demonstrating its efficacy in building a regime of self-rule where none existed before, Zhang shows how thinking about political action in an individualized rather than collective way can leverage resources for changing shared human environments that would otherwise be overlooked.

I evaluate Zhang's model through an extended engagement with the work of Hanna Pitkin, who throughout her career has specifically addressed—as a problem for and of democratic politics—the kind of individualized action that Zhang advocates. By self-awareness, Zhang means the ability of individuals to see their political and social selves critically and imaginatively, in the context of China's immanent post-revolutionary political demise. He triangulates from these

particular vantage points a new republican regime, built on the incremental changes that accumulate as individuals shed their roles as imperial subjects and envision themselves as citizens of a republic. Although Pitkin shares with Zhang his sympathies for individually differentiated action in the process of founding polities, she would argue that his model threatens to individually impose, rather than collectively craft, the conditions and goals of political life. Self-awareness implies a tyrannical process of manipulation, because the self-aware individual in effect assumes the role of an “epic” political theorist (to borrow Sheldon Wolin’s term)¹ in which he sees other people as objects and himself as the only relevant decision-maker.² Pitkin emphasizes the need for the theorist to overcome such tyranny by dissolving the “I that theorizes” into a participatory “we that acts.” Her argument reflects a widespread democratic impulse to resist any orders – even abstract ones – that are not truly the product of all who are affected by them.³ Her work offers a particularly bold counterpoint to Zhang’s insistence that only the awareness of and by individuals can constitute a foundation for political action that neither imposes nor invites tyranny.

My argument below does not attempt to defend the entirety of Zhang’s vision of “self-awareness” as much as use Pitkin’s arguments to sketch its limits and possibilities, especially with respect to the relationship between political action and political theory in a context of irreducible plurality and political breakdown. Zhang’s exhortations to “self-awareness” may not provide an exhaustive account of political action under mature regimes, but it does draw attention to the difficulties of concerted action when taking steps radical enough to stop the inertia both Pitkin and Zhang find so inimical to self-rule. This is particularly so in situations where a community’s members have not yet built democratic relationships among each other, or cultivated particular shared commitments, to make coordinated action in concert possible. In these kinds of situations, the unilaterally initiated, individual awareness that Zhang encourages seems both necessary and

effective, even as it courts a dangerously atomized political self. Recognizing this danger, we can exploit its critical edge: self-awareness ultimately interrogates the identity of political action with *collective* action, even as it provides a conceptual framework to think about how disparate individuals *qua* individuals can gain traction on shared problems before collective action is possible.

The Problem of Theory

Zhang wrote and thought in an environment marked by unprecedented intellectual and political upheaval in China. For most of his influential, early career, Zhang argued for a constitutionally limited parliamentary cabinet system modeled after that of Great Britain.⁴ His support of constitutionalism in an era of revolution embraced rule of law over the radical politics of Sun Yatsen and his revolutionary factions, leading many modern-day commentators on Zhang's work to focus exclusively on his contributions to institutional design and political reform.⁵ Zhang's arguments for constitutionalism did help to elaborate an institutional framework during the republican era, but I focus in this essay on Zhang's often overlooked theoretical reflections on the establishment of republican rule in China. For Zhang, theoretical explanations grew more central to his defense of constitutional democracy in the years following 1911, after the elected President Yuan Shikai dissolved the national assembly and began centralizing his control over the fledgling republic.⁶ Many contemporary thinkers blamed not institutional design but China's low level of political education for this turn of events, and endorsed as an antidote elite-led, top-down transformations of Chinese social and political practices.⁷ Zhang countered these suggestions primarily on a theoretical level, understanding the issue in terms of how the founding of a new tradition of constitutional democracy could abide by the principles of self-rule it hoped to secure. His establishment in 1914 of *The Tiger*, an influential journal of political opinion,⁸ gave Zhang the

space and authority to parse out the steps toward self-rule that theoretically precede institutional effectiveness.

Unwilling to concede to elites the sole power to manipulate and control the masses, yet faced with the reality of political collapse, Zhang locates the constitutive elements of republican regime consolidation in the personal orientations of individual citizens, rather than their leaders. In two essays that appeared in the first volume of *The Tiger*—“The State and the Self” (國家與我) and “Self-awareness” (自覺)—Zhang identifies self-awareness as what links personal orientations to the possibilities of self-rule. He alludes to a story from the *Mencius*, a seminal text of the Confucian tradition that Zhang’s audience had most likely memorized in early childhood, to locate the spirit of self-awareness in a personal reaction to political power.

“Mencius has said [to King Hui of Liang]: ‘Now, [suppose] your Majesty is having music here. The people hear the noise of your bells and drums, and the notes of your fifes and pipes, and they all, with aching heads, knit their brows, and say, ‘Our king so enjoys his music, but why does he reduce us to such an extreme state [of distress]? Fathers and sons cannot see one another. Elder brothers and younger brothers, wives and children, are separated and scattered abroad.’” [Mencius 1.2.2] ... Getting a headache [from this situation] is a reaction you can’t say is not a source for self-awareness, but it doesn’t go a step further and say, ‘Now that I am in such an extreme state, how can I act as a king (王為)?’ Because our state lacked this kind of true self-awareness, for millennia we have only had a history of rulers (君), and not a history of the people (民).⁹

In this description of “self-awareness,” Zhang portrays the disjuncture between some ideal state of affairs and a gravely troubled political reality as an actual physical pain, and therefore most acutely felt on the individual register.¹⁰ It is this individual pain that prompts reflection on “how I can act as a king,” in the process transforming the individual from an imperial subject to one who participates in ruling. As Zhang portrays it here, self-awareness is a process of interrogating who the rulers are supposed to be, and how those who do rule undertake effective action in the world. Although an implicit part of rule by “the people,” because it in some way constitutes the agency of the people’s history, the headache that facilitates self-awareness nevertheless does not entail questions about membership and exclusion, as much as a cultivation of a particular, internal self-orientation. With the turn to individualized feeling, Zhang reduces government by the people (民) to an awareness of and by the self (here articulated as the “I,” 我). Zhang insists that the very process of an individual coming to a realization and making a decision is precisely what constitutes the state; indeed, once this realization is made, “the work of creating a state is already half-done.”¹¹

Acquiring self-awareness to Zhang is thus a process that fosters democratic practices and subjectivities spontaneously, without recourse to the top-down control Yuan Shikai and foreign advisors like Frank Goodnow were advocating. Its goal is to motivate the differentiated comprehension by China’s citizens that the “loss of the state” (亡國) is a direct result of their personal disengagement from both social and political life.¹² The “loss of the state” is a term traditionally identified with the fall of a dynasty, but Zhang reinterprets it to mean the loss of the republican polity to authoritarian rule—a loss caused not by deliberate political manipulation, but by an unconscious perception that the immanent collapse of the republic is a matter of fate rather than a matter for (individual) human intervention.¹³ Such desperation drove many of Zhang’s compatriots to flee abroad, smoke opium, or give up on the constructive everyday activities that

kept Chinese society functioning.¹⁴ Zhang believes self-awareness will rescue his contemporaries from fatalism, by motivating them to re-think how their individual choices and lifestyles are constitutive of republican polity-building. He urges his audience to become entrepreneurial about finding ways to “use their talents” in a hostile world, whether that be writing political opinion pieces, caring for one’s family and friends, or simply remaining aloof from corruption. He insists that even those “who have no natural talent, but have the courage to go forward, perhaps by being involved in a vocation or in running a business,” are essential contributions to the polity-building process.¹⁵ To Zhang, personal behavior, whether good or bad, “does not transcend the scope of politics.”¹⁶

By encouraging citizens to rethink how their personal lives affect political outcomes and vice-versa, Zhang hopes self-awareness will consolidate republican practices in a deeper way than elite-led transformations could make possible. Self-awareness effects this transformation by presuming a link between theory-building capacity and the efficacious actions that build and sustain regimes of self-rule. The act of re-seeing one’s self, everyday activities, and environment in a different light, Zhang seems to think, both motivates and constitutes social and political transformation: people change their political worlds by changing themselves. Zhang even goes so far as to claim that “although the state may be taken over by those in power, the power to establish the state still lies within the self. If I want the state to be square, it will be square; if I want it to be round, it will be round.”¹⁷

Yet, as Hanna Pitkin has pointed out, the integration of political action with theory poses a set of unique tensions when it is acknowledged that others possess equal capacity for political participation. According to Pitkin, for the theorist to perform his unique task efficaciously, he must be separate from others in a way that renders him capable of transcending any one particular

viewpoint: the very purpose of theory is a critical reconceptualization of political life so as to discern what is necessary from what can and should be done.¹⁸ This is precisely Zhang's point in promoting self-awareness, but Pitkin worries that the generic rules such abstraction demands will reflect more of the theorist's own agenda than the reality of the free subjects that he presumes create political order. "The theorist stands outside the political system about which he speculates and writes; of necessity he deploys and manipulates its citizens without consulting their wishes or opinions."¹⁹

For these reasons, Pitkin argues that the integration of theorizing with political action can never be the solitary activity that Zhang expects; rather, it is made possible only by bridging the gap between the theorist and his or her "subjects" by way of public action. To Pitkin, political action and political beginnings ultimately must focus on the collaborative efforts of the entire community rather than on the actions and demands of one person acting alone. Just as individuals cannot create their own personal languages, neither can they initiate unilateral political change without taking into account the existing "grammar" of the community that gives meaning to their actions and words,²⁰ and that is alone capable of executing the entirety of a theoretical vision. The very plurality of the public realm inveighs against seeing the initiation of action in mechanistic or biological terms, where individual beginnings might be meaningful. Biological beginnings presume a relationship of direct causality between act and response, but political beginnings insert themselves into a community of individuals whose responses are open-ended and unpredictable.²¹

These characteristics of action in a community of self-rule suggest that Zhang's attempt to found a republican polity should turn away from individual theorizing, and build instead on the insight that founding new political regimes is ultimately a "co-founding"—a process of mutual recognition by citizens of their shared tasks, hopes, and responsibilities.²² According to Pitkin, the

ideal of a lone founder, “an *auctor* who initiates and induces the free actions of others, so that his project becomes what they willingly carry out,” is a “fantasy solution” to the problem of making citizens.²³ If theoretical exercises like self-awareness are to be effective and meaningful politically, they must be political interventions—that is, linked to the “concerted action” that for Pitkin defines politics.²⁴ This means relating “I” to “we,” promoting decisions for effective intervention made in the name of and by the community collectively.²⁵

Pitkin’s account is valuable because it links republican commitments to equal participation with their concrete, real-world efficacy, teasing out the implications of the fact that the world can never be the creation of any one individual even when he acts with absolute political authority. At the same time, however, she leaves underspecified the precise steps by which individual theorizing relates to collective self-rule, and this oversight has important consequences for how future changes in an existing political system can take place. On the one hand, Pitkin does place the agent at the center of any strategy to change those conditions of inertia and self-indulgence that in early work she calls “drift.” In *Blob*, Pitkin associates these conditions with “the social”: a situation “in which a collectivity of people—for whatever reason—cannot (or at any rate do not) effectively take charge of the overall resultants of what they are severally doing.”²⁶ Yet on the other, her solution is ultimately the establishment of politics “where politics could and should be,” the spontaneous engagement by a community of “shared self-government, public freedom.”²⁷ She revises an earlier fear about the unique potency of the lone theorist to affirm that such capacity for theory and for action is really more diffuse than she had originally portrayed it,²⁸ but continues to characterize the “isolated deviant individual” who works to change political institutions as “utterly helpless”: for Pitkin, action “must take the form of concerted action if it is to help us.”²⁹ In fact, individual actions cannot be “political” until they are read in terms of the coordinated, collective efforts to

which they contribute.³⁰ This interpretation of “political” action does not deny the importance of individual capacity, but it does insist that we must act with others before we can become effective at changing reality, or before our unilateral interventions into a wider community can be authorized.

Yet the problem with conditions of “drift” or “the social” is *precisely* that collaborative efforts of “co-founding” and concerted action are not forthcoming, and therefore cannot be relied upon as vehicles for change, or for the “rejoining of the concrete and general, local and large-scale” that both she and Zhang seem to be pursuing.³¹ Pitkin claims at one point that the community is “always already free to become free,” meaning that the spontaneous coalescence of individuals in public action only awaits a revival.³² But even this possibility assumes a context of political experience that can be remembered or made accessible by reference to existing concepts and practices—a difficult task even for the “thoughtless,” but much more so for those living in communities that have not “forgotten” this “lost treasure” of public freedom, but have never in their history experienced it.³³ She tells individuals to “just do it!”, all the while characterizing their solitary actions as nonpolitical and ineffective. Zhang’s turn to “self-awareness,” after years of advocating distinctly institutional measures for political betterment, wrestles with these very difficulties of presuming public, concerted action as the primary antidote to social inertia and political collapse. By formulating a different relationship between theory and political action, Zhang explores alternatives to collective action as a device of social and political change.

Beginning from before 1913, when the so-called “second revolution” to oust the increasingly predatory Yuan Shikai from power ended in failure, Chinese intellectuals were faced with the apparent collapse not only of the republican regime, but of politics more generally. The twin realms of “society” (社會) and “culture” (文化) became new sites of elite manipulation and reform as polity-building receded in the face of its apparent uselessness.³⁴ Zhang and his colleagues

at *The Tiger* gained fame during this debate for defending the need to “talk about politics” (論政) and to attend to politically-centered measures of social betterment, including reform of the provisional constitution.³⁵ Institutionally, Zhang advocated a system of provincial self-rule to help local communities secure their political autonomy against top-down control from an increasingly authoritarian center.³⁶ Yet in light of repeated failures to consolidate the republic and to achieve consensus even on fundamental matters of institutional design, Zhang’s defense of the meaning and efficacy of political action eventually needed to address the political in a way that did not turn on concerted action or existing institutions—at that time, the possibility of acting together with others was precisely what a model of political action needed to explain. Unlike Pitkin’s co-founding citizens, whose mutual recognition emerges from a spontaneous, “renovating return to beginnings,”³⁷ Zhang and his contemporary Chinese have nothing to return to, except an imperial past they have already forsaken. Their ideal republic lies only in the future and in their (disparate) imaginations.

In this context, Zhang formulates a relationship between the individual theorist and the wider community that focuses on the capacity of lone individuals to act, but that does not abandon a republican characterization of political authority as diffuse and ground-up. Although in many ways complementary to Pitkin’s account, Zhang nevertheless suggests that thinking about an individual’s political action as necessarily oriented toward coordinated action with others can sometimes obstruct rather than inspire those personal transformations that both he and Pitkin believe shape shared political environments. The exercises in self-reflection and imaginative visualization that constitute self-awareness disaggregate larger political transformations into personal commitments, prompting individuals to act precisely when and because others are *not* acting.

Individualism

During the crisis in political faith that followed the failure of the “second revolution” and Yuan’s subsequent consolidation of executive power, Zhang’s defenses of the self and its relevance to political outcomes grew more elaborate.³⁸ These defenses are most explicit in a pair of essays Zhang published in 1916 and 1917. One, titled “Beginnings” (發端), inaugurated the new daily edition of his journal *The Tiger*. The other, titled simply “Self” (我), appeared in the *Eastern Miscellany*, one of the longest-running and influential Republican-era journals, known for its focus on issues of self and psychology and their relationship to politics.³⁹ In these essays, Zhang specifies the dangers of “forgetting the self” (忘我) and the urgent need for “searching for the self” (求我) by explaining the relationship between the self and the external world.

The self is not something one person gets and then keeps to himself...What individuals are engaged in doing has its own logical space. This is called “the self”. What is called “exerting all one’s effort” (盡其在我) is to act within this space with integrity and persistence. What is called “searching for the self” is to search within this space rather than fleeing from it. When what I can do, is clearly coordinated with this space, this can truly be called “achieving the self.” It is like a light in a room: if I use a candle to take a portion of this light, the light is divided but the light in the room remains just as it was before. The strength of the light does not increase or decrease based on the number of people who have divided it up. Thus, if what is called “self” just stops at the “inhibited self,” then you will be able to feed, clothe, and shelter oneself and perhaps one’s friends and associates. But ultimately the affairs of heaven and earth will not matter at all [to you]. However, if what you

achieve is the “unbounded self,” this is the logical [space for the] self, the self that has not expended its light. Thus what is achieved will not be [limited to] something just one individual happens to acquire by chance, but will be something that becomes linked to social mores and the minds of others.⁴⁰

This passage suggests the mechanism by which Zhang expects his self-aware individuals to make an impact. The “self” becomes “unbounded” – that is, effective – not by communicating directly and purposefully with others, or by engaging in the kinds of political behavior that typically mark democratic regimes, such as voting, mass action, or holding political office. Rather, by attending to his own talents, integrity and courage, the self-aware individual becomes “linked to the social mores and minds of others” via the ambient changes his actions have in the world that go on to inspire responses. Zhang describes these efforts as “a light in a room”: their divisibility or diffusion does not negatively affect their potency, and may even increase it as others see the light and bring themselves in line with the exemplary moral behavior these efforts strive toward.

That means to have effect on others, one does not act in concert with them, deliberate with them, or even negotiate with them. Instead, self-awareness prompts one to re-fashion the external environment in a manner that allows one to “exercise one’s due portion” by “using one’s talents” without denying to others the chance to do the same.⁴¹ This is a politics of exemplariness and local action, in which one’s self-awareness as a republican citizen will inspire others to act by example to do as you do.⁴² Engaging the wider world both changes oneself, and one’s own incremental self-awareness constitutes small changes in the wider world that others may then engage. Although the external environment influences individual feelings, tendencies and actions, it is equally true that individuals are the primary shapers of this environment. “External things (物) and the self (我) are

mutually corresponding相對, such that it would be totally ridiculous to speak only of things and not the self, to speak only of the self and not of things. Therefore, if there are no ‘selves,’ there can be no country; how can we conduct national affairs without ‘selves’?”⁴³

Placing the individual at the center of political action by activating his capacity for theorizing has definite resonances with certain trends in late imperial Chinese thought, a point I return to below. Such individualism does, however, sharply distinguish Zhang’s account from most other contemporary Chinese treatments of “self-awareness,” which tracked an obsession with collective awakening, modernization, and national identity in the face of foreign incursion.⁴⁴ To Zhang’s contemporaries, such as the republican thinker Liang Qichao and the revolutionary activist Sun Yatsen, the best hope for Chinese survival lie in grouping together as a nation by recognizing a shared ethnic heritage. The focus on mass action that came to characterize nationalist and, later, Communist radicalism in China was built primarily on the insight that such grouping was more effective than individual attempts to reshape China’s future. Zhang’s emphasis on individual consciousness harkens back to the isolation and impotence of traditional Chinese political organization, which in Sun’s view rendered the people like “a heap of loose sand,” unable to transcend their parochial commitments in the name of national and social progress.⁴⁵

Pitkin’s thoughts on “theory” can rescue Zhang on this point, by explaining how individual particularity can strengthen rather than fragment a regime of self-rule. Like other republican thinkers, including Arendt, Pitkin recognizes the individual “both as the source of initiative and as the locus of moral value and dignity.”⁴⁶ Similarly, when Zhang attributes to self-awareness the exclusive power to “dissolve the nation and rebuild the nation,” and “effect the regeneration of dead tissue” that is the state, in part he means to underscore the capacity of individuals to resist the “false nationalism” that denies the constitutive role of individual particularity in defining the public

good.⁴⁷ Zhang's work on individualism, in fact, influenced contemporary Chinese intellectual trends such as the student-led May Fourth movement, which saw in the affirmation of individual worth an important remedy for the traditional hierarchical ethics of imperial Confucianism.⁴⁸

Yet part of the reason Pitkin's defense of the individual makes sense is because such action, as both she and Arendt read it, "is always interaction," linked to others equally involved in the common enterprise of politics.⁴⁹ May Fourth activists, including Hu Shi, also were careful to situate individualism, the "small self," within the "great self" of society and its demands. Read in these terms, Zhang's concept of "self-awareness" develops a much-needed account of the personal shifts in orientations as individuals transform themselves from imperial subjects to republican citizens, but he does not offer an immediate response to either his contemporary critics or to the basic principles of modern, self-ruling communities. By leveraging individual sensations and orientations, Zhang seems to be heightening rather than resolving the tensions between individual efforts to change reality, on the one hand, and the recognition that, in Hannah Arendt's words, "men, not man, live on earth and inhabit the world," on the other.⁵⁰ Rather than bridging that gap between self and community, self-awareness seems to further widen it.

Read in terms of contemporary Chinese intellectual dilemmas, however, another paradigm for individual action emerges that possibly links individuals to their wider community in a way that neither turns on, nor disavows, concerted action. The tension-ridden position of Zhang's self-aware individual can be read as one response to the contradictions of literati action in the face of democracy, a dilemma linked closely to the new forms of political action made available by European and American democratic theory. The civil exam system that in imperial China funneled intellectuals from any social class into government service was abolished in 1905, forcing China's educated elites to reconsider both their relationship to wider Chinese society and their role in

political reform. Fundamental questions about the sources of change in society could no longer be deferred to the traditional bureaucratic mechanism or the literati who staffed it, even as intellectuals began to question their own central roles in what was now believed to be a profoundly malfunctioning political system. Intellectuals continued to be influenced by the traditional obligations of the well-educated classes—who saw themselves as charged with the responsibility to care for “all under Heaven”⁵¹—even as republican rule necessarily changed the way in which these intellectuals identified the proper “subjects” and “objects” of political life.⁵²

These conceptual puzzles about the status of intellectuals remained an important part of the unexamined assumptions of Chinese political theorizing well past the 1911 revolution.⁵³ Zhang, I argue, responds to these puzzles by revising the literatus ideal in light of what he identifies as a diffuse capacity for self-awareness. Invoking the literatus as a model not of elite leadership, but of the union of political efficacy and theoretical reflection, Zhang believes self-aware individuals can perform a similar synthesis of acting and theory that enacts political authority in the process of interpreting it.

Literati Action

Influenced by neo-Confucian cosmology, in which self-reflection could both reveal and correct the larger patterns in the external world, the imperial Chinese literatus stood at the center of political action under late dynastic rule. As everyday executive of the law, upholder of the community’s moral character, and interpreter of the morally and politically authoritative canon of Classics, it was the literatus, not the ruler, who perceived himself as primarily responsible for effecting the “moral juncture” between normative and actual authority.⁵⁴ According to the historian Thomas Metzger, as a matter of both institutional and conventional practice the cultivated literatus

alone had the capacity for political admonishment, constituting in his person the “ultimate vehicle of moral insight” into a world that saw authority as ultimately lodged not in one’s social superiors, but “in the structure of the cosmos itself as something accessible without mediation to each individual will.”⁵⁵ The literatus’ insight was buttressed by the executive power derived from his position within the Chinese imperial bureaucracy, but also by the belief that “while the external cosmos was seen as tending organically to unite ultimate being and experienced events, the mind had a diffuse, transnatural power to bring this tendency to full realization. That is, the ethical activity of the individual could cause vast changes in the social and metaphysical world.”⁵⁶

In the manner of imperial literati, Zhang assumes that individual acts of being aware are both necessary and sufficient for uniting the normative and empirical authority that constitute democratic sovereignty. Although not usually associated with the self-cultivation theorists who drew explicitly from these neo-Confucian traditions in the early republican era, Zhang nevertheless banks here on their metaphysical assumptions.⁵⁷ The “inner” moral struggles of his self-aware individuals are meant to mediate, however imperfectly, the “external” reality of the institutions those individuals both create yet remain aloof from. No longer interpreting the Classics, individuals nevertheless remain loci for interpretive insight into what it means to be a democratic citizen.

Yet the political promise of self-rule, the basis of both the 1911 revolution and the republic it established, presents two further questions for this model: how “the people” could become effective political actors; and how the erstwhile literati-turned-intellectuals could perform effectively within this new structure of authority. As both ruler and ruled, the “people” as an entity simultaneously act and are acted upon; in other words, their action is supposed to be both normatively authorized and materially effective. The position of the literatus in this triangular relationship therefore becomes compromised: no space is left for his decisive action or political

insight, for the very reason that he affirms the capacity of everyone else, not only himself, to rule. Confronting this new division between the sources of authority, the sources of insight into that authority, and the sources of action, intellectuals in republican China confronted the same tensions between individual theorist and wider community that Pitkin argues only “public freedom” can solve.

One of the most influential interpretations of this new, dual position of “the people,” and their relationship to intellectual elite rule, was elaborated by Zhang’s frequent interlocutor Liang Qichao. Liang’s early essay “On Self-Rule” (論自治), a component of his magisterial and influential compendium *On Renewing the People*, explains that “self-rule” will rescue the Chinese people from the mindset that accepts rule by either literati bureaucrats or “hegemon” (authoritarian rulers). However, Liang’s definition of the term is more reminiscent of fascism than the democracy he purportedly advocated. To Liang, “to be ruled” meant to be “without disorder,” a literally mechanistic metaphor that he applies without distinction to a single body as to a body of persons.⁵⁸ Liang compares this group to an “army,” by appealing to a Rousseauian general will: “the leader of this army is the law comprised by the inner knowledge of each person’s mind.”⁵⁹ That the law emerges from the mass, rather than one person, somehow makes everyone the leader.

This has the result of theorizing the individual actors out of the picture, substituting their divergent motivations with a reified groupness that Liang deems tractable only to outside forces (that is, foreign domination).⁶⁰ This sudden move from individual to group destabilizes the meaning of “self-rule,” rendering it not an internally governed impulse as he seems to say at the beginning but a condition of “being in order” that presumes a homogeneity of preference, activity and opinion. Not only does this silence the question of individual motivation, it also makes the group vulnerable to an “ordering” from the outside, either to enforce this homogeneity or to

manipulate it without the friction that attends political action in conditions of true plurality. Once the assumption of “self-rule” as a purely group concept is made, the masses again recede into the background of political life. Society is thus rendered simply another external reality, like regional warlords, economic stagnation, or foreign aggression, whose influence was to be borne out, fought against, and perhaps manipulated, but never activated in any political sense. Because the people must be acted-upon before it (or they) can become actor(s), the literatus-bureaucrat is once again cast as a member of a privileged elite that alone possesses a self-motivated capacity for action.

Zhang reverses Liang’s typology by asking how the “people,” a group in classical philosophy condemned to be effectually inert, can occupy the roles once played by literati. Zhang’s most explicit treatment of the identity and implications of non-traditional political actors is found in his 1914 essay “On the Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces of Government,” inspired by an essay of the same name by the English political scientist James Bryce. Zhang’s essay is revealing both for how it applies (however superficially) scientific principles to politics, and for how it comes to terms with the variety of “forces” unleashed in Chinese society after the fall of the Qing. From journalists to warlords to local gentry, massive numbers of new political actors responded to the unprecedented political contexts generated by the republican revolution.⁶¹ Rather than dismiss these new actors as enemies of order, Zhang’s essay straightforwardly incorporates them as inevitable and potentially useful elements of political life. These forces are defined by their ability to apply what Zhang calls extra-political measures to problems that are not formally recognized by the official regime. Quoting Bryce, Zhang explains that “In politics, we may call the tendency which draws men or groups of men together into one organized community and keeps them there a Centripetal force, and that which makes men, or groups, break away and disperse, a Centrifugal.”⁶²

The “centrifugal” forces of non-traditional actors, Zhang argues, should be balanced by a constitution that integrates their needs and abilities by viewing their activity as politically relevant.

Zhang’s adoption of such scientific language for describing how politics and political actors work suggests a deliberate rendering of political activity as a force of nature, which I take to be his first step in incorporating “the people” into the literati model. Like many of his contemporaries, Zhang too invoked Darwinian social theories and the doctrine of evolution to supplement his arguments about politics. Yet using science rather than more interpretive or normative techniques for understanding political life seems to work against Zhang’s exhortations to self-awareness. In the process of incorporating non-traditional political actors, Zhang seems to discount, rather than valorize, their contributions to the polity-building project: it casts them as independent variables in a prototypical, behavioralist social science rather than as spontaneous actors whose self-awareness alone can give meaning to the polity they build.

But Zhang may be attempting another kind of transformation here, one that turns on his identity of theorizing with effective political action typified by the literatus posture. Consider why the behavioralist revolution in Western political science has provoked criticism from advocates of more agonistically political conceptions. These theorists warn that scientific terminology applied to politics enacts a categorically incorrect and potentially stultifying conceptual shift: using science to describe or analyze political phenomena edges dangerously close to condemning spontaneous political behavior to the status of a predictable activity, and hence evacuating political actors and activity of their spontaneity, unpredictability, and will. As Sheldon Wolin explained in his seminal essay “Political Theory as a Vocation,” these assumptions enforce the same uncritical and ergo “untheoretical” assumptions of prevailing political ideology that justifies the present “authoritative allocation of values” in society.⁶³ The employment of such “methods” itself transforms the world

into the shape the researcher's agenda needs it to be: "the employment of method [i.e., behavioralist political science] assumes, even requires, that the world be of one kind rather than another if techniques are to be effective."⁶⁴

Wolin's essay means to criticize the ways in which behavioralism casts the world in its own image, and thus lacks the objectivity it professes. Like Pitkin, Wolin himself maintained an ambivalent position about the status of the theorist, reading theory as both dangerously potent, yet decidedly necessary for seeing otherwise overlooked possibilities for action.⁶⁵ Such ambivalence suggests that when Wolin criticizes practitioners of behavioralism for their failure to recognize the bias of their own vision, he also says something else: how we see or "theorize" is integral to establishing our orientation in the world, and that this act of theorizing (including even the initial decision about how to theorize) wreaks indelible changes in the entire structure of fact.⁶⁶ In other words, a theory constitutes a method for viewing a situation that remains a highly potent device through which real control can be exercised. It is this more general notion that, despite Wolin's opposition to the scientific vocabulary Zhang employs, is recoverable as a way of articulating how Zhang expects "self-awareness" to actually work.

Zhang is not "naturalizing" these social forces so as to render them politically intractable (and thus beyond the pale of criticism); he adopts these terms rather to affirm them as actors of political life. Zhang's analysis thus leads him to identify many non-traditional subgroups and individuals as politically significant and as worthy political agents, including most prominently individuals who do not occupy official posts, peasants (especially those involved in uprisings), and factional interests opposed to policies of the ruling party. For Zhang, these sometimes violent interventions in politics should find peaceful yet powerful outlets within a properly designed constitution that allows all comers to "express their ideas and find peace in their own lot," and

makes them capable of “achieving their own place.”⁶⁷ In fact, his identification of these people and groups as “forces” (力) does not disable them from rupturing, challenging or changing the political status quo. The scientific language he adopts here rather legitimates these actors, by underscoring the extent to which these actors are not only politically, but also metaphysically, potent.

Self-awareness contributes to this renovation by articulating both a means of and significance for action taken by non-traditional actors. Earlier scholar-officials sensitive to the plight of the masses, like the heterodox Tang dynasty thinker Liu Zongyuan, simply urged officials to serve the people, without articulating an effective mechanism to make corrupt officials “frightened and obeisant” of the power the people actually possessed.⁶⁸ Zhang sees this solution as leading merely to thousands of years of pent-up resentment and oppression, resolvable only by violent uprisings or outright revolution.⁶⁹ To change this situation, the people must realize that “the power to rise up in anger to chasten and admonish [their rulers] abides in their own selves.”⁷⁰ This return to the “self,” I argue, signals Zhang’s attempt to grant these non-traditional political actors the virtuous and effective capacities of literati, and thereby facilitates the second step in Zhang’s attempt to transform “the people” into literati actors. Where much of the efficacy of the traditional Confucian literatus was seen to derive from his perfectibility, Zhang identifies alternative modes of efficacy and incorporates them into his model of action.⁷¹ Zhang invites these actors to see for themselves, to become aware, to act as if they, like imperial literati, alone bear responsibility for ordering the world.

Zhang was not the only thinker to read the political action of a self-rule regime in terms of literati action; Sun Yatsen and the Nationalists also invited the people “to occupy the seats once reserved for gentry-scholars [i.e., literati]” in a “refurbished theater of moral politics.”⁷² Sun, however, believes this model of action requires top-down regulation of personal habits and hygiene

as much as moral virtue.⁷³ Only Zhang realizes the identity of political actors with literati can ascribe to non-traditional actors an open-ended capacity to interpret, theorize about, and criticize their environment. Specifically, Zhang exploits the identity between ruler and ruled implicit in democracy to argue that individuals comprising “the people” can most effectively operationalize their sovereignty not by rising up en masse, but by working toward achieving the status of literati themselves – namely by joining their demonstrated political efficacy to self-awareness, that is, the capacity for reflecting, envisioning, and enacting the socio-economic principles their commitment to democracy demands. In assuming this literati posture, non-traditional actors will possess not only the raw power, but also the individualized will, to stand in tension with the normative values that overarch their social and political order. The “people” comes to occupy the normative position capable of legitimatizing political rule; at the same time, however, each individual acts to mediate and criticize the normative whole toward which their capacities (activated via “self-awareness”) are oriented.

For Zhang, then, the insertion of the “self” into democratic life means that individuals act for commonly shared ends, but they do so separately; they do not act “together” to transform their socio-political environment. The scope Zhang allows for theorizing, therefore, is neither as broad nor as ambitious as Pitkin characterizes it. What the self-aware individual re-envision is not primarily all of society, but rather his or her place within a properly reconfigured political and social milieu. The fragmentary and diffuse character of theory, emblemized by the wide dispersal of non-traditional actors, need furnish no transcendent perspective to be inspiring or meaningful as world-changing theory. It is rather active within local situations and unexpected places, not only at the top of the political (or intellectual) hierarchy. Zhang essentially asks those capable of social and

political action to become “theorists”—inverting Pitkin’s solution, which makes theorists become actors.⁷⁴

The Political Implications of Self-Awareness

Despite the insights self-awareness affords, Zhang’s account does pose an array of non-negligible problems that have long been identified as problematic for (even if characteristic of) imperial Chinese political thought. I have already discussed above some Republican-era critiques of traditional Chinese individualism made by Liang Qichao and Hu Shi. These critiques have been further elaborated by modern-day scholars of late imperial China, who blame the individuality of Chinese political action for impeding the collective identity that makes democracy and limited government possible. Frederic Wakeman, for example, characterizes the role of Ming and Qing intellectuals as perpetually caught up in the irresolvable conundrum of criticizing a despotic state while remaining unable to acknowledge the possibility of “detaching sovereignty for themselves” as a group.⁷⁵ Wakeman argues that the longstanding Confucian virtue of dissent and censure—the interpretive mediation between moral and political authority performed by the literatus—was merely a “self-defined right of evaluative dissent” that did not reach beyond individual admonishment to “conceive of group rights” that Wakeman believes could endow them with independence from state control for effective social action.⁷⁶ The failure of Chinese scholar-officials to establish politically grounded and defensible rights of collective action also troubles Chang Hao, who pictures would-be Chinese reformers perpetually vacillating between personal self-cultivation as an “inner” location of cosmological authority, on the one hand, and unquestioned obedience to “external,” cosmologically sanctioned institutions, on the other, as methods of ameliorating social and political problems.⁷⁷

For Wakeman, Chang, and others, Western theories of constitutional government and collective political mobilization, introduced into China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rescued Chinese thinkers from perpetually replicating these futilely individualist political actions to which most brands of Confucianism encouraged them.⁷⁸ These critiques can be amplified by Pitkin's own characterization of political life as a collective enterprise, whose possibilities necessarily exceed the powers of any one individual to control or even decisively influence. When others are acknowledged to possess an equality of self-directed capacity, any political theory must grapple with the unpredictable consequences of both coordinated and non-coordinated action taken with and against others. Taken together, these critiques reveal the limits of Zhang's self-awareness: although Zhang sometimes treats self-awareness as both necessary and sufficient to build a political regime, it should not (and probably cannot) dominate the practices that *sustain* regimes of self-rule: Zhang's individualist model may potentially create what, using his own words, we could call "centripetal," polity-destroying "forces" that threaten to submerge democratic politics in a regime of either self-absorption or radical impotence. Self-awareness is important but insufficient; in a mature regime, for both normative and empirical reasons, it requires tempering by other values that orient the self to others and their demands.

In other work, Zhang does elaborate a set of such values.⁷⁹ I still believe, however, that his concept of self-awareness on its own nevertheless contributes to thinking about political action, especially in conditions of political breakdown. By characterizing action as something that "while based in individual autonomy" is nevertheless "oriented toward solidarity with others,"⁸⁰ Pitkin (via a discussion of Arendt) means to affirm the capacity of other individuals to change political environments. Action taken with others seems essential to performing politics as an activity that works with, rather than on, fellow human beings—it is an antidote to the mentality Arendt identified

as belonging to *homo laborans* and a return to the *vita activa*.⁸¹ Yet Zhang's self-awareness concept reminds us that although politics is about living together with others, specific kinds of political action may require thinking about our efforts in a way that does not take action with others as constitutive (even if, and as, it affirms the potential of others to transform the political landscape).

In this sense, self-awareness is both something to see and a way of seeing, both a vision and a lens. As a vision, it crafts those material and visual environments that mark effective, human-initiated change. Zhang's juxtaposition of the "self" and "external things," a point I discussed above, reminds us that our material environment also stands to influence, inspire, and shape personal action. The self-aware individual takes actions and affects environments that influence and are influenced by the decisions of others, but it does not take acting with others as definitive of political action or efficacy. This is how self-awareness functions as a lens: it helps us see an old situation in a new way that revises our targets and sources of action. Because other people are no longer what the individual is striving to overcome, they also cannot be seen as constant potential inhibitors of his own interests. Disagreement between political actors is not cast as the "problem" that must be resolved before efficacious political action can take place. Instead, the individual can begin from just where he is.

In situations where we "lack the very ideas of action, of politics, of freedom" because no one has "the relevant experience that would make those ideas meaningful,"⁸² this dual function of self-awareness helps to identify what steps can be taken before spontaneous public action is possible. Zhang explains that these little steps accumulate "like grains of rice in a storehouse," beginning from the insight that "selves" are the first actors upon "external things."⁸³ Asking how self-rule could establish itself in a place like China, which lacked the indigenous traditions that supported its emergence elsewhere, Zhang cannot regard acting together in public in the way Pitkin

and Arendt do: it cannot be seen as a “lost treasure,” an experience whose eventual return can perhaps emerge from existing vestiges of past practices.⁸⁴ Therefore, Zhang’s first task is to motivate disparate, internal visions of political community and to explain how their external manifestation, even by one individual in the form of everyday practices, can matter.

Zhang wants us to shift attention away from others toward ourselves— not so as to indulge unreflective and selfish desires, but to guard against shifting to others our own responsibility for change. In an essay further elaborating the connection between self-awareness and polity-building entitled “The State and the Self,” Zhang identified “self-confusion” and “shirking one’s responsibility” as the twin dangers that arise out of a “negligence of the self” (亡我). These dangers emerge as a result of believing that “the amount of good and bad in the world is not something that can be increased or lessened by one’s own involvement.”⁸⁵ Although potentially indulging our capacity for tyranny, self-awareness nevertheless explains why that danger must be courted: presuming that action in concert is everywhere always possible, or at least is always the proper orientation for our actions, overdetermines the sources of change. Assuming that the only effective action is action taken with others, Zhang fears, can easily fall into the trap of thinking that “my contribution doesn’t matter.” In the situation Zhang faced, the danger of individuals failing to take action was far greater than the danger of tyranny that self-awareness may inadvertently produce.

Taken alone, then, self-awareness may underwrite a politics of isolation and alienation: when one is stuck believing that *only* one’s own actions matter, the mutual relationships and sheer collective energy that sustain a republican political regime are lost, and individuals are driven either to tyranny or (as were many imperial Confucians) eremitism. But there are also dangers to reading political action as always and everywhere culminating in action with others: at best, we risk overlooking the important kinds of self-work that must take place before collective action even

makes sense. At worst, we allow ourselves to blame the failure of our ideal world to emerge on those intransigents who refuse to coalesce in collective action toward one's own specified ends.

In republican China, the kinds of subjectivities required by democracy were not necessarily engendered by the Chinese past, by its shared practices, or by recognized co-membership by its citizens in a nominally republican polity. Indeed, under conditions like these, or under those Pitkin and Arendt identified with "the social," the circular relationships that tie individuals to their community just as often replicate past regimes as produce future ones. Self-awareness can rescue political actors in these certain, desperate situations from the paralysis of futility, by explaining why and how personal, microlevel foundations for action do matter. By concentrating on the process individuals undergo in coming to believe that a polity or state is worthy of being willed into existence, Zhang identifies one important way in which personal transformation is intimately linked to political reality and explains why such transformation must necessarily take place on that individual level. In becoming "theorists" in the process of self-awareness to which Zhang exhorts us, we necessarily take on for ourselves the perpetual mediation of the gap between our own efficacy and the wider social order that our efforts bring into being. Indeed, the very power of this action is that it sometimes can and must proceed when one "knows that it cannot be done, but does it anyway" (*Analects* 14.6) – assuming anything less would mean giving in to the reality one's ideals persist in striving against, a move that would fundamentally disable the efficacy of one's "self-awareness." That the position of this willful individual is tenuous and anxiety-ridden only attests to magnitude of one's power. To paraphrase Pitkin, it is always oneself, and never others, that is simultaneously the hindrance to and the source of all change in the world. Zhang, however, insists that to render this insight an effective motivation for political action, we must realize that it is the "I" that must first act, because it is that same "I" that theorizes.

Awareness of the self is needed precisely when politics itself has failed – that is, has failed not in terms of accomplishing some objective, but failed absolutely—but this does not discount its political characteristics. As an important component of transformative action, “self-awareness” provides a potentially fruitful reinterpretation of what we may consider to be “political action.” It reorients the focus of political activity away from “action in concert” toward disparate – though cumulative – efforts to render shared problems incrementally and personally tractable, in ways that complement or supplant deliberately coordinated public control. At the very least, this account suggests that the first (but, importantly, not the last or only) question to ask when faced with “drift” may not be how to communalize our goals and thus build from shared purposes, but how to realize these goals successfully, severally. Whether the accretion of efforts will proceed as Zhang envisioned is a matter of dispute, but it is certainly the case that the reorientation for political action his model provides mitigates the overwhelming odds against our really doing anything.

¹ Sheldon Wolin, *Hobbes and the Epic Tradition of Political Theory* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1970). To Wolin, the theorist is creator “of a new political cosmos,” who orders “an entire society and the lives of all of its members” (p. 29).

² Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice; on the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought*, 1993 ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 326.

³ This problem has been dubbed “Pitkin’s dilemma” by those who have met her challenge in undertaking it: see especially Ruth Lane, “Pitkin’s Dilemma: The Wider Shores of Political Theory and Political Science,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (September 2004): 459.

⁴ Zhang’s earlier, pre-1914 essays in the *People’s Stand* (民立報) newspaper give details on the history and mechanism of these political institutions (e.g., “On cabinet government” 論內閣政府, March 25, 1912). Zhang defended the need for a strong government that was at the same time constitutionally limited in its power (e.g., “On a strong government” 說強有力之政府, Feb. 29, 1912).

⁵ This conclusion about Zhang’s significance seems traceable to Hu Shi, whose overview of twentieth century Chinese literature identified Zhang as one of the few supporters of “political” rather than “cultural” or “social” solutions in the early Republic: see Shi Hu, “Wushinian Lai Zhongguo Zhi Wenxue,” in *Hu Shi Wencun* (Luoyang: Luoyang tushu gongsi, 1985), 224-227. This characterization of Zhang has been repeated with little emendation by Fansen Wang, *Zhongguo Jindai Sixiang Yu Xueshu De Xipu* (Taipei: Lianjing chu ban she, 2003), 250-253; and Zongmian Xu, “Shibaizhe De Tansuo: 1913-1915 Nian Jian Guanyu Zhongguo Ruhe Shixian Minzhu Zhengzhi De Taolun,” *Lishi yanjiu*, no. 4 (1984).

⁶ Kaiyin Lam, "Yan Fu Yu Zhang Shizhao: You Guan Lusuo "Min Yue Lun" De Yi Ci Sixiang Lunzheng," *Hanxue Yanjiu* 20, no. 1 (2002), 353; Shengyang Yue, "Yizhi Xifang Minzhu Zhengzhi De Shibai Yu Qimeng Sixiang De Fusu," in *Shidai De Cuowei Yu Lilun De Xuanze: Xifang Jindai Sichao Yu Zhongguo 'Wusi' Qimeng Sixiang*, ed. Guisheng Liu (Beijing: Qinghua University Press, 1989), 109-111.

⁷ Citing the recommendations of foreign advisors like Frank Goodnow (then president of the American Political Science Association), and Western icons like JS Mill, many of Zhang's interlocutors insisted that only a preliminary tutelage period, led either by an enlightened despot or a small group of elites, could bring about conditions amenable to democracy. In this debate, Liang's arguments for "cultural reform" (文化改革) undertaken for "the cause of society" (社會事業) prefigured the later May Fourth emphasis on mass education as a prerequisite to political participation. His provocative essay "The Foundations of Government, with a Directive for Public Opinion Leaders" 政治之基礎與言論家之指針 (*Da Zhonghua Zazhi*, January 20, 1915) is a typical example. For further discussion of this debate, see Xu, "Shibaizhe De Tansuo," 32-44; Leigh Jenco, "Individuals, Institutions and Political Change: The Political Theory of Zhang Shizhao" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007), Ch. 2.

⁸ Timothy Weston notes that "Although very short-lived, *The Tiger* was arguably the most influential political journal in China between the time Liang Qichao published *New Citizen* (*Xinmin congbao*) (1902-1907) and the high tide of the New Culture Movement." See Timothy Weston, "The Formation and Positioning of the New Culture Community, 1913-1917," *Modern China* 24 (1998), 260-261.

⁹ "The State and the Self," *The Tiger*, August 10, 1915; QJ 509-10.

¹⁰ Although thinkers like Hannah Arendt have relegated pain to the non-political realm precisely on the basis of its irreducibly individual qualities, others have seen a more explicit link between (individual) physical pain and political consciousness. For example, one of Zhang's primary interlocutors, Liang Qichao, drew upon the nineteenth century German legal philosopher Rudolph von Jhering to argue that the pain that accompanies a violation of one's rights awakens one to knowledge of the law: see Stephen C. Angle, "Should We All Be More English? Liang Qichao, Rudolph Von Jhering, and Rights," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 2 (2000), 246.

¹¹ "The State and the Self," QJ, 515.

¹² For example, in response to a reader's letter that criticized the Japanese tendency to suicide, Zhang argues that even feeling "disgusted with the world" and committing suicide would be more productive than "living lackadaisically" as many Chinese do. *The Tiger*, August 10, 1915; QJ, 529-30.

¹³ "Self-awareness," *The Tiger*, August 10, 1914; QJ, 181. Zhang's interpretation of "losing the state" is here informed by that of the Qing literatus Gu Yanwu, who used the term to categorically distinguish the interests of the Chinese people from those of the emperor. See Zhang's essay "The State and Responsibility," *The Tiger*, June 10, 1914; QJ, 127-8.

¹⁴ "The Foundations of Government," *The Tiger*, May 10, 1914; QJ, 4; "Self-awareness," QJ, 179, 184.

¹⁵ "The State and the Self," QJ, 515.

¹⁶ "Self-awareness," QJ, 179.

¹⁷ "The State and the Self," QJ, 513.

¹⁸ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolo Machiavelli*, 1999 ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 35, 290.

¹⁹ Pitkin, *Wittgenstein*, 326.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 199-201.

²¹ Pitkin, *Fortune*, 281-282; Pitkin, *Wittgenstein*, 321-322, 326-330.

²² Pitkin, *Fortune*, 278.

²³ *Ibid.*, 53, 75. Pitkin does not explicitly acknowledge any debt to Hannah Arendt on these pages, but compare Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 181-190.

²⁴ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 199-200, 281.

²⁵ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public," *Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (1981), 345.

²⁶ Pitkin, *Blob*, 252. Pitkin discusses "drift" in more detail in Pitkin, "Justice," 344, 346.

²⁷ Pitkin, *Blob*, 280-284; Pitkin, "Justice," 345-348.

²⁸ Pitkin, *Blob*, 281; Emily Hauptmann, "A Local History of 'the Political,'" *Political Theory* 32, no. 1 (2003), 54.

²⁹ Pitkin, *Blob*, 261, 280; Pitkin, "Justice," 343-344.

³⁰ For example, Pitkin defines free citizenship as the awareness that one is responsible yet "merely one among many others whom one must take into account, because *only together with them can one be free or self-governing.*" Pitkin, *Blob*, 266.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

³² *Ibid.*, 282.

³³ *Ibid.*, 274.

³⁴ Xu, "Shibaizhe De Tansuo," 36, 42. As thinkers like Liang Qichao pointed out, the Chinese had tried all manner of regime types in the past two decades, including constitutional monarchy under the Qing and republican rule after the revolution. But "since success continues to elude us, it can be inferred that the answer must lie outside of political institutions" (Liang, "The Foundations of Government," 10).

³⁵ Hu, "Wushinian Lai Zhongguo Zhi Wenxue," 224; Naide Chang, *Zhongguo Sixiang Xiao Shi* (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1930), Ch. 30; Yue, "Yizhi Xifang Minzhu Zhengzhi De Shibai," 128-132.

³⁶ Zhang, "On Federalism" (聯邦論), *The Tiger*, November 10, 1914; Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 159-164; 185-186.

³⁷ Pitkin, *Fortune*, 278.

³⁸ Zhang's biographer and student Bai Ji'an attributes the personalist turn in Zhang's work to Zhang's penchant for activism (行動); see Ji'an Bai, *Zhang Shizhao Zhuan* (Beijing: Zuojia, 2004), 115-116. To me, this turn also seems to foreshadow the frustrations with politics and institutional reform that, only a year later, prompted Zhang to forsake political office for full time academic study, which Bai also documents (120-5).

³⁹ Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice : Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity--China, 1900-1937* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 87. Liu analyzes the essay "Self" from the perspective of the evolving discourse of individualism in pre- and post-May Fourth China, but does not seem to realize that the pseudonymous author is Zhang.

⁴⁰ "Self," *Eastern Miscellany*, Jan.10, 1916; QJ, 630-631.

⁴¹ "Self-awareness," QJ, 183.

⁴² Cf. *Analects* 4.25: “Virtue never dwells alone; it always has neighbors.”

⁴³ “Beginnings,” *The Tiger Daily*, January 28-29, 1917; QJ (vol. 4), 3-7.

⁴⁴ John Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996), 6, 13.

⁴⁵ Yat-sen Sun, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank W. Price (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927), Lecture I, 4-5.

⁴⁶ Pitkin, *Blob*, 147.

⁴⁷ Zhang, “Self-awareness,” QJ, 185; “The State and the Self,” QJ, 511, 509.

⁴⁸ Weston, “New Culture Community,” 257.

⁴⁹ Pitkin, *Blob*, 146; Arendt, *Human Condition*, 23.

⁵⁰ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 7.

⁵¹ Yingshi Yu, “Zhongguo Zhishi Fenzi De Bianyuan Hua,” *Ershiyi shiji* 4 (1991), 17.

⁵² The preoccupation with themselves as “renwu” (人物, “charismatic leaders”) during this early period at the very least indicates a self-conscious confrontation with their newly destabilized positions, including a more objective look at to what extent popular acceptance conditioned their success as policy-makers. Wu Guanyin’s contributions to the *Yongyan* political journal, including articles such as “The *Renwu* that Society Most Admire” (*Yongyan* 1.18, Aug. 16, 1918) and “Politics and *Renwu*,” (*Yongyan* 1.12, May 16, 1913) are representative of this self-perception. See Jenco, “Individuals, Institutions and Political Change”, 83-90.

⁵³ According to Yu Yingshi, this literatus (士大夫) ideal did not recede from mainstream political thinking until the intellectual class was definitively marginalized by the construction of Soviet-style party states (first the Nationalist, then the Communist) after the failure of the Beifa government in 1924; see Yu, “Zhongguo Zhishi Fenzi De Bianyuan Hua,” 18-19.

⁵⁴ Thomas A. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament : Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 115. Compare also William Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 89-92.

⁵⁵ Metzger, *Escape from Predicament : Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture*, 176.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 115. Such belief in metaphysical potency is often traced to the wide influence of radical neo-Confucian movements (e.g., Taizhou) in the late Ming dynasty; see Rowe, *Saving the World*, 322; Wang, *Zhongguo Jindai Sixiang Yu Xueshu De Xipu*, 138.

⁵⁷ For example, Xu Zongmian explicitly delineates Zhang's political program from the "personal reform" promoted by contemporaries like Du Yaquan (Xu, "Shibaizhe De Tansuo," 34.)

⁵⁸ Qichao Liang, "Lun Zizhi," in *Yin Bing Shi Quan Ji* (Taipei: Wenhua Book Co., 1989), 54.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Mary Backus Rankin, "State and Society in Early Republican Politics, 1912-1918," in *Reappraising Republican China*, ed. Frederic Wakeman and Richard Louis Edmonds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶² *The Tiger*, August 10, 1914; QJ, 188-189. Zhang cites James Bryce, *Studies in History and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), 217.

⁶³ Sheldon Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," *American Political Science Review* 63 (1969), 1063. Compare also Pitkin, *Wittgenstein*, 321-322.

⁶⁴ Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," 1064.

⁶⁵ William E. Connolly, "Politics and Vision," in *Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political*, ed. William E. Connolly and Aryeh Botwinick (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 7.

⁶⁶ Wolin, *Hobbes*, 5.

⁶⁷ "Centrifugal and Centripetal Forces," QJ, 203.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁷¹ In this sense, Zhang's project contributes to the "democratization of personality" discourse that, beginning in the late Qing dynasty, critiqued traditional Confucian sagehood ideals centered on ritual, strict personal control, and hierarchy, and offered instead a less perfectionist, more accessible human ideal centered on the decisive role of emotions, reason, and (by Zhang's time) science. See Hongliang Gu, *Xiandai Zhongguo Pingminhua Renge Huayu* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue, 2005), 2, 13-15.

⁷² Fitzgerald, *Awakening China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution*, 35.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁷⁴ Pitkin, *Blob*, 280-281.

⁷⁵ Frederic Wakeman, "The Price of Autonomy: Intellectuals in Ming and Qing Politics," *Daedalus*, no. Spring (1972), 37.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 36-37. Wakeman traces part of their difficulty to a long-standing Chinese resistance to political organization of parties and groups: "Scholars alone, acting as individuals, were respectably impotent. Scholars together, constituting a faction, were dubiously partisan" (p. 41).

⁷⁷ Wakeman's and Chang's critiques are only two among several. William T. de Bary similarly argues that even for extremely progressive and critical scholar-officials like the Ming dynasty

iconoclast Huang Zongzi, the key to socio-political improvements ultimately lies in “the nature and quality of leadership” rather than “rights” of individuals collectively and universally granted: see William Theodore De Bary and Tsung-hsi Huang, *Waiting for the Dawn : A Plan for the Prince : Huang Tsung-Hsi's Ming-I Tai-Fang Lu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 11. Irene Bloom offers an analysis of how this same impulse relates to modern Chinese understandings of freedom: Irene Bloom, "The Moral Autonomy of the Individual in Confucian Tradition," in *Realms of Freedom in Modern China*, ed. William Kirby, *The Making of Modern Freedom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁷⁸ These scholars do acknowledge that late-Qing “statecraft” traditions (*jingshi*) provided an imperial Chinese vocabulary for institutional (rather than merely individual or moral) reform; however, *jingshi* thinkers continued to interpret politics as a matter of individual virtue rather than collective effort. See Hao Chang, "Song-Ming Yilai Rujia Jingshi Sixiang Shishi," in *Jinshi Zhongguo Jingshi Sixiang Yantao Hui Lunwen Ji*, ed. Guangjing Liu and Baoqian Ji (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1983), 12.

⁷⁹ Zhang’s doctrine of “accommodation” (調和), for example, urged tolerance of “the different” and objective treatment of “the same.” See Zhang, “The Foundations of Government,” QJ 1-2; “Accommodation to Build a State” 調和立國論, *The Tiger*, November 11, 1914; QJ 251-278. For discussion of the philosophical implications of Zhang’s “accommodation,” see Huaqing Guo, *Kuanrong Yu Tuoxie: Zhang Shizhao De Tiaohelun Yanjiu* (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2004).

⁸⁰ Pitkin, *Blob*, 182.

⁸¹ Arendt, *Human Condition*, 7, 26, 205-214.

⁸² Pitkin, *Blob*, 274.

⁸³ “Beginnings,” QJ (vol. 4), 5.

⁸⁴ Pitkin, *Blob*, 276; Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1969), 204.

⁸⁵ “The State and the Self,” QJ, 514. See also “Beginnings,” QJ (vol. 4), 3-7.