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SOCIAL HIERARCHY AND GROUP SOLIDARITY: THE MEANINGS OF *WORK* AND *VOCATION/PROFESSION* IN THE CHINESE CONTEXT AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

BARBARA SCHULTE

Abstract: The Chinese characters for *culture, education, profession/vocation* and *work* provide important information on the socio-historical background of the concepts represented by them. Particularly the concepts of work and education have profound implications for the idea of vocational education. Based on an etymological and semantic analysis of the characters, and through the introduction of a typical example of Chinese work organisation, the work unit or *danwei*, this paper shows correspondences between the past and the present organisation of work. It also shows that semantic analyses, when ignoring the socio-cultural context, may lead to a distorted picture of the society concerned. This is demonstrated by the example of the concepts of 'order' and 'harmony'.

Zusammenfassung: Die chinesischen Zeichen für *Kultur*, *Bildung/Erziehung*, *Beruf* und *Arbeit* beinhalten wichtige Informationen zum sozialhistorischen Hintergrund der durch sie dargestellten Konzepte. Vor allem die Konzepte von Arbeit und Bildung/Erziehung sind für die Idee der Berufsbildung folgenreich. Anhand einer etymologisch-semantischen Analyse der Zeichen und einer Einführung in ein typisches Beispiel chinesischer Arbeitsorganisation, die Arbeitseinheit oder *Danwei*, wird aufgezeigt, dass es zwischen der früheren und heutigen Arbeitsorganisation bestimmte Korrespondenzen gibt. Ferner wird gezeigt, dass den sozio-kulturellen Kontext ignorierende semantische Analysen zu einem verzerrten Bild der betreffenden Gesellschaft führen können. Dies wird beispielhaft anhand der Konzepte 'Ordnung' und 'Harmonie' verdeutlicht.

Like other newly-introduced concepts such as science, economics, or religion, the widely used Chinese term for profession – *zhiye* – was established with its modern meaning only during the 20th century. However, the term itself is not new: it is the product of ancient Chinese (especially Confucian) conceptions of the vocational world. The main aim of this paper is to explore this world via an etymological and semantic analysis of *profession* and *work*, after having analysed two other quasi-neologisms, *culture* and *education*. These four terms, and the characters which represent them, mirror the socio-historical background in which the social organisation of work has been embedded.

There are certain correspondences between the past and the present conceptual and actual organisation of work. These correspondences will be illustrated by the example of the Chinese work unit, or *danwei*, which as a structural and social but not necessarily political entity is still considered to have a deep impact on the lives of Chinese workers and their families. The paper reveals the shortcomings of semantic analyses that do not take into account the social and historical developments accompanying the construction of social meanings. This will be demonstrated by the example of 'order' and 'harmony', often considered to represent typical and influential characteristics of Chinese society. The question arises

if and, if so, how the problems evaluated here can be avoided when approaching semantic constructions like the vocational world.

The paper is partly motivated by an increasing demand (beginning, perhaps, with the 'cultural fever' in the 1980s), to take into account Chinese culture while, or despite, modernising the country. This demand is not as new as some Chinese scholars make it sound. The dilemma between the preservation of China's own cultural heritage and the creative adoption or blind copy of Western things as articulated in the *zhongti xiyong* or 'Chinese essence, Western functions' debate of the 19th century has been re-formulated in countless variations. Nevertheless, the recent intensification of academic and popular concern with anything 'cultural' or 'Chinese' should not be overlooked. This 'culturalisation' or 'sinicisation' trend has not only become apparent in the selection of topics in newspapers and journals, on the book market, or in TV programmes; it has also pervaded academic life and academic disciplines, as can be seen from university curricula and publications (see e.g. Schulte [2001] on the emergence of cultural linguistics). At the same time, the paper emphasises that cultural idiosyncrasies also play a role in a field which many Chinese and Western educational experts regard as a kind of 'de-culturalised' area, namely the field of vocational and technical education.[1]

This paper cannot aim to design a more culture-specific system of vocational education in China, though this would be an interesting and worthwhile object of study (see Diehl [1999] on Pakistan and India). Nor is it possible within this paper to describe, or even predict, at what time in which situation which elements of culture began to contribute to the realisation of the understandings of work or profession/vocation. Rather, through the following discussion the paper intends to direct the reader's attention towards the different layers of meaning inherent in the concepts and contexts of work and vocation/profession. In general, research on vocational education has been rather descriptive and policy-oriented in nature. In contrast, this paper contributes to the investigation of the reasons why certain *ideas* and, subsequently, systems of work organisation have emerged (or have been adopted from other countries) and why others have not. Specific recent developments can be interpreted as having strong correspondences with past social structures, even though the Communist take-over and the consequent policies might imply otherwise.

The conceptual background of culture, education, vocation/profession, and work

Specific developments in 19th and 20th century Chinese history and society, and the concomitant need to express and transport these changes via the Chinese language have led to the seemingly paradoxical situation that many Chinese terms are neologisms and traditional words at the same time, especially within the field of science. The reason for this lies in China's close connections to Japan during its modernisation period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with Japan having already successfully launched a large-scale modernisation programme, including of the Japanese language. Two strategies were adopted in Japan in order to name the many Western, 'modern' ideas: beyond creating genuinely new terms and, less often, characters, the Chinese classics were also searched for characters or expressions which could be used to

denote the new ideas.[2] Confronted with similar obstacles decades later, Chinese intellectuals tended more and more simply to adopt these borrowed Japanese-Chinese words and "return graphic loans ... derived from classical Chinese" (Liu 1995: 302) instead of choosing or inventing their own terms. While this was an understandable reaction when considering the mere numbers of (often oppositional) Chinese intellectuals going to Japan for exile and/or study, it also makes sense with regard to the *visual* similarities between the two languages in the form of the Chinese character, which made the re-adoption of the terms especially tempting and easy for the Chinese.[3] The return graphic loans *culture*, *education* and *work*/*labour* and their (increasing) usage among the Chinese intellectuals in the course of the 20th century also experienced a similar history (Liu 1995), whereas the case of *profession/vocation* (*zhiye*) is not clear.[4]

Hence, an investigation of Chinese words and characters is productive in two respects – particularly regarding characters which represent meanings that can be considered central to both the past and more recent discourses. Firstly, Chinese characters are *per se* meaningful; that is, they are composed of at least one meaningful component. These semantic components, and their combination, provide rich information on the ideas and assumptions surrounding the construction of the characters' meanings at the time of their creation, thus allowing for sociological insight into the remote past, which in this way is not possible for languages recorded in alphabetical writing systems. Moreover, in the course of the centuries following the characters' original creation, the characters were re-defined and re-interpreted in various dictionaries and encyclopaedias. This can be instructive with regard to the development and re-adaptation of the characters' original meanings.

Secondly, the re-discovery (and re-definition) of some old terms via the Japanese in modern times is a very interesting process, which raises at least one further question: what is the relationship between the newly established meaning and the older meanings, both represented by the same character(s)? It can be maintained that the old meanings were not simply replaced by the new ones, but somehow merged with them, as certain intellectual and educational practices secured the continuity of traditional thought. These practices included activities of intellectuals in the form of community schools, public readings, and other communicative functions, thus "making the core values of the cumulative tradition coherent, dynamic, and persuasive" (Tu 1991: 110). Thus, more research is needed on the interrelationship between the old and the new meanings, for example along the lines of Liu (1995). In the following, by looking into the etymology of characters, it is *not* argued that the specific structure of these characters and the meanings they transport influence in any way the Chinese individual's conception of the ideas which the characters represent. Rather, such an analysis is only a tool for detecting trends of thought that were prevalent at the time of the characters' creation. On the other hand, this does not preclude the possibility of correspondences between these trends of thought and more recent developments, as will be shown particularly in the second part of the paper.

The Chinese word for *culture*, *wenhua* or 文化, consists of two characters. The first character *wen* originally depicted certain lines or engravings, according to legend on the back of a dragon or a tortoise (Fazzioli 1987: 231). It then came to represent the written character and, more generally, literature as a

whole, and later still encompassed something like refinement and a civil character, which included diplomacy, the art of persuasion and the knowledge of the rites and secret state procedures (Gernet 1972: 87). Along with *zhi*, simplicity, *wen* made up the ideal gentleman. *Wen* was also one of the two obligatory qualifications of the ancient Chinese official, the other one being *wu* or 武 and denoting military skills and military knowledge. Whereas in earlier times the estate of the so-called *shi*, which later produced the Chinese intellectuals or scholars, consisted of both *wenshi* and *wushi*, with the emergence of a distinct intellectual class the former gradually came to replace the latter in importance, and when the imperial examination system was being installed from the 7th century onwards, *wu* as a qualification played no role within the system (Ma 1995; Hu 1997).[5]

The second character 化 symbolises two men, one standing upright on his feet, the other standing upside down on his head, thus indicating the change or transformation from one state of being into another. It soon came to be used like a suffix, comparable to the English *–isation* (Wu 1995: 209). The combination of these two elements as in 文化 comes close to English *cultivation*, or even German *Bildung*, and can refer both to the internal affairs of the state, and to the individual (and its education). It is interesting in this respect that in its semantic development, *wenhua* has gone through a movement from the inside to the outside, that is, from the individual person to the state or the society as a whole. In contrast, Latin *cultura*, from which English *culture* is derived, has experienced a reverse movement from the outside, as in the cultivation of the land, to the inside, as in the metaphorical use of *cultura animi* (Wolf 1994: 1). During recent decades particularly, the rising role of the computer industry (and its language) has led to many new terms being coined which directly translate the original English word into Chinese, as, for example, in *control centre*. However, *wenhua* never appears in terms pertaining to agriculture or the biosciences, as does English *cultivate* in *cultivating yeasts* or *culture* in *culture of bees* or even of *bacteria*. It seems that the original *wen* character is still too strong to allow for direct translations which are otherwise common practice. Chinese culture or *wenhua* seems to represent an inner capacity that is *felt* to be a defining characteristic of Chinese identity by the Chinese themselves: thus, anybody who is said to 'not have culture' (*meiyou wenhua*) is likely to be excluded from a given community (if only temporarily), and the Chinese generally consider themselves as 'having culture' (*you wenhua*). All in all, *wenhua* in this respect also serves as an integrating mechanism for the Chinese people (Watson 1991).

The close and causal relationship between the individual and the whole through *wen* is deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy and ethics, and probably the most famous example is from the *Great Learning*, where through a chain of cultivated actions the goal of peace throughout the (China-centred) world is achieved:

> ... When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is *cultivated*, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order; there will be peace throughout the world... (Chan 1963: 86f.; emphasis added)

Cultivating, or cultivating the way, as demanded in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (Chan 1963: 98), is also an intrinsic part of education.[6] In the *Etymological Dictionary*'s (1992: 1357) explanation of *wenhua*, culture and education are closely interwoven. This sort of education is of concern not only to the individual, but also to the state or even the whole world, and it is true not only for the Confucian gentleman, who has to take an active and leading role, but also for the common people, who are required to follow the gentlemen by obeying the rites.

The term for education, *jiaoyu* or 教育, reflects this hierarchical order: teaching – the rough translation of the first of the two characters for 'education' – is if the lower person imitates the higher person, according to the oldest Chinese etymological dictionary (Wang 1995).[7] Whereas this explanation reveals the reasoning of the period when it was compiled, namely the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), the origins of the two characters and the meanings connected to them can be traced back to even earlier times, probably the Shang dynasty (16th c.-11th c. BC). The original meaning of the first character 教 can be split into two parts again: the part on the right-hand side indicates a hitting hand (with some sort of stick), while the left part stands for filial piety, including serving one's parents, continuing the will of the ancestors etc.[8] Already at this early stage, filial piety was seen as the basis of all kinds of goals (also political), and Confucius himself later regarded it as the foundation of all morals and virtues. The second character, the original shape being 𠫓 and symbolising a child or a son upside down, meant 'giving birth' in ancient times. The meaning was then extended to include growing (up), raising and nurturing, as explicated in the *Erya*, the oldest semantically arranged dictionary compiled at the beginning of the Han dynasty. The Confucian philosopher Mencius (372-289 BC) already used it metaphorically with connotations of instructing or admonishing. Also, the works of *Mencius* are usually cited as the earliest document containing the compound *education* or *jiaoyu*. Mencius praised education as the third joy of the noble-minded, after the joy of having healthy parents and brothers, and the joy of a good conscience when facing other people and heaven: "To attract the finest students in all beneath Heaven, and to teach and nurture them – that is the third joy" (*Mencius* 1998: 241).

Once established in its meaning, the term for teaching was inflated to create new compounds, all making use of the 'teaching' character. However, usage of the compound *jiaoyu* or *education* was rather marginal. The central notion of learning remained far more prevalent than teaching, which was seen as simply the reverse action of learning. The famous classic work cited above is called *The Great Learning* and not *The Great Teaching*, and even one of the earlier and most well-known modern Chinese intellectuals, Yan Fu (1854-1921), still used the word 'learning' when translating Herbert Spencer's *Education*, and not 'teaching', as the translated title reads today. The 'teaching' character (and indeed the compound used by Mencius) for 'education' only came to be systematically applied, including by those who before only used it sporadically, from the beginning of the 20th century, and (again) via the overwhelming influence of the Japanese. Thus in May 1901, Luo Zhenyu (1866-1940) published the journal *Educational World* [*Jiaoyu shijie*] using the new term, and likewise Wang Guowei (1877-1927) used the Japanese-coined term *jiaoyuxue* for *educational studies/pedagogy* in some of the first issues of this journal.[9]

Which now were the goals of education, which in its formal and non-formal settings embraced the entire society? Traditionally, education was to induce culture (*wen*), moral conduct, wholehearted sincerity, and truthfulness (*The Analects of Confucius* 1997: 91). Again, we can see that the goals were closely linked to the problems of society and governing as a whole, and through education the individual learned to realise and identify himself as a loyal and responsible part of the state. According to Tu (1991: 112), this tradition of creating a conscience within the intellectual which makes him believe that his actions have profound consequences for the state as a whole did not come to a sudden end just because the imperial government was being criticised and eventually replaced. Moreover, in late 19th and early 20th century China it was not so much values like freedom which dominated the intellectual discourse, but rather the patriotic concern for China's survival or strength – an argument which is still prevalent in today's intellectual debates and protests.[10]

The understanding of vocation and work has emerged within this triangular network of state, intellectual/official, and individual. Whereas the dual structure of *vocation* or *zhiye* 职业 underlines the dichotomy of state and non-state entities, the semantic field of *work* or *laodong* 劳动 emphasises the opposition of intellectual and non-intellectual. *Zhiye* 职业 can also be recognised as consisting of two characters. The first character refers to the duty or office of the (mostly Confucian) official, whereas the second character denotes the hierarchically ordered categories of scholars,[11] peasants, craftsmen, and merchants (*Etymological Dictionary* 1992: 2537). Like the character for the Chinese *sage* (*shengren* 圣人) – the model person every gentleman should try to copy – the *zhi* or *office* character also has the 'ear' 耳 positioned at its left side, thus indicating one important function of the government official: to lend his ear to the common people in order to sound out the public opinion and then find the most efficient governing strategy.[12] The right-hand part of *zhi* consists of 'sound' and 'dagger-axe' (an ancient weapon), together resulting in the meaning of 'watch tower', but although these components leave room for much speculation with regard to the *office* meaning, according to an extensive database on the etymology of Chinese characters, this part only provides the pronunciation of the whole character.[13]

The character denoting the four estates of scholars, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants (业) shows a tree and its foliage, and later on represented a piece of wood holding together books (*Etymological Dictionary* 1992: 1610). The semantic extension towards **'column', 'line', 'area', 'branch', 'estate',** and later even 'occupation', 'profession', and 'industry' can probably be understood best by seeing *ye* as grouping or binding similar things (similar in character, hierarchy, interest, etc.) together in specific categories. The over-emphasis on agriculture resulting from this hierarchical order at the cost of trade and commerce has been repeatedly made responsible for China's industrial and commercial backwardness towards the end of the 19th century. However, the hierarchy with the scholars being at the top and merchants at the bottom end of society has not always been as clear and definite as it might appear from looking only at the last few centuries. As has been suggested by some scholars, the 'four estate' structure

might rather be the result of the division of labour and some degree of professionalisation within Chinese society (Ma 1995: 36-45), and close interaction, mutual help, and even friendships between Confucian scholars and merchants were no exception, even to the extent that somebody could be a wealthy merchant and Confucian scholar at the same time, like Confucius' disciple Duan Mu.[14] Until the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD), becoming a merchant was an occupational possibility among upper class people, next to aspiring to an office post (Übelhör 1985). It was only later and probably with the growing financial involvement and, consequently, corruption of the government officials, that the philosophical and ethical opposition of 'righteousness' (*yi*) or 'humanness' (*ren*) on the one side and material interests (*li*) on the other was – and still is today! – also politically re-enforced and exploited, but the repeated complaints by the government indicate that the success of wiping out the commercial spirit of the ruling class has been rather limited. Recent corruption scandals support this assumption.

The division of professions as confirmed in the explanation of *ye* was made visible by the spatial differentiation of these groups, mainly for pragmatic and economic reasons, as the exchange of experiences, technologies, and other information as well as education for the younger generation could be more easily achieved within a locally fixed and closely connected community. Geographical groupings of certain occupations can still be observed today, sometimes with a specific branch taking over a whole village. The side-effect of this hierarchical order symbolised by *ye* – namely keeping everybody quiet and content in his place – was of course highly instrumentalised and legitimised by government officials. In fact, in Confucian writings one may find statements which insinuate that poverty was nothing a virtuous person should be worried about.[15] The subsequent class re-arrangements of the Communists – though with somewhat different hierarchical preferences – did not contribute to loosening up these at least theoretically fixed positions in society. On the contrary, the household policy of allocating to each person a specific place where he or she is allowed to live has further reduced the chances of changing positions, and it has made it almost impossible to move legally from the ideologically privileged countryside into the materially privileged city. Only during the Cultural Revolution – not without reason also called the 'big chaos' – such movements were violently enforced. However, as will be pointed out later in more detail, this ideal state of everybody staying where he or she is has never been fully achieved in reality despite strict state measures. In the past as well as in the present, Chinese society has always been highly mobile (Herrmann-Pillath 1996).

The use of *zhiye* in the term *vocational education* (*zhiye jiaoyu*) was only established on a broad base with the founding of the 'Chinese Society of Vocational Education' by Huang Yanpei in 1917. Although *zhiye jiaoyu* was used before that time – for the first time probably in 1904 by the educator **Yao Wendong** in Shanxi Province (Liu 1997: 136) – it was above all *shiye*, not *zhiye*, which was used in combination with 'education' and which referred explicitly to industrial-technical education.[16] 'Industry education', as it is also translated, was instituted by the Qing government as a supplement to the previous classically oriented education still based on the imperial examination system. It resulted from the growing awareness that the conventional system did not suffice to enable the country to modernise, stand up to the

West, and survive. Hence, in that period the four-syllable saying 'shiye jiuguo' – 'engage in industry to save the country' – was coined. Beginning around 1910, however, industry education was increasingly criticised as being useless and too detached from reality by educationists and industrialists alike: graduates were not welcomed in industry circles, and the unemployment rate was still rising. At this point, the idea of vocational education, modelled mainly on the Chinese perception of American vocational education, was propagated as the only way to resurrect China from this misery. One of the first advocates of vocational education was **Lu Feikui,** then editor of the *Journal of Education* (*Jiaoyu zazhi*), and it was particularly Huang Yanpei who linked vocational education with the country's choice to remain poor and perish, or become rich and resurgent. Vocational education in this modern sense was no longer a mere appendix of 'real education', but was considered an intrinsic part of general education – something which was never really fully conceptualised and accepted by the broad public. As a consequence, 'industry education' (again a Japanese-coined term) was abolished and replaced by 'vocational education', while in Japan 'industry education' remained in place until after World War II.[17]

The last term to be discussed here before moving on to the present-day work organisation, *labour/work* or *laodong* 劳动, reveals a sensibility to the opposition of mental and physical labour, when seen in its historical context. The two characters – the first meaning 'to burn strength', the second 'to act', 'to move' (consisting of 'heavy' and 'strength') – can be found in Chinese classic sources, but were rediscovered by the Japanese again, thus also being a return graphic loan (Liu 1995: 322). In original Chinese and early Confucian thought, physical labour was not belittled; indeed farmers' activities were highly valued because of their life-sustaining function. Traces of this esteem can be detected in the emperor's ritual acts at the earth temples praying for good harvests and in several agricultural symbols at the sites of former imperial palaces. However, beginning at least with Mencius, the economic need of the division of labour was also justified ideologically by the opposition between the 'working hearts' (*laoxin*), thus the mental workers,[18] and the 'working force' (*laoli*), the physical workers. The latter were supposed to support and follow the first group, which alone was entitled to take the lead (Hu 1997). At the same time, the leading role of mental workers was justified by their interest in moral behaviour and ethical concerns, while the subordinated position of the physical workers was connected to their pursuit of lower (and mostly material) interests. Although this was not the only philosophical or ethical position during the long history of Chinese thought, it was to be the dominant trend, and proved useful in legitimising the existing structures of governance.

As a consequence, working in order to achieve prosperity has hardly been given a moral basis, and, ironically, this neglect, if not disdain, of materialism fitted perfectly well with the expressed Communist goals after 1949. Specifically, this meant that the only morally valuable work was to study the Confucian canon and become an official, or, after 1949, to study the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist canon and become a cadre. Contrary to the widely propagated socialist goal of merging mental and physical labour and contrary also to the general high appraisal of physical labour, reality did not follow this rhetoric, and at least educated people

continued to value mental labour more highly than physical labour. This inevitably led to the disregard of an idea such as vocational education, which apparently did not prepare for such lofty goals as becoming an intellectual leader. And, as Zhu Xiaobin (1996) remarks, it was only after specific degrees from vocational education institutions were linked to specific cadre functions that vocational education seemed more attractive to people, thus partly drawing on the functional structures of the old imperial examination system. Due to these specific developments, getting into a leading position and doing 'common' work also today seem to exclude each other by nature, and no clear rationale exists for the Chinese public to invest in an education that prepares for something inferior. Indeed, this negative attitude has been reinforced with the success of the one-child-policy, as with only one child to invest in, the chances have become even lower that parents who can afford to spend money on their child's education will spend it on something so unpromising as vocational education.[19]

Persistent structures: The present organisation of work and the Chinese *danwei*

Before moving on to the Chinese work unit or *danwei* and its characteristics, some continuities between the background discussed so far and the post-1949 situation will be briefly outlined. There are several structural and conceptual correspondences between the pre-and post-1949 spheres of work and vocation. Apart from the close watch (kept by government elites) on how wealthy one was allowed to be – this also included pre-1949 limitations on personal property – there was the basic government claim of the right to regulate the people's personal lives and thoughts. This is often phrased in the term 'paternalistic relationship', which again is deduced from the above mentioned principle of filial piety, and it inevitably leads to a hierarchically structured and authoritarian style of governing.[20] In its logic, the Communist government followed the line of argument as presented in *The Great Learning* above, so that individual behaviour was closely linked to the fate of the state as a whole. As a consequence, the close relationship between politics and education was continued in order to evoke the politically right behaviour. As a further consequence, the elite was placed again in its dual function of both leading the people and serving the government, thus being an instrument of the government rather than controlling or balancing it. As has been mentioned before, the Confucian official can be seen as being replaced by the Communist cadre, and the Confucian canon by the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist canon. Under Soviet influence, the examination system was practically re-instituted, the character of which dictates certain forms of thinking and behaving. And, in spite of all rhetoric, the opposition of mental and physical labour was continued. This is not only apparent in the division of labour that, with a few exceptions in China's post-1949 history, has been practised after all, but also in differentiating forms of reward: cadres may not necessarily get more money from the government than ordinary workers, but they are certainly privileged through their influential position, which in turn means more money in the end (Hebel and Schucher 1992). Of course, privileges like this become questionable with the rise of market economy and increasing chances to make a fortune in the private sector, but even today married couples prefer to place one partner in the state sector, which is still considered more secure than the private.

One specific and, one may say, typically Chinese form of work organisation is the *unit* or *danwei*, which was specifically designed by the Chinese post-1949 government. From 1949 to 1979, over 80 per cent of the urban labour force was organised in work units (Li and Wang 1996),[21] and even in 1998, when reform measures had already sharply reduced the number of *danweis*, 60 per cent of the urban labour force were still employed in work units. Of these, 71.4 per cent were state-owned, 15.4 per cent collective, and 13.2 per cent other types of work units (*China Statistical Yearbook* 1999: 133). There were two straightforward and pragmatic reasons why *danwei* structures were installed nationwide: first, grouping working people and their families into such units naturally made it easier to organise and mobilise the masses; second, in structuring the country into units, the Party could draw on pre-1949 experiences (since the end of the 1920s), when the Communists already controlled more than one hundred million people through their units, providing food, education, entertainment etc.

In fact, three basic principles survived from these early years into the post-1949 period, each of which also reflects features from the more remote past. Firstly, the administrative structure of the *danwei* is dual, consisting of military and the Party representatives before 1949, and the (purely administrative) *danwei* management and the Party representatives after 1949.[22] A consequence of this structure is once more the triangular relationship between the state, the cadre (official), and the individual, which was discussed above. This relationship places the cadre, as it did with the official during the imperial system, in a state of dual responsibility, as he is expected to act in the interest of the government and of his unit's members at the same time. This has often led to conflicts of loyalty and given rise to diverse techniques to avoid these conflicts, such as manipulated reports to the government.[23] This triangle of state, cadre, and unit members is also the reason why employers and employees are not necessarily in opposition to each other, as is normally the case in Western enterprises. Secondly, the multi-functionality of the *danwei* was preserved, with the unit not only performing its original function (such as producing steel), but also catering to the economic, political, and social needs of its members. Again, this mirrors the geographical and vocational clusters of the past, when a certain profession also meant a certain life within a certain community, probably best represented by the various guilds which existed right into the 20th century. Third, Communist ideology required certain principles of equality to be installed in the *danwei* (e.g., between officers and soldiers, or between cadres and workers), which can also be traced back to the old Chinese dream of the Great Equality or *datong*. In reality, both ideologies have never been fully realised, and difference of status has remained rather distinct. However, this ideology could evoke the harmonious *feeling* of belonging together (and being responsible for each other), while leaving it clear at the same time who was to take the initiative and who was to follow. This again echoes the notion of the term *education* as explained above, and in fact *danwei* cadres, in their model function, were often seen also as teachers or educators.

Certain other features reveal even more clearly the family, clan, or guild character of the *danwei*.[24] The Chinese family – to allude again to the above quotation from *The Great Learning* – is the ideal metaphor and medium to produce a cultivated (or 'domesticated') and responsible individual, and its structural realisation in the form of the clan may well serve as the prototype of both the guild and the *danwei*. An

employee of the classical *danwei* belongs to his or her unit throughout his or her whole life, and also after retirement. Moreover, the worker's children are virtually born into the unit, thus extending the unit's obligations also to the children. Even today there are techniques to inherit a status or even the occupation itself from one's father or mother within the unit (Bian 1994). As with a clan or guild member, for a long time the worker's status has not been based on a contract, and thus could not be terminated (from either side). Even in the mid-1990s, only eleven per cent of total employments were based on a contract (*China Labour Statistical Yearbook* 1998). This led to the general assumption that a mobile worker – that is, the exceptional situation that somebody wanted to leave or somebody was forced to leave – must be a bad worker, and even recent changes in industrial law could not alter the generally negative attitude towards 'formalities' like contracts (Hebel and Schucher 1992: 109; 221). Just as in the times of the guilds, the worker is more or less considered the unit's or enterprise's property, in which it had invested, who has acquired knowledge of internals, and who therefore should not be allowed to leave. The *danwei* member also receives a specific status, which may vary with his or her age and on which personal affairs such as friendships and marriages depend. This is embedded in a complex social network made up by inter-personal relationships, in Chinese famously called *guanxi*.[25] In short, every *danwei* represents an isolated social system by itself, which through its far-reaching functions and responsibilities makes an existence outside the system almost inconceivable to those who are used to it.

Further parallels can be found in both clan and *danwei* structures: order and 'harmony' are emphasised, which can only function on the basis of a strict hierarchy and through the enactment of certain rules and rites. These rites were of a more religious nature in former times (such as worshipping the ancestors), whereas later on they took on a more ideological-political character (such as group meetings, including self-criticisms). The head of the clan or *danwei* has absolute authority: in former times this was on account of the head's seniority, his relationship to the common ancestor, and his merits in the service of the emperor; in modern times based on the leader's relationship to certain Party organs, his merits in the service of the Party, and his seniority.

Many of the competencies of the clan head have re-appeared with the *danwei* manager: implementation of state policies, enforcement of certain norms and rules, strict measures against oppositionists, protection and creation of social prestige among the members, management of financial funds, mediation in disputes within the unit and between different units, etc. The patri-linear system is replaced by a party-linear system, through which everybody's status and possibilities are defined by his or her relation to the common point of reference, the Party.[26] In order to function also emotionally, the entire system is construed upon the belief that the leader is, by nature, benevolent and thus can be trusted and followed like one's own father, who has not only the right to reign, but also the duty to care for his members. Many protests in recent times have been less directed at the limited range of action for common workers or the lack of democratic structures as such, but rather point at the unjust behaviour of the leaders, who in their eyes try to avoid their responsibility to take proper care of the people. Conceptually, these protests can be linked to

protests of the past, when a dynasty was overthrown usually only if the emperor was found to be not fulfilling his duties as an emperor, such as caring for his people.[27]

Another way to emotionally ground the *danwei* or clan structure was to create and nurture a collective spirit. This was achieved by inclusive and exclusive techniques, that is, by clinging to specific familiaristic traditions on the one hand and drawing a line between one's own unit/clan and other units/clans on the other hand. The latter technique also becomes apparent in language usage, such as 'my *danwei*' and 'your *danwei*', and, of course, in architecture, since most work units – and in the past, the residences of families or clans – are surrounded by fences and walls. It also perpetuates the well-known Chinese distinction between the 'inside' (one's family, village, county, etc.) and the 'outside' (the wife's family, other villages, foreign countries, etc.), which is also pronounced in the vocabulary.[28] The dynamics produced by such a collective spirit have further been used to exert group pressure on those individuals who were not willing to move along with the masses, rather than simply threatening them with fines and punishments. It seems that with the family as a core notion, the power of the group has been much greater in China than in other socialist systems, such as the USSR. As observed by Teiwes (1971: 36, quoted in Cell 1977: 10):

> In Russia there was little group pressure to induce individual self-reform through small group pressures as in China, and no genuine Soviet equivalent of Mao's 'curing the illness in order to save the patient'. Moreover, particularly under Stalin, Soviet educational measures were marked by extreme routinization, profound cynicism on the part of participants, and generous applications of coercion.

The re-formulation of society (and of parts of society) through the lens of the family has ambiguous consequences for state power. Although via the work unit, state control can be consolidated more thoroughly to a certain extent, since the familiaristic *danwei* is a more efficient medium than the state (as an abstract institution) to penetrate everybody's life with state-promoted ideology, the thus emerging autonomy of the *danwei* presents at the same time a danger to the absolute power of the state. Consequently, an eternal struggle for power has been going on between political centres and clans (or clan-like communities) in the past, and between the Party and different *danweis* (political, administrative, economic) in the present. Historically, the clan or the *danwei* has always been strong when the state was weak, as the former took over functions which the latter was unable to fulfil, due to financial or administrative problems. The most recent re-emergence of secret societies and other clan-like structures in South China can be interpreted from this perspective. Furthermore, the organisation of an enterprise or a community as a family results in the exclusion of third powers, that is, of institutions that are neither on the side of the *danwei* members nor on the side of the *danwei* leaders, such as an independent court working on the basis of neutral laws. Contrary to stereotypical assumptions about China, legislation has always existed.[29] Nonetheless, the idea that everybody, regardless of status, was subject to the existing laws has never gained wide acceptance. Only in the past few years, and with difficulty, have people begun to sue those whom they would have never dared to accuse of any wrong-doing before. From a Western viewpoint, this a most important step towards further democratisation.

In summary, many elements of the socio-cultural background that have been discussed around the terms *culture*, *education*, *profession/vocation*, and *work* have been kept or re-adapted within the present system. The four notionk clearly reveal two different perspectives on society: whereas *culture* and *education* voice a moral demand directed at individual behaviour, *profession/vocation* and *work* refer to a certain, morally or ideologically founded, state of society. *Culture* or *wenhua* is the imperative quality of the active participants of society, who constitute a distinct elite with the clear task of leading the passive participants. It is this elite's job to ensure that certain cultural rules and norms are enforced, including concepts like the opposition of 'righteousness' and 'materialism'. Thus, *culture* is both a broad characteristic qualifying the intellectual for entering the elite (via the imperial examination system) and, in its more formalised shape, something to be instilled in the masses. The means to achieve this is *education*, a top-to-bottom process, which centres around the moral principle of filial piety and has been elaborated in more recent history to include educational measures such as mass campaigns, self-criticisms, TV promoted model persons, etc.[30] *Profession* or *zhiye* reflects this bipolarity of society, in that it differentiates between the elite on the one side, with the 'ear'-function to sound out and properly lead the masses, and, on the other side, the different strata of society, which are supposed to remain as they are. The notion of *work* further underlines the separation into leaders and followers.

The Chinese *danwei* has been shown to be one example of the continuation both of these moral-educational principles and processes and of this hierarchically structured, familiaristic social organisation. It constitutes a micro-society, which allocates to every member his or her proper position. It is predicated on the assumption that the fewer changes there are, the better it is for the unit. Consequently, it makes sure that its members obtain a training that specifically fits its profile, whereas it is not interested in teaching more general skills that could be used elsewhere. Obviously, this runs counter to the aims of modern vocational education, which is supposed to furnish the individual with certain skills, instead of preparing him or her for a specific work place. Thus, it is not only the incompatibility, as noted above, of the ideas of education and work that prevents the wide acceptance of vocational education; it is also the conception of the work place as a specifically defined, unchanging environment that precludes vocational education with its idea of providing flexible job skills. These two problems are deepened, since, for reasons pertaining to the idea of education, vocational education tends to be too theoretical, which in turn makes its students even less prepared for a specific work place. As a consequence, although the slogan 'first education, then work' has been accepted by most decision-makers theoretically, in reality training on the job still assumes the role of vocational education (Schucher 1999: 39). In 1992, the much propagated goal of fifty per cent of students being enrolled in vocational secondary education institutions was achieved; since then, however, numbers have again decreased. Apart from attempts to raise the quality of vocational education itself, one educational policy to increase its attractiveness was also to enable the transition from vocational education institutions to higher education, so that choosing the vocational education path would no longer be perceived as a blind alley (Schüller 1999). It remains to be seen if this will really alter the status of vocational education or if it will not just be used as a springboard onto the 'real' higher education.

There are reasons for arguing that with the present restructuring of the entire economic system in China, the *danwei* is becoming an obsolete social phenomenon, a relic from the prime of socialism. However, at least two indicators suggest otherwise, the first pertaining to the public's conception of what constitutes a work place, the second pointing at institutions that can be considered functional equivalents of the *danwei*. According to survey data from Li and Wang (1996: 135; re-arranged by priority in Appendix A), non-*danwei* workers also expect their employers to provide care for items that are not directly work-related.[31] For example, 92.2 per cent regard political work as an item which their employers should concern themselves with.[32] Other dimensions include, family arguments (89.6%), sports/recreation (89.2%), and help with children's employment (83.4%). Dating and marriage are still considered by half of the respondents (50.2%) as a responsibility of their work place; surprisingly, this is five per cent higher than the rate among those respondents who are *danwei* members. Another survey conducted by Li among *danwei* members only in the years 1987 and 1993 (Appendix B) reveals that in all cases questioned, the respondents of 1993 wanted their employers to assume even more responsibility than in 1987. This is also true with the item 'dating & marriage', which in 1993 46.4 per cent (as opposed to 37.2 per cent in 1987) liked their employers to take care of!

Although these rising expectations may have to do with growing feelings of uncertainty in a rapidly changing economy (and society), it is nonetheless conspicuous that it seems to be the familiaristic characteristics that the respondents yearn for. Recent developments, such as enterprises starting to provide schools for migrant workers' children, show a similar trend of copying *danwei* characteristics. It is interesting in this respect that looking at global developments in work organisation (e.g. in Western countries), we can observe what could be called *danweification* trends – though motivated by a different philosophy – in that some employers increasingly try to make their enterprises more family-like and thus more socially binding for their employees, such as encouraging them to take part in shared sports, recreational, and holiday activities. Especially in the information technology and media professions this seems to be increasingly the case, to the point that employees are not only invited, but even expected to take part in such community-building activities. This raises the question to what extent Chinese *danweification* trends are not only traditionally grounded, but also reinforced and utilised by global developments.

There is severe de-*danweification* of existing work units in China in order to make the units more efficient economically, as the related services provided by the *danwei* are extremely cost-intensive. However, apart from the *danwei* strategies copied by a few non-*danwei* enterprises mentioned so far, other forms of social organisation assume *danwei* functions and some of its characteristics (cf. Holbig 2001). In rural areas, especially the traditional clans, secret and cult societies, and the mafia fill and control the organisational vacuum left by the administrative units of the government, which are now occupied with more lucrative business activities. Similarly, migrant workers have been organising in guild-like associations for self-protection and mutual help, often grounded on sharing the same village or region of origin. In urban areas, one can observe the growing importance of the neighbourhood committees (Holbig 2001: 160ff.). Until recently derided as a purely ideological and rather unauthoritative committee of old men and women,

they have been modernised in the last few years, resulting in the professionalisation of the committees' activities. Thus, quite a few neighbourhood committees – controlling between one hundred and one thousand households – now employ well qualified, middle-aged full-time workers for professional communal management, as the committees' range of action increasingly includes economic activities. Administratively, neighbourhood committees exist outside the state hierarchy (organised from the city government at the top down to the street bureaus at the bottom) and its members are elected on a semi-democratic basis. It remains to be seen if Party control or the committees' autonomy will win the race, but at least at the organisational level it seems to be the case that in a time of economic hardship for the existing work units, *danwei* characteristics have found a new host in the neighbourhood committees.

Conclusion: Problems and Perspectives of Semantic Analyses

Society is today witness to a flood of publications and (sometimes very expensive) seminars on cultural differences and strategies to cope with them, especially in the context of increasing cross-cultural co-operation between enterprises and the growing number of joint ventures. Some of them read like recipes, taking culture as something predictable like a computer programme.[33] Many are linked to the question of how major Chinese philosophical trends, and Confucianism in particular, have helped or hindered China on her way to modernisation. As can be seen from the results of a thought experiment listed in Appendix C, almost any perceived feature of Chinese Confucianism can be used as an argument both for and against modernisation: for example, the importance of inter-human relationships might fulfil a social function relevant for the efficiency of workers and thus the whole enterprise, but it might also be a possible source of partiality and corruption. Similarly, the important role of the family might integrate the individual into the community and thus have a stabilising function, but it also might prevent people from seeing or thinking beyond the borders of their unit (family, city, country, etc.), while also excluding potentially novel and creative outsiders.[34] While interesting, such a discussion is ultimately of limited utility, as it works at too general a level to lead to specific conclusions.

There is a basic problem with detecting and operationalising so-called cultural core entities.[35] How is the observer or the researcher to know that a concept taken to belong to a cultural core is not complemented and balanced by other concepts, thus changing the meaning it would have had if it was standing only on its own or opposed to still different concepts? And, second, how is she or he to know that in identifying an apparent key concept he/she is not just stumbling into a rhetorical trap? These two questions will be illustrated – if only briefly – by the example of 'order' and 'harmony', often considered typical and influential characteristics of Chinese society.

The concept of order and harmony has been raised again and again both in classical writings and in more recent official announcements. Both order and harmony refer to an ideal state of everybody being in and knowing his proper place, without conflicts arising from status difference. But what do the repeated references to order and harmony really tell us? Most probably, they suggest that order has never been fully achieved in reality – an assumption which is supported by historical evidence. One source of disorder

certainly was the high geographical mobility within Chinese society, which made it hard for the government to control those moving back and forth. On the other hand, this mobility also ensured a certain degree of interaction between different parts of China, which again could contribute to the mental unification of the country (or some parts of it) and thus to the identity construction of 'Chineseness' (Herrmann-Pillath 1996). In fact, certain structures inherent in past and present Chinese society automatically evoke patterns of mobility. These include the structures of market activities requiring a high degree of mobility, the dispatch of officials into regions other than their home region, pilgrimages to ancestor places, and, of course, exogamy, which results in the married woman travelling back and forth between her old and her new family. Many more instances of mobility could be listed here. In spite of attempts made by the government to restrict this mobility, e.g. by the rigid registration system or the raised prices of train tickets, mobility, and a certain extent of ensuing chaos is part of the normal life in China and can be experienced directly by any visitor to the country.

'Harmony' now can be seen as an essential strategy to survive within this mobile world. It is closely linked to the strategy of networking, which compensates for the lacking spatial stability by introducing a certain degree of personal stability. Throughout Chinese history and well into the present, the individual could not rely too much on an external state authority for help and support, which had to be sought in personal networks such as the clans, guilds, community groups (*xiangyue*) etc.. In such a situation, it is only natural that one should not be keen on finding differences with network partners, but should rather strive to find commonalities with co-members, in order to establish a common and harmonious basis of co-existence. Again, there is a famous and very telling four-syllable saying 'seek common ground while reserving differences' (*Chinese-English Dictionary* 1993: 2066).[36] Seen from this perspective, 'harmony' no longer presents itself as the highly ethical-moral principle known from philosophical or ideological texts, but rather provides a means to get along in society. Its function may be comparable to the American 'openness', which does not necessarily mean that everybody conveys his or her deepest and most hidden feelings to everybody, but only represents a specific strategy of successfully communicating with others.

The analyses presented in this paper on *work*, *vocation* and other concepts that come into play when considering the social organisation of work could be extended in various directions. First, the reception processes of foreign ideas concerning work, vocation, education, and vocational education as well as the semantic patterns constructed around these processes should be the object of further research. Only a thorough insight into these processes makes a full understanding of Chinese modernity – and how it differs from Western modernity – possible. Another promising extension of research on this topic might be the combination of video/audio taping and comments/interpretations as done by Corse and Robinson (1994). Their procedure consists of four steps: videotaping social interactions; soliciting explanations and interpretations of the videotaped events from relevant 'insiders' (being videotaped themselves); gathering reactions to and critiques of the videotaped events from cross-cultural 'outsiders' (again being videotaped); and, finally, returning for reactions and responses from the *insiders* on the *outside* commentary. Such a procedure might be well-suited to expose taken-for-granted, assumed, and implicit aspects of culture, and it

hopefully prevents the researcher (if only to a certain extent) from falling prey to ethnocentric pre-assumptions, which otherwise might frame the entire research project.

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Appendix A: Items for which responsibility should be assumed (Li and Wang 1996: 135)

Items	Non-*danwei*	*danwei*
injury at work	99.3%	99.0%
retirement	98.5%	97.5%
medical care	98.5%	97.8%
technical training	96.6%	95.9%
housing	96.2%	94.5%
family planning	93.2%	92.8%
further education	92.3%	92.2%
political work	92.2%	91.7%
party and youth league activities	91.7%	92.4%
family arguments	89.6%	87.3%
child care	89.6%	86.6%
sports and recreational activities	89.2%	90.4%
transportation to and from work	89.2%	86.4%
child's education	89.1%	83.6%
public baths	88.7%	86.8%
dining room	88.1%	88.1%
job change	86.2%	82.6%
leisure trips	85.4%	84.8%
child's employment	83.4%	80.7%
hairdresser's shops	77.9%	73.6%
small stores	75.3%	70.8%
divorce	59.9%	52.4%
dating & marriage	50.2%	45.0%

Sample: approx. 3000

Appendix B: Should the danwei *take over responsibility for the following items?*
(Li and Wang 1996: 133)

Items	1987		1993	
	yes	*no*	*yes*	*no*
Medical care	97.5%	2.5%	98.0%	2.0%
Retirement	96.6%	3.4%	97.7%	2.3%
Housing	91.8%	8.2%	94.8%	5.2%
Political work	89.6%	10.4%	91.8%	8.2%
Further education	89.3%	10.7%	92.2%	7.8%
Technical training	88.5%	11.5%	96.0%	4.0%
party and youth league activities	87.4%	12.6%	92.4%	7.6%
Family arguments	85.9%	14.1%	87.9%	12.1%
Child's education	82.3%	17.7%	84.7%	15.3%
Family planning	79.3%	20.7%	92.8%	7.2%
sports	77.7%	22.3%	90.2%	9.8%
divorce	45.1%	54.9%	54.1%	45.9%
Dating & marriage	37.2%	62.8%	46.4%	53.6%

Sample 1987 = 2,348

Sample 1993 = 3,334

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Appendix C: Confucianism and Modernisation, Pros and Cons

Pros	*Cons*
self-cultivation: critical reflection on one's own thinking and acting	orientation towards the past: lacking motivation regarding the future
the high importance of learning	sticking to the opinion of the teacher
discipline and hierarchy: easy realisation of central goals	discipline and hierarchy: inflexibility and lacking innovative ideas
fixed values: ordering and integrating mechanism	fixed values: other (maybe productive) ideas are excluded
the importance of inter-human relationships: social function	the role of relationships or social networks (*guanxi*): source of corruption
meritocracy: only the most able succeed (to a certain extent)	thinking and learning in terms of examinations: learning not for one's own (or other people's) sake
respect for the elderly and hierarchically higher persons	the lacking ability to assert oneself
family structure: the individual is integrated into the community, stabilising function	one's own family (or town, or city, or province) becomes so important that outsiders have no chance
high efficiency of educational policies	no (conceptual) separation of politics, religion, and education

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[1] Particularly in China, few vocational educationists attempt to link vocational education with the cultural context in their analyses and interpretations. One of the few is Zhu Xiaobin (1996), who, however, argues at a level too vague and philosophical to lead to definite conclusions (and, to a certain extent, too bipolar in reconstructing China and the 'West' as straight opposites).

[2] The Japanese had also coined terms in pre-modern times, that is, "*kanji* loan terms that arrived in modern Chinese without necessarily involving European languages" (Liu 1995: 299). For a more systematic listing of loan types, see Liu (1995).

[3]However, there *were* attempts to create one's own terms, especially at the *Tongwenguan*, a modern institution founded in 1861 in Beijing in order to teach Western knowledge. Moreover, the blind adoption of the Japanese neologisms was rejected by some Chinese intellectuals like Ma Xiangbo (1840-1939) (see Hayhoe 1996), or Yan Fu (1854-1921), whose translation principles are described in Schwartz (1964: 92-98). On the interplay between cultural traditions and educational modernization, and the terms reflecting some of these modernization processes, see Hayhoe (1992). Moreover, prior to the 'invasion' from the West from the 19th century onwards, Western missionaries also played an important role in translating things and ideas.

[4] No information in the relevant literature could be obtained which definitely identifies *zhiye* as a (return) loanword. Data bases on Chinese character etymology like the *Etymological Dictionary* (1992) usually only investigate the ancient classical sources and *not* possible transfer and re-transfer processes between China and Japan. Moreover, if a term is not included in dictionaries containing foreign terms, this does not necessarily preclude that this term is a return loan, as the definition and perception of loanwords is still rather vague and research on this subject is full of mistakes. *Education* or *jiaoyu* can serve as a good case in point: identified by Liu (1995) and Huang (1999) as a return graphic loan, it is not listed in the *Chinese Dictionary of Foreign Words* (1985). In Mateer's (1924: 114) list of new Chinese terms, *vocation* or *zhiye* is listed as a new word. However, Mateer concedes that the decision to define a word as 'new' relied solely on the Chinese scribe's intuitional judgement. According to information I owe to Fukuzawa Hiroomi, the Japanese term *shokugyou* (Japanese reading of *zhiye*, 'profession') is listed in *A Pocket Dictionary of the English and Japanese Language* of 1862 (reprint in Sugimoto (1981)) and was thus commonly used during the Edo period, which means that

it had either come from China as a simple loanword, or had been re-created by the Japanese already during the first half of the 19th century along the lines discussed above. The issue needs to be further investigated.
[5] Note that the combination of these two skills is still apparent in Chinese four-syllables proverbs (*chengyu*) such as 'be well-educated and trained in military exercises' or 'be famous for literary grace and warlike exploits', to name just a few examples (*Chinese-English Dictionary* 1993: 2673).
[6] The close connection between *culture* and *education* is not in every aspect specifically and exclusively Chinese; some characteristics have parallels in other cultures as well, and especially ancient Greek views on culture and education appear to share common features with the Chinese case; cf. for example Shankman and Durrant (2000) and Yang (1998); on the attempt to deconstruct overly simplistic contrasts between ancient China and ancient Greece, see Lloyd (1990); on similarities and differences between Plato's and Confucius' views on education, see Xu Xiaozhou (1992). Also Renaissance thought – like Castiglione's ideal gentleman (including his upbringing and education) – seems to bear some resemblance to Chinese philosophy; see e.g. the *Book of the Courtier* in Hare (1908).
[7] The dictionary, *Shuowen jiezi*, was compiled in 121 AD by Xu Shen. The following information on etymology is basically taken from Wang (1995) and Huang (1999).
[8] Filial piety is embedded in the so-called five relations: the relation between sovereign and minister, between husband and wife, between parents and children, between older brother and younger brother, and between friends.
[9] In the course of the language modernisation process, *xue* (originally 'learning', 'to learn') was made a suffix, equivalent to English *studies* or *–ology*. Although widely employed by the Japanese, this morphological pattern "can be found in earlier missionary-Chinese texts … and, therefore, should be regarded as a Chinese neologistic usage" (Liu 1995: 350).
[10] It is interesting in this respect that some patterns of protest during the Tiananmen incident in 1989 deviated from this line of argument. However, they were often criticised as too individualistic, radical, and government-opposed by other protesting student groups, who even made these more radical groups partly responsible for the escalation of the protests on June 4th.
[11] These were formerly recruited from the warriors; see the explanations on *wen* and *wu* above.
[12] On the 'ear' function of the sage and the "power of orality", see Tu (1991: 111).
[13] This data base can be found at the website www.zhongwen.com (as at August 2001). Despite carrying phonetic information, the 'watch tower' might still have been chosen for semantic reasons as well. According to yet another (Japanese) source, the character originally depicted a small flag stuck into the ground, which later, when put in front of shops, indicated the type of products sold at the shop. How this meaning refers to the different components of the character, is not clear (*Kadokawa Dictionary of Character Etymology* 1983: 501).
[14] This has been pointed out by Hu (1997). Confucius himself even criticised the heavy taxing by the government as "non-human" (*buren*); 'human' or *ren* is an important ethical conception of Confucianism.
[15] Cf. "One who is poor but delights in the Way" (Book One, "Xue Er"); "A man of humanity places hard work before reward." (Book Six, "Yong Ye"); "The gentleman rests at ease in adversity" (Book Fifteen, "Wei Ling Gong); all taken from the *The Analects of Confucius* (1997).
[16] *Shi* originally means 'real', 'substantial', but also 'wealthy' (the character shows strings of money under a roof). On the emergence of ideas on *shiye* and *zhiye* during that time, cf. Liu Guilin (1997).
[17] In the Japanese *Great Encyclopaedia of Education*, the entry on "Vocational education" says that "industry education" was replaced by "vocational education" in 1946 as a translation of American "vocational education"; the Chinese case is not mentioned (*Great Encyclopaedia of Education* 1978: 409-413).
[18] The Chinese 'heart' was responsible both for feelings and (rational) thoughts; this can still be seen in characters of 'feel' and 'think' types like 'to love' and 'to understand', which both contain the semantic element of the heart.
[19] This negative attitude has been confirmed in interviews with vocational educationists in Beijing as well as in a recent investigation of German-Chinese co-operation in vocational education projects; see Stockmann (2000: 45).
[20] At this point, there will be no discussion on the implications of this kind of relationship, such as both sides being subject to mutual obligations, or the relationship between paternalism and the development of democracy.
[21] Most information on the *danwei* is taken from Li and Wang (1996).
[22] After 1949, existing factories, schools etc. were first taken over by the military, which was then replaced by the Party cadres; or, the military cadres changed into the status of Party cadres.
[23] In fact, it is rather common to engage in triple entry book-keeping, one for the government, one for the unit, and one – the real numbers – for oneself.
[24] Within the range of this paper, it is not possible to expand on the characteristics and historical development of the Chinese clan and the guilds. On the history of guilds, see Qu (1999). Older English accounts can be found in Gamble (1921) and Morse (1967).
[25] There is extensive research on Chinese *guanxi*. Yang (1994) provides an ethnographic perspective on *guanxiology*; Hong (2000) integrates Chinese concepts such as 'face' and *guanxi* into processes of workplace learning and problem solving.
[26] With decentralisation measures determining large parts of Chinese society, it remains to be seen how these points of reference will change, or whether they will be dropped for good.
[27] Of course, this social requirement is rather ideal and it often might have served only as a means to legitimise the overthrow of a dynasty.

[28] For example, 'outside' or *wai* appears in 'non-local' (*waidiren*), 'grandmother/mother of mother' (*waipo*), and 'foreign country' (*waiguo*).
[29] Cf. Zhu (1992: 21): "China may have had the most extensive legislation known in medieval history. The problem was that there was nothing to restrain the ruler from changing the fundamental basis of legislation according to his whim."
[30] This is only true for the ideological function of education, while of course numerous educational activities of academic nature have been taking place throughout the entire Chinese history.
[31] However, with the book published in 1996, the survey data are somewhat too old, given the great changes in Chinese economy and society. As the items from the questionnaire are very telling, it would be worth re-conducting this survey.
[32] With this item, it is of course uncertain if the respondents did tried to accord with what they regarded as the proper or politically correct answer.
[33] See, for example, Hall, an author widely read and cited also in China (Hall and Hall 1990).
[34] For the list in Appendix C, I am grateful to the participants of my seminar in winter 2000, who took part in finding these oppositional pairs.
[35] The problematic of the concept of culture itself – its boundaries, its constructedness, its liability to changes – is too large a topic to be raised in this paper.
[36] An alternative translation reads: 'put aside minor differences so as to seek common ground' (*Chinese English Dictionary* 1993: 2066).

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