

HUNG LEUNG HAU LING DISTINGUISHED FELLOW IN HUMANITIES LECTURE

Panglossian Dream and Dark Consciousness: Modern Chinese Literature and Utopia

香港大學孔梁巧玲傑出人文學者講座

「潘格洛斯」大夢與「幽暗意識」：現代中國文學與烏托邦

By

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Full Abstract

This essay seeks to analyze the contested conditions of modern and contemporary Chinese utopia, as a political treatise, a literary genre, and a social imaginary. It starts with a review of utopian fiction in the late Qing and early Republican era, followed by a critique of select political and intellectual utopian proclamations as a “literature of persuasion” in modern China. It concludes with an exploration of the new millennium where utopian political discourse coexists with dystopian literature.

In particular, I call attention to the tension between Panglossianism and “dark consciousness” arising from the contemporary debate over the future of China. By Panglossianism, I refer to the Voltairean critique of the optimism that seeks to justify the history of both the past and future in terms of “all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.” By “dark consciousness,” I refer to Professor Chang Hao’s engagement with the polemics of crisis and contingency in Chinese thought.

It is my contention that, precisely because utopia is generating public debate in post-socialist China, a critical reflection on its historical lineage as well as literary underpinning is in order. One must look into the spectrum of utopian imaginary of our time, and ask whether the utopian discourse as proffered by the political machine and the dystopian fiction prevailing in the literary sphere represent the dialogical potential of Chinese reality, or more polemically, its disavowal.

烏托邦作為一種文學表現，政治願景，以及社會想像，對現當代中國影響深遠。本文檢討烏托邦小說在晚清和民國的興起，點評現代社會、政治論述作為一種烏托邦式「宣講文學」的可能，並思考新世紀以來，官方烏托邦論述與文學界惡托邦敘事並存的現象。

據此，本文著眼當代烏托邦論述/敘事中，「潘格洛斯主義」與「幽暗意識」所形成的辯證關係。

「潘格洛斯主義」典出法國啟蒙思想家伏爾泰對萊布尼茲式樂觀主義——現有歷史是過去與未來最好可能中的最好結果——的嘲諷，「幽暗意識」則來自張灝教授對中國思想中深層危機感的反省。

當代中國對未來願景的討論充滿激情，蘊含其中的烏托邦想像和歷史因緣須要正視。本文檢討種種烏托邦與惡托邦的聲音，並提出如下問題：政治機器的樂觀論調和文學書寫的異議回聲所表現的，究竟是眾聲喧嘩的對話可能，還是這一對話可能的質疑甚至否定？