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I'm delighted to be here. I would like to thank the organisers and the hospitality of Prof Cheng of the Chinese Civilisation Centre of City University of Hong Kong.

I would like to discuss something quite complex within a very short timeframe. The title of my presentation is: the agony and bewilderment of Chinese modernity.

Put simply, this very heavy topic, East meeting West, the core issue is what we have discussed today. In the modernity of China, inevitably we have to look at the western impact on China and how we respond to the impact from the West.

Modernity is a temporal concept, a concept of time. I think the modern history of China is characterised by it. I can't cover all the aspects. I can only zoom in on a few points.

The theme that I'm going to discuss of course has many exceptions, but I'm only looking at some mainstream issues. The modern history of China can be placed in contrast with western modernity, not to highlight the features and characteristics of Chinese modernity.

The western modernity is the result of the transformation of the traditional order in the West. Until the 16th century, this order was rooted in Christianity, following religious reforms. That reform started a new chapter in western culture.

This transformation is a system of symbiotic values that were transformed. The traditional symbols were reorganised and reconstructed. The net outcome of that is twofold.

The first result is it gave rise to the seed of new change after the Lutheran reform. They were still Christians, they still believed in Christianity, but that Christianity was transformed Christianity. That Christianity gave rise to the seed of new change. That seed was not contained in the

traditional Christianity. It was the new Christianity that contained the new seed of change.

This new seed had a strong power which spawned new things. Later, I'll explain where the power came from.

In the meantime, the identification with the traditional things was preserved. There was no severance of the umbilical cord from Christianity. They still believed in Christianity. But that conviction was modified conviction.

The western modernity, in other words, is the result of a successful transformation. That transformation created huge power and the power can be manifested in the market economy, the conditions that made possible the catalyst economy. Of course there were some other factors. Let me give you some examples.

Constitutional democracy in the West is now built on the rule of law. The rule of law was a close relative of pluralism in medieval times. However, the earlier version was different from what we have now. This transformation created a new order. There was a traditional order, after the transformation there was a new order in place.

In this new order, there was a lot of energy created, motive force created, a consensual interpretation which remains contentious, but let's not be too academic about it.

The protestant ethics, there are two points. One is in the Lutheran Church. For the first time it was mentioned that different trades and professions had their own callings. Whatever you do, it's not your own choice. It could be your luck, it could be providence, the will of God. Whatever you do, the thing you do itself has its own sacred nature, has its own professional spirit. That is closely related to Lutheran Church, because it introduced the notion of a calling.

However, the Lutheran Church's interpretation did not go directly to western capitalism because that church had a strong element of mysticism -- a communion with God, in that way.

One of the important conditions for capitalism was rationalisation, instrumental rationality using rational calculation, the most rational, most efficient calculation and applies it to economic development.

Of course, it can be applied to other spheres. It's not value rationality. Value rationality refers to the true, the good and the beautiful, because these three elements are rational in themselves and, therefore, do not need proving by other factors.

The rationality in America mainly refers to instrumental rationality. The development of instrumental rationality was the main reason for capitalism.

I think that was closely related to aestheticism, because according to Calvinism, the future of mankind is predetermined by God. The main tenet is: can this person go to heaven? That's determined before the person is born. If you believe in this, you cannot go to heaven by simply praying and having communion with God. God is infinite. You are finite. How can a finite life conceive the infinite thinking of God? It's your wishful thinking if that's what you think.

Calvin also believed, according to how he interpreted the Bible, he came to this belief and that belief injected a strong sense of anxiety into the followers of Calvinism because prayers do not work according to their principles. The only way is to suppress their desires and work very hard in this mortal life. If they succeed, they will have some level of solace in this life. They can get a sign of benevolence from God.

That created a strong energy. For example, in the genesis of capitalism, there was a strong element of accumulation of capital. To use the most efficient means of instrumental rationality to make money and to accumulate capital. In the past, making money was not the hobby of Calvinist churchgoers. People in the past used to be rich and great consumers. Like

the rich merchants in Yangzhou, they made a lot of money and then they went out to spend it.

But for the Calvin Church, the purpose of work is justified in itself. They do not make money in order to make money. They make money in order to reach their own salvation. That is why they can work with undivided attention. They live to make money, but they do not make money to spend money. They make money with the most efficient means, but they do not spend it.

That leads to a very strong pattern of behaviour rooted in instrumental rationality. That was one of the seeds that gave rise to capitalism later on.

I was over-simplistic in generalising the characteristics of western modernity or the distinctive traits of western modernity. The transformation into the new order led to some ramifications, including capitalism, constitutional democracy and many other things.

According to Max Webber, it led to some very serious problems associated with modernity. He said the alienation of this instrumental rationality -- because mankind became enslaved by instrumental rationality.

When this instrument became *modus vivendi*, it became the end, not the means. When it reached a certain level of development, other modes of life were influenced by instrumental rationality. Instrumental rationality became the end, not the means. When it became the end of life, humanity became his own instrument. That led to quite grave consequences. What is the consequence? It's the alienation of rationality, because rationality used to be the instrument, but now humanity became the instrument of instrument rationality.

I'm going to read Max Webber's quote to illustrate this point, his analysis of the complexity of modernity. This is the Chinese translation of the last chapter of his book. This is my own translation. I think it's more accurate. He said:

"The end result of the instrumental rationality is that nobody knows who in the future will be living in the iron cage of capitalism. Nobody knows at the end of scripture development, there will be a new sage coming on the horizon and nobody would know. There will be a rebirth of new ideals and old concepts."

If neither would appear, no prophet leading us to new salvation, no rebirth of new concepts, then will the future be an egomaniac mechanical load of evolution?" The final stage of this culture, there will be soulless experts and those with no hearts.

That is the alienation rationality. I know I have very little time. I can't elaborate. I think this is much more profound than Karl Marx's notion of alienation.

I think Karl Marx said, "Through capitalism, humanity became the slave of its own production." When he analysed it, he brought the future dimension into his analysis. That alienation contained advancement and progress, but Max Webber was more pessimistic. That's why he did not have the baggage of utopia. He was more cutting. In his eyes, after instrumental irrationality came about, there was no salvation. I don't think any other thinkers have found the solution to that.

In other words, the western modernity is the product of a new order. After transformation and after centuries of development, there have been very powerful things coming out of that, including western imperialism.

It has led to a very negative consequence. That's the distinctive trait of western modernity. The Chinese modernity differs vastly, but is closely related to western modernity. Chinese modernity did not have the transformation which happened in the West in the 16th century.

The traditional values, the traditional symbols, traditional thoughts, did not get reorganised, reconstructed and restructured to create a seed of change. That seed of change has an umbilical cord with the past and yet it points to the future and plays an impetus for the future.

We did not have this transformation. Why did we not have it? It's a very complex viewpoint. The main reason is because the mainstream ideology in China is a revolutionary one and the Chinese revolution was based on an anti-tradition platform.

Are their resources in Chinese heritage that can be transformed? The answer is complex, but the main ideology, the dominant ideology of course has many exceptions. I'm talking about the mainstream which has influence on the trend. I'm not making a value judgment.

In many places in China, there were no anti-tradition activities. The mode of life was a traditional mode of life. They were not affected by the anti-tradition movement that centred around Beijing. Because of this anti-tradition, iconoclastic mainstream ideology and, in fact, its anti-traditional thinking is heavily influenced by traditional thinking. That did not lead to the 16th century transformation in the West.

Why is it so? The main reason is the Chinese tradition is a theocratic tradition. Again, it's very complex. I can't really elaborate.

Starting from an analysis of Confucius, Confucius said there's a way and culture and politics follow a rational order. This order is built on the symbolism of the son of heaven. Because it's a theocratic integrated regime, Chinese heritage is a highly integrated order.

Because of that, when the political centre breaks down, because the other elements were integrated into the political order, the identical, logical, cultural and social orders disintegrated with it. It doesn't mean disintegration obliterated all the elements in that order, it only means that some of them met their demise, but some became free radicals which departed from the roots and became free radicals. These free radicals could be married to other factors, including western elements, but they could not generate power and energy. Because of that, the greatest trade of Chinese modernity is crisis of order. This crisis of order, compared to the birth of the new order in the West, is very different. The Chinese have worked very hard. You can't say the Chinese have not worked hard

enough. In every generation, the Chinese made sacrifices, but the result, I'm afraid, is negative.

The reformation by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao failed. Because of that failure, we had the revolution of 1911, where there was a lot of bloodshed. That failure led to the appeal for revolution.

That revolution was not intended to give a chance to the warlords. The intention was to build a republic. That republic was short lived, for a few months, followed by the carving up of the country by the warlords.

The failure of the revolution led to the north expedition, whereupon the Kuomintang established a fascist political regime, which again failed. The Kuomintang fled to Taiwan. In other words, the order led by Chiang Kai-shek also failed.

Then there was the Japanese invasion which had a huge impact on the Chinese nation. That gave birth to the left wing revolution, which was very unsuccessful and paid a high price.

I don't know if any of you know this, but running into or sprinting into the heaven of communism -- that was the slogan -- in that process, from 1959 to 1963, the most conservative estimate was 27 million dead. That was a world record.

I think this is a fact that many young Chinese people do not know, because the powers that be do not want young people to know it. It's also a fact that's not known to many Chinese people outside China. This is a very conservative estimate. If it's not so conservative, the estimate could be as high as 40 million.

Because of the Mao revolution, heavily swayed by ideology and utopic ideology which created political religion, which deified Mao Zedong as a power of transcendence, but he was not up for it and that led to these grave consequences.

In other words, Chinese modernity is characterised by Chinese people having a strong aspiration, a strong desire to build a new order under a crisis of order. That order could not be borne naturally, so there was a strong effort to fabricate this order.

With such anxiety, with such desire, you would realise that individual power is very limited. When we realise our power as individuals is very weak, yet the price is so profound, it's very easy for us to move to quasi-religious worship of some individual.

For example, Mr Huaxiao and other May 4<sup>th</sup> celebrities, they promoted science, but then they worshipped science as a naturalistic religion. They thought science was the answer to all.

In other words, they believed that if you believe in science, the meaning of life can be revealed. This is laughable if we look at it now, because science cannot provide the resources to answer questions about the world outlook, about life view.

It's a very complex thing. Science, in its own right, can provide knowledge and tell you what knowledge to use when and where. But it cannot explain how you can answer questions regarding life.

In other words, the advocacy of science in the May 4th movement became a worship of naturalistic religion. The Chinese revolution became a political religion that deified an individual.

The net outcome of that political worship was a waste of resources. If science was the true God, if Mao Zedong was the true God, then following Mao Zedong can give you salvation. You can also find solace in that worship and that will be very truly religious and it will serve the religious ends.

However, it's not a religion and science is not religion either. That is why the Chinese modernity created new superstition, new blind faith. Although it did away with the old existing superstitions, it created new superstition. When the new superstition was not regarded as a



superstition and when it was regarded as a transcendental truth, it became very, very destructive.

What's the way ahead? This crisis of order is here to stay. This market economy is creating many serious problems, because the market economy has to be based on rule of law, but the Chinese market economy is not based on rule of law. There's this market economy dominated by the powers that be and by those who are influential and powerful.

China is sustaining the market economy with natural resources, so still the issue of overcoming the crisis of order remains. This is the prices to pay. Bewilderment is we have gone this far, we have done so much, made so many sacrifices, we have gone back to square one. We still have these problems unresolved. Thank you.