

## **A Review on Zhi Mian and Lu Xun**

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I would like to end with such a concrete example of IP—a particular Chinese IP based on the legacy of Lu Xun. My account in the following is based on Xuefu Wang's works, some of which can be found on our website (click on Interest Group, then click on publication under Wang).

Lu Xun is one of the most influential writers in modern China. As a young man, Lu Xun wanted to save lives by studying Western medicine, but later gave up medicine for literature. Believing in the transformative power of literature, Lu Xun used fiction as a form of culture critique. Lu Xun's literary works are permeated with deep feelings for his countrymen. He expressed "Grief over their misfortune" and was "indignant toward their servility" (Wang, 2009, p. 162). Known as the Chinese Nietzsche, Lu Xun's writing entails an integration of Western influence with the literary heritage from ancient China. The following epithet shows how he was admired for the unique combination of "Teachings of Tolstoy and Nietzsche, Writing Styles of Wei and Jin Dynasty" (Wang, 2009, p. 160).

As a prototype of Chinese IP, the case of Lu Xun suggests some unique characteristics: First, what's indigenous does not need to be "pure" without Western contaminations. Lu Xun's literary style is a hybrid, but every bit uniquely Chinese. Second, it is not a reaction against Western psychology. Western influences were eagerly appropriated to serve his project of social reform. Third, self-reflexivity is the key attribute of Lu Xun's project, which consists of intense soul searching on behalf of his fellow countrymen, resulting in one of the most trenchant cultural critiques in Chinese history. Lastly, the Lu Xun phenomenon was an intellectual movement that capitalized on the performative action of arts and literature to have the widest impact on society.

It is against the backdrop of this that we can appreciate Xuefu Wang's "Zhi mian" psychotherapy as a full-fledged Chinese IP. Zhi mian means "directly facing" reality. It is a term used by Lu Xun, who said famously that "The real warrior dares to face life as it is, no matter how gloomy it might be; and to look unflinchingly at the scene, no matter how blood drenched it might be" (a partial translation is given in Wang, 2009, p. 164). If we wonder about Wang's strategic use of a statement so graphic with blood and gore, we may keep in mind the grisly reality that the zhi mian approach is best equipped to address—the pervasive devastation and trauma from the Cultural Revolution and other large scale destructions in modern Chinese history. Wang claims that the goal of zhi mian psychotherapy is cultural transformation: He wrote, "According to Lu Xun's observation, the greatest tragedy in our culture is the

suppression of authenticity, resulting in the lack of sincerity and trust, and the prevalence of swindling and cheating" (in "The Meaning of Zhi Mian") (in Chinese). Zhi mian psychology capitalizes on self reflexivity, which consists of "penetrating observations of the shortcomings in one's own culture, as well as integrating the resources in one's own culture." Not unlike Lu Xun, an ideal therapist is supposed to be something of a hybrid, one who is equipped with "Chinese soul and Western talents." Western psychotherapy techniques, especially existential psychotherapy, are eagerly appropriated to solve uniquely Chinese problems.

A case in point is Xuefu Wang's paper "Back to Reverence and Fear" (in Chinese). "Reverence and fear" is Wang's rendition of the existential psychologist Kirk Schneider's notion of awe. Schneider's China talk (2010) on awe triggered a profound soul searching in the Chinese audience. We have lost the basic reverence and fear toward nature and life, says Wang. Retrieving the ancient Chinese notion of reverence and fear toward Heaven, Wang reflects on the pallid lack thereof in the class struggles and the propagandas such as "To the extent humans dare, to the extent the earth yields its resources;" or "With one shout from the gasoline worker, the earth trembles three times." Wang bemoans the fact that "In recent decades, our attitude toward nature, others, and self consists of manipulation, conquest, deprivation, and control." The solution lies in zhi mian, which helps to restore the fundamental reverence and fear toward nature, says Wang.

The moral of my story is that there are far many more varieties of IP's out there. There is much work to be done in terms of documenting, promoting, and nurturing the so far neglected IP's. And at the same time, learn a lot.