

Scientific Metaphysics in the Writings of Hu Shih: strengths and limitations

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This paper intends to become an entry point for analysis and research on Hu Shih's way of thinking about science and limitations regarding his scientific metaphysics. Hu's disbelief in ghosts and gods and his advocacy for the abolition of feudal superstition became a theoretical foundation for his atheism, which undergirded both his scientific way of thought and his belief system. This paper highlights Hu's ideas regarding "science" and "worldview" to discover the meaning behind his perspective on science and specify limitations in this way of thought.

Key words: Hu Shih, scientific metaphysics, worldview, enlightenment, belief system

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1. Introduction

After the cultural debate which ensued between East and West during the period of the May Fourth Movement, the intellectual trends of thought in the Republic of China turned to a discussion of the differences between “science” and “metaphysics.” This discussion became known as “the Debate between Metaphysicians and Scientists.” “Because of the same life, because of different points of view and different opinions, the most disunity in the world between ancient and modern is the view on life.”¹⁾ The focus of the debate was to argue over which to use, science or metaphysics, to govern our lives. Considering the ongoing encounters between East and West, and between tradition and modernity, the debate over “science” and “worldview” was inevitable and indicated the change in intellectual thought that developed during the period of the May Fourth Movement.

However, from another point of view, there are limitations to the thoughts and theories of the “science” camp of the debate, with Hu Shih’s “Scientific Metaphysics” being no exception. Based on this, this paper attempts to answer the following questions:

First, the science side of the debate consistently advocated that worldview must be dominated by “science”, that science was to be used to direct everything, and that the “scientific method” could be used to answer the question of “worldview”. However, when we are reminded of the particular language of the “May Fourth” discourse, that science and metaphysics can never stand together, that they cannot so much as exist together, how was Hu able to propose a “Scientific Metaphysics”?

1) See Yadong Library, “*Science and Worldview*”, 1.

Second, standing on the side of science in the debate over science and metaphysics in the 1920s, Hu makes an argument for “scientism” and the “scientific method” to make known the importance of the scientific mind and the culture of science. However, this paper preliminarily argues that Hu’s position, because it in effect comes close to worshiping science and making it a belief system, neither completely overthrows traditional thought nor eliminates the tension between “science” and “metaphysics”. Third, beginning with the period of the May Fourth Movement, science gradually became the main tool and basic principle of Marxist historical materialism. In other words, the science camp in the debate between science and metaphysics in the 1920s could not effectively influence the surrounding environment with their philosophy. I argue that Hu’s Scientific Metaphysics is no exception.

Thus, this paper intends to become an entry point for analysis and research on Hu’s way of thinking about science and limitations regarding his scientific metaphysics. Hu’s disbelief in ghosts and gods and his advocacy for the abolition of feudal superstition became a theoretical foundation for his atheism, which undergirded both his scientific way of thought and his belief system. This paper highlights Hu’s ideas regarding “science” and “worldview” to discover the meaning behind his perspective on science and specify limitations in this way of thought.

2. “Science” as the basis of worldview

Hu places much weight on the use of reason and on the use of the scientific method to pursue objective studies. He takes on a scientific

perspective, and he is completely focused on the scientific method to analyze and solve problems. This way of viewing science reflects the character of modern Chinese scientism at that time: to emphasize the importance of science, to maintain a scientific outlook, and to affirm the efficacy of the scientific method.

Prominent intellectuals of the period of May Fourth Movement believed that Western science would bring about major social changes in China and consequently have a huge impact on the Chinese people.

It is noteworthy that Hu's focus on the rational spirit, scientific outlook and the scientific method behind science and technology was unique among other intellectuals of his time. He argued that science could create a "new worldview" and that technology could be used as a reasonable and effective means to solve "natural" and "social" problems and even the question of "life of man":

Within the past 30 years, there is a term that is being raised to the status of supreme dignity in China; whether people know it well or not, whether they are conservative or progressive, they dare not openly express contempt for it or pay insult to it. That term is "science". Whether such a nearly unanimous belief nationwide is worthwhile is another question. We can at least say that ever since China started the Hundred Days Reform, no one who claims to be a forward-thinking individual has dared to openly slander "science."……
這三十年來，有一個名詞在國內幾乎做到了無上尊嚴的地位；無論懂與不懂的人，無論守舊和維新的人，都不敢公然對他表示輕視或戲侮的態度。那個名詞就是“科學”。這樣幾乎全國一致的崇信，究竟有無價值，那是另一問題。我們至少可以說，自從中國講變法維新以來，沒有一個自命為新人物的人敢公然毀謗“科學”的……²⁾

2) See Yadong Library, "Science and Worldview", 2-3. The English translation of the original Chinese text was carried out by the author.

Against the backdrop of the cultural debate between East and West, science undoubtedly became an important spiritual resource for the transformation of China's national character. Science was revered as a spiritual resource of enlightenment and national salvation and became the backbone for a new theoretical system. Thus, it was highly regarded by important intellectuals during the period of May Fourth Movement. Among those involved in the debate, Hu was foremost in attaching great importance to science. It is well known that Hu was deeply influenced by both Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) and John Dewey (1859-1952). Huxley taught him how to doubt, and Dewey taught him how to think. Hu tried to break the evils of the feudal system and feudal ethics by utilizing scientific methodology and theories of natural science. He was committed to introducing trends of thought from the West and promoting the modernization and transformation of Chinese traditional culture. Clearly, both his methods of academic research and his ideological viewpoints were inextricably linked with science. Indeed, it was science that laid a solid foundation for his ideas on "scientific metaphysics."

However, the development of Hu's scientific metaphysics can be traced back to before the controversy. According to relevant materials from the summer of 1921 to the summer of 1923, Hu gave a total of five lectures on the theme of "scientific metaphysics": 1. Jinan School 暨南學校 (the summer of 1921); 2. Anqing No. 1 Middle School 安慶第一中學 (August 3, 1921); 3. Beijing Law and Politics College 北京法政專門學校 (March 25, 1922); 4. Jinan No. 1 Middle School 濟南一中 (October 18, 1922); 5. Zhejiang Summer School 浙江暑期學校 (August 12, 1923). Among these, Hu's speeches at Jinan School in 1921 and at Zhejiang Summer School in 1923 are currently unattainable. I sought related materials but was unable

to find any. Therefore, I will only discuss his other speeches.

I think that the specific content of Hu's scientific metaphysics is worthy of review and attention. For this reason, this paper tries to analyze its development in chronological order:

1. On August 3, 1921, Hu gave a lecture on "Scientific Metaphysics" at Anqing No. 1 Middle School. He said that scientific metaphysics advocated using scientific perspectives and methods to deal with various problems facing mankind. In addition, he stated that the scientific method is divided into two aspects: the negative aspects are that (1) it is not arbitrary, and (2) it does not blindly follow conventional theories; the positive aspects are that in the process the researcher is (1) raising a question, (2) researching the topic, (3) proposing a hypothesis: using both prior knowledge and experimentation, (4) analyzing results, and finally (5) forming a conclusion.³⁾
2. On March 25, 1922, at the Beijing College of Law and Politics, Hu gave a lecture on "Scientific Metaphysics" defining it as using a scientific spirit and perspective while applying the scientific method to deal with problems facing mankind. He started that a scientific spirit lies behind the scientific method, and he proposed a five-point scientific methods: (1) specific, problem-based, not general; (2) questioning, research-based, not blindly following conventional theories; (3) hypothetical, not arbitrary; (4) Experimental, not static; (5) practical, not "dramatic".⁴⁾

3) See Hu, "The Complete Collection of Hu Shih", Vol. 29, 396-397.

3. Hu's lecture on October 18, 1922, on "Scientific Metaphysics" in Jinan No. 1 Middle School is divided into two parts: 1) scientific perspective: (1) "doubt"; (2) "doubt and belief"; 2) the scientific method: (1) identify the problem at hand; (2) rigorously test the hypothesis; (3) draw a conclusion.⁵⁾

The main point of Hu's early lectures was undoubtedly to argue that a "scientific perspective" and the scientific method can solve all the problems of human life. His ideas contributed to a wider recognition of scientific ways of thinking.

Hu did not apply the scientific perspective and the scientific method only to the basic categories of science, but also sought reasonable ways to utilize them in his own fields of research, namely literature, history and philosophy. Although some scholars point out the inadequacy and one-sidedness of his emphasis on the importance of a scientific perspective and the scientific method, Hu's ideas and efforts were very significant in his time, contributing not only to the liberation of thought, but also to breakthroughs in progressive thinking and methods of academic research. Therefore, his intellectual thought can be said to have historical implications. Hu's scientism has undeniably played an historical role, particularly for the advance of progress in the course of China's modernization.

4) *Ibid.*, 553-554.

5) *Ibid.*, 798.

3. Science as “Enlightenment”

After the prominent Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhang Junmai 張君勱 gave a speech on “worldview” at Tsinghua University on February 14, 1923, his friend Ding Wenjiang, an advocate of scientism, immediately refuted his arguments, expressing strikingly different views on science, unwaveringly adhering to the scientific method of positivism. Hu then proceeded to offer the idea of “Scientific Metaphysics,” also from the perspective of scientism:

We must know that European science has already taken deep-root and that there is no fear of an attack by the metaphysical devils... As for “worldview”, we only have that of striving to become a magistrate and make a fortune; of relying on destiny; of asking the gods for answers through divination; we have only the worldviews laid out in the books *Treatise on Secure Living (An Shi Quanshu)* and *Treatise of the Most Exalted One on Cause and Effect (Taishang Ganying Pian)* —the Chinese people’s worldview has not yet met with science! At the present time, sadly, the advocacy of positive science is yet inadequate, education in positive science is underdeveloped, and the forces of positive science have not been able to sweep away the smog that thickly overshadows the whole country. Yet, surprisingly, some eminent scholars have come out and proclaimed that “European science is bankrupt”, blaming the crime of the bankruptcy of European culture on science itself, underestimating science, listing accusations against the scientists’ worldview, and not permitting science to have an impact on their outlook on life! When people who believe in science observe this state of affairs, should they not be concerned? Can we not speak out in defense of science?

我們要知道，歐洲的科學已到了根深蒂固的地位，不怕玄學鬼來攻擊了。……至於“人生觀”，我們只有做官發財的人生觀，只有靠天吃飯的人生觀，只有求神問卜的人生觀，只有《安士全書》的人生觀，只有《太上

感應篇》的人生觀，——中國人的人生觀還不會和科學行見面禮呢！我們當這個時候，正苦科學的提倡不夠，正苦科學的教育不發達，正苦科學的勢力還不能掃除那迷漫全國的烏煙瘴氣，——不料還有名流學者出來高唱“歐洲科學破產”的喊聲，出來把歐洲文化破產的罪名歸到科學身上，出來菲薄科學，歷數科學家的人生觀的罪狀，不要科學在人生觀上發生影響！信仰科學的人看了這種現狀，能不發愁嗎？能不大聲疾呼出來替科學辯護嗎？⁶⁾

Hu used scientism, that is, having a “scientific mind” and using the scientific method as the basis of his academic ideals and ongoing pursuits. Clearly, his scientism was opposed to the ideas of the metaphysics school. Hu and others mainly based their arguments on a comprehensive anti-traditionalism while promoting the modernization of Chinese literature, culture, academics, and even Chinese society as a whole. According to Hu’s way of thought, the debate between “science” and “metaphysics,” which had no precedent in Chinese history, became a sensational ideological discourse in the cultural climate of the Republic of China. Because of this, Hu expressed doubts and concerns about the idea of “scientific failures” caused by the ideological and cultural community of the Republic of China at that time.

Calls for so-called “democracy” and “science,” “freedom” and “progress” were not only important indications of an awakening of intellectuals during the period of May Fourth Movement, but also important aspects of Hu’s thoughts. At that time, Chinese society was in a period of transition. It called for freedom and openness, civilization and progress; it opposed autocracy and superstition while advocating democracy and science. Under the impact of the tide of change, Hu clearly realized the importance of “changing the mind” and “reforming the

6) See Yadong Library, “*Science and Worldview*”, 7-8.

society,” and he believed that the fundamental reason for China’s lag behind the West was that the traditional Chinese way of thinking and its cultural characteristics hindered both historical and scientific progress.

From this, we can clearly see that Hu attached great importance to science, from advocating the discussion of all matters with a scientific perspective, to addressing problems using the scientific method, and even going so far as to apply science to the issue of metaphysics. This shows the important process of Hu’s thought toward a unique form of scientism. In this context, Hu gave an opinion as follows:

Because we are convinced that worldview is changed by knowledge and experience, we are convinced that the effect of propaganda and education can make the varying worldviews of mankind have a minimum level of agreement.

The most important question is: what is to comprise the “minimum agreement” among varying worldviews?

My answer is: take what ought to attain objective, unbiased, public agreement among today’s scientists- “Scientific Metaphysics” --to be the minimum consensus on worldview.

我們因為深信人生觀是因知識經驗而變換的，所以深信宣傳與教育的效果可以使人類的人生觀得著一個最低限度的一致。

最重要的問題是：拿什麼東西來做人生觀的“最低限度的一致”呢？

我的答案是：拿今日科學家平心靜氣地，破除成見地，共同承認的“科學的人生觀”來做人類人生觀的最低限度的一致。⁷⁾

The reason why Hu thought that a “Scientific Metaphysics” with “minimum agreement” was needed is because Hu clearly realized that there is no consensus in the debate over science and metaphysics. Therefore, he pointed out that with propaganda and education, science

7) Ibid., 23.

could attempt to solve the core issues involved in the debate which asked the question “how is the scientific outlook on life possible?” and thus summed it up as a “scientific outlook on life” with “minimum agreement”. Why does Hu insist on asking today's scientists to, objectively and without bias, publicly advocate for “scientific metaphysics” to become the “minimum consensus” for a universal worldview? This article attempts to explore the following aspects:

First, I think that this is inseparable from Hu's thought. Specifically, Hu's emphasis on the “scientific method” was not limited to his academic research, but also considered by him to be an important strategy for the enlightenment of the mind. Hu uses a scientific perspective and the scientific method to reveal what is “hidden” and to remove “ignorance,” and thus to establish a “Scientific Metaphysics.” I think that it does play some role in the enlightenment of the mind and that in some way it also achieves a “minimal consensus” of worldview.

Secondly, when Hu discussed Scientific Metaphysics, the reason why he repeatedly spoke of a “minimal consensus” was because he was clearly aware of beliefs in “theism” and in the “immortality of the soul” that were popularized in medieval Europe and which he regarded as fallacy and as resulting in “much agreement with little differences.” This is exactly the opposite of “minimal consensus”. Obviously, this means that Hu denied a God-centered worldview and thus advocated reshaping a new worldview centered on science. I also think that this can, in a certain sense, play a role in “enlightening the mind.” Then Hu put forward ten points for his Scientific Metaphysics in the preface of his treatise on the topic, referring to the specifics of the role of science in worldview, with still more room for discussion All this will be explored further in the next chapter.

4. Limitations of Hu Shih's "Scientific Metaphysics"

When Hu explained his philosophical proposition of "Scientific Metaphysics," he was inspired to a certain extent by Wu Zhihui's "scientific view of the universe and outlook on life," which is what Wu described as his "view of the universe and view of humanity based on a new belief system." Wu believed science and believed in science, taking natural science as his ideological source, and tried to get rid of the religious beliefs that had always dominated people's daily lives and formed their ideologies, correctly distinguishing between religion and superstition and establishing an objective and scientific view of life.

The reason why Wu's "scientific view of the universe and of humanity" was regarded as a "new belief" is because he used scientific facts to construct his view of the universe and of human life, in opposition to old ideas and beliefs. Hu agreed with him on this point. Insofar as a naturalistic view of the universe and of human life can be correctly understood, a so-called "scientific metaphysics" can be established. For this reason, Hu further proposed ten points for an "outline of a new metaphysics".⁸⁾

- (1) According to the knowledge we have of astronomy and physics, let people know the infinite size of space.
- (2) According to the knowledge we have of geology and paleontology, let people know the infinite length of time.
- (3) According to the sum of all the sciences, we know that it requires no supernatural master or creator to know that the universe and all

8) Ibid., 25-27.

things in it move and change naturally—of their own accord.

- (4) Based on the scientific knowledge we have of biology, people know of the waste and cruelty of the competition for survival in the biological world—thus, let people better understand that the supposition that there is an “all-good” master is untenable.
- (5) According to the knowledge we have of biology, physiology, and psychology, let people know that man is only a kind of animal, that he and other animals are only different to a degree, and that there is no difference in type.
- (6) Based on biological science and the knowledge we have of anthropology, ethnography and sociology, let people know the history and causes of the evolution of biology and human society.
- (7) According to biological and psychological science, it is known that all psychological phenomena have causes.
- (8) Based on the knowledge we have of biology and sociology, let people know that morality and etiquette are changing and that the reasons for change can be found out by the scientific method.
- (9) Based on the new knowledge we have of physical chemistry, let people know that matter is not dead, but alive, not static, but moving.
- (10) According to the knowledge we have of biology and sociology, let people know that individual human beings the “small self” is mortal, while humanity the “big self” does not die and is immortal; let people know that “the whole lives forever” is religion, the highest religion; and those religions that seek heaven and the pure land for individuals after death are selfish religions.

Hu regarded the “naturalistic worldview” as a “scientific metaphysics” or a “new view of life.” It can give us a more accurate understanding of human life, and even a thorough understanding of the world itself. This “new metaphysics” has broad significance in a certain sense. Compared with Wu’s scientific view of the universe and of human life, Hu approached mankind’s problems with an even greater emphasis on the scientific and rational perspective, and he affirmed the role of science in constructing principles about the origins of the universe and of human life.

I return to a question I raised earlier and that requires further consideration. In the introduction of this paper, I pointed out that “science” and “metaphysics” can neither be synchronized nor coexist. According to this, can a “scientific metaphysics” be established? In fact, this actually became the focus of the debate between “science” and “metaphysics.” Hu actively advocated the spirit of science and focused on the scientific method and on the use of the definition and nature of science to establish a new metaphysics, and this set him apart.

However, I think that Hu’s ten principles of a “new metaphysics” were closely tied to his personal “values of life,” because they were based on characteristics of Chinese cultural beliefs. These so-called beliefs had a great influence on the formation of people’s outlook on life, values and way of looking at the world. Therefore, in a certain sense, Hu’s scientific metaphysics can be regarded as a “belief.”

In order to prove this point, we can look for relevant clues in his thought during the period of May Fourth Movement, particularly his “social immortality theory,” which undoubtedly represents one of Hu’s main ideas at that time. Yet, looking at it from another angle, it is closer to Hu’s personal values and points out his teaching: “the current ‘small self,’ must

bear a great responsibility for the infinite past of the immortal 'big self.' I also have a great responsibility for the infinite future of the eternal 'big self.' I need to think about how I should try to use the current 'small self' in a way that allows me to live up to the 'big self' and do no harm to the infinite future of the 'big self.'"⁹⁾ Hu regarded this social immortality theory as "my religion" and "the highest religion." It was used to criticize the "immortal spirits theory", and to remedy the three errors of the traditional "three immortality theory."¹⁰⁾ He denies all belief in the immortality of the soul and holds Christianity and Buddhism in contempt. It can be seen that under his concept of the "immortality of society," Hu further advocated his "scientific metaphysics" and consolidated its logical rationality. However, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics has its own limitations:

First, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics can be regarded as a Chinese view of life and as a form of modern ideological consciousness within Chinese culture. However, from another point of view, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics opposed the thinking and activities of the metaphysical school, which inevitably appeared to be too conceptual and did not become the worldview generally recognized and accepted by the people of China at that time. Therefore, his own ideas can be interpreted as an outgrowth of Hu's "atheistic thought" and "individualistic view of life." Based on this, I think that to an extent, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics also represents the real predicament that China faced with the advancement of Western thought into her culture.

Secondly, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics held a certain degree of significance for progress. Nonetheless Hu could not completely eradicate

9) See Hu, "The Collection of Hu Shih", Vol. 2, 532.

10) It refers to the immortality of morality, immortality of contributions, immortality of expounder from "Zuo Zhuan左傳".

various influences of Chinese traditional culture. Indeed, Hu affirmed the value of tradition in many places. His thought originated in tradition, especially in the area of academic research. Hu's Scientific Metaphysics can find a basis in Ding Wenjiang's non-theological religious view of "unifying his view of life with science" and "sacrificing the momentary nature of the individual for the sake of the whole species," as well as Wu Zhihui's naturalistic view of the universe. Furthermore, Hu's "social immortality theory," which he spoke of as his own belief, was influenced not only by traditional Chinese Confucianism, but also by the Buddhist concept of reincarnation.

Hu stood on the side of science in the intellectual debate of his time and he used scientism and the scientific method to lay an ideological foundation for the dissemination of a scientific spirit and culture. Although Hu tried to establish a new metaphysics with science, he could neither completely overthrow traditional thinking nor eliminate the tension between "science" and "metaphysics." Thus, he was unable to perfect his scientism. In addition, since the May Fourth Movement, science has been used as the main tool and basic principle of Marxist historical materialism, which differed widely from the point of the debate between "science" and "metaphysics," and this led to further differentiation in Hu's thought. When we consider Hu's individualism, view of life and values, we can see these mirrored in his Scientific Metaphysics.

5. Conclusion

The debate between "science" and "metaphysics" began in 1923 and

had a profound effect on the history of modern Chinese thought and academic history. The focus of the debate between the science school and the metaphysics school was “which shall we rely on to govern our lives?” The metaphysics school maintained that “science cannot explain everything and cannot solve the problems of life.” From the opposite perspective, the science school opposed the way of thinking of the metaphysics school and insisted that science can establish a correct worldview. The debate over science and metaphysics signaled changes in ideological resources prior to and subsequent to the May Fourth Movement. Therefore, conflicts and contradictions between the two sides were inevitable.

However, from another perspective, there are ideological limitations behind the theories of the science advocates. Among them, this paper has taken Hu’s thoughts on scientific enlightenment as the object of research, and takes his “Scientific Metaphysics” as the focal point of the research to try to objectively clarify his way of thinking and its limitations.

In the second chapter, this paper discussed the connection between Hu and science. Hu was deeply influenced by science and firmly believed that science would bring about fundamental changes in China, even to the point of completely changing the old ideas and concepts of the Chinese people. Hu’s scientism amidst the difficult process of China’s modernization showed its own unique ideological characteristics, which were more clearly manifested in the debate between science and metaphysics in 1923.

In the third chapter, this paper discussed the formation and main points of Hu’s Scientific Metaphysics. Hu’s science-focus was mainly reflected in his emphasis on basing everything on a “scientific perspective” and on

utilizing the “scientific method,” taking science as the foundation for people’s “worldview.” It is noteworthy that while Hu’s Scientific Metaphysics is not only limited to the level of Hu’s knowledge and understanding of science, it can also be an important strategy for advancing in “ideological enlightenment.” The “minimum consensus” proposed by Hu was aimed at addressing beliefs in theism and the immortality of the soul that prevailed at that time. I think that this played a practical role in “ideological enlightenment” to a certain extent.

In the fourth chapter, this paper discussed the specific functions and limitations of Hu’s Scientific Metaphysics. On the basis of hundreds of years of scientific common sense, Hu advocated that the principle of life in the universe should be construed scientifically; that everything in the universe and nature be dealt with using a scientific outlook; that all people should be required to know and understand that the universe and all things in it are natural and that “the immortality of the greater self” and “living for the eternal life of the whole species” must determine people’s attitude towards society and even life itself. However, Hu’s Scientific Metaphysics also has its own limitations. First, his idea of Scientific Metaphysics could have come to be regarded as the Chinese people’s view of life and the ideological consciousness of the modernization of Chinese culture. Yet, the sharing of his idea of Scientific Metaphysics was mainly limited to the circle of intellectuals, and was used to oppose the ideological propositions and related activities of the metaphysics school. In effect, it was not widely recognized by the people at that time. Secondly, although Hu’s Scientific Metaphysics did have remarkable significance for progress, it could not completely eradicate traditional elements of Chinese culture. In addition, Hu’s Scientific Metaphysics is

based not only on Ding's religious view and Wu's naturalistic cosmology, but also on his own "social immortality theory." Therefore, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics also inevitably falls into a traditional Confucian ideology.

In short, Hu used "science" to reshape a new "outlook on life," which opened up a new path for ideological enlightenment, but he could neither entirely break from traditional thinking nor completely eliminate the tension between "science" and "metaphysics." Hu could not perfect his scientism and failed to gain the general recognition and support of the people at that time. As a result, science became merely Hu's own personal belief system.

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Abstract

Scientific Metaphysics in the Writings of Hu Shih: strengths and limitations

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This paper intends to become an entry point for analysis and research on Hu Shih's way of thinking about science and limitations regarding his scientific metaphysics. Hu's disbelief in ghosts and gods and his advocacy for the abolition of feudal superstition became a theoretical foundation for his atheism, which undergirded both his scientific way of thought and his belief system. This paper highlights Hu's ideas regarding "science" and "worldview" to discover the meaning behind his perspective on science and specify limitations in this way of thought.

It is a matter of common knowledge that Hu was deeply influenced by science and firmly believed that science would bring about fundamental changes in China, even to the point of completely changing the old ideas and concepts of the Chinese people. Hu's scientism amidst the difficult process of China's modernization showed its own unique ideological characteristics, which were more clearly manifested in the debate between science and metaphysics in 1923. Hu's science-focus was mainly reflected in his emphasis on basing everything on a "scientific perspective" and on utilizing the "scientific method," taking science as the foundation for people's "worldview." It is noteworthy that while Hu's Scientific Metaphysics is not only limited to the level of Hu's knowledge and understanding of science, it can also be an important strategy for advancing in "ideological enlightenment."

However, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics also has its own limitations. First, his idea of Scientific Metaphysics could have come to be regarded as the Chinese people's view of life and the ideological consciousness of the modernization of Chinese culture. Yet, the sharing of his idea of Scientific Metaphysics was mainly limited to the circle of intellectuals, and was used to oppose the ideological propositions and related activities of the metaphysics school. In effect, it was not widely recognized by the people at that time. Secondly, although Hu's Scientific Metaphysics did

have remarkable significance for progress, it could not completely eradicate traditional elements of Chinese culture. In addition, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics is based not only on Ding's religious view and Wu's naturalistic cosmology, but also on his own "social immortality theory." Therefore, Hu's Scientific Metaphysics also inevitably falls into a traditional Confucian ideology.

I argue that Hu used "science" to reshape a new "outlook on life," which opened up a new path for ideological enlightenment, but he could neither entirely break from traditional thinking nor completely eliminate the tension between "science" and "metaphysics." Hu could not perfect his scientism and failed to gain the general recognition and support of the people at that time. As a result, science became merely Hu's own personal belief system.

Key words : Hu Shih, scientific metaphysics, worldview, enlightenment, belief system

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