Peoples and Publics

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In some of the contemporary literature on globalization there has been a celebration of how new forms of communication are destabilizing older forms of identity, especially those associated with the nation-state. The impression given is that these "earlier" forms of identity are fixed and immutable compared with the flexible and performative identities of new social movements, diasporic migrations, and multimediated mass publics. Yet the notion of national identities tied to a concept of the sovereignty of peoplehoods is a modern and relatively recent cultural invention whose revolutionary origins were linked to globalized colonial regimes.

Conceptions of publics, publicity, and publicness, for example, are crucial to the construction of the forms of peoplehood and subjectivity that are at the heart of not only the nation-state but also popular culture, transnational identities, and new social movements. At the same time, as the work of Jürgen Habermas and Benedict Anderson has shown, these forms can be traced back to the rise of print capitalism and its international circulation of novels and newspapers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Conceptions of nationhood and democracy that we now take for granted presuppose notions of "collective interest" and "popular sovereignty," which, in turn, depend on forms of public subjectivity such as "the voice of the people" and "public opinion."

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), Habermas sug-

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gested that these forms of public subjectivity developed in the bourgeois societies of eighteenth-century Europe; notions such as rational public opinion provided the bourgeois classes a legitimizing political ideology in the struggles against the absolutist state. In this pathbreaking book, Habermas did not explicitly link these forms to the development of nationalism or a global political economy; his account was resolutely *intra*national at both the cultural and economic levels. Presupposing both the nation-state and the world colonial system, he remained locked within England, France, and Germany, each of which he treated as separate and almost independent entities.

In a recent series of articles, "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure" (1996), "Citizenship and National Identity" (1996), and "The European Nation-State: On the Past and Future of Sovereignty and Citizenship" (in this issue of *Public Culture*), Habermas directly addresses these issues. He makes explicit the links among political problems of legitimation, democracy, citizenship, and the nation-state, and he places them in a broader international context. Although the responses in this issue are respectfully critical from both theoretical and historical angles, I would like to take a slightly different tack by placing the emergence of new forms of public subjectivity in both historical and global contexts that stress the complicated relations among issues of legitimation and performativity, along with the global circulation of cultural forms.

In a series of *Public Culture* articles, I began to explore some of the unexpected transpositions that occur when cultural items circulate across national boundaries (Lee 1993, 1995). The 1993 article started with the exhibition of the artist Xu Bing's Chinese nonsense characters in order to show how transnational, national, and local levels of communication mediate conceptions of publics, publicity, and publicness. The 1995 article uses the crisis of the humanities (*renwen jingshen weiji*) in Mainland China to decenter the U.S. multiculturalism debates by placing both in a broader comparative context of "state-saturated" versus civil society institutional environments. In both cases, a crucial moment was the movement or circulation of people and things from one context to another and their subsequent local appropriation: Xu Bing and his exhibit from Beijing to Madison, Wisconsin, and Chinese intellectuals from China to the United States.

This essay expands the notion of circulation explicitly raised in Anderson's 1991 work on nationalism to the creation of the modern notion of "we, the people." One of the key cultural conceptions presupposed by the modern nation-state is that of constitutionalized peoplehoods; yet these national identities are a product of a transnational circulation of a cluster of ideas, including popular sovereignty, publicness, and democracy. The American and French versions of "the

people" point to its revolutionary origins. Drawing upon Hannah Arendt (1963; see also Bonnie Honig 1993), I treat modern revolutions as creating a legitimation crisis that the performative creation of a constitutionalized peoplehood is designed to solve. Any revolution that denies the legitimacy of the political order it overturns must invent a new form of legitimation. Instead of relying on external forms of social and political legitimation such as God or the church, the modern notion of "we, the people" creates a self-referential political subject to which such notions as individual rights, democracy, and freedom seem "naturally" to apply.

In the first section of this essay, I go into some detail about the founding documents of the American Revolution and Rousseau's *Social Contract*, which are two different ways to resolve this paradox. In the section "From Mao to Now," I sketch how the Maoist conception of "the people" can also be viewed as an alternative attempt to solve this paradox; Mao's own thought on these issues derives from an eclectic mix of traditional Chinese and Western social philosophy that was nurtured by the explosion of interest in Western thought at the turn of the century. I then point to how a transnational mass mediation is creating new forms of cultural identity that challenge some of the official models of "Chineseness."

In this issue of *Public Culture* Habermas argues that the "crystallization" of "popular national consciousness" into Andersonian imagined communities became "the catalysts of a new form of collective self-identification." The American and French Revolutions would use these new cultural notions to transform the "*Adelsnation,* the nation of the nobility, into a *Volksnation,* the nation of the people." In "Popular Sovereignty as Procedure," he argues that "the *cultural* dynamic released by the French Revolution has obviously *not come to a standstill*" and is still relevant for current democratic practice. Extending some of Anderson's insights that the internationalization of print capitalism provided a new sense of time and space necessary for the development of the modern nation-state, Habermas argues:

> Revolutionary consciousness gave birth to a new mentality, which was shaped by a new time consciousness, a new concept of political practice, and a new notion of legitimation. The historical consciousness that broke with the traditionalism of nature-like continuities; the understanding of political practice in terms of self-determination and self-realization; and the trust in rational discourse, through which all political authority was supposed to legitimate itself—each of these is specifically modern. (1996, 467)

In his book on the public sphere, Habermas makes explicit the connection between capitalism and these new forms of political imagination through the notion of ideology:

> If ideologies are not only manifestations of the socially necessary consciousness in its essential falsity, if there is an aspect to them that can lay a claim to truth inasmuch as it transcends the status quo in utopian fashion, even if only for purposes of justification, then ideology exists at all only from this period on. Its origin would be the identification of "property owner" with "human being as such" in the role accruing to private people as members in the political public sphere of the bourgeois constitutional state, that is, in the identification of the public sphere in the political realm with that in the world of letters; and also in public opinion itself, in which the interest of the class, via critical public debate, could assume the appearance of the general interest, that is, in the identification of domination with its dissolution into pure reason. (1989, 88)

The identification of property owner with human being in general, and the interests of a specific class with that of the general interest, is a rhetorical move at the heart of modern ideology. These synecdochic equations create the space for the expression of the social contradictions they mediate; the resulting disjunction between social reality and ideology is a constitutive part of bourgeois society. The ideological (and metonymic) construction of "we, the people" links the private expressions of subjectivity ("human being as such") with their public counterparts (the imputed potential rationality of public opinion) and gives the resulting social totality an agentive subject. If we combine these insights with Anderson's work on the international circulation of the idea of the nation, we can see that it is in the interstices of the crossing of public spheres (England and colonial America; Spain and its colonies) that the modern notion of peoplehood emerges; it is a trope that transfers to an ideological level the crisis developing between the global cultural economy of colonialism and traditional forms of political legitimation; the resulting ideology of the equality of nations and peoples becomes a necessary component of an emerging *international* global economy.

In the American colonies, this would be expressed in a new form of subjectivity, that of a constitutionalized peoplehood, which would be abstract enough to legitimate a "bourgeois constitutional state," yet concrete enough to subsume all private citizens. It is this dual structure of the modern notion of peoplehood that also marks its uniqueness as a cultural construct: a doubled form of performative subjectivity that mediates between the simple aggregation of "I's" and the collective we of "we, the people."

The radicalness of this conception lies in its revolutionary origins. The Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution announce the creation of a political subjectivity that breaks with traditional forms of legitimation. In neither

document are there references to the antiquity of the American people or a continuity of culture and custom that binds them; instead, there was "a profound feeling that a radical break with the past was occurring—a 'blasting open of the continuum of history'" (Anderson 1991, 193), the idea of which would spread and be emblazoned in the French Revolution calendar's marking of a new world era starting with Year One of the new French Republic.

Revolution combined the ideas of a unique beginning and freedom with the creation of a new historical subject and agent. The revolutionary project of "inventing the people" produced a new form of make-believe which "then takes command and reshapes reality" (Morgan 1988, 14) even as it attempted to establish a unique history for each new nation. Yet ultimately, revolutions simply replace one form of make-believe with another.

In both the American and French Revolutions, the battle to create a sovereign people contained within it the overthrow of an older order of legitimacy—that based on the divine right of kings. Yet to overthrow this source of legitimacy was to call into question that which had always been assumed: Governments were legitimated by higher laws. If religion could not provide the source of legitimacy, what could? Even more specifically, what legitimates the constitution of a modern nation when traditional sources of authority have become effaced by a rising secularism? Arendt describes the situation as a vicious circle:

> Those who get together to constitute a new government are themselves unconstitutional, that is, they have no authority to do what they have set out to achieve. The vicious circle in legislating is present not in ordinary lawmaking, but in laying down the fundamental law, the law of the land or the constitution which, from then on, is supposed to incarnate the "higher law" from which all laws ultimately derive their authority. And with this problem, which appeared as the urgent need for some absolute, the men of the American Revolution found themselves no less confronted than their colleagues in France. The trouble was—to quote Rousseau once more—that to put the law above man and thus to establish the validity of manmade laws, *il faudrait des dieux*, "one actually would need gods." (1963, 84)

Performing the People

Arendt's invocation of both the American and French cases points to two different solutions to the performativity paradox of legitimation that she has outlined. Each will involve the creation of a form of peoplehood that depends on a specific

model of communication and is abstract enough to legitimate the law. In Rousseau's case, the model of peoplehood depends on a face-to-face model of communication in which the law merely transmits the general will; the legitimation crisis occurs in the creation of the founding law of laws, not in the creation of the people. In the American case, the notion of peoplehood rests on seeing the nation as a print-mediated community. The critical transformation is when communication is seen not just as a face-to-face relation between people but as a potentially limitless print-mediated discourse; the legitimation crisis is resolved through the relations between an oral model of people creation in the Declaration of Independence and its subsequent incorporation into the abstract peoplehood of the "we, the people" of the Constitution.

Rousseau's account of the social contract to create a general will is designed to solve the following problem: "Find a form of association which defends and protects with all common forces the person and goods of each associate, and by means of which each one, while uniting with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before." (1983, 24). The answer is to submit to the general will: "Each of us places his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole" (24).

The social compact gives the body politic absolute power over all its members, creating a general will that is "general in its object as well as its essence" and that "loses its natural rectitude when it tends toward any individual, determinate object" (33). There is thus an irreducible difference between the general and particular wills: "Thus, just as a private will cannot represent the general will, the general will, for its part, alters its nature when it has a particular object; and as general, it is unable to render a decision on either a man or a state of affairs" (33). The social compact between assembled individuals brings into existence the general will and the body politic. Legislation will give "it movement and will" (36) and allow society to reproduce itself over time. Since the laws of state are a product of the general will, their objects will be similarly abstract and general. Laws do not name any individuals or stipulate particular actions, but consider "subjects as a body and action in the abstract. . . . Thus the law can create several classes of citizens, and even stipulate the qualifications that determine membership in these classes, but it cannot name specific persons to be admitted to them. . . . In a word, any function that relates to an individual does not belong to the legislative power" (37).

Yet it is the very abstractness or nonindexical nature of the general will and the law that make setting the model in motion impossible. On the one hand, the

"existence of the State is only ideal and conventional" (Rousseau, quoted in de Man 1979, 272). On the other hand, law demands context specificity in order to function: It must apply to specific cases. The law is always future-oriented; its illocutionary mode is that of the promise, but a promise also presupposes a specific date when it is made—"laws are promissory notes in which the present of the promise is always a past with regard to its realization" (de Man 1979, 273), and this temporal structure and movement is at the heart of the law. The practical realization of the model demands a concomitant specification of the general will: "The law of today should not be an act of yesterday's general will but of today's; we have not committed ourselves to do what the people wanted but what they want. It follows that when the Law speaks in the name of the people, it is in the name of the people of today and not of the past" (273). Yet no such "people of today" can exist, because "the eternal present of the contract" precludes "any particular present" (273). The general will lacks a voice which "can state [*énoncer*] the will of the people" (Rousseau, quoted and translated in de Man 1979, 274).

Indeed, there seems to be a fundamental performative paradox whose resolution would require a metaleptic reversal of cause and effect: "For an emerging people to be capable of appreciating the fundamental rules of statecraft, the effect would have to become the cause. The social spirit which ought to be the work of that institution, would have to preside over the institution itself. And men would be, prior to the advent of laws, what they ought to become by means of laws" (40).

Men, in the state of nature, would not have experienced or had knowledge of the benefits that a state governed by laws would bring about and are governed primarily by self-interest. So where would the notion of the social good to be produced by legislation come from? What would motivate mankind to create binding laws? From their assembled state, it seems people could only make promises that would govern that particular assembly, but not any others; there would be no laws that would create a potentially infinite temporal sequence in which present promises became the presupposed pasts for their future realizations. The general will requires the creation of the law to preserve and reproduce itself. Rousseau's solution is a lawgiver who has the "sight and voice that the people lack" (de Man 1979, 274) but who also is outside of the system and free from the distorting influence of particular interests: He who frames the law should not make it. Even armed with such wisdom and foresight, the only way "the fathers of nations" (i.e., the lawgivers) can set the model in motion is through deception—"to credit gods with their own wisdom" (274): "It is this sublime reason, which transcends the grasp of ordinary men, whose decisions the legislator puts in the mouths of the immortals in order to compel by divine authority those whom human pru-

dence could not move" (41). The appeal to a transcendent source of authority makes the source of inspiration at least as general as the general will and the law; at the same time, it allows the lawgiver to give the people the knowledge they need to create the law.

In the American case, the source of legitimacy and sovereignty will be "the people" created in the Declaration of Independence and presupposed and transformed into an abstract peoplehood by the Constitution and its legitimating politics of print mediation. Despite the apparent continuity between the "we" of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, it is immediately evident that this relationship is a historically constructed one that links two different subjects. The "people" of the colonies appealed to at the end of the Declaration is not the same "people" at the beginning of the Constitution. The latter was created by James Madison, agreed upon by the Constitutional Convention, and ratified by the state legislatures. It was, as Morgan has put it, an "invention": "But even before the convention met, Madison recognized that it could achieve the objectives he had in mind for it only by appealing to a popular sovereignty not hitherto fully recognized, to the people of the United States as a whole. They alone could be thought to stand superior to the people of any single state" (1988, 267). Although this notion of "the people" would draw on the peoples of the individual states, it would be "a separate and superior entity" which would give to the "national government an authority that would necessarily impinge on the authority of the state governments" (267).

Madison's invention was responding to several crises. First, the Continental Congress lacked the legislative authority to get the various states to work effectively together after the threat of war was over. As the Declaration itself stated, its representatives were indirectly elected by the state legislatures. The Congress was made up of the elite sectors of colonial society, and, since it lacked a directly elected house of representatives, it could not claim to directly represent the people. The state legislatures could claim to represent their constituencies, but the Congress had no corresponding claim that could trump those of the states; it therefore lacked the sovereign powers of a truly national government. By 1787, Congress's lack of legislative authority had produced a crisis. There were secessionist uprisings in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. John Marshall, the future chief justice of the Supreme Court, thought unless there was a national government with effective powers, there would be "anarchy first, and civil convulsions afterwards" (quoted in Morgan 1988, 267).

Yet creating a solution that would give some entity both power and legitimacy would require a new conceptualization of representation. Much of the revolu-

tionary rhetoric was a critique of indirect and virtual political representation. During the Stamp Act debates, it was argued that the colonies were not properly represented in the parliament, and it was even suggested that, because of the distances involved, they could never be because any representatives would soon lose touch with local issues. With the Declaration of Independence, these issues of representation soon became involved in the vicious circle of a legitimation crisis. When the Continental Congress declared on 15 May 1775 that the authority of the Crown should be replaced by new state governments based on the authority of the people, the question immediately arose of the legality of such a decree since there was no longer any precedent for legally claiming the authority of the people. Previously, the law derived its legitimacy from the king and from parliament; with the overthrow of that order, it seemed that legal authority itself was lost. In Philadelphia, a pamphlet called *The Alarm* soon appeared, raising the question of who authorized such an authorization: "Legislative bodies of men [have no power to destroy or create] the power they sit by. . . . Otherwise every legislative body would have the power of suppressing a constitution at will; it is an act which can be done *to them* but cannot be done *by them*" (Wood 1969, 337). The problem was that if the General Assembly could legally alter the constitution, then it "might afterward suppress the *new* authority received from the people, and thus by continually making and unmaking themselves at pleasure, leave the people at last *no* rights at all" (337).

One of the solutions Madison drew upon was the practice of creating constitutional conventions, which quickly spread after the Declaration. These conventions broke with the vicious circle of finding some legal way to justify the founding law precisely because they were considered to be extralegal. In *Common Sense*, Tom Paine described them as "some intermediary body between the governed and the governors, that is, between the Congress and the people" (quoted in Warner 1991, 101). Madison's goal was to create a national government whose authority would rest on a notion of the people of the United States, not on state governments or the particular constituencies they represented; instead, the American people would constitute "a separate and superior entity . . . capable of conveying to a national government an authority that would necessarily impinge on the authority of state governments" (Morgan 1988, 267). This notion of the American people would face two directions: It would be a transcendent source of legitimacy, yet be embodied in every citizen. Madison's insight was to use the occasion of the Constitutional Convention to create a document that would lay out the legal procedures for claiming the authority of the people: "By constituting the government, the people's text literally constitutes the people. In the con-

crete form of these texts, the people decides the conditions of its own embodiment. The text itself becomes not only the supreme law, but the only original embodiment of the people" (Warner 1991, 102).

The printed textuality of the Constitution allows it to emanate from no individual, collectivity, or state in particular, and thus from the people in general. Its circulation mitigated against the particularism of local interests, and thereby solved one of the continuing problems of that period: how to balance local interest and the public good by creating a mediation between the two; by building upon the translocal nature of the mediation, it created the ground for a notion of disinterested public virtue. It creates a textualized mediation of what Arendt had called "the worldly in-between space by which men are mutually related" (1963, 175) in which the reading and ratification of the Constitution creates the very "we" that is its opening subject and also its audience, anaphorically invoking the "we" of the Declaration.

The creation of "the people" in the Constitution resolves the performativity paradox by substituting the direct, face-to-face mediation of society by speech with a model based on the indirect mediation of print. In Rousseau's model, a face-to-face assembly creates the social contract which brings about the general will, but it is only through the law that the general will can preserve itself and endure; although writing and print make it possible for society to continue, they merely transmit the general will whose abstract properties arise from the initial face-to-face contract. At the same time, the assembled general will is unable to create the law necessary to preserve itself without a deceptive reversal of cause and effect by lawgivers who appeal to some external, transcendent agency.

The American solution is to replace this transcendent authority with an extralegal source that is sufficiently abstract and general to legitimize the law, and yet immanent within the legal process. This source will derive from the written qualities of the law and its ability to create an "imagined community" of readers and citizens based on the abstract properties of print mediation. If speaking, direct representation, and face-to-face assembly are the original sources of the general will, then writing, indirect representation, and print mediation are the sources for its preservation and reproduction. The Constitutional Convention and the process of ratification ensured that the source of this authority was extralegal; it represents a higher will that legitimates particular acts of legislation but itself can never be reduced to the normal legislative process. "The people" are the embodiment of a general interest that transcends particular interests and is thus sufficiently abstract to legitimate the law of laws or a constitution. The metaleptic reversal of cause and effect is accomplished not through an act of deception, but

through a splitting of the performativity of the "we, the people" into the Declaration's earlier performative moment[1] (which still appealed to God and relies on an oral model of performativity—the first printed edition still contains Jefferson's diacritical marks) and the future self-interpretive process the Constitution creates (in the Supreme Court and the amendment process) in which the people will constantly reinterpret itself. Returning to Rousseau's gap between the abstractness of the general will and the performativity of the law, we can see that in the U.S. case, the temporal trajectory that the performativity of promising establishes at the heart of the law is embodied in the Constitution in its amendment process and the Supreme Court; at the same time, the whole legislative process presupposes and creates "the people of today" immanent in every legislative act that "the people" also legitimates.

From Mao to Now

The idea of a constitutionalized peoplehood is now a presupposition of the international order of nation-states. The founding ideas were born out of the bourgeois public sphere and became transformed and institutionalized in the American colonies. Circulated among an international elite held together by print capitalism, the double nature of peoplehood as abstract unity (a "we" that can legitimate the law of laws) and individual manifestation (as citizen) provides national agents that move through "the empty, homogeneous time" of modernity (Walter Benjamin, quoted in Anderson 1991, 24).

These notions of peoplehood grew out of a particular cultural and historical context and are based on certain models of communication. In both the American and French examples, the abstract dimension of peoplehood was created by a denial of particular interest in the name of the people or of the general will. This model of legitimacy is thus in profound tension with a mass-mediated consumer society in which individual choice and freedom exist at the level of consumption. In a consumer society, the specificity of interest and embodiment bracketed by both these models of peoplehood returns in undisguised form as the basis for a

1. Derrida also locates the performative paradox of the Declaration in the creation of "we, the people": "The 'we' of the declaration speaks 'in the name of the people.' But this people does not exist. They do not exist as an entity, it does not exist, before this delaration, not as such. If it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can hold only in the act of the signature. The signature invents the signer. This signer can only authorize him- or herself to sign once he or she has come to the end [*parvenu au bout*], if one can say, of his or her signature, in a sort of fabulous retroactivity. That first signature authorizes him or her to sign" (1986, 10).

mass subjectivity characterized by a potentially infinite differentiation of desire; consumerism becomes a space for the construction of alternative identities from those of the state.

These problems become particularly acute in a country like Mainland China in which a Rousseau-like vision of peoplehood has been institutionalized in a political form that insists on the unity of state and society. In China, the mass-mediated public audience is coextensive with the potential citizenry. The present cultural crisis of legitimation in China manifests itself in the government's repeated calls to create a "socialism with uniquely Chinese characteristics" in the face of the forces of pluralization and differentiation of desire that Deng's economic reforms have released. The tension is not between civil society and the state but is, rather, a fundamental incompatibility between the model of communication used to legitimate the state's conception of "the people," and a transnational sense of Chineseness arising from the interplay between print and mass-mediated forms of communication developing in a pan-Chinese "public" space that lies "between" Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, and Chinese diasporic communities, particularly in North America and Southeast Asia.

In the West, the institutions of the bourgeois public sphere, legitimated by an appeal to an abstract peoplehood, form the basis for civil society; these institutions, ideally independent of the state, serve as a mediating "buffer zone" between the market economy and the state. In the modern conception of civil society, the subjective rights of citizens are guaranteed to a self-regulating public which is independent from the direct political authority of the state. In natural law theory, the separation of civil and political society is created through two social contracts: the first in which people agree to work together for self-preservation, and the second that empowers the sovereign. The ideological and socioeconomic dimensions of society are seen as mutually reinforcing through the "hidden hand" of market competition, which is supposed to guarantee that unfettered pursuit of individual economic interests would ultimately benefit all of society. Private property is a presupposition for the market and bourgeois notions of freedom, equality, and autonomy.

Marx criticizes this view of the purported beneficial mutual reinforcement of economics and politics as bourgeois ideology. Instead of being the basis for freedom and equality, private property was the source of social inequality and led to the loss of freedom, especially for the working class. Lenin formulated the idea that the Communist Party would be the vanguard of the people led by a revolutionary elite that would penetrate into and mobilize all sectors of society, including the arts and media. The elimination of private property would also entail the

elimination of bourgeois civil society. Mao adapted Lenin's formulations to an agricultural and relatively nonindustrialized China by substituting the peasantry for the urban proletariat as the revolutionary core of the people. He also created an all-embracing ideology—Maoism—that located power and decision making in a party that unified all civil voices into one. This model derives directly from Rousseau, whom Mao had read in his student days at Changsha. Mao's own intellectual development was mediated by his exposure to Western philosophy (especially Rousseau) in his early years in Hunan. He was an active participant in a Chinese intellectual sphere that was rapidly becoming part of an international print community. The arrival of Western social philosophy challenged traditional notions of state and society, and during these early formative years in Hunan Mao read Chinese translations of Darwin, Adam Smith, Mill, Spencer, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, among others (Li 1977). Mao's transformation of Marx and Lenin would build on this rather eclectic mix of writings plus his interests in traditional Chinese philosophy.

Mao avidly read Liang Qichao's *Xinmin Congbao* in which Liang prefaced his discussion of Rousseau with a quotation from Kant declaring the *Social Contract* to be a framework for establishing a nation. Mao's interest in the will starts at this point, and his philosophy teacher, Yang Changzhi, spent nine years studying in England and Japan and was a follower of the Oxford neo-Hegelian, Thomas Hill Green, whose major work, *Principles of Political Obligation*, concerns the dialectic between individual wills and the larger community. Green's neo-Hegelianism puts the general will into motion; it prepares the route for the materialism that Mao would adopt from Marxism.

Rousseau's theory of the social contract insists on the inalienability and indivisibility of the general will; in rejecting the dual-contract model of natural-law theory, it supports the sovereignty of the people and the inseparability of civil and political society. Government is merely the executor of the people's will, not its representative. In the Maoist formulation, the party would be the general will of the people, and political society would be the ultimate realization of individual freedom. In a Maoist China, there could be no difference between state and society, and no public sphere in either theory or practice. Colletti picks up the revolutionary implications of Rousseau's *Social Contract*: "Revolutionary 'political' theory, as it has developed since Rousseau, is already foreshadowed and contained in *The Social Contract*; or to be more explicit, that so far as 'political' theory in the strict sense is concerned, Marx and Lenin have added nothing to Rousseau, except for the analysis (which is of course rather important) of the 'economic bases' for the withering away of the state" (1972, 185). Otto von Gierke's

comments on Rousseau apply equally well to Mao's justifications for the Cultural Revolution: "And from the permanent and absolute omnipotence of the assemblage of the people, suspending the executive power and the whole jurisdiction of government as soon as it is assembled, he developed his programme of permanent revolution" (quoted in Colletti 1972, 183).

Mao's solution to the performative paradox of revolutionary legitimation is a democratic subject which is created by the united will of a "people's democratic dictatorship" against its class enemies. The nonantagonistic contradictions within the people were to be handled by democratic means, while antagonistic contradictions with class enemies required dictatorial methods:

> Workers, peasants, urban petit-bourgeois elements, patriotic intellectuals, patriotic capitalists and other patriots comprise more than ninety-five percent of the whole country's population. Under our people's democratic dictatorship, all of these come within the classification of the people. And among the people we must practice democracy.
>
> Those whom the people's democratic dictatorship should suppress are: landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionary elements, bad elements and anti-revolutionary rightists. . . . These are the people we must compel to reform. They are the people whom the people's democratic dictatorship is directed against. (170)

In the name of "democratic centralism" Maoism created the image of a peoplehood in which the leadership refines and articulates the democratic consensus of the masses: "What sort of method is this? It is a democratic centralist method: it is a mass-line method. First democracy, then centralism: coming from the masses, returning to the masses; the unity of the leadership and the masses" (Mao 1974, 160). The party acts as the crucial mediation: "Our slogan is: 'A people's democratic dictatorship, led by the proletariat and based on the alliance of the workers and the peasants.' How does the proletariat exercise leadership? It leads through the Communist Party. The Communist Party is the vanguard of the proletariat. The proletariat unites with classes and strata who approve of, support and participate in the socialist revolution and socialist construction, and exercises dictatorship over the reactionary classes or the remnants thereof" (168).

With the Communist victory, a Rousseau-inspired vision of the fusion of state and society led by a party which represented the general will in the name of liberation became institutionalized in Mainland China. The party as vanguard became symbolized in the construction of public space. Unlike Western models of publics and public space, the Chinese model has a center, the party, from which all ideological and cultural legitimation radiates. Print, media, art, and literature are all

supported and cultivated by the party, which then transmits them to the population; like in Rousseau's vision, print communication should transparently transmit the will of the party. Unlike the liberal civil society tradition, the source of legitimacy for the state, the general will, antedates its mode of communication; the basic model, taken from the formative years in Yenan, is a face-to-face model of the political process. Its physical embodiment would be Tiananmen Square, the huge public space in front of the old imperial Forbidden City in which the party leaders could face an assembled mass of a million citizens; the square was a microcosm of the party and its people.

Given the role of the party leadership in directing and building unity versus the "enemies of the people," it is not surprising that, from the very beginning of the student movement in April 1989, the government's and students' models of political communication contrasted sharply over issues such as consensus versus freedom of expression. The united will of the party organization requires a unified command structure; in his 26 May address to the military commission (which was also a not so veiled attack on party secretary Zhao Ziyang), general Yang Shangkun bluntly stated that the party cannot tolerate "two voices," either within or outside of it. Using the old military metaphor of "two command posts," Yang argued that the social upheaval was caused by factionalism within the party—"the present problem is that two voices within the Party have been exposed to society" (1989). If the party leadership is not united, how could the people be?

In some ways, Tiananmen Square could be seen as a "material representation" of the struggle between the state and a newly emerging "counterpublic" over the models of public subjectivity that should underlie political legitimacy. It was a "concrete" public space in which demonstrations and parades took place and in which the government would enact its model of a unified public and peoplehood; since almost every village in China has a similar public space, Tiananmen was the iconic embodiment of state power. During the Beijing Spring, it also became a symbolic space that crystallized the aspirations of all the new societal forces unleashed by Deng's opening of the economy and the subsequent explosion of individual entrepreneurs (*getihu*), privately run coffee houses and restaurants, thinktanks, and journals. The result was a pluralization of voices representing a variety of interests that had no direct political outlet or spokesperson. In the initial stages of the demonstrations, the students did not speak as one body but purposely flaunted a polyphony of voices. From late April to mid-May, the government seemed to adopt a more conciliatory posture (due partially to Gorbachev's visit) and a "carnivalesque" atmosphere set in. Different groups presented competing reform platforms addressed not only to the government but also to each

other, with constant appeals to the general good and an incredible density of cross-referencing in their slogans. Tiananmen Square became a public space in which official and nonofficial groups discovered and debated issues of common concern, thereby creating a public whose "horizontal" organization challenged the more traditional "vertical" model of peoplehood advocated by the state.

The students and intellectuals also resorted to highly ritualistic and symbolic means in order to dramatize their action on the square, which progressed from the traditional mode of humble petition to more egalitarian forms of dialogue with government officials and among themselves. They took over the Monument of Revolutionary Martyrs as their own headquarters and learned how to conduct meetings in accordance with Western democratic procedures (*Robert's Rules of Order* was in heavy demand throughout the demonstrations). Like other new social movements, they drew heavily from popular culture, wearing headbands and colorful clothes, mixing their singing of the "Internationale" with popular tunes from Taiwan and protest songs from the United States (especially "We Shall Overcome"), as well as newly composed folksongs by young and irreverent poets like Cui Jian, the Chinese Bob Dylan. The students freely gave interviews to Western journalists and media reporters, thus drawing worldwide publicity and extending the scope of their newly found public sphere to a truly international dimension. To sustain their momentum, some leaders then called for hunger strikes. It was not until martial law was declared on 20 May that the celebrative and carnivalesque mood gave way to more desperate diatribe against government leaders, including calling for Li Peng's and Deng Xiaoping's resignations. The reinstating of oppressive authority had the direct effect of "monologizing" the discourses into one of strident opposition, and the earlier sense of openness was lost. The erection of the Goddess of Liberty was a last rallying ritual—an intentionally bold gesture designed to link their movement with Western ideals of democracy and freedom and, perhaps more important, to disrupt the old symbolic axis formed by Mao's portrait on the wall of the Forbidden City and his mausoleum on the square.

The democracy movement brought together forces that directly challenged the notions of peoplehood and publicness on which state authority rested. The Chinese phrase for democracy, *minzhu*, gives a clear and strong connotation of people's sovereignty; however, in the Maoist reformulation, that sovereignty rests with the Chinese Communist Party, which considers itself the vanguard of the people and speaks on its behalf. For some three decades since the mid-1950s, the party had molded the various segments of the population into its monolithic vision of the people, thus ironically depriving them of a real voice. Consequently,

the immediate manifestation of the student movement was the simple demand to be heard—the articulation of a true voice, a genuine vox populi no longer manipulated by the party. Orderly march and demonstration was considered a right granted by the Chinese constitution to convey the voice of the people to the government.

The student demonstrations drew on a long history of public protests stretching back to the turn of the century. In the events leading up to the 20 May declaration of martial law, public protests had catalyzed public opinion and legitimately claimed the role of spokesman—to articulate the voice of the masses. Once public support had been galvanized, people felt that the government should listen to the student leaders since they represented the people's will. It was in this context that the student leaders' televised "dialogues" with the government took on special significance and highlighted the differences between competing models of public legitimacy.

The term *duihua*, dialogue, almost means face-to-face conversation, and almost never appears in political contexts; *jianghua*, speech or talk, is more commonly used. *Jianghua* reflects the asymmetric, superior-to-inferior, conditions of Chinese political discourse. Mao's speeches were addressed at their audiences and almost never represented their addressees as potentially coequal participants, despite the frequent invocation of the "masses" as a counterpoint to the addresses. Mao's printed speeches became canons to be religiously "studied" (*xuexi*) again and again. Hence the rhetorical mode of *jianghua* has always been the privilege of the leaders. *Duihua*, by contrast, implies an equal give and take between participants. When Premier Li Peng agreed to meet the students for a dialogue on 18 May, he began a "speech" directed at the student leaders, reinforcing the asymmetry by comparing them to his children. This act of authoritarian paternalism was quickly interrupted by the student leader, Wu'er Kaixi, who said that if Li continued in that way nothing would be accomplished. The young student leader insisted on calling him teacher Li instead of Premier Li, undoing some of the official hierarchy that Li Peng had tried to introduce. The government viewed the meeting as a great concession on its part; the students viewed it as a failure because the government refused to engage in a "real dialogue" in which the participants could exchange ideas as equal citizens about issues of mutual concern. These abortive dialogues were an unprecedented public attempt to break through the rigid monologism of Chinese political discourse. Such a breakthrough would have required the government to recognize the importance of a plurality of voices in political decision making, and hence a complete dismantling of the Leninist-Maoist ideology.

Looking back at the student movement, we can see it as challenging some of the basic assumptions about peoplehood and public opinion that underlie modern Chinese politics. Tiananmen brought into public purview a variety of discourses that formed a counterpublic to that of the state. Unlike the Western bourgeois public sphere, this public space did not grow out of or help to create a buffer zone between the market and the state; it was not the institutional locus for the articulation of ideologies supportive of civil society. Indeed, the very institutions that supported its development were dependent on government support and were quickly eliminated after Tiananmen.

Although the forms of peoplehood and publicity advocated by the students challenged official models, they shared with their antagonists a face-to-face notion of political representation, as the struggles over *jianghua* and *duihua* in the student-government dialogues indicated. The demonstrations did introduce a more pluralistic conception of public voicing, especially in the early marches when different work units joined the student demonstrations. The polyphony and relative decentering of voices contrasted sharply with the government's monological insistence on hierarchy and consensus.

In the post-Tiananmen period, Deng's economic policies have loosened up the "work unit" (*danwei*) system that regulated employment, housing, education, and medical support. The system regulated intimate portions of everyday life, deciding promotions, housing assignments, and even marriages; it was the institutional locus of the individual's incorporation into the state. Economic reforms have spurred the development of many non–state-controlled enterprises; many people have left their work units to pursue individual enterprise or to maintain a nominal presence (to keep housing benefits) while working at other jobs. The loosening of public surveillance has led to an explosion of gossip magazines and sexy tabloids, as well as new magazines that reflect the development of new lifestyle interests, from self-help to home improvement. A new magazine, *shenghuo* (Life), self-consciously imitates *Life*, *Time*, *L'Express*, and *Der Spiegel*, while *ai yue* (Philharmonic), the first audiophile magazine in China, has a circulation of over five thousand in Beijing alone. The magazine was started by an editor for *Beijing Literature* who was interested in classical music and developed an interest in stereo magazines. After Tiananmen, he was deactivated because of his sympathies with the students, and with his now extensive spare time, he decided to create a magazine that would review recordings and equipment. Very much a reflection of his own private tastes, the magazine focused on classical music. It quickly sold out, and a private sensibility struck a resonant chord with a rapidly expanding audience.

In addition to the proliferation of print materials, a new mass-mediated and

commercial public is being created that devours gossip about movie stars and avidly watches television soap operas such as *ke wang* (Yearnings) and *bian ji bu de gu shi* (Stories from an Editors' Bureau, a Chinese *Murphy Brown*). The production models for these soap operas and movies come from abroad, especially from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Unlike earlier works that would portray communist heroes overcoming incredible hardships, these new programs emphasize values of everyday life and the changes in contemporary culture. The first Chinese-produced soap opera, *ke wang*, although set during the Cultural Revolution, focused on the drama between two families and eschewed any depiction of political issues.

The economic reforms have produced a more complex situation for intellectuals and academics. Teachers and professors still belong to work units; since state salaries have not kept up with inflation, there is an increasing pressure to develop sideline incomes. The number of intellectuals and graduate students going abroad continues to rapidly increase, while some of the graduate students who went abroad right before or after the Tiananmen incident have received their degrees and have returned to China or Hong Kong. A transnational Chinese intelligentsia that includes Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and overseas Chinese has been formed and is shaping the direction of pan-Chinese social and cultural criticism. At the same time, Western disciplinary divisions have become increasingly salient, resulting in an internationalized professional culture in which the social sciences draw heavily on Western models and methodologies, while the humanities are experiencing what has been called "a crisis in the human spirit of the humanities" (*ren wen jing shen wei ji*).

The crisis in the humanities is at least partially due to the changing position of Chinese intellectuals, especially those from the Chinese departments of elite universities such as Beijing University. These intellectuals traditionally defined what it meant to be Chinese and were at the forefront of the student movements of the last century. In the post-Tiananmen period, their position has been considerably weakened. Because of their lack of English, they found it more difficult to go abroad, and most remained behind after Tiananmen. At the same time, many of those who went to the United States were graduates of foreign language institutes, English departments, or departments in the natural and social sciences. As these students returned, often as freshly minted Ph.D.s, or got positions abroad but wrote for magazines in China, the gap between Western literary theories and Chinese realities was exacerbated. In addition, the rampant commercialization seemed to devalue any notion of high culture: Writers who did not adapt were not read, and intellectuals had no tools with which to analyze popular culture (except those imported from the West). It is therefore not surprising that in such circum-

stances, some Chinese intellectuals have turned to *guoxue*, or national cultural studies, as a way of discovering the essence of Chinese culture.

The irony is that this turn to *guoxue*, which was originally at least in part an effort by post-Tiananmen Chinese professors to turn to apolitical topics, now fits the government's effort to discover uniquely Chinese values compatible with state authoritarianism and a market economy. The crisis in the humanities has been paralleled by government attempts to stir up a new patriotic nationalism under the banner of *jing shen wen ming,* a "spiritual civilization" with uniquely Chinese characteristics. A recent wildly popular book, written by intellectuals formerly supportive of the student demonstrations but unable to leave China after Tiananmen, is appropriately titled *China Can Say No*; in the name of a virulent nationalism, it attacks the West, particularly the United States, and has been picked up by the government propaganda machine as a major contribution to the rethinking of China-U.S. relations. Yet the insistence on traditional values based on face-to-face models of human interaction will probably be inadequate to the new notions of peoples and publics that the internationalization of culture and communication are creating in China. Commercialization has introduced the possibility of institutions of cultural criticism independent from the state that are also increasingly part of a pan-Chinese cultural sphere. This potential multiplicity of voices is developing independently of the state. At the same time, the emphasis on values of everyday life shared across these regions creates the image of a contemporary Chineseness that crosses national boundaries. As we saw with the Beijing women's conference and the international controversy over the Three Gorges Project to dam the Yangtze River, there are now local, subnational constituencies in Mainland China for the new social movements that are sweeping the globe.

This increased circulation of people, commodities, and ideas among the "greater China" region is leading to the creation of a pan-Chinese cultural nationalism that will have profound implications for all of Asia. The basis for this transnational culturalism is a shared print culture (the written language is the same in Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Mainland); it is reinforced by the increasing international circulation of Chinese intellectuals and cultural practitioners, as well as mass media products such as movies, soap operas, and music. In order to deal with these pluralizing and transnational tendencies, the Mainland government, in its search for "a socialism with Chinese characteristics," has embraced Singapore's neo-Confucianist rhetoric as a model for the creation of uniquely Chinese values that might support both political authoritarianism and entrepreneurship. In such a model, culture and the nation still overlap: Chinese culture is Mainland culture. These ideas are themselves the product of a transnational cir-

culation. Singapore's neo-Confucianism owes a great deal to the work of Du Weiming, a professor of Chinese studies at Harvard who was educated in Taiwan and later became an adviser to Singapore's prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew. The Mainland government promoted *guoxue,* or national cultural studies, as a way of determining the uniqueness of traditional Chinese culture in order to bolster its claims to cultural authenticity; in the academy, *guoxue* has become a way of asserting the primacy of Chinese studies in the face of the massive importation of Western literary and cultural theories.

The present efforts of the Chinese government to promote a pan-Chinese set of values compatible with both authoritarianism and a market economy are part of what might be called a third global "wave" of people-making. The first wave was the transmission of European debates over peoplehood and sovereignty to the American colonies, resulting in the formation of the first modern constitutional democracies. The second wave was the transmission of these models from the Americas to Europe during the nineteenth century, which gave rise to European nationalisms and their colonialisms. The third wave, catalyzed by the events of 1968 and the development of new social movements across the world, builds on a globalized communications infrastructure and is producing notions of publicness and peoplehoods that challenge traditional models of national sovereignty. It consists of transnational movements linking not nation-states but "peoples" with shared interests such as women's issues or the environment; the Chinese democracy movement is one of many contemporary examples.

The characteristics of this emerging transnational Chinese public sphere work directly against the model of political legitimation of the present Mainland government. It has no effective center, and it is a print and mass-mediated space that links together several local public spheres, all of which deviate from the classical model of nationally based public spheres: These include Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and the increasingly important overseas Chinese communities, especially in the United States and Canada. In addition, this public sphere also parallels the development of transnational Chinese capital, as well as the circulation of new images of cosmopolitan lifestyles through an increasingly dense traffic in videos, movies, popular magazines, music, and novels. The greatest irony of all may be that it is this third wave of people-making and not the state that is creating the institutional conditions required to develop those "uniquely Chinese values" that are necessary for China to adapt to the processes transforming it.

Conclusion

The Chinese government's insistence on its cultural uniqueness reenacts the performative paradox of its founding moment, whose origins themselves could hardly be considered pure. The more it searches for a cultural construction to verify its uniqueness, the more it denies the heterogeneous origin of the very notion of peoplehood it seeks to legitimate. In the Chinese case, this has been exacerbated by a search for foundations in the classics, whose hermeneutics invariably involve models of face-to-face communication profoundly at variance with those creating contemporary forms of Chinese identity. The concept of the people in traditional Chinese culture has to be stretched to incorporate the dual structure that the modern notion presupposes.

Yet these paradoxes are not unique to China. To the extent that a constitutionalized peoplehood creates the dual category of people versus citizen, the performativity paradox is internal to the idea of the modern nation. The renewed demands for an essentialized culture shared by a people emerges from the demand for values abstract enough to legitimate the state and yet broad enough to define every citizen; internal to such constructions is an aporia created by the disjunction between models of communication presupposed in legitimating the state and those generated by mass-publicity and consumerism. Homi Bhabha and Paul de Man have described the tension as between the pedagogical (Bhabha) or constative (de Man) and the performative—between the self-generating subject of "we, the people" moving in an abstract historical time and the "in-betweenness" of the production of "we-ness" in present time. Yet, as we have seen, the abstract subject in its dual "we-ness" as people and citizen emerges as the legitimating moment of the law of laws, as the double solution to the performative paradox of modern nationhood. The ongoing performative paradox is resolved by an appeal to the peoplehood of the founding moment that binds every "present we" in a past and future that is seen as its own.

If Habermas's contention that the bourgeois public sphere and its constructions of publics and peoples is the origin point for ideology is correct, then putting a global spin on the construction of peoples and publics leads to a recognition of the fundamental importance of this cluster of constructions for our whole understanding of what a global order consists of. Marx tried to go beyond the bourgeoisie's self-understanding of their own agency by positing another subject of history—capital (itself structured by the duality of abstract and concrete labor time), which constitutes the totality of social relations; the necessary dis-

juncture between these two modes of agency in capitalism is the source of and is created by ideology. Reinterpreting Habermas's account, ideology becomes a performative construction created by the slippage between specific and general conceptions of peoples and publics. The ideology of peoplehood and the concept of national culture appear as each society's solution to its own founding and ongoing performative paradox; at the same time, these "manifestations of the socially necessary consciousness in its essential falsity" (Habermas 1989, 88) have become presuppositions of the modern world order.

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