

The Intellectual Life of Macao

The Hollow Heart

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INTRODUCTION

How does one begin to evaluate critically the intellectual life of a city? This is a formidable task indeed, and there are as many views on this as there are citizens. Therefore this paper presents the author’s own view, and this view is deliberately partisan in order to be provocative.

How does one construe intellectual life, let alone critically evaluate it? What criteria does one use to critically evaluate it? What kind of kind of evidence does one use? Is it the number and quality of papers published in journals, cutting edge research, or perhaps public debate? Where does one look for signs of intellectual life? Where one looks determines what one finds. Does one search only in the academy, or does one move into the public sphere? Does one look at media debate, or cultural events, or public debates, or publications and ripostes, or government affairs? Does a city have an intellectual life, or is intellectual life an individual matter, or is the city’s intellectual life that of the individual writ large, plus some non-reducible items?

The term ‘intellectual’ is slippery. For example, ‘intellectual’ can be used to denote that knowledge obtained by reasoning, understanding—perhaps objectively—and the use of mental powers, or it can be used simply to mean ‘clever’ or ‘educated’, or ‘thoughtful’. It would not be difficult to find evidence in some of Macao’s higher education institutions of such intellectual work, some of it, as perhaps should be expected, of international significance in scholarship and patents, with other parts less significant.

This paper takes two perspectives, very different in their origins and foci. One of them is about the intellectual life of the individual, and the other is the role of the public intellectual. They complement each other and, together, provide an integrated perspective on the intellectual life of Macao in which the individual and the society are combined, i.e. micro and macro perspectives. The first view of the intellectual way of life stems from the writing of the Dominican priest Antonin Sertillanges, and is more individualistic. The second is a perspective on the public intellectual, from Edward Said. Of course there are many perspectives that one can take, and in selecting only two one exposes oneself to the criticism of over-selectivity. Well, we will live with that.

Part of the view of intellectual life adopted here has an overt political agenda, which will become apparent as the paper proceeds, and that political agenda concerns the place and role of the intellectual in public life and the nature and role of intellectual life in society. For intellectuals to take up such a political role, and for intellectual life to rise to the challenges of bringing about a more socially just, equal society,

as espoused by Said, requires a tenacity of spirit and resolve in the individual, a state of mind, and a commitment to the benefits of humility, solitude and reflection as set out by Sertillanges.

THE ARGUMENT IN THE PAPER

The paper argues that, on the criteria set out by either author, Macao’s intellectual life is partial, limited and marginalised. In some spheres, for example in Macao’s higher education, there is plentiful intellectual activity, but, in the terms and criteria defined and used here, how far this is intellectual is questionable. Intellectual life in Macao is confined to a few locales and publications, and in some spheres it is redefined as upgrading for employment and career advancement rather than as intellectual creativity. In parallel with this is a vast tract of silence on public debate on the good life, on values, on worth, on societal, cultural and personal development.

In seeking explanations for this situation, the paper argues that such silencing commences from a very early stage in Macao’s schools, and that conformity and its reproduction are the input, medium and outcome of Macao’s schooling (i.e. an instance of the sociologist Anthony Giddens’s (1984) structuration theory), reducing creativity and the intellectual life, and contributing to a largely acquiescent, supine society in Macao (recognising, of course, that other factors also contribute to the *status quo*). Further, though some aspects of intellectual life are evident in higher education and in pockets of society such as religious communities and some associations, Macao’s conformist culture, coupled with the dangers of speaking out in a small state, combine to bring about a lack of developed public intellectual life.

Intellectual life, it is argued, requires its participants to become reflective and transformative, and not merely reproductive of inequality and impoverishment. The paper suggests that market societies, in which materialism, commodification, the entertainment culture, the overriding dominance of a business culture, immediate gratification and value interpreted as monetary gain abound, are a deformation of society and contribute to a reduction in intellectual life, yet these are prominent in Macao and some of its higher education institutions are incubators of this mentality. Intellectual life, it is argued, from the views

of both Sertillanges and Said, is dangerous, unsettling and demanding, of individuals, cultures and societies. The paper concludes that Macao’s development as an intellectual society needs a huge injection of public intellectuals who are prepared to engage, challenge and critique the *status quo*, with an agenda for the promotion of equality, social justice, and acting on the voices and aspirations of the weak, the poor, and the silenced. The paper makes a case for this to commence at the earliest stages of schooling, and being followed through into higher education.

Both authors studied here are clear in their view that the intellectual does not stand apart from her or his society but is organic and central to its development, and this requires a host of qualities of character, commitment and courage.

INTELLECTUAL LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF SERTILLANGES

At an individual level, the view of Sertillanges (1998) includes several features of intellectual life and preparation for it:

- Resolve;
- A sense of vocation, response and relative singularity of purpose;
- Connection with, and yet detachment from, one’s society, and cooperation with one’s fellows;
- The significance of contemplation, solitude, silence and reflection: ‘all pay tribute to loneliness, to the life of silence, to the night... Solitude is the homeland of the strong’ (Sertillanges, 1998, pp. 48 and 51);
- The importance of conscience;
- Self-discipline and the austere obligation of deep study, avoiding ‘the danger of being easily satisfied’ (ibid., p. 119);
- The significance of learning and self-examination;
- The importance of freedom (albeit construed in different ways);
- A renunciation of the self and the cultivation of a sense of selflessness;
- The cultivation of the inner life;
- The readiness to admit error whilst holding ‘an uncompromising adherence to our fundamental persuasions’ (Sertillanges, p. xxv);
- A recognition of the limits of reason and of our own pretensions and frailties;

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- A breadth of outlook: ‘a ‘dry fruit’ stands for one who knows nothing; but also for one whose mind is shrunken and shrivelled because he [sic] has prematurely confined himself to the cultivation of one department of study’ (ibid., p. 102).
- Modesty and humility coupled with strength of belief.

On Sertillanges’s criteria, it is difficult to discern much intellectual life in Macao. The commodification of life and people, the rampant materialism and Macao’s gross entertainment culture, and ‘the laziness in disguise which prefers easy familiarity with others’ thoughts to personal effort’ (Sertillanges, 1998, p. 146) defy that kind of intellectual life. Personal intellectual development vis-à-vis Sertillanges is not easy to find in Macao amongst Macao’s academic community, and it is even harder to detect outside the academic community apart from, perhaps, its religious communities. But it leaves hundreds of thousands untouched in Macao; they go about their daily business in a relative intellectual vacuum. As the English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1925, p. 166) opined: ‘most people would die sooner than think; in fact they do so’.

Whilst some academic life is clearly oriented towards promoting the social good and the development of knowledge, both of which are entirely worthy, with exceptions noted, it is not always easy to see how much of it is about anything more than personal advancement, i.e. how it contributes to the public good of Macao or the public debate on societal values and development. Personal advancement and recognition for its own sake is in contrast to the view of Sertillanges who suggests that the true intellectual sets aside ambition in favour of the disinterested pursuit of the truth, of knowledge. This is very far from the culture that one observes in many quarters of Macao, when vaulting ambition and gaining face are driving forces for many of Macao’s leading figures. As Sertillanges (1998) remarks:

[c]ome to the intellectual life with unselfish motives, not through ambition or foolish vanity. The jingling bells of publicity tempt only frivolous minds. Ambition offends eternal truth by subordinating truth to itself... An act of ambition apropos of knowledge ceases to be an act of the pursuit of knowledge, and he [sic] who indulges in it ceases to deserve the name of intellectual. (Sertillanges, 1998, pp. 6 and 26)

Academic life in many parts of Macao becomes a score sheet of how many papers one produces, one’s level of promotion and influence, one’s personal advancement, and the public display of all this. Here academic ‘performance’ is just another commodity in a commodified society, treating individuals as commodities. Academic life is too often redefined as the production of papers and the conduct of research, some of it of dubious contribution to the advancement of anything apart from the authors’ egos and self-indulgence. Unfortunately one detects an undeserved arrogance in some of Macao’s intelligentsia, as though they have placed themselves beyond criticism, and there is little sign of academic or intellectual questioning of their claims. The lack of critique of the views of Macao’s ‘intellectuals’ is observable daily in its media; there is no debate.

Sertillanges’s requirements for humility, modesty and a dogged commitment to learning and quiet reflection sit uncomfortably with a higher education system whose teachers and students study entertainment and gaming with such enthusiasm, with its emphasis on immediate, instant gratification, indulgence, gross appetites, money and the dubious consolations of mass entertainment, whilst at the same time rigorous intellectual life is side-lined.

Taking Sertillanges’s view of the intellectual life, it appears that, in Macao, the cultivation of intellectual life in individuals seeking the truth often gives way to pride and self-advancement. A quick review of some of the higher education web sites indicates much being made of what is actually little serious scholarship in Macao, and of self-promotion amongst those who, if they were true intellectuals, should know better.

INTELLECTUAL LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF SAID

In a much publicised set of Reith lectures in 1993—*Representations of the Intellectual*—Edward Said commented on two kinds of intellectual:

- Traditional intellectuals, such as teachers and priests, who, he suggests, do not challenge the *status quo*;
- ‘Organic intellectuals’, a term borrowed from Gramsci, to denote those who speak for the interests of particular, subaltern groups and classes in society and who are both inside society (i.e. engaged with a particular class or group) and

outside society (they look at society from without as well as from within) and who ‘constantly struggle to change minds’ (Said, 1993, p. 4).

Said takes Benda’s definition of intellectuals as ‘a tiny band of super-gifted and morally endowed philosopher-kings who constitute the conscience of mankind’ (p. 5). ‘Real intellectuals’, comments Said in discussing Benda, ‘constitute a clerisy, very rare creatures indeed, since what they uphold are eternal standards of truth and justice’ (p. 5). Indeed Benda (1928, p. 43) writes that real intellectuals are those:

whose activity is essentially not the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages, and hence in a certain manner say: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’. (Benda, 1928, p. 43)

Though Said is critical of Benda’s conservative interpretation of ‘intellectual’, for Benda, like Said, real intellectuals are not disengaged from the world, but ‘when, moved by metaphysical passion and disinterested principles of justice and truth, they denounce corruption, defend the weak, defy imperfect or oppressive authority’ (p. 6). This brings them into opposition with the *status quo*. As Said remarks, Benda’s ‘figure of the intellectual [is] as... someone who is able to speak the truth to power, a crusty, eloquent, fantastically courageous and angry individual for whom no worldly power is too big an imposing to be criticised and pointedly taken to task’ (p. 8).

Intellectuals are powerful. Said observes that ‘there has been no major revolution in modern history without intellectuals’ (pp. 10-11). He sets out his view of an intellectual:

[T]he intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d’être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. The intellectual does so on

the basis of universal principles: that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behaviour concerning freedom and justice from worldly powers or nations, and that deliberate or inadvertent violations of these standards need to be testified and fought against courageously... Least of all should an intellectual be there to make his/her audiences feel good: the whole point is to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant... My argument is that intellectuals are individuals with a vocation for the art of representing, whether that is talking, writing, teaching, appearing on television. (Said, 1996, pp. 11-13)

Said (ibid., p. 21) quotes the American sociologist C. Wright Mills, who comments that ‘[t]he independent artist and intellectual are among the few remaining personalities equipped to resist and to fight the stereotyping and consequent death of genuinely living things’ (p. 21). Indeed Said positions the intellectual thus:

There is an inherent discrepancy between the powers of large organisations, from governments to corporations, and the relative weakness, not just of individuals, but of human beings considered to have subaltern status, minorities, small peoples and states, inferior or lesser cultures and races. There is no question in my mind that the intellectual belongs on the same side with the weak and unrepresented... At bottom, the intellectual in my sense of the word is neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. (Said, 1996, pp. 22-23)

Said’s view of the socially attached intelligentsia is entirely distinct from that of, for example, Mannheim (1936, pp. 140-141), who suggests that the intelligentsia are unattached to any social class and who freely—voluntarily—decide their own affiliations and move between the owners of the means of production: those involved in the process of production (workers and entrepreneurs) and the social relations of production. Said is on the side of the subordinated groups, and he gives us a disarmingly frank comment not only on the role of the public intellectual but of intellectual

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life more widely as being essentially engaged in the emancipation of all sectors of society.

Said’s view resonates with the views of the cultural critics Giroux (1983, 1989) and Aronowitz & Giroux (1985) who speak of ‘transformative intellectuals’. Transformative intellectuals ‘are part of a specific class and/or movement and... serve to give it an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields’ (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1986, p. 135). For Said, Giroux and Aronowitz, intellectuals work to achieve a more equitable society in which individual dignity and identity are fashioned and refashioned. Transformative intellectuals raise awareness of contested issues, treating people as critical agents, questioning how—and whose—knowledge is produced and distributed in the wider society and in whose interests this is operating. The intention is to make society more ideologically critical with a view to its emancipation. Intellectuals work on, and with, the experiences of members of society and interrogate and critique these experiences for their ideological messages. The intention here is to expose oppression, inequality and the construction of social identities within asymmetrical relations of power of different groups in society. This is with the intention of transforming ways of looking at lives, life situations and life chances, so that members of society experience empowerment and emancipation as members of diverse cultures and communities. They develop their ‘voice’ within participatory democracies.

Said, Giroux, and Aronowitz and Giroux echo the famous statement from Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*: ‘the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it’. They ascribe a political role for intellectuals, rather than simply the self-serving creation of abstract reasoning for its own sake, or the articulation of theory alone, however elegant and refined it may be. It is difficult to discern such transformative intellectuals in Macao.

At a societal level, the view of Said, the elements and manifestations of intellectual life include:

- A social conscience manifested through debate, leadership and action;
- Prominence given in society to issue of social justice, truth, freedoms, values, quality of life;
- An articulation and questioning of predominant values, attitudes and principles of societal operations;

- Public, engaged discourse and critical debate on issues of corruption, defence of the weak and the poor, the disempowered and the disenfranchised, and a defiance of imperfect or oppressive authority;
- Public questioning and ideological critique of dominant ideologies and oppressive orthodoxies, dogma in the public sphere, and the status quo of asymmetries of power, influence, wealth, freedoms, privilege, political agendas and interests;
- Disinterested, selfless promotion of equality and social justice;
- An exposure of illegitimate and non-egalitarian practices in society;
- Promotion and embodiment of independence of thought.

On Said’s criteria, Macao’s intellectual life is stunted, partial, incomplete and immature. Whilst members of academic institutions in Macao can easily bring to the fore any number of their publications in learned journals, dissecting out to the nth degree the manifold intricacies of such-and-such an issue, conducting and reporting research on a myriad of empirical matters (and nobody would wish to suggest that this is not important), in Macao we are starved of Said’s intellectuals who are the modern day public *philosophes*: leading intellectuals who can articulate, represent and lead the moral sense and direction of society.

Whilst Macao has academics routinely paraded in the media to make anodyne comments on such-and-such a piece of public policy or local matter, there is no spark of the ‘clerisy’ of standards of truth and justice of which Benda (and indeed Sertillanges) spoke. It is difficult to detect many in Macao who, to use Benda’s words quoted earlier, are ‘moved by metaphysical passion and disinterested principles of justice and truth’ and who ‘denounce corruption, defend the weak, defy imperfect or oppressive authority’, or who ‘speak the truth to power, a crusty, eloquent, fantastically courageous and angry individual for whom no worldly power is too big an imposing to be criticized and pointedly taken to task’.

It is difficult to identify those in Macao who, to restate Said’s comments earlier, ‘publicly...raise embarrassing questions,... confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them),... who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations,

and whose *raison d’être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug... on the basis of universal principles: that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behavior concerning freedom and justice from worldly powers or nations’. In other words, what obtains in Macao is a worthy but selective, incomplete and limited view of intellectual life, a view that is politically anodyne, supine and largely unquestioning and accepting, bought off in part by government handouts and support for non-politically threatening research. Intellectual life is timorous and silenced. Macao does not have its Chomsky, Solzhenitsyn, Russell or Said: formidable intellects with a passion for compassion, human dignity and social justice.

Perhaps it is Macao’s small size that makes outspoken comments from intellectuals difficult to make or to discern. In Macao, face-giving (and Sertillanges [1998, p. 42] comments that ‘[d]isplay and dissipation of mind are mortal enemies of thought’) and face-saving bring about self-protection and an unwillingness to speak out, to seriously speak out. (‘Face’ here is defined as ‘the public self-image that every member of a society wants to claim for himself’ (Faure and Ding, 2003, p. 91). One can have very few secrets in Macao; people frequently know each other’s most intimate personal, family and professional matters and history. The thrust towards collectivism, harmony, consensus and conflict avoidance, perhaps a necessary feature of ‘getting along’ in a small state or territory, is heightened by the Chinese culture of consensus, collectivism (Hofstede, 1980; 1983) and relationships. As Zohar (1997, p. 110) writes: ‘in Chinese culture, I am defined by my relationships... and thus the boundaries of my own identity are quite ambiguous and contextual’. Further, there are defining characteristics of Macao which derive from the Confucian ethic of conformity and respect for seniority (Lee, 1996), and a reluctance to threaten social stability. As Zohar (1997, p. 112) writes, such stability can be ‘a bit claustrophobic’.

The close proximity of people to each other in Macao is coupled with a widespread Chinese characteristic of deep-seated obedience to authority, for giving, saving and maintaining ‘face’, and for the desire for collective harmony and consensus. Because Macao is small, because it is a tightly networked society, and because secrets are hard to keep from the public

about personal and professional matters, this renders speaking out a ‘high stakes’ exercise. Much can hang on public opinion, public domain knowledge or public perception (c.f. Sutton, 1987). Reputations can be very fragile, and ‘face is a fragile commodity’ (Faure and Ding, 2003, p. 91). What, in other, larger, societies, might go unheeded in connection with an individual’s actions (c.f. Goyder, 1987; Austin, 2002, p. 27) are the subject of public scrutiny and knowledge in Macao. As Foucault (1991) remarks, the surveillance culture leads to self-surveillance and self-censorship. In a very small state or jurisdiction such as Macao, individuals can exert considerable influence and their impact can be powerful (c.f. Bray, 1998, p. 18; Bray and Kwo, 2002, p. 198). Macao is a hothouse for magnifying the influence of individual decision makers, decisions and people in powerful positions.

It is unsurprising, then, that the Chinese culture of face-saving, face-giving, sustaining and retaining face (Bond and Hwang, 1986, p. 246; Bond, 1991), themselves closely linked to self-protective and self-defensive behaviour, are experienced sharply in Macao. Public perception, opinion and knowledge are influential, so it is little wonder that self-protecting behaviour features strongly here, in society and in intellectual life. Face-saving and self-protection, whilst not peculiar to Chinese cultures (see Goffman, 1959; 1963), are acutely significant and sensitive in Chinese society and small states and territories.

The ‘hothouse effect’ in small states, wherein small issues can be amplified into huge matters, leads to self-protecting behaviours in Macao. Because one’s future can be fragile in a scenario such as Macao, then damage limitation and self-protection are almost inevitable. It is small wonder that, in intellectual terms, many of Macao’s alleged intellectuals self-censor; they may have too much to lose if they speak out. Macao may be a microcosm of such problems experienced in many small states and territories, heightened here by its very smallness.

Further, Said’s views provide a critique of market societies in which everything is a commodity and everything has its price. We are not only consumers but we are consumed by materialism. Macao is what the celebrated Harvard philosopher Michael Sandel (2013) terms a ‘market society’ (as opposed to a market economy), in which everything is ‘up for sale’. In market societies like Macao, everything is a commodity

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and everything has its price. We are not only consumers but we are consumed by materialism. Many live for, and by, Macao’s pleasure palaces; the entertainment culture penetrates deep into their psyche. Contrast this to the view of the intellectual life of a city in which some aspects of living cannot have a price put on them; they are beyond the reach of market forces. We do them, promote them and contribute to them because we consider them worth doing.

Market societies neglect issues of human worth and values, and Said is quick to indicate that intellectual life requires a fundamental concern for equality, social justice and hearing the voice of the weak and the poor. But in much of Macao profit alone rules the day. Sandel observes that markets exacerbate inequality as key human public good—health, education and social services—are more available to those who can pay. He comments that important ‘non-market’ goods; health, education, social services and personal relations are sacrificed, crowded out or outsourced in a market society in which everything, even humans, comes with a price tag.

The good life becomes that which only a few can afford rather than being a fundamental human right. It becomes equated with the possession of commodities, with people as mere consumers and commodities. Personal relations, moral debate, values, justice, fairness and equality are pushed into a corner, whilst king money rules. Markets are socially divisive; the rich do very nicely whilst the others suffer. Who is there in Macao who is speaking out about these matters? At the time of writing, Macao’s GINI coefficient is rising; its rich are fabulously wealthy but many citizens queue for free food hand-outs. Where are Macao’s intellectuals speaking out about this?

Macao’s public good has become a tradable private good. Civic virtue—doing things for everyone’s benefit—is low on the agenda, whilst financial profit reigns supreme. Commodify everything and make money; that is the name of the game, but only a few can win at it. Where are Macao’s intellectuals speaking out about this?

We should heed Michael Sandel’s advice that to look at the world as only a huge market is simply wrong-headed. Justice, equality, fairness, the good life, civic virtue, morals, values, wealth distribution, empowerment of the disempowered, the weak, the poor and the silenced, transcend mere money and

profit. The intellectual life of a city must improve society because it is good to improve society, not simply because it puts money into the pockets of the few. It is difficult to hear the voice of Macao’s intellectuals here. Macao’s society must be much more than a market commodity, but where are Macao’s intellectuals speaking out about this?

Both Said and Sertillanges recognise, in different ways and for different reasons, that an intellectual life is dangerous, and they suggest why this is. For Sertillanges, intellectual life demands tenacity, resolve and commitment as it is personally challenging. For Said, it involves an unwavering exposure of inequality in all its forms. In both cases intellectuals have to contend with ‘dangerous knowledge’ (Giroux, 1989): that knowledge which challenges and upsets the *status quo* of individuals, society and policy makers, and a rich means of intervening in social, economic and cultural production and reproduction of inequality, in raising awkward questions about power and its operation in society and decision-making.

INSTITUTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS FOR INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN MACAO

The discussion so far has focused on the individual intellectual as a member of Macao’s society. But, as Durkheim (1895) indicated, there are ‘social facts’, and it is possible to construe intellectual life in terms that are not reducible to individual behaviours. At this level one can examine the institutions in Macao that promote intellectual discussion, enquiry and discourse. In some there is academic discussion that abides by the nature of intellectual life in the terms discussed by Said, for example the Macao Economic Association which concerns itself with research on inequality in Macao. There are institutions which promote the cultures of Macao and other countries. There are religious institutions (e.g. the Macau Ricci Institute) and institutions for educational concerns. Indeed Macao has close to 100 associations with a diversity of interests, and over 170 trade unions. It has newspapers and media in several languages. However, with only a few exceptions, it is sometimes difficult to detect any extended intellectual engagement with the key issues on Said’s agenda.

Other major centres that one would look to in Macao for evidence of intellectual activity are, of course,

the schools and higher education institutions. One can ask why there is comparatively so little intellectual life in Macao. I suggest that the roots lie in a deep-seated conformity, which is taught and learned in schools and higher education. A hidden curriculum of conformity operates to the silencing of intellectual life, questioning and critique in Macao. It starts at an early age and reaches up into higher education.

EXPLANATIONS FOR MACAO’S INTELLECTUAL IMPOVERISHMENT

Conformity is rife in Macao’s schools and higher education.

SCHOOLS

If one goes into many Macao school classrooms one is struck by several features:

- The physical environment is often sterile and unstimulating; there is a dearth of displays, and what displays exist under-represent students’ work and over-represent badly drawn, kitsch cartoon characters; the décor is drab;
- The environment is provided for the children rather than by the children;
- Few areas, if any, of the curriculum are represented in the few classroom displays that exist;
- There are few books or classroom libraries;
- Classrooms are starved of resources or interest, and crowded, with children overwhelmingly packed in single or double rows, and working largely alone; where they do sit in groups there is little or no group interaction—grouping is a seating arrangement rather than a working arrangement.

In many classrooms the curriculum and the work are entirely undifferentiated. The lessons are standardised, driven by standard textbooks, delivered largely through a single mode (the teachers’ lecture), reinforced by routine testing (Morrison and Tang, 2002), producing standardised, formatted minds (Sacks 1999). All students are required to go through the same material at the same pace in the same way, and classrooms resemble assembly lines or processing factories involved in the mass production of the same standardised goods. Transmission teaching delivers the same uniform product. All the students are expected to reach the same



standard (a passing grade) and this is characterised by an over-representation of lower order thinking and an under-representation of higher order thinking (Morrison, 2009). The teacher tells the students what to think, how to think it, when to think it, and, through testing, how well they have thought. This is control, perhaps done benevolently and caringly, but nevertheless control.

Students and teachers in schools and higher education are weighed down by the burden of learning, reciting and repeating facts and information, with huge amounts of marking to be done by the teachers (Morrison and Tang, 2002). The knowledge is inert; many children have difficulty in recalling the knowledge—they have never used it, and, as brain-based research tells us, one has to ‘use it or lose it’ (Cilliers 1998, p. 93).

In many Macao classrooms one is struck by the amount of choral chanting that takes place, at high volume. Students chant, they shout, with one voice, particularly at kindergarten and primary levels. The quiet hand of conformity is powerfully taught and learned from a very early age. Conformity is over-determined—rendered inevitable through the combined influence of several causes—by the content and structure of lessons. It is a powerful hidden curriculum.

Many art lessons comprise students copying, or colouring given outlines of drawings; though they

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may select which colours to use, they have to stay within given lines and boundaries, the agenda for their colouring being pre-set, with no free expression in the *generation* or *creation* of what will be drawn. PE lessons are marked by lines of students performing exercises: an army of trainees. Students have to stay within prescribed boundaries. They are truly being schooled.

Though there is some integrated teaching (e.g. thematic teaching) at the kindergarten stage, from then on students are taught ‘lessons’. In many kindergartens and lower primary classes one could as easily be in a secondary classroom, the only difference being in the age of the children; the teaching and learning styles are the same and the organisation of the curriculum is largely the same. There is little distinctive pedagogy in each age phase in Macao schools. There are subjects in more than one sense: compartmentalised knowledge with students subjected to a regimen in whose creation they have no part.

Macao schools do not challenge students (other than to keep quiet), and students do not challenge the system. The system is extensively hegemonic (Gramsci 1971). Schools are highly hierarchical, closed institutions, with several mechanisms for command, control and surveillance (ibid.), e.g. with CCTV cameras installed.

One does not challenge the system, as the benefits of not challenging it outweigh the disadvantages of challenging it. Indeed, one can observe many very young children enjoying the lessons that are teaching them to conform: training a society of happy slaves. One of the unspoken features of schooling in Macao is that the students generally have a positive attitude to school and behave well—it would be the envy of many teachers elsewhere to have such learners—and yet these same children are given a diet of dull and unstimulating lessons to be endured in silent boredom. They adhere to a system which represses them: a fully-fledged hegemony (Gramsci, 1971).

The 2003 Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA) (OECD 2004, p. 129) reported that 15-year-olds in Macao were the lowest of all 40 participating countries in their sense of belonging to school and second highest in their feelings of being ‘left out of things’ in school; they felt disconnected from school, an irony in, yet a consequence of, a conformist regime. Indeed 39 per cent of Macao’s students said ‘I feel helpless when doing a mathematics problem’,

with only 13 countries scoring more highly. Only 57 per cent of Macao’s students reported that ‘the teacher gives students an opportunity to express opinions’ in mathematics, with 28 countries scoring more highly on this issue. Some 55% of Macao’s students reported that ‘when I study mathematics I try to learn the answers to problems off by heart’, with only 11 countries scoring more highly. Macao’s students are disconnected from their school (only 3 countries scored lower on the factor ‘I feel I belong’).

The PISA 2009 data indicate that, in terms of standardised tests, Macao’s students have more than twice the OECD average for ‘monthly’ tests and three times the OECD average for such tests ‘more than once a month’. In regard to teacher-developed tests, they have nearly twice as many as the OECD average for ‘more than once a month’ whilst, for more authentic forms of assessment, such as portfolios, 46 per cent of the responses indicated ‘never’, nearly twice that of the OECD average. (This echoes Morrison and Tang (2002) which indicated that school students in Macao were subject to an average of two tests a day.) For assessment by use of homework, whilst the OECD average was 56.5 per cent, for Macao’s students it was 97.1 per cent.

Whilst the OECD average for ‘teachers not meeting individual students needs’ was 26 per cent for the response ‘to some extent’ and 2.7 per cent for the response ‘a lot’, for Macao the responses were 47.9 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. Whilst the OECD average for the responses ‘to some extent’ and ‘a lot’ to the item ‘students not being encouraged to achieve their full potential’ was 23.5 per cent, for Macao’s students it was 42.9 per cent. For the item ‘the teacher encourages students to express their opinion about a text’, for the response ‘most lessons or all lessons’, the OECD rating was: 54.3 per cent, whilst for Macao students it was 36.7 per cent.

Importantly, for the item ‘the teacher poses questions that motivate students to participate actively’, for the response ‘most lessons or all lessons’, the OECD rating was 45 per cent whilst for Macao it was only 34.2 per cent. For the item ‘school has done little to prepare me for adult life when I leave school’, whilst the responses ‘agree or strongly agree’ were 23.8 per cent for OECD countries, for Macao they were 49.1 per cent.

In Macao, students and teachers are under immense pressure from marks and assessments, which

play a critical role in students’ school careers; the pedagogy is traditional; performance in some school subjects has a lot of room for improvement; and the curriculum is regarded as often irrelevant to students and their future work, and yet there is little incentive to change.

In short, the suppression of the creation and development of the intellectual life is strong in many of Macao’s schools.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Whilst it would be unworthy to deny or understate the high level research and teaching that takes place in Macao’s universities and its other institutions of higher education, or to understate the commitments of its teachers and researchers in promoting the good life, nevertheless it is not always easy to see the criteria of intellectual life from Said and Sertillanges being fulfilled in the public arena in Macao. For sure, one can easily find monumental lists of publications from those working in academic institutions, but how far these impact beyond the walls of the institutions more widely into Macao society is less straightforward to discover. There is much separation of the academic research from the Macao environment, and this may be entirely justified, and, indeed, there is research in, on and about Macao, but it is remarkable that it has so little, if any, impact on Macao society.

In terms of pedagogy, there is much didactic, one-way lecturing, with teachers delivering their lecture through a microphone, such that the noise and the teacher’s voice are relentless and inescapable. Despite this, students sleep in lessons; they switch off and are switched off learning. The teacher is typically working much harder than the students, and if the students don’t pay attention then that is construed as *their* problem, not the teacher’s. The lesson is about transmission, not necessarily about learning.

Whole class teaching is accompanied by individual work and limited interaction. Many classrooms typically embody differential language rights. Not only does the teacher have more language rights than the students but it is the teacher who decides what these will be, and the teacher monopolises the talk. As with thinking, the teacher decides who will talk, what they will talk about, when they will talk, and how well they have talked (c.f. Edwards 1980). There are very few open-ended questions. Students’

learning is frequently passive and responsive. Students rarely initiate classroom talk; there is little or no choice yet plentiful copying, repetition and exercises. When students are asked if they have any questions, there is frequently silence; they have learned to receive without question. This is compounded by a frequently observed phenomenon: the teacher asks a question, there is no response, so the teacher answers his/her own question. There is no need for the students to participate; all they need to do is to sit silently and wait, not disrupt, and everything will be done for them.

One would hope that Macao’s upcoming higher education graduates would fuel an intellectual debate on these issues. Macao has a plethora of higher education institutions for such a small city, some private, some public, some monotechnic, some multidisciplined. However, the scenario for developing intellectual life in the city is not promising in this respect. Equality is not even being served in the gender balance of its students. For local HE students in Macao 2011/12 (the latest data at the time of writing) some crude data are unsettling: 7,877 local males and 10,810 local females were in higher education in Macao, a 1:1.37 ratio of males to females. Not only is there a gender imbalance in the number of males and females taking up higher education, but their fields of study are revealing (Table 1).

One sees the prevalence of vocational, employment-oriented students in Macao, a massive emphasis on business, tourism and entertainment, and a comparative dearth of other areas being studied. Data for the academic year 2011/12 (GAES, 2013) indicate the proportions of local students studying different areas in Macao thus:

Social and behavioural science:	6%
Health and Social Welfare	9%
Education:	6%
Humanities and Arts:	12%
Tourism and entertainment:	28%
Business and management:	39%

More than twice as many students were studying business, tourism and entertainment than education, humanities, arts, social science, health and social welfare combined. In other words, put perhaps simplistically, higher education in Macao is not educating fully its next generation of intellectuals; rather it is training employees. Its higher education appears to be largely

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operating a service function, for employment: an impoverished view of education.

Macao is beginning to wake up to being a learning society, but, at the time of writing, what it is learning is of questionable worth in terms of the intellectual life—money and entertainment trump everything, the poor seem not to matter, learning is for getting a better job, and a city’s self-examination doesn’t matter as long as the money and the tourists roll in.

As with schools, the suppression of the creation and development of the intellectual life is strong in many of Macao’s higher education institutions.

The picture painted here of educational institutions in Macao, is perhaps depressing. Whilst it may not hold true in all cases, this is not the point; the point is that it happens in Macao, and this conformity stifles intellectual life.

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that intellectual life can be defined in many ways. Two perspectives on this, have been taken: from Sertillanges and Said. Whilst Sertillanges sets out considerations for the intellectual life of the individual, Said takes a more public political line on intellectual life, suggesting that the intellectual has a political responsibility to speak out against oppression, inequality, and exploitation, and to ensure that the weak, the poor and the disadvantaged are heard in society. However, one notes that Sertillanges is very concerned for intellectuals to be involved in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and that this displaces personal self-promotion and ambition as drivers of intellectual life.

More than this, Said is suggesting that the intellectual in society is the grit in the oyster, the irritant that brings about a pearl. In this respect Said is echoing a line of public philosophers that reaches back to Marx and beyond, arguing that to understand, explain and interpret the world is worthy but insufficient in improving society. Intellectuals and intellectual life have to change, improve and emancipate society to render it more equal, to further social justice, to operate ideology critique and to improve the lot of the dispossessed, the weak and the silenced. Intellectual life requires its participants to become transformative, not merely reproductive of inequality and impoverishment.

Further, the paper has argued that market societies in which materialism, commodification, the entertainment culture, immediate gratification and value interpreted as monetary gain abound, are a deformation of society and constitute a reduction in intellectual life, yet these are prominent in Macao. The paper has argued that in Macao, though some aspects of academic and intellectual life are evident in higher education and in pockets of society such as religious communities and some associations, Macao’s conformist culture, coupled with the dangers of speaking out in a small state, render its public intellectuals an almost extinct species. Hence part of the title of this paper is ‘the hollow heart’.

Intellectual life is dangerous, unsettling and demanding, both of individuals and societies. As Sertillanges (1998, p. 253) writes: ‘intellectual life is heroism; would you want heroism to cost nothing?’ It is profoundly pedagogical and requires profound courage. It is hard to see much of either in Macao. As Aronowitz and Giroux (1986, p. 37) remark:

[T]he starting point... for such intellectuals is not with the isolated student but with collective actors in their various cultural, class, racial, historical, and gendered settings, along with their particularity of their diverse problems, hopes, and dreams. It is at this point that the language of critique unites with the language of possibility. Aronowitz and Giroux (1986, p. 37)

Intellectuals and intellectual life are transformative, of individuals and societies. As these authors (ibid., p. 41) write, transformative intellectuals develop counter-hegemonic practices that can challenge the incorporation of subordinated groups into the dominant ideology.

Intellectual life, thus defined, is not confined to the academy; it is ‘but the slow and gradual cure of our blindness’ (Sertillanges, 1998, p. 77), and is at the heart of society. As Said (1996) remarks: ‘[o]ne task of the intellectual is the effort to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication’ (p. xi). Intellectuals, he opines, are ‘precisely those figures whose public performances can neither be predicted nor compelled into some slogan, orthodox party line, or fixed dogma’ (p.xii). In an era in which humanity in Macao is under threat, Macao needs its intellectuals more than ever. **RC**

Table 1: LOCAL HE STUDENTS BY AREA OF STUDY 2011/2012 (Source: GAES, 2013).

Broad Groups	Area of Study	Doctorate	Master	Post-graduate Diploma	Bachelor	Bacharelato (3-yr Degree)	Diploma	Total
Education	Teacher Training			49	483			532
	Education Science	12	93					105
	Physical Education		21		232	9		262
Humanities and Arts	Humanities	8	23		107			138
	Languages and Literature	2	60		754			816
	Translation		36		239	88		363
	Design and Arts		8		361	84		453
	Religion and Theology	5	10		2			17
Social Science, Business and Law	Social and Behavioural Science	7	132		659			798
	Cultural Heritage		19		37	73		129
	Journalism and Communication	4	17		822			843
	Business and Management	35	505		4,542	383	39	5,504
	Gaming Management				272			272
	Public Administration	5	141		454	56		656
	Law	10	83	87	517			697
Science	Life Science	2			6			8
	Mathematics		9		28			37
	Computing and Information Technology	6	58		385	4		453
Architecture and Engineering	Engineering	10	64		213			287
	Architecture and Town Planning	3	40		140			183
Health and Social Welfare	Medicine	2	13		178			193
	Nursing and Health	5	61	22	498	29		615
	Pharmacy		28		31			59
	Social Services		7		406	49		462
Services	Tourism and Entertainment	2	79	35	3,017	825	124	4,082
	Environment Protection	2			8			10
	Security				82			82
Total		120	1,507	193	14,473	1,600	163	18,056

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Entre *Artes Liberales* e *Liuyi* (Seis Artes)
Um Esboço de Certas Peculiaridades
da Concepção Chinesa de “Arte” na Dinastia Han

GIORGIO SINEDINO*

I

É lugar comum que as palavras arte, *art*, *Kunst* são semanticamente equivalentes. Mas até que ponto poderemos dizer o mesmo de *yìshu* 藝術? Num momento em que a Arte se encontra “unificada” por um mercado globalizado e em que a sua significância maior reside na busca de “novas linguagens”, parece fácil ignorar as especificidades culturais dos termos e passar directamente ao que todos “sabemos” que significa. Entretanto, a história da palavra “arte” impede qualquer generalização, ou mesmo consenso, sobre como se produziu a universalidade hoje atribuída à instituição Arte.

O que temos por certo é que há duas formas de tratar o problema. A primeira tenta encontrar um princípio de coerência que dê forma e/ou substância às diversas manifestações que poderíamos classificar ou

qualificar como “arte”: seja o Belo, seja a representação, seja a apreciação, etc. Esta é a forma mais prática de se aproximar uma escultura budista do período Yuan a um crucifixo pintado por Cimabue, deixando-os placidamente confortáveis um ao lado do outro. A segunda enfatiza as circunstâncias sociais de certas actividades produtivas, realçando a posição do artista, do apreciador e do crítico. Conforme este segundo método, fica mais evidente aquilo que a abordagem “filosófica” teve que ignorar para afirmar que a Arte existe como conceito.

Por outro lado, mesmo se o mercado artístico e as relações patrono-artista ou objecto-apreciador forem de facto “universais”, como conciliar a(s) Arte(s) voltadas para dois ideais de perfeição culturalmente diferentes? Mesmo que, por um lado, todos os artistas busquem fama e riqueza, que dizer de diferentes preconceitos e restrições sociopolíticas, particularmente de aspirações e problemas existenciais culturalmente incompatíveis? Uma noção radicalmente formal e objectiva de Arte não terminaria por contaminar o facto de que a Arte tem papel e relevância distintos em culturas diferentes? Um certo distanciamento histórico talvez contribua para a discussão: trataremos brevemente das *artes liberales* no Ocidente e, num segundo momento, das “Seis Artes” (*liuyi* 六藝) na China.

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