

There are no immediate survivors, but two generations of scholars will remain indebted to her for her many contributions.

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### BENJAMIN ISADORE SCHWARTZ (1916–1999)

Benjamin I. Schwartz, Leroy B. Williams Professor of History and Government at Harvard University, died November 21 at his home in Cambridge.

Born in East Boston to an immigrant family, Schwartz was educated at Boston Latin School and Harvard College. With a major in Romance Languages, he was preparing for a career in high school teaching when World War II turned him toward East Asia, specifically Japan. As an army officer in signals intelligence, he was immersed in Japanese secret radio traffic, and happened to be the duty officer who read and analyzed the first intercepted message that hinted at Japan's readiness to surrender. After the war, he entered the Harvard Graduate School, studied Chinese, and joined the first of John K. Fairbank's seminars in Regional Studies (along with Joseph Levenson and other future leaders in the modern China field). He was appointed in 1950 to the Harvard faculty, on which he served until his retirement in 1987.

The work that established Schwartz as an intellectual leader, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Harvard University Press, 1951) was developed from his doctoral dissertation. Here one finds already some characteristic marks of his scholarship. His aim was to describe the relationship between worker and peasant movements in the evolution of CCP doctrine, particularly Mao's role in rationalizing the de facto autonomy of the militarized CCP from its supposed "proletarian" base. The trick for Kremlin and CCP ideologists was to be sure that innovations *in deed* were camouflaged by orthodoxy *in word*, in order "to conceal . . . the actual severance of the Chinese party from its proletarian base." Sources in Russian, Japanese, and Chinese led Schwartz to conclude that Maoism was no mere creation of Soviet strategists, nor an example of orthodox Leninism, but rather an original adaptation to the concrete military-political situation of China in the 1920s and 1930s. This conclusion, now so generally accepted, constituted a crucial advance in the intellectual context of 1951 and a turning point in the development of modern China studies, and led to a more sophisticated understanding of international Communism. Underneath lay Schwartz's belief that we must both take ideas seriously and place them firmly in the context of action; and that in evaluating particular ideas, we must consider their broader matrix of culture and thought.

Delving deeper to the underlying problem of how Chinese conceived the relationship between their own cultural background and Western thought, Schwartz studied the pioneer translator-interpreter, Yen Fu. *In Search Of Wealth And Power: Yen Fu And The West* (Harvard University Press, 1964) could only have been written by one broadly learned in both Chinese and Western cultures. Schwartz's study of Yen's translations required a critical re-reading of the works of Spencer, J. S. Mill, Montesquieu, Huxley, and others, in a way that revealed their core messages as perceived by a Chinese mind. The mind of Yen Fu focussed on how state power in the West was connected to Western social thought, and how Chinese state power could profit from the same connection. To perceive how the thought of "liberal" thinkers was intimately connected to the "Promethean explosion" of the Western

industrial state was Yen's special contribution to his age, and at the same time Schwartz's contribution to a deeper understanding of the modern West.

Yen Fu never believed that the world of thought could be neatly divided between Chinese and Western civilizations, or between "traditional" and "modern." Schwartz, too, believed that universal problems (such as the relation of man to the "unknowable") could be approached through studying the compatibilities of cultures, as well as their oppositions. This ecumenical spirit animates his third major book, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Harvard University Press, 1985). Here Schwartz confronted the historian's most agonizing problem: keeping faith—with his readers, by framing his message in language that they find meaningful; with his historical subjects, by limning their thoughts in language that is true to the way they conceived their own world. For all the difficulties of such an enterprise, the reader never feels that Schwartz's ancient thinkers are living in a world totally alien to our own. Discussing (275) how the philosopher Mencius rejected a simple dichotomy between words and feeling: "[T]endencies of language arise out of the deeper moral tendencies embedded in the heart. The realization of the true way cannot come simply by submission to external rules embedded in language but arises out of an undeviating commitment of the will to do the right." Meditations on this level, illuminating the human identity we share with the ancient Chinese, are to be found throughout the book.

Schwartz's interests expanded into ancient time, rather than (as these books might suggest) drifting backward into it; he remained fascinated by contemporary China throughout his career and wrote upon it often. His many articles show how the questions he addressed early in his China studies remained vivid in his mind thereafter, and that connectedness seemed more significant to him than conventional divisions. Many of these articles are collected in *Communism and China: Ideology In Flux* (1968) and *China and Other Matters* (1996; both Harvard University Press).

Schwartz seemed to compose his lectures before the very eyes and ears of his astonished audiences, letting his thought develop freely among the hyperlinks of his mind, so that he might begin a sentence with Mao and end it (many clauses later) with Maimonides; an exaggeration, perhaps, but not by much. The impression was never one of artfulness or intellectual "packaging," but of ideas picked fresh from his garden and presented with soil still clinging to their roots. Schwartz's inspiration as a teacher came from this extraordinary freshness and inventiveness, as well as the impression left upon even the most junior student that he and Schwartz were exploring ideas together.

After his retirement, he remained an active member of the profession, participating in conferences worldwide and remaining close to students and colleagues.

He is survived by his wife, Bernice, by his children Jonathan and Sara-Ann, by four grandchildren, and by a host of grateful students.

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