

# Multidimensional Utopia: Chinese Logic of the Future Imagination of *the Three-body Problem*<sup>1</sup>

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The greatest charm of science fiction is not the artistic imagination, but the scientific imagination. Liu Cixin's *the Three-body Problem* as a Chinese science fiction novel, reflected Chinese writer how to think science and technology and its possible future of mankind's imagination. This novel contained "Deconstruction" Utopia, "Transcendence" dystopia and "Composited" Heterotopias, Which fully demonstrated singularity politics's great ideological tension between post modernity thinking of in this or that and typical Chinese style doctrine and dialectics.

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The best way to discuss Chinese science fiction from global view, is from the begin to understand Liu Cixin's *the Three-body Problem*. The reason is simple. *The Three-body Problem* is regarded as the first novel surpassed western science fiction by itself. It not only responds several important themes of western science fiction, but also gives them new thoughts with distinctive Chinese cultural characteristics. First, "The clash of civilizations": the invasion of alien civilization and the out way of Earth civilization. Different from the view of "Anthropocentrism" and "earth centered" of western science fiction, Liu Cixin refined the universe of sociology "dark forest rule" and the "theory of evil human nature" which established on the basis of cold logic though the earth civilization and he Three-body civilization once irreconcilable opposed has destroyed. Second, "The boundary of science"—the possibility and limit of science and technology development. Liu Cixin in *the Three-body Problem* give us imagination of the multidimensional space of the universe and locking the development of human science and technology by Naokou, pointed out the limitation of human science and technology invention, which has a blow and a shout of scientism which was undoubtedly formed since sixteenth Century. In scientific view, the problems was due to science and technology can only further progress through science and technology to solve. But the answer to *the Three-body Problem* is that the science and technology of intelligent creatures can never and will not be able to contend with the laws of the universe. This is undoubtedly the embodiment of the thought of "harmony between man and nature" in ancient China. On an equal footing with the so-called "harmony" is not the nature and man, but man belonging to nature. Only by following the principles of nature, can man be free. Third, "The cultural consequences of post human": whether artificial intelligence can

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replace human intelligence. Different from the alienation of artificial intelligence that leads to different from the western people and its control over the people, Liu Cixin pointed out that the individual mind is never open and intelligent black holes, just opaque personal thought become the final barrier to resistant to the artificial intelligence. It is a response to the themes of Western science fiction that Liu Cixin presents the possibility of Chinese logic in the era of science fiction.

The biggest charm of science fiction is not art imagination, but scientific imagination, which is to think and explore the future of science and technology will be able to develop to what level, which can create bizarre things as well as scientific inventions such as these to the human world of the future will bring what kind of influence. Therefore, the most fascinating of science fiction is to show the possible future science and technology world, such as *Neuromancer*, *Robocop*, intelligent robots, digital people, a variety of strange and eccentric alien creatures and their alien civilization, and *Star Trek*, the future city and has now become a reality wearable device etc.. Why are science fiction so appealing? The first thing is the wonders of science and technology, and the second is the human destiny in the future of science and technology. If you take this standard *the Three-body Problem*, you will find that it unfortunately does not show us how many new inventions, and even the “three-body world” is in the “three-body game” in the history of the earth and civilization were deduced; even in the face of cosmic collapse crisis, their process of heart enter the small universe, Liu Cixin also just described to us it is a long farming pastoral scene. So, where were the imagination of *the Three-body Problem* from? What was the power of science fiction to dominate the whole of *the Three-body Problem*? That’s to show for us an unprecedented vision for the future, which contained some Chinese logics distinct from western science fiction in *the Three-body Problem*.

Utopia is a type of imagination of the ideal future society (state or place). Therefore, Utopia is a part of the most important parts in science fiction. In *Archaeologies of the Future: the Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. Fredric Jameson attempts to discuss the limitations and get rid of the past utopia concept be limited to the specific political (such as communism, Stalin, etc.) . With the help of the science fiction (novels and movies) analysis, Jameson intends to reintroduce the individual and the human concepts which were formed since the Enlightenment ideas of culture, and in order to reactivate the “Utopia” in “the meaning and value of post revolutionary era”. Jameson believes that “The fundamental dynamic of any Utopian politics (or of any political Utopianism) will therefore always lie in the dialectic of Identity and Difference, to the degree to which such a politics aims at imagining, and sometimes even at realizing, a system radically different from this one.” Therefore, Utopia has become a powerful weapon to question the existing social system.

The left-wing criticism theory of European and American has formed a series of “Utopia” concepts, including “anti-utopia or Dystopia” and “heterotopia” etc.. Their common feature is the naming of a particular spatial attribute. The basic meaning of “Utopia” is “good place” and “no place”, such as heaven, Datong world, communism has the human ideal and spiritual home of nature; during the cold war, “Utopia” becomes a derogatory in some context, which means Stalin’s totalitarianism. “Anti-Utopia” and “dystopia” means “ideal society negative and evil in the future” as the opposite side of “Utopia”. A number of anti-totalitarian tendencies writers tried to performance of future rule by the secret police, the monitoring network of human society the pessimistic mood and attitude. The “heterotopias” pay more attention to the real world, which was the typical properties of future imagination and predicted Utopian realistic criticism into an effort. Obviously, whether is a

utopia or dystopia, or heterotopias, all was spaces within certain social relations summary, or is the macro, macro and micro level characterization of the “universe sociology” in the *Three-body Problem*.

What is the universal view of *the Three-body Problem*? Optimistic or pessimistic? Critical reality or escape from reality? Is a linear or cyclic evolution? These are related to the basic value orientation of *the three-body Problem*.

“Deconstruction” Utopia. There is not lack of the description of “Utopia” (that is, the imagination of the ideal society of human beings) in *the Three-body Problem*. However, all of them have been reconstructed in varying degrees. The story of *the Three-body Problem* began from the beginning of the Great Cultural Revolution. Liu Cixin described how the blood, youth, ideals and passion to be destroyed in the “crazy era”. They were fooled and the evil side of human nature showed. In a gun battle, a beautiful girl was killed; Ye Zhetai was was whipped to death by his students on hundreds of thousands struggle sessions; Ye Wenjie was inhuman abused after she refused to expose the cruelty of materials, etc... It is the faith burst experience in cultural revolution makes Ye Wenjie lost faith in human society and civilization of the earth, and hoped an alien civilization to transform the earth civilization. Therefore, the three-body civilization has become an alternative to the revolutionary idealism of the cultural revolution, and become a new utopia of the earth three-body organizations.

However, between the communist ideal of the Great Cultural Revolution and the three-body civilization, Liu Cixin intended to weaken the historical reflection of the Great Cultural Revolution, intended to go beyond the “Socialist / Capitalism”, “Marxism/non-Marxism”, “West/East” between the two opposite and the inertia of thinking, and upgraded the Great Cultural Revolution (in fact, is a kind of intentional obfuscation) to the whole world problem. This approach is typical universal thinking of American style: the individual, specific, historical events are alike to the human, global, global issues. We can see this “I am human” of thinking way in American literature and Hollywood movies. That is why the Great Cultural Revolution become the only “historical representation” of the nature of the event, but it is a graphical abstraction of the historical period in *the Three-body Problem*: it has no origin (because of *the Three-body Problem* is not made the reflection of history as its target), no future (main stories of heroes Wang Miao, Ye Wenjie, et al. Lo Gi were activated at the beginning of twenty-first century, but Liu Cixin did not present the reality now).

Transcendence “dystopia”. The most desperate thing of *the Three-body Problem* is the “love” of the sun cannot be shined into “the dark forest”. It also makes readers think the future of the universe described by *the Three-body Problem* was too pessimistic and dark and has become a predictable “dystopia”. However, named *the Three-body Problem* as “dystopia” is expected to be very hasty. “Dystopia” is the opposite of “Utopia”, but not “either this or that” and “good or evil” on the opposite side. Dystopia is the most important feature in Utopian logic but to their opposite. In Huxley, George Orwell’s works, all the people pursued beauty and goodness, order and harmony, but a series of efforts have brought perverse results: in this “brave new world”, the most beautiful human feelings disappear, no shame, no love, no pain, also lost the thinking and creativity. Scientific, rational, and technological controlled of society and people and led to totalitarianism. But Liu Cixin in *the Three-body Problem* showed the process of mankind’s tenacious survival in the “dark forest rule” universe: in the context of the Great Cultural Revolution, we can’t think that a woman in a desperate state to welcome an alien civilization was “anti-human”; internal differentiation of the earth three-body organizations, “the Wallfacer Project” showed that the mankind also adopted actively to face an alien civilization civilization; Lo Gi studied to understand “the

dark forest rule” of the universe sociolog Tor Booksy, and completed the devastate experiment of 187J3X1 (the three-body world was eliminated after the gravitational wave universe broadcast was started by mankind). In addition, Liu Cixin also focused on rethink on science and technology, alien and totalitarian. Although Lo Gi has successful deterred the three-body civilization by using the snow project and become “the swordholder” after the destruction of the 187J3X1 stars and achieved the strategic balance between the earth civilization and the three-body civilization. But humans did not thank for Lo Gi, the opposite is to assume Lo Gi “world destruction crime”. On the one hand, Lo Gi was a savior of humanity, on the other hand he become a dictator.” People find that Deterrence Era is a very strange era, on the one hand, human society reached an unprecedented level of civilization, democracy and human rights are hitherto unknown respect; on the other hand, the whole society was shrouded in the shadow of a dictator. Some scholars consider that science and technology were once one of the forces to eliminate totalitarianism, but when the threat to the survival of civilization crisis occurs, science and technology may be the birth of a new totalitarian soil. In the traditional totalitarian dictator, only through other people to realize the rule, which is faced with low efficiency and many uncertain factors, therefore, in the history of mankind, one hundred percent dictatorships have never appeared. But the technology was for this super dictatorship to realize, these wallfacer and swordholers are worrying examples.” Undoubtedly, this was also suspected by Liu Cixin along with what Huxley and George Orwell’s thought and further forward thinking results in *the Three-body Problem*. When people eventually chose the replace plan to avoid the totalitarian scheme: Chose Chen Xin on behalf of “love” “female” to replace the Lo Gi . Although this choice will be soon took advantages by the three-body civilization, but that’s what *the Three-body Problem* just liked to transcend the *brave new world* and 1984.

Composited “heterotopias”. In Foucault’s theory, “heterotopia” is not only an imaginary space, but in reality offbeat space life composed of diverse power relations. Foucault had studied prisons, clinics, cemetery, art, and so on, which have “heterotopia” nature. This idea opened a very broad way for space research of critical theory. According to Foucault’s classification, heterotopias has two kinds: one kind is “Crisis Heterotopia”, another is “Heterotopia of Deviation”. The former mainly existed in the primitive society, was composed of a variety of divinity and taboo of ordinary people is not involved in the space, such as the altar and the temple; the latter was the offbeat space form in the modern society, and represented the offbeat space form normal, behavior and life style were not the same as the daily life. But now the question was, “what is normal, what is the daily life”? If we said that the scientific and technological rationality based on modernity was normal, then the traditional customs, the feelings of the humanities, and the creation of art belonged to the “abnormal”. Foucault sharply pointed out that modern knowledge in the definition of “madness”, “disease” and “crime” and so on were considered “abnormal” behavior which contained absolutely was not by scientific and rational, but by a set of power mechanism.

In *the Three-body Problem*, multiple heterotopias constitute the basic structure of the novel, which is the important basis of singularity politics. First of all. There were a number of properties of heterotopias inside the human society. In “The Earth Past”, China in the Grand Cultural Revolution was this kind of [另类空间] where the socialist ideal change to its opposite. Ye Zhetai uphold the scientific rational spirit could only been critical to the reactionary authority of the bourgeoisie; Red coast base in the Grand Cultural Revolution belonged to another the nature of the heterotopia—there was not political movement, but was highly confidential with “isolated”

military management; earth three-body rebels base “trial” was a kind of [另类空间], was the core base organization came and sent three-body world command center, where was established with Evans direct contact with the three-body world and become advance troops the three-body world attacked earth. Related with the earth, the three-body world far away four light-years was also heterotopias, which alternated between Stable Eras and Chaotic Eras and made destruction and new civilization become the norm in the science and technology advanced with basic science fiction imagination of an alien civilization. Not only that, in *the Three-body Problem*, the whole universe with the nature of heterotopias, which was controlled by dark forest rule where life is full but strangely quiet. All civilizations remained highly vigilant, with dual attribute ready to attack (Hunter) and be prepared defense (prey). The most amazing thing was that Liu Cixin wrote directly destruction and rebirth of the whole universe, and imagined a “small universe” just like Noah’s Ark to help people and save the hope of life.

Then, why did *the Three-body Problem* establish such a complicated space structure, including Utopia, dystopia and heterotopias? Fredric Jameson might be able to give some explanation: “Indeed, for those only too wary of the motives of its critics, yet no less conscious of Utopia’s structural ambiguities, those mindful of the very real political function of the idea and the program of Utopia in our time, the slogan of anti-anti-Utopianism might well offer the best working strategy.”<sup>2</sup> Liu Cixin was fully aware of the singularity of political space, that made him unlike the general critical realism literature or science fiction literature to take two opposite thinking but also in either this or that, both on the postmodern thinking and typical Chinese doctrine and dialectics to maintain a huge ideological tension.

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<sup>2</sup> Jameson: *Archaeologies of The Future: the Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, Trans. WU Jing, Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2005, p. 5.