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Human Memory as a Dynamic Accumulation of Experiences: Li Zehou's Concept of Sedimentation

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1 Introduction

Li Zehou belongs to the most well-known Chinese philosophers of the contemporary era. The present article aims to introduce his view on the shaping of collective human memory. He described the long lasting process of accumulation of experiences through the lens of his concept of sedimentation.

Sedimentation (*jidian* 积淀) is an innovative, fresh and invigorating concept; due to the lack of any suitable existing words, the term was created by Li Zehou himself (Gu Xin, 1996, 215). This pivotal notion regards a fundamental philosophical idea, linked to several other central concepts which constitute the basic theoretical platform of Li's system, as for instance, to the cultural psychological formation, the humanization of nature, the internalization or naturalization of humans, to the shaping of inborn human qualities (or the so-called "human nature" /*ren xing* 人性/), and thus to the very substance and existence of human beings, stored in collective memory (Li Zehou, 1987, 238).

Li Zehou describes this notion as "the accumulations and deposits of the social, rational, and historical in the individual through the process of humanizing nature¹." (Li, Cauvel, 2006, 94). Li's conception of sedimentation, which stores human experiences and shapes collective memory, is based upon the metaphor of the geological

1 The "humanization of nature" (*ziran de renhua* 自然的人化) also belongs to the crucial concepts of Li Zehou's philosophy. In his view, humans are, through the process of material production and due to their *homo faber* nature, by virtue of their active subjectivity and their mental sedimentations, which manifest themselves in specific "cultural psychological formations or (dynamic) structures" (*wenhua xinli jiegou* 文化心理结构)," recreating both, their environment and their inwardness into something he called "humanized nature" (*renhuade ziran* 人化的自然). Li Zehou has completed the concept of humanization of nature as a process, which was first described by early Marx, with his own notion of the naturalization of humans.



stratification of layers of clay, soil, dust and rocks that are formed and deposited over long many millions years. The movements of glaciers, their rising and disappearing, the erosion and the modifications of earth's crust by continental drift results in the forming of layers which are changing at different rates. The surface is more variable than the bed rock which seems relatively invariable and fixed. (Chandler, 2016, 136). Still, the entire layers as such are modifiable, changeable and moveable, for they are subject to the never-ending process of the evolution of our planet. According to Li, the complex process of human sedimentation can be categorized into three modes or realms in which such layering takes place. The first one can be denoted as the sedimentation of species and it consists of forms, which are common to all human beings. The second one is the so-called cultural sedimentation, which co-creates modes of thinking and feeling common to particular cultures. The last one is individual sedimentation, which marks our intimate worldviews, our intimate feelings and patterns of thought and is determined by individual life experiences² (Cauvel, 1999, 156). On the other hand, the process of sedimentation has four dimensions, which overlap and mutually influence each other³. These are: the techno-social formation (gongyi - shehui jegou 工艺——社会结构), which pertains to social and material production, the cultural-psychological formation (wenhua - xinli jegou 文化——心理结构)⁴, the human community or “the great self” (da wo 大我) and the human individual or “the small self” (xiao wo 小我)⁵. (Li Zehou, 2016, 173).

In a wider sense, sedimentation can be compared to Jean Piaget's notion of internalization⁶ (Gu Xin, 1996, 215). Some scholars (e.g. Liu Kang, 1992, 124) even believe that Li's entire theory of sedimentation is largely a variation of this concept, based on Piagetian theory of cognitive and affective development. However, in Li

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- 2 Li points out: “Sedimentation flows from history into psychology from rationality into sensuousness, from sociality into individuality” (Li, Cauvel, 2006, 167).
 - 3 Although these dimensions are interdependent and even though they mutually influence each other, the first one, which is connected to the material practice of making tools, grounds all later dimensions. Li argues that this production predates all symbolic and artistic activities by hundreds of thousands of years (Li Zehou, 1994, 2).
 - 4 According to Li's anthropology of human practice, as described in his article *Guanyu zhutixingde buchong shuoming* 关于主体性的补充说明 (*A Supplementary Explanation of Subjectivity*), which was first published in 1985, mankind evolved by developing two basic formations, namely the technological-social formation, which is external, and the cultural psychological formation, which is innate (Li Zehou, 1985, 15). Later on, the former term was changed into *gonju benti* 工具本体 (techno-social substance) and the latter into *qingan benti* 情感本体 or *qing benti* 情本体 (emotion as substance) (Yu Chuanqin, 2016, 3).
 - 5 These two notions were first introduced in his book *Pipan zhaxuede pipan: Kangde shuping* 批判哲学的批判: 康德述评 (*Critique of Critical Philosophy: A New Key to Kant*). Here, Li Zehou is citing Kang Youwei's 康有为 notions of the great (society) (da wo 大我) and small (individual) self (xiao wo 小我), (Li Zehou, 2001, 52). However, at the turn of the 20th century, both notions were also frequently applied by Liang Qichao 梁启超 and Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孙中山).
 - 6 In Chinese: *neihua* 内化.

Zehou's view, Piaget's theory was also biologicistic, since it neglected the social factors and the active role of humans in making and applying tools. Hence, Li tried to combine Piaget's theories that unfold the a-priori categories according to universal patterns in growing children with his technology-oriented interpretation of Marx (Chong, 1999, 129). Since for Li, the a priori as such is already a product of social activities, patterns of mind are influenced by the specific mode of production in each stage of social development, forming particular cultural-psychological formations and leading the individuals to view the world in a certain way and to act accordingly. In this context, Li Zehou writes:

My theory is closer to Jean Piaget's, which emphasizes that logic and mathematics come from the abstraction of activity itself. Piaget came to this conclusion through the study of child psychology. But he did not connect psychology with anthropology to raise "subjectality" and "sedimentation" as a philosophical problem (Li Zehou, 1999, 175).

Li has created the concept of sedimentation in order to study how rational elements are shaping human sense experience, how social factors manifest themselves in individual minds and how historical developments become part of collective human memory. In other words, sedimentation is the process in which rational, social and historical elements are accumulated in individual mind.

One of the crucial points in the process of sedimentation as an accumulation of collective human memory is to establish a set of mental forms, which is comprised of three parts: the cognitive, the moral, and the aesthetic substructures. Li employs "three utterances - internalization, condensation, and sedimentation of reason, respectively - to depict the formation of these three different substructures" (Gu Xin, 1996, 215).

2 Dynamic layering of mental formations

Sedimentation represents a specific stage of transformation of human experience in collective memory, in which form and content, the natural and socio-cultural, and the senses and reason are unified to form a complex and coherent entity of collective memory. Many scholars believe that, in certain aspects, it could be compared to Carl Gustav Jung's archetypes, which are embedded in the collective unconscious. However, Li's sedimentation is a dynamic entity and therefore less ahistorical (Chong, 1999, 129) than Jung's notion. The existence of Jung's collective unconscious is namely implying that individual consciousness is by no means a tabula rasa, but is rather subject to predetermining influences. Jung points out that

it is in the highest degree influenced by inherited presuppositions, quite apart from the unavoidable influences exerted upon it by the environment. The

collective unconscious comprises in itself the psychic life of our ancestors right back to the earliest beginnings. It is the matrix of all conscious psychic occurrences, and hence it exerts an influence that compromises the freedom of consciousness in the highest degree, since it is continually striving to lead all conscious processes back into the old paths (Jung, 1990, 112).

Li's sedimentation is also a kind of "collective unconscious". However, while Jung's archetypes are fixed and static structures, belonging to the conceptual framework of transcendental forms, Li Zehou absolutely denies the existence of such mental phenomena. "Human psyche is not a dead thing like a table or a chair. It is a continuously evolving, developing and progressing process. Thus, sedimentation and cultural-psychological formation equally belong to such vital, lively processes" (Li Zehou, 2014, 3).

Li's sedimentation is not something biologically "inherited", but rather products of a dynamic, ever-changing process of psycho-cultural development. In such processes, it is the dominant mode of production of a certain type of society that "produces a particular cultural-psychological formation that then leads the individuals belonging to this society to view reality in a certain way and to act in certain ways" (Sernelj, 2016, 95). C. G. Jung presupposes that the archetypes gained from a remote past are a priori or primordial patterns existing in human collective unconsciousness. Li's theory of sedimentation, on the other hand, is remarkably different because it emphasizes the dynamic process of continuous change, which is a result of the impact of the material development of society upon the psychological-cultural formations in human mind (ibid.).

This psychological- cultural formation is collective only in the sense that all members of a certain culture or society obtain and possess the same cultural code, which manifests itself in particular modes of behavior, customs and value systems. An additional difference between the two concepts lies in the fact that Jung has – in contrast to Li Zehou – bestowed his archetypes with a mystical and religious dimension. He regarded them as symbols, reflecting the ever-unique experience of divinity, which possess the ability to offer human beings a premonition of the divine while at the same time guarding individuals from its immediate experience (Jung, 1990, 8). For him, these symbols are embedded in a complex cognitive system and manifest themselves through religion or another mystical praxis. In Jung's view, they can be discovered through artistic creation, which arouses them from the realm of collective unconscious to the conscious level. According to Těa Sernelj (2016, 95), such an interpretation of religion and such attempts to draw parallels between mythology

7 人的心理不是死东西，如桌椅板凳那样，它本身乃是一个不断展开、不断向前推进的过程。因此，无论是积淀还是文化心理结构(formation)都是一些活生生的过程。

and an individual mind, prove a tendency toward bold generalization, which ignores important cultural distinctions.

Jung's view is completely different from Li Zehou's interpretation of the forms and symbols that have been sedimented in cultural-psychological formation of human mind. According to Li, rituals, songs, dancing and myths were gradually forming poetry, literature, music, painting, and other forms of artistic expression, along with social and political institutions. All these culturally determined phenomena were formed in the process of material (or technological) production and development of society, which modified the spiritual production of humans. Although in a certain sense and to a certain degree, they certainly represent a kind of "frozen images of the remote past" (*ibid.*), they still cannot be present in people's minds as something static and immutable, because they were transformed through a complex and ever changeable historical process. Hence, in Li's theoretical framework, the structure of sedimentation layers is dynamic and can thus be regarded as a form of collective unconscious only in the sense of a cultural identity gained through the process of socialization as well as hereditary cultural code of the society we were born in. In this context, it is important to understand that this congenital cultural code or cultural identity as a form of collective unconscious is by no means composed by primordial forms, as Jung suggest in his theory of archetypes, but is constantly changing in accordance with the material and spiritual development of society. By laying stress upon the crucial function of the material and technological impact on the sedimented cultural-psychological formations contained in the human mind, Li has thus bestowed the idealistic and speculative nature of Jung's view with important components derived from the Marxist historical materialism. Simultaneously, he also upgraded the Marxist theory of social developments by pointing to the important role assumed in these processes by factors belonging to human psychology⁸. Thus, the superficial resemblance between Jung's collective unconscious and Li's concept of sedimentation is quite irrelevant if we take into consideration the above-mentioned differences (*ibid.*).

In this context, it becomes obvious that according to Li, the sedimentations or forms of the mind can neither be compared to Kant's a-priori forms and categories, which are equally fixed, static and unchangeable. Due to the fact, that they are subject to human agency and tightly linked to historical and social processes, they are necessarily dynamic and modifiable. Although Li Zehou believes that human sedimentations are

8 As Marthe Chandler (2016, 135) points out, Marx believed that people became different from animals when we started to produce the things we need to live, but he says little more than this about primitive human beings. Li's theory of sedimentation fills in this lacuna, describing the "humanization of nature," the process of creating a human nature that is different from that of every other animal, and which began when our early ancestors started systematically making and using tools.

categories or forms of mind, that are independent of any individual, community or society at a particular moment in time, he still thoroughly emphasizes that they are not independent of humankind as a whole over long periods. Thus, they cannot be viewed as categories, which are absolutely independent of all experience (Cauvel, 1999, 158). In other words: according to Li Zehou, the forms and categories of the understanding are only a priori from the individual viewpoint, whereas they are derived from experience and are thus a posteriori from the viewpoint of society and communities. For Li Zehou, the main weakness of Kant's doctrine of the a priori was that it ignored history (Chong, 1999, 129). Hence, being a highly dynamic concept, sedimentations naturally also change as human beings evolve, as the cultures they are living in become more complex and as they individually develop new modes of perceiving the world, thinking and feeling.

In a certain sense, however, Li Zehou's concept of sedimentation might be compared with the notion of habitus as developed, for instance, by Pierre Bourdieu, who also often laid stress upon the corporeal nature of social life and emphasized the role of practice and embodiment in social dynamics. In his theory, habitus is a system of structuring dispositions, which is rooted in social practice and is always oriented towards practical functions. It represents a mental formation, which includes thoughts and feelings and is characterized by a set of acquired categories, sensibilities, dispositions and taste. Its contents are a complex product of embodying social structures. Habitus is created through a social, rather than individual process; it leads to patterns that are enduring and transferrable from one context to another, but also shift in relation to different contexts in time and space. According to Bourdieu, habitus refers to the mental structures through which people apprehend the social world. These structures are essentially the product of the internalization of the structures of that world (Bourdieu, 1989, 18). Habitus is not only a system of schemes of production of practices, but also a system of perception and appreciation of practices. In both dimensions, its operation expresses the concrete social position in which it was formed. Thus, it produces practices and representations, which can be classified or differentiated (*ibid.*, 19). Similar to Li Zehou's sedimentation, habitus is also not static, fixed or permanent, but can rather be modified in various situations or over long periods of time. It is mainly developed through processes of socialization and determines a wide range of dispositions that shape individuals in a given society. It is not a fixed or static structure but rather a durable set of dispositions that are formed, stored, recorded and exert influence to mold forms of human behavior. Habitus can vary in accordance to the particular social environment, because unstable social domains may produce unstable systems of dispositions that generate irregular patterns of action. It can reinforce cohesion but can also stimulate change and innovation (Navarro, 2006, 16).

Habitus can be seen as a product of sedimentation of experience and as a result of long lasting, continuous socialization. In addition, Bourdieu draws upon Merleau-Ponty's philosophical concept of embodiment as a part of his model that incorporates social experiences into the concrete corporeal. Merleau-Ponty also applies the notion of sedimentation; for him, experiences and abilities, accumulated through long historical periods, sedimentate into "habitual dispositions" (Flynn, 2011, 9), which are seen as products of sedimentation of intersubjective practice. In this context, he emphasizes that we must make a distinction between the body as it is at a given moment, and the body that he calls an "habitual body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 101).

3 Epistemological foundations and ethical elements in the shaping of human memory

Similar to these views Li Zehou's concept of sedimentation is a historical concept, and as such, it thoroughly manifests itself in human practice, largely influencing its concrete forms and co-creating its development. With such a notion of sedimentation, he metaphorically refers to the hidden structure of human enculturation and the formation of collective memory. Layers of human experience, of human aesthetic sensibility and our practical rationality are being sedimented, through millions of years, in the unconscious realms of our mental forms, which Li calls cultural-psychological formations⁹. The theoretical foundation for Li's theory of sedimentation can be traced back to his critique (or his upgrading) of Kant's epistemology, according to which knowledge is not merely the result of the mind passively receiving sense data, but also of its active synthesis of sense data into objects. Li Zehou aimed to formulate an alternative epistemology to replace "not only the Kantian a priori but also the doctrinaire Marxist 'mirror' theory of knowledge" (Chong, 1999, 128)¹⁰. In this way, he turned Kant's transcendental philosophy into an empirically grounded theory of human "cultural psychology", which is seen as an independent factor of human historical development on the level of culture¹¹. However, his effort to counter such determinisms by reaffirming human agency could lead to a theory of voluntarism, which Li Zehou explicitly wanted to avoid:

9 According to Liu Kang (1992, 125) there is, however, a basic difference between Li Zehou's "cultural-psychological formation" and the Freudian "unconscious". While in his understanding, Li's psychic formation is a thoroughly rational and cultural product, in Freud and Lacan the "unconscious" signals an irreconcilable hiatus between cultural constraints and natural instincts and drives (see Lacan, 2006, 52).

10 However, Li's historical view of sedimentation is compatible with the early Marx, and also to a great extent consistent with Darwin's theory.

11 In this context, Li rejected the orthodox Marxist supposition of class struggle as the crucial and sole driving force of historical development.

Once the form in which the world appears to the human mind is conceived, as Kant conceived it, as a product of the synthesizing activity of consciousness as applied to sense data, then it is but a small step to throw the sense data overboard altogether and arrive at Fichte's conclusion that consciousness is the only factor in the constitution of experience: the Ego creates the world to serve as an arena for its own activity. Thus, when Li brought Kant in to overthrow the naive reflection theory of knowledge, he also had to build in a safety valve to prevent the turn toward Fichtean idealism (Chong, 1999, 128).

Li Zehou pointed out that the solution to this dilemma could already be found in Marx's early work, because, according to Li, it was Marx who discovered that both, the "transcendental ego" and the "thing in itself" were fundamentally historical and social (ibid). In this sense, they are both equally results of sedimentation of accumulated experience in individual minds, although not in terms of contents, but rather in terms of forms (xingshi 形式) or structures (jiegou 结构)¹².

That which makes human psyche different from that of the animals, are the symbolic activities of the collective consciousness, i.e. the great self. "Activities such as using human language and producing ornamental objects, require imagination and abstract, symbolic thinking. Li argues that symbolic activity grew out of the music and dance of primitive shamanistic rituals" (Chandler, 2016, 162). Singing and chanting make it easier to coordinate group work. Similarly, the emotional power of music and rhythm in shamanistic dances was most important in making us human by transforming and "humanizing" our emotions and desires. Thus, dancing and other rituals had a powerful impact on early humans, since they created intense feelings of belonging to a community, which manifested itself in respect, love and loyalty. These feelings, in turn, have sedimented into the emotional, moral and aesthetic psychological structures necessary for truly human communities to evolve (ibid.). Li Zehou writes:

Just as in the case of material production, I insist that without activities of the collective social consciousness, i.e. without primitive shamanist ritual activities and without linguistic and symbolic activities, the formation of a human psyche that is different from that of the animals would not have been possible¹³ (Li Zehou, 1990, 191-192).

12 Li preferred to denote these mental structures (jiegou 结构) with the English term "formation" rather than "structure," because in his view, formations belong to dynamic concepts, whereas structures were more fixed and static. However, in Western structuralist (and even more so in the post-structuralist) theories, the concept of structure can also be seen as a changeable and dynamic one (see Rošker, 2012, 3).

13 与物质生产一样，我仍然坚持，如果没有集体的社会意识的活动形态，即如果没有原始的巫术礼仪活动，没有语言和符号活动，也就不可能有区别于动物的人的心理。

The early humans participated in collective dancing and other shamanistic rituals thus experienced an intense emotional ecstasy of being part of the community (great self). At this stage, particular psychic formations or the individual ego or small self, was almost not sedimented at all. Hence, individuals had little sense of themselves, “certainly not in the way we have had since the Enlightenment” (Chandler, 2016, 170). As already mentioned, Li Zehou firmly believes that the collective consciousness is logically and historically prior to the individual self. At this point, all members of a community were united in “one being,” possessing one set of intentions, desires and goals (ibid).

For Li Zehou, humanity is therefore the amalgamation of reason (sociability) into sense experience (naturalty). In this process, the reason is internalized, condensed, accumulated and sedimented into sense experience, integrating the two different aspects into one harmonious unity (Gu Xin, 1996, 213). Li explains this process of unification in the following way:

If we say that the epistemological and ethical structures of subjectivity still have some external, one-sided, and abstractly rational characteristics, only in humanized nature in an aesthetic sense society and nature, history and reality, and humankind and individuals can really achieve an internal, concrete, and comprehensive integration and unity. If we say that the former two structures are still characterized by reason, which has been internalized or condensed within the sense experience, the latter, that is, the aesthetic structure is characterized by sensuality, in which reason was sedimented. (Li Zehou, 1985, 21)¹⁴

The stage of elementary sedimentation has already had wide ethical implications: the collective psychological formations created by this primary mode of sedimentation provide the foundation for human empathy, which, in Chinese culture, manifests itself in the crucial Confucian virtue of (co)humanness (ren 仁), which is a kind of empathy¹⁵.

14 如果说，认识论和伦理学的主体结构还具有某种外在的、片面的、抽象的理性性质，那么，只有在美学的人化自然中，社会与自然，理性与感性，历史与现实，人类与个体，才得到真正内在的、具体的、全面的交融合一。如果说，前二者还是感性中内化的或凝聚的理性，那后者则是积淀了理性的感性；如果说，前二者还只表现在感性的能力、行为、意志中的人与自然的统一，那么后者则表现在感性的需要、享受和向往中的人与自然的统一。这种统一是最高统一。

15 Li Zehou believes that while in Western cultures, people proceeded from shamanistic rituals to science and religion, in Chinese culture they have directly upgraded them by developing on their basis Confucian rituality (li 礼) and (co)humanness (ren 仁, Li Zehou, 2015, 13). To illustrate this supposition, we shall quote a sequence from the Confucian Analects explicitly referring to this process: 颜渊问仁。子曰：“克己复礼为仁。一日克己复礼，天下归仁焉。Yan Yuan asked about humanness. The Master said, “Humanness means to subdue one’s self and to restore rituality. If you can subdue yourself and restore rituality for one single day, then all under heaven will return to humanness.” In this context, many later Chinese philosophers, for instance Zhu Xi (1130–1200), also

As Martha Chandler (2016, 140) points out, Li's theory of sedimentation can thus successfully explain how *Homo sapiens* developed empathy without recourse to *ad hoc* claims about "imagination" and "analogy". In this context, Chandler grounds her interpretation on the theories written by Michael Tomasello and Steven Mithen, who identify the origin of language in the human cognitive skill which manifests itself in the individual ability of recognizing that other humans are same as oneself (see Tomasello, 1999, 15; Mithen, 2006, 117). However, it is equally plausible to assume that human brains have constituted this recognition the other way around, namely, that a human being first recognized herself as an individual separated from other human beings (or the community as the elementary entity of self-identification), because s/he perceived him or herself as being "just like the others". Much of Western anthropological theories is still (consciously or unconsciously) grounded in the primary position of individual self-awareness. Li Zehou does not claim the opposite (i.e. that the social awareness is predominant), but merely points to the correlative and complementary relation between the individual self and the community or the social environment in which she or he lives (Li Zehou, 2007, 186-187).

4 Conclusion

Numerous contemporary neurologic research studies also emphasize this correlativity, pointing out that in the shaping of human memory, collective experiences are being intermingled with the individual ones (see e.g. Ramachandran, 2009, 2). There is clearly a chicken-or-egg problem concerning the question of which evolved first. However, "the main point is that the two co-evolved, mutually enriching each other to create the mature representation of self that characterizes modern humans" (ibid.).

Hence, Li's theory is not only consistent with contemporary scientific evidence, but furthermore provides a perspective from which to remedy some of the individualistic assumptions of much contemporary social science. Among others issues, it clearly shows that members of communities partly attain their individuality due to shared memories. In this context, Li Zehou's work offers us valuable and fresh insights into the operational mode and the function of sedimentation as a specific form of accumulating experience in the shaping of collective memory.

reminds us of the value of the humanities, which, lies precisely in one's establishing the existential resolve to see the project through, "not merely as an intellectual task to be completed, but even more as part of the existential humanizing project of cultivating oneself into a more sensitive, reflective, responsible, self-conscious human being" (Thompson, 2017, 40).

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Human Memory as a Dynamic Accumulation of Experiences: Li Zehou's Concept of Sedimentation

Keywords: Li Zehou, collective memory, modern Chinese theory, sedimentation, comparative philosophy

Li Zehou is among the most influential contemporary Chinese philosophers. In this article, we shall take a closer look into the deeper structure of his theory by providing an analysis and interpretation of his concept of sedimentation (*jidian* 积淀), which belongs to the central notions and paradigmatic foundations of his thought. In his system, the term sedimentation denotes a specific kind of collective human memory, and a process in which information and experiences are encoded and stored in our mind. In this context, the paper aims to analyse Li Zehou's attempts to achieve a dialectical solution to the contrariety of content and form in human memory. Through the lens of this notion, which he sees as an accumulation of the socially rationalized, archetypical forms of perception and experiences stored in human memory, we will also critically compare his philosophy to some similar, albeit by no means identical, approaches within modern Western theory.

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Človeški spomin kot dinamična akumulacija izkustva: Li Zehoujev koncept sedimentacije

Ključne besede: Li Zehou, kolektivni spomin, moderna kitajska teorija, sedimentacija, primerjalna filozofija

Li Zehou sodi med najvplivnejše sodobne kitajske filozofe. V pričujočem članku si bomo podrobneje ogledali globinsko strukturo njegove teorije ter se posvetili analizi in interpretaciji njegovega koncepta sedimentacije (*jidian* 积淀), ki predstavlja osrednji pojem in paradigmatsko osnovo njegove miselnosti. V tem sistemu sedimentacija pomeni specifično vrsto kolektivnega spomina in proces, v katerem se informacije in izkustva v kodirani obliki nalagajo v našo zavest. V tem kontekstu avtorica analizira Li Zehoujeve poskuse izdelave dialektične rešitve protislovja med vsebino in obliko človeškega spomina. Skozi optiko tega pojma, ki ga Li razumeva kot akumulacijo družbeno racionaliziranih, arhetipskih form zaznave in izkušenj, ki so uskladiščene v človeškem spominu, bomo njegovo filozofijo tudi kritično primerjali z nekaterimi podobnimi, četudi ne identičnimi izhodišči moderne zahodne teorije.