

Where does the truth lie, or does it? Varieties of verite?

Gary T. Marx

Every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing

A.N. Whitehead

Men of well-padded intellect with a genius for platitudes have been warning against violence, they have been deploring it in the cities...They are the men who see the absence of violence as the opportunity for inaction.

J.K. Galbraith¹

The above quote from philosopher A.N.Whitehead reminds us that no matter how accurate and well intentioned, *all* answers are partial and perspectival. And as the quote from economist and diplomat J.K. Gailbraith implies, any answer portages two questions: "who determines the questions?" (agenda setting) and "who gives the answers?"(whether truth, knowledge, wisdom or their opposites). While in principle all have a voice, all voices are not equal. His comment was in reference to President Johnson's 1967 appointment of a very unrepresentative national commission (Report 1968) to study U.S. civil disorders. These two quotes are a fine introduction to Professor Kam C. Wong's insightful inquiry into Mongkok. A book that might have added the subtitle: "*Say's Who, Who Should We Believe and Why*"

Professor Wong is a one man riot study commission. As a scholar, practitioner and citizen he brings his vast erudition and varied experiences to this analytically dispassionate inquiry into a most passionate subject --the Mongkok events of 2016. Trapped by language and popular usage, these events have become known as the "Mongkok Riot". Yet, as this book makes clear just what the event "was" offers the scholarly and popular engines plenty of fuel along with an abundance of hot air. This book offers a model for what a fair-minded riot commission study (in Hong Kong's ICI terms a Independent Commission of Inquiry) into such events should be.² He makes a strong case for the need, and offers direction, for such an inquiry while realistically noting the challenges and limitations it faces.

Using open sources, Wong documents what happened and what has been said about the incident and masterfully locates this in a context of Chinese and Western scholarship on the nature of knowledge and types of knowing. He offers piercing questions, strictures and data to guide understanding. This book is a thoughtful prelude

and an essential directive for any commission of inquiry into this, or any subsequent civil disorder events. Mongkok is a small chain in an endless link going back centuries, even as it is impacted by new tensions between the young and old, Hong Kong and mainland China, China and the west and tentacles of globalization.

A Chinese expression holds that, "when three people gather on a journey, there is one I can learn from". Professor Wong as a public intellectual is clearly one to be learned from --with his bridging experiences between Chinese and western societies; Hong Kong and mainland China; a ivory tower academic and a black belt instructor in karate; a colonial riot police commander and a defender of the civil rights of the poor; and a criminologist and lawyer. Wong's varied career, like a famous 1950s film made in Hong Kong, "is a many splendored thing" so too is his love for Hong Kong and the pain he feels at the problems revealed by Mongkok. The use of Chinese characters to document and supplement English will prove useful to those able to read both languages.

On the book's first page we encounter an activist saying, "this was not a riot, it was a prelude to a revolution." Professor Wong uses the claim to elucidate the "political nature and cultural relativity in naming". A rose by any other name may be a rose, but is that true of events called a riot or a revolution?

Categories matter --one rose does not make for spring, nor for a garden. But how many (and what kinds) of individual acts of disorder or angry words make for an event deemed worthy of attention --whether as a riot to be suppressed, or as an early warning signal calling for corrective action or for both? One issue here is how we think about individual actions vs. the aggregate of many such actions, as the whole becomes different than the individual parts and can change over time. In the west we are more prone to think of individual rather than group (whether the family or political) responsibility. The disjunctures and connections between the individual and group levels, yields a complicated conceptual space that offers no easy (or perhaps universal answers as Wong's call for attention to Chinese history and culture suggest).

While this book has implications for international comparisons, its' topic involves the varied, separate and changing actions over 12 hours of hundreds of people shorn of their individual distinctiveness by whatever linguistic shorthand (e.g., "The Mongkok Riot") the observer chooses in clumping together the fragments of multiple realities. The book offers a record of, and responses to, a significant event (or more properly events) in Hong Kong's recent history. But just what "were" those events and how is that different or similar to asking about the chemical properties of the flower --whether it is called a rose or something else?

The Fox With the Wide Angle Lens

In political theorist Isaiah Berlin's (2013) terms Professor Wong is a fox (a person aware of many perspectives) rather than a hedgehog (a person who holds to a single perspective). Foxes can be accused of eclecticism. But their full hand when applied to a narrow topic can offer an enriched view precisely because of its eclecticism.

There is much to be said for the wisdom of the eclectic above and beyond the battle who sees how lesser mortals can be blinded by their passionate commitment to a narrow point of view or just one frame. Making sense of events such as Mongkok requires moving picture cameras from different angles and distances over time, not a snapshot from one camera at one time and place. True, the eclectic being everywhere runs the risk of being nowhere. That is fortunately not the case for Professor Wong. In persuasively arguing for empirically and logically grounding the lofty, self-righteous and conflicting claims about Mongkok, and viewing the events against a backdrop of Hong Kong's history, culture and human society more broadly, he offers a clear and useful point of view.

While much of his prior written work has focused on policing in China and Hong Kong, he has also written on topics as varied as the USA Patriot Act, corporate crime and cross border policing. Professor Wong moves around. In sitting on the merry-go-round of social perception he has a breadth of vision denied the immobiles who merely sit on their bench. His wide-angle perception does not change the facts, but it does give him a unique vision and appreciation of the Spanish expression, "everything is the color of the glasses through which you are seeing" and sociologist W.I. Thomas' observation that, "if a person perceives a situation as real, it is real in its consequences".

Given the nature of perception and communication and the hidden (or forgotten) hands of history, the unconscious, failings of memory, dissimulation, self-interest, habitude, the ubiquity of change and the dangers of linear thinking (if some is good, more must be better!) and unrestrained zeal, we should never rest too comfortably with any given answer, no matter how comforting or politically useful an unquestioned idea may be. Any understanding of conflict must begin with such awareness. But it can't stop there.

Those seeking knowledge need above all to listen and to validate where that is possible. That is a central message and virtue of this book, no matter how unsupported a view may appear (whether on logical, ethical, legal, symbolic or empirical grounds) attention must be paid and the tacit assumptions on which positions rest need to be surfaced, as well as purpose of offering the view or use for which it is intended. As a result of the existence we share with others, we need to acknowledge sincerely held views, whether they are ignorant, unsupportable and due to even evil.

We also need to compare views. Areas of agreement and disagreement and the logical adequacy of approaches can be better seen when a systematic conceptual approach is used. For example, Altheide and Schneider (2013) offer a useful content analysis tool for disentangling and comparing the varied truth claims offered for contentious events such as Mongkok. Accounts can be analyzed with respect to broad frames, particular themes and the nature of the discourse. In considering assumptions, logics and empirical evidence, such an approach can surface contradictions and helps identify questions asked/not asked and evidence treated or ignored by parties to the conflict. Straining words through a conceptual framework offers a more systematic way of comparing and contrasting the descriptive approaches that only report what was said.

Mathew Hughey (2018) offers an analysis of the Kerner Commission report that could serve as a model for future work on events such as Mongkok.

One strand of understanding noted by German sociologist Max Weber is *verstehen*. This involves the imaginative taking the position of the other to better grasp what they say and feel, --although that does not require agreeing with them. As a chronicler and interpreter Professor Wong listens to the choral refrains, whether of those in the street, police, government, the media or the public, as well as groups beyond in China and the west. He is also attentive to the divergent voices within these groups.

Hearing all of the voices may sound more like a cacophonous shrill than a symphony, and this can cause conflict-avoiding persons to reach for their earplugs. Yet different voices and styles of communication including body language must be heard if progress is to be made. Any hope of civil peace requires dialogue, although it hardly stops there and in times of crisis words must be matched by deeds, in spite of the two types of limitations Wong notes in his last chapter involving scientific explanation and political feasibility of implementation.

This multiplicity recalls Kipling's parable of the blind people and the elephant, but the fit is not perfect. All of Kipling's claimants were correct, given their limited perspective. They spoke honestly and their answers were directly relevant to the question posed. In the case of Mongkok, as with most controversial public issues, claims vary from valid to possible to wrong to outright lies and to value positions that are not subject to the standards that apply to factual claims.

Furthermore a view can be valid, but irrelevant to the task at hand. Thus the legal definition of behavior is not the appropriate standard when asking about its morality. Consider Martin Luther King's statement that with respect to segregation, the higher God given standard of equality was determinative, not the laws of the South upholding segregation which may, none-the-less, be empirically correct in their application, given the laws of the state. The crime was segregation not sitting at a restaurant, even if from the local legal perspective this was reversed.

Three Kinds of Truth Seeker

We can identify at least 3 responses to the quest for truth that apply to Hong Kong and more broadly. The fundamentalist starts with answers rather than questions and says, "it true because I say it's true. I know." In Hong Kong this can be applied to PRC and HKG. To ask questions can be seen as heretical. Single-factor reductionists who find all answers within one idea or who always give priority to one value reside here.

The relativist, drowning in humility, if sometimes also in irresponsibility and lacking courage, says, "answers are just stories and it all depends on your point of view" (or politics), as with Hong Kong Indigenous. One story is no better than another. In the face of this diversity, truth is seen to lie in the hands of the person with the largest megaphone who controls the narrative *today*. That can change of course as the political

winds shift. The radically different official labeling of the 1957 Kowloon riot beautifully illustrates that (those labeled as rioters under colonial rule were labeled as heroes after 1997).

Empirical scholars such as Professor Wong share something with both the fundamentalist and the relativist. Yet such scholars start with questions, not answers, and realize that answers often lead to new questions. As well, they realize that all claims (and claimants) are fair game for questioning. They question their own views and are open to being proven wrong. Such a scholar is at home with the U.S. state motto that says, "Show me, I'm from Missouri." I want to see the evidence!

Yet as with the fundamentalist, the scholar worthy of the name does take some things as given. If it is true that where you stand depends on where you sit, the scholar sees and speaks from a particular social location with values and interests. Among unquestioned elements for most scholars are the values of democracy, the dignity of the person, and learning through empirical research. Such a scholar sees with the relativist that there are many stories to be heard. But after listening, the scholar seeks through inquiry to assess varied claims by publicized standards of, and results from, empirical observation across different observers, mindful of the setting in question (whether the country or the institution).

When such observers agree on the ground rules for drawing conclusions about what the facts are some consensus is possible, whatever their individual politics and interests. Such a scholar seeks to identify and help overcome gaps in knowledge, identifies tacit empirical and moral assumptions, and offers criteria by which competing claims can be assessed. The scholar also identifies different kinds of truth and explores possible connections between them (e.g., seeing if assumptions about what the facts are that underlie a value position are empirically supported, seeing if actions that might logically follow from empirical analysis seem intuitively right or wrong). Such a cautious, thought provoking approach will be rejected by those who want answers that will put an end to all the questions.

But even when we have confidence in a type of answer, as Wong (1997) observes elsewhere, special care is needed when convictions are robustly held. The strong emotions which propel a relentless search for truth can also inhibit finding it. Being encapsulated in our own subjectivity and with our own interests, we need tools that permit a degree of understanding among others, as well as insight into our shadows. Reflexivity should be among the most treasured of scholarly virtues.

In taking a strong position on behalf of subjecting all voices to a standard of empirical observation Professor Wong is hardly a relativist. Even if, as he notes, the facts do not speak for themselves. But they can speak very loudly when seen in a shared context. Meaning and applicability depend on the frame of reference one applies. The question or problem (whether intellectual or policy) should determine the preferred method and approach. Too often this is reversed, as those with a favored method,

concept, theory or policy trot it out as the correct approach or answer before adequate analysis or being clear about its utility for the need at hand.³

Does the Frame of Reference Fit the Question and Goal

Professor Wong usefully elucidates various kinds of frame that can be applied such as legal, moral and conceptual. As noted above, in contrasting the legal and the moral, given multiple frames, the "correct" answer depends on the goals, the rules of the activity and the context. Thus the correct answer for the legal definition of a riot in Hong Kong involves violations of statutes (theft, failure to obey a lawful order). In contrast, for the activist the crimes and injustice were seen with the police, the government or the mainland as enshrined in tradition and promises made, but not kept. While for the scholar interested in understanding order and disorder in society we see another contrast in which the definitional tool is the conceptual and the key is whether the definition is useful for the inquiry. The scholar attuned to reality's richness has an abundance of concepts to use considered next.

Consider distinctions available to the scholar, such as *who* the participants were -- as with "youth riots"; or the naming might be the *what* was done as with "commodity riots" involving looting; or the label could be the present or absence of an *ideology* as with the "issueless riots" in victory and sports celebrations; still another way of classifying involves the *opportunity structure* as with anti-social behavior when police go on strike or during a disaster; or the prism of *parties to the conflict* might fit with traditional race and religious riots where rival groups struggle or where one group challenges government; or the focus can be on the *career* of the disorder --is it contained or does it escalate (for example as a result of police under or over reaction and the presence of a police riot), is it the first salvo in a struggle that becomes a more organized social movement that is eventually successful or does it remain episodic and relatively unorganized or an unsuccessful social movement; still another concept involves *scale* (minor to major with respect to number of persons involved, breadth of geographical areas, length, extent of injury, death, property damage and social disruption).

Various composite measures, typologies and assessments based on combining the above dimensions can be appropriate, depending on the scholar's goals. For example a broader classification for whether disorders are merely individuals taking advantage of a situation to act out (riot) rather than a communal protest can be developed based on whether or not a protest ideology is present, whether the disorders develop out of a prolonged community conflict, the presence of spokespersons, the words used during and after the activity and the attitudes after the fact of various types of participants, the presentation of demands, selectivity in attack, a link between the source of the trouble as identified in an ideology or what Neil Smelser (2012) called the "generalized belief" and those targets actually attacked. To be sure, rarely will these all vary perfectly with one another, or approach either end of the continuum from riot to protest. As noted above, we also must be mindful of the connections between categories applied to discrete individual actors and to the more elusive category of the group.

Mongkok: The Same But Different

This book helps us think about what is unique and what is common about Mongkok relative to related events elsewhere and the future of Hong Kong. The events that began at the start of the Chinese Lunar New Year in Feb. 2016 need to be considered alongside of other violent crowd events in Hong Kong since WWII such as the Kowloon Double-Tenth Riots of 1957 against estate rule, the Star Ferry riots of 1966 in response to a 5 cent ferry increase and the 1967 riot involving labor-management issues.

While the enforcement of licensing rules involving the fish ball hawkers were the precipitating (triggering) incidents, in Mongkok in contrast to most disorders where those with the complaint are central to the action and make demands directly related to their concerns, the vendors were not centrally involved in the disorders, nor did the disorders focus directly on their grievances. That suggests yet another conceptual category (*proxy disorder*) that may be useful in contrasting events where those in the streets claim to speak for aggrieved others who are not present vs. (*direct voice disorder*) where the aggrieved in the streets speaking for themselves vs. settings where the events have nothing to do with the precipitating incident (*opportunistic or captured disorder*).

Mongkok is also interesting because it appears that social media did not play a major role in drawing people to the event. That contrasts markedly with the important role such media have come to play in western protests (e.g., the case studies in Lucas and Monaghan 2018). The limited duration of Mongkok is likely a factor.

Mongkok is a classic case of the unintended consequences that can flow from a rigid application of a zero-tolerance policy. A lesson learned in the West with respect to the softening of surveillance is the importance of police discretion in negotiating with complainants (Gillham and Marx 2018, Marx 1998), particularly during special periods such as holidays, celebrations and tragedies. A softer approach can avoid the kind of police escalation seen in Mongkok, although too minimal a police profile may have the opposite effect. The mine and mind fields here are monumental, no matter how professional and experienced the police are, luck plays an under appreciated role and, as with the proverbial rushing river in which one can never dip a foot in the same water twice --there is an *always evolving, dynamic, and fluid conflictual dance between police and those involved in protest and disorder* (Gillham and Marx 2000).

Mongkok with its relatively limited scale, can also be compared to the much larger, longer lasting and more destructive scale of disorders in the West such as in the USA and Europe during the 1960s and more recent events in Los Angeles, France, Sweden and Germany. Without denying the fear, injury and destruction of the Hong Kong events, such comparisons encourage asking why the Mongkok disorders were relatively less disorderly than elsewhere? Of course that is certainly not to predict that that will always be the case.

In exploring that question we can ask: is it because of fewer grievances, better channels to peacefully express them, more professional police responses, a sense of

hopelessness, greater fear of repression or greater respect for authority rooted in Confucian culture and Chinese history with the obeisance due the emperor and authorities (including parents and elders) more generally, a preference for communal harmony over direct conflict, an emphasis on law over justice, on obligations, duty and saving face rather than on God-given individual rights and being in your face through impolite actions, and a moral imperative to negotiate rather demanding a whole loaf? ⁴

The book encourages thought and debate about the proper role (and limits upon) citizens expressing grievances beyond the formal and polite means of doing this and government and police in responding to such expressions. To an American with limited first hand experience in China (briefly in Hong Kong in the 1960s and teaching for a short time in Tsinghua and lecturing in Beijing in 1995 (Marx 2000) the differences are striking. Consider for example the continued strong impact of traditional culture, the greater subordination of private to public interests, favoring the communal over the individual, and a preference for conflict avoidance and negotiation. There is greater acceptance of informal, personal and local means vs. formal structures and of traditional morality vs. legal systems and procedural rules. With this one also sees a stronger tendency for societal ends to override the means (at least relative to modern democratic societies). and stronger support for the idea that government should play a very active role in enforcing morality and "correct" behavior and ideas. The diverse points of view the book offers encourages reflection on the proper role of government, the relation of the criminal justice system to the party in power, and where the lines between the public and the private, liberty and order, and the state and society are best drawn. As a bifurcated society Hong Kong hosts these tensions and they are played out in the differing responses to the meaning of Mongkok.

Globalization

An important issue raised by Wong's observations regarding China's enduring distinctiveness involves the implications for the supposed juggernaut of a homogenizing, colonizing western driven (at least initially) globalization with respect to both technologies and democratic ideals. The encounter between broad social forces such as Western globalization and the richness, heterogeneity and push back of other cultures is of great importance for understanding and for informed policy discussions about societal directions and needs. There are times when empirically, practically and morally one size does not fit all, even as there must be limits.

The cross cultural issues seen in the globalization by export of a homogenized, international (whether by design, accretion or unreflective mimicry) of U.S. technical and covert social control and liberties systems are fascinating.(Marx 1995a, 1995b, Guzik and Marx, forthcoming) Strong forces push toward a standardized global culture.

Yet when one gets down to cases and looks concretely, each national context (and even the variation within them regionally and locally) is so rich, distinctive and often changing, that an easily identifiable impact or trend for any single variable is usually difficult to show. We also need to separate the formal (more easily measured indicators)

from actual behavior. The mere presence of a law or a formal structure (whether technical or legal) is not a sure guide to behavior, any more than their absence means that behavior consistent with them will not be found. The informal can be seen only through fine-grained observational analysis of local situations. ⁵

A remark by the American writer Mark Twain applies to the supposed impact of globalization. He once said of an erroneous obituary, "The reports of my death were greatly exaggerated." The same thing might be said of the death of clearly distinct national cultures of protest and government and police responses. However, the report of Twain's death eventually was correct. With the ever increasing influence of China the global transformation may well move more strongly in the other direction as well.

This raises a broader question regarding what type of understanding students of comparative societies should seek—that of the social historian or journalist who describes what is distinct, or that of the positivist scholar who looks for explanations and general laws and trends. For the former, an important rule of social inquiry is 'beware of sociologists bearing broad generalizations.' For the latter, the rule "find variation and congruence and account for them" is equally important. Yet if we qualify our generalizations by factors such as social context, time and place, and identify different types of the phenomena of interest, we can lessen the contradiction. A little humility and a tentative approach to a dynamic world also helps.

Who is the Monkey, Who is the Organ Grinder?

Beyond such value questions, an important causal question in the 2016 Year of the Monkey, is to ask just who is the monkey and who is the organ grinder? Are the youth in the streets just the organ grinder's monkey performing to the music of unseen organizers with agendas (whether social movements, police provocateurs, other nations or groups with economic or cultural interests)? Or is the monkey showing his power and foresight by acting autonomously in response to the need for self-defense or as a last resort in response to unjust conditions where there is no clear establishment path to change?

A key tool here is the need to disaggregate and differentiate --things need to be broken apart and classified so that cases sharing common elements are together and not lumped in with things they may be only superficially connected to and then to explore empirical correlates of the categories. As social theorist Georg Simmel observed, that reconfiguration can cause us to see hidden linkages among seemingly disparate factors, but also to see that seeming commonalities may mask important differences. That is certainly the case for identifying the many types of disorder, the multiple dimensions by which they can be compared. In doing that we may see veiled connections and processes. and are helped when studying the issues in a comparative framework across countries and also across methods --as the book recommends.

Where possible, we need to note necessary and/or sufficient conditions for the observed behavior. Yet that must be done deftly without becoming unduly deterministic

or linear in the face of jagged realities and feedback loops. A pinball analogy with causal vectors bouncing off of each other can be helpful. Yet there is clearly a communicative and practical need for short hands and parsimony, even as sweeping responses risk banality, obscuration and even obfuscation. Alas, the tensions and challenges never end!

With tools for empirically and logically discovering and organizing the facts, and awareness of the appropriate frame of reference we can then proceed to moral evaluation and judgments about what is to be done with realistic expectations.

As the qualifications and directives in this wise book make clear, we can not answer many of the many questions about civil disorder with great precision. The goal must be to encourage thought and sensitivity to the issues, not the clear and undisputed solution to a mathematical equation.

Centrally involved here is the search for knowledge and wisdom and the techniques to discover them. The search involves the interplay of facts and values in a dynamic and somewhat relative world steeped in paradox and material and non-material scarcity where, while all should have their say, all answers should not therefore count equally.

Yet among all this relativity there is a time to act, even if only as a chronicler or moral witness, rather than an antiseptic moral eunuch unduly hidebound by the presumed objectivity and neutrality of the scientific method. The method and theory must fit the problem not the other way around! Professor Wong's book calls on the various parties to clarify their assumptions --theoretical, empirical and moral, so that disagreements move beyond name calling and shouting and they are clear what the game is with its goals and rules.

Protest, Police and Public Order/Disorder

I have been studying issues of protest, police and public order/disorder for almost 6 decades. Let me conclude with a brief comment on just one of the parties re the nature of the game and rules. (* This section draws from Gillham and Marx, 2018)

Police are invariably major actors in any study of disorder. Certainly all societies seek police responses that will minimize harm to those in the streets and to police while maintaining order. Government inquires almost always call for more controlled and effective police responses and Wong notes such inadequacies in Mongkok. But we need to ask effective for whom and by what standards?

How should we judge developments in the management (or what can be called pacification, "just desserts", or unjust repression depending on who the "we" is doing the calling/judging) of disorders? Is not law enforcement's ability to avoid killing protesters in the streets or to intervene preventively a sign of progress? Is this a cause for some modest celebration, or at least appreciation as we compare the response of "Asia's finest" to some of the egregious examples elsewhere? Certainly, the avoidance of provocation,

injury or loss of life, cities on fire, escalation, hatred and alienation are positive. Full scale riots leave deep reservoirs of bitterness on all sides and are conducive to backlash and draconian policies.

Yet the development of more pacific, democratic, professional policing ethos able to prevent and repress all disorders is not without contradictions, challenges, risks and trade-offs relative to other models (Marx 1988; Gillham and Marx 2000; 2003). What does it mean to say that a police response "works"? With health care or schools, we seek maximum effectiveness. But for police in a democratic society we need optimal (rather than maximal) effectiveness. Practices must be continually re-examined given changing conditions, tactics, and actors. In the case of efforts to create more professional police and to regulate discretion in crowd situations, the challenge is in finding the right mix such that honoring discretion does not put police beyond the law and responsible political control, while regulating discretion does not introduce undue rigidity. Order needs to be maintained and the law (with its vagaries and conflicts) followed, but not at great cost to citizens' rights, the elimination of protest as a tool for social change when established arteries are blocked, nor the *permanent* institutionalization of strong control responses temporarily created and justified by a major crisis (such as 9/11). In such cases strong oversight and renewal procedures are necessary to keep responses measured and proportionate.

We can ask that a bandage or pain reliever do its job and certainly not make an injury worse, even as it is not a cure. As with most directives to riot study commissions President Johnson's charge to his Commission was muddled regarding the link between his 3 often cited questions ("what happened, why did it happen and what can be done to prevent it happening again"). The "it" was taken to mean riot stoppage. But what was really needed was a fourth question separating "it" as riot control from "it" as racial injustice (or in this case the grievances of those in Mongkok and the dissatisfied in Hong Kong more generally). What it takes to prevent or stop a civil disorder is distinct from broader changes in economic and political opportunity, education, housing, health, and the many other factors related to the sense of injustice that can propel disorders. The logical and empirical error of "false equivalence" is present when the harm from short-lived disorders and the harm from enduring and deep injustice are seen to be equivalent.

Police behavior alone can hardly solve the broader issues involved disorders. Improved and more effective police responses can often stop riots from escalating. But to the extent that they are unfairly repressive and deter legitimate protest, they may exacerbate deepen grievance and inhibit changes associated with disorders.

Democratic societies experience a continual tension between the desire for order and the desire for liberty. While, as the case of the *police state* suggests, one can have the former without the latter, it is not possible to have a society with liberty which does not also have a minimum degree of order. The balance between these will vary depending on the context and time period. Policing in a democracy seeks to avoid the extremes of either anarchy or repression.

In an open democratic society which respects the dignity of the individual and values voluntary and consensual behavior and the non-violent resolution of conflicts, police, with their power, secrecy, and use of violence and deception, are an anomaly. They are charged with using undemocratic means to obtain democratic ends. Police offer an ethical and moral paradox which should forever make democratic citizens vigilant.

This paradox is evident in the fact that a democratic society needs protection both *by police* and *from police*. Restrictions on police power are not a sufficient guarantee of freedom. Taken too far, they may even guarantee its opposite, as private interests reign unchecked and/or citizens take the law into their own hands in the face of increased disorder. Yet a police whose power is too great is also a danger. President Abraham Lincoln posed the dilemma well when he asked, "must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its' own people, or too weak to maintain its' existence?"

Bertrand Russell observed that, "the whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts". While we initially need a skeptical approach, it is necessary to believe in something! For Professor Wong that involves the notion that the pursuit of the truth and improvement of the human condition can be linked. Even if the empirical yields hazy or dark clouds of doubt, as Italian social theorist Antonio Gramsci said, "pessimism of the spirit, optimism of the will". With poet Robert Browning, "...a man's reach should exceed his grasp", or else what is a dream for? With eyes wide open we must have a dream of honest listening and reflexivity, understanding, reconciliation, and peace. Professor Wong's notable effort indeed makes it easier to maneuver across the rock strewn stream.

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¹ A comment made about President Johnson's appointment of the Kerner Commission to study U.S. civil disorders in 1967. It seems unbelievable in 2018 to see that as late as 1967 a Commission concerned with race relations was made up largely of middle of the road, middle aged white men (there were two blacks and one woman). There was no voice for the angry young or the more critical social movement representatives. That voice was heard in a document *The Harvest of Racism* (Shallow, 2018) which I was privileged to work on. The report however was embargoed and not released until 50 years later.

² However, just how "independent" such a commission anywhere can be when it is appointed by the government in power is a good question. A government appointed commission will be more likely to see its (usually moderate) recommendations acted upon and have broader (if hardly total) legitimacy, than is the case for self-anointed and appointed commissions of special interest groups (e.g., those of a protest group or civil liberties group, chamber of commerce, police union). The latter are likely to have clarion and less nuanced views regarding causes and the actions needed. That is said knowing that such government commissions are often disingenuous forms of impression management conveying the sense that something is being done, while calling for more study and simply kicking the can down the road.

³ A simple answer at that! In my experience the fauna most prone to the search for certainty are jejune, student activists (who can be excused for their impatience and naivety) and politicians and journalists (who can not). During an interview in which I answered a complicated question about undercover policing by saying "that depends" and offered qualifications, the impatient reporter said, "enough, just answer the question, "Yes or no --is it good or bad"?"

⁴ Wong offers an insightful contrast between Western and Chinese views here. He notes that while both object to the use of violence for political ends, "...only the Chinese considers collective violence as ipso facto moral wrong, without justification and beyond redemption. Thus the mere thought--speech creating social disorder, much less a riotous act, would land a person in jail." A Chinese person only exposed to such views would likely be unsupportive and have trouble understanding President Thomas Jefferson's observation that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing" (Staloff 2005) In the same way a western/westernized person steeped in the ideals in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and not in classical Chinese culture would find the failure to make a distinction between words and deeds a violation of human rights.

Of course sweeping East v. West conclusions must be used as a general map not a detailed compass. Wong also notes that within Chinese culture when the ruler does not meet his obligations protest is sanctioned. He quotes an activist suggesting that it does not matter what those in the streets did in Mongkok, (the what), rather what matters is why they did it. In this case for self-protection or to protect HK core values or hurting what is seen as the oppressive HKP.

⁵ A point well demonstrated by Wong's (2015) study of Hong Kong policing.