Feng Shui Project: Educational, Cultural and Philosophical Perspectives

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The background to the project is decades of research on the contributions of history and philosophy of science (HPS) to theoretical, curricula and pedagogical issues in science teaching. Some project material and resources are on the web. The project will come to fruition in late 2021 as thematic issue of the Springer journal *Science & Education*.

Much of this research tradition has been published in the Springer journal *Science & Education: Contributions of History, Philosophy and Sociology of Science* that commenced publication in 1992.

An extensive account of the research can be found in the 3-volume, 76-chapter *International Handbook of Research in History, Philosophy and Science Teaching* (Springer 2014) that has contributions by 130 scholars from 30 countries.

An overview of the research can be found in the 440-page monograph *Science Teaching: The Contribution of History and Philosophy of Science* (Routledge 2015). A Chinese translation is published by Foreign Language, Technical and Research Press in Beijing.

One extension of this research can be read in the 340-page, 1,700-references monograph – *Feng Shui: Teaching About Science and Pseudoscience* (Springer 2019). The summary of the book's argument is available on the web. The Feng Shui Project, which began in late 2019, takes this book as 'background information' though contributors are not committed to the book's arguments.

Currently there are 14 papers being written, by 20 authors from nine countries. Their disciplines are science education, history of science, anthropology, economics, psychology and philosophy. Provisional Contents & Abstracts are available. The first draft of papers (5-10,000 words) are due for completion by end of 2020.

Feng shui theory, with its dependence on the millennia-old, Asian core notions of 'life force', chi or *qi*, is intimately connected to the now world-wide practice of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the spectrum of traditional martial arts and qigong exercises, and increasingly found university medical, nursing, architecture and town-planning programmes. Feng shui is promoted on millions

of websites. A Google FENG SHUI search returns one-hundred million such sites in half-a-second. The sites support a multi-billion-dollar economy. Amazon has 7,000 feng shui books listed in English alone.

Feng shui is a significant subject with obvious economic, cultural and educational ramifications, yet surprisingly it has generated minimal critical, systematic scholarship; with little attention to the educational responsibilities and opportunities feng shui occasions.

In 2016 the Chinese government legislated its *Benchmarks for Scientific Literacy of Chinese Citizens*. The theory of feng shui is included as a literacy goal. This document at its 9th reference point stipulates that all students by end of schooling should:

> know the traditional Chinese philosophical concepts such as Yin-Yang and Five Elements, and the unity of nature and man, which are the simple materialism and methodology of the whole system in ancient China and have practical significance.

The Feng Shui Project has a good deal of current relevance, not just for China, but also beyond. The project connects with long-standing and consequential topics in philosophy of science, philosophy of education and cultural studies:

- Should scientific thinking extend beyond the classroom and laboratory?
- Does being scientifically literate entail having a scientific habit of mind?
- Can a distinction be drawn between science and pseudoscience?
- Can the examination of pseudoscience advance the better understanding of science?
- Can chi, *qi* or 'life force' be known by science or is it 'beyond' science?
- Are theoretical postulates in science to be interpreted realistically or instrumentally?
- Are scientific truth claims universal or are they to be adjusted to local cultural, religious and political circumstances?
- What should be taught in science programmes when there is a clash between deep-seated, historical cultural commitments and the worldview of science?
- Is methodological and/or ontological naturalism a presupposition of scientific research?
- Is science committed to a particular worldview with specific ontological, epistemological, ethical and political components?
- Is the appraisal of scientific practice and theory worldview neutral?
- What educational and cultural lessons can be learnt from the chequered history of the Chinese Communist Party's positions on feng shui?

For more information on the project please contact project coordinator: