

Regaining Honour and Regaining Legitimacy: Shame, Confession, Obedience and Risk Practices amongst Chinese Communist Officials

Shaoying Zhang and Derek McGhee

First and corresponding author: Dr Shaoying Zhang, is associate professor of Shanghai Political Science and Law and a Shanghai Young Eastern Scholar; Email: sz8n13@soton.ac.uk; He is interested in Chinese governance, politics of ethnic conflict and de-radicalization. He has published two books entitled *Social Policies and Ethnic Conflict in China* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and *China's Ethical Revolution – Regaining Legitimacy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Postal address of affiliation: Room 218, Building 7, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law; 7989 Wai Qing Song Road, Shanghai, P.R China (201701)

Second author: Professor Derek McGhee; is Professor of Sociology, FRSA, FAcSS, and Faculty Dean of Research for Humanities and Social Sciences, and Director of the Keele Institute for Social Inclusion. Email: d.mcgee@keele.ac.uk. His research areas include governance, citizenship and migration. He has published four sole-authored books and two co-authored books with Dr Shaoying Zhang. Postal address of affiliation: Claus Moser Building, Keele University; Keele; Staffordshire; ST5 5BG; UK.

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Abstract

As part of its anti-corruption campaigns in China, the Communist Party of China (CCP) provides officials opportunities to redeem themselves and renew their vows of loyalty to the Party and the people they serve. Officials must regain honour through a process of self-confrontation and self-renunciation in compulsory meetings in which they are encouraged to transform their immoral thoughts and behaviours through confessional criticism and self-criticism practices. These meetings facilitate officials' redemption through a divinized, ritualistic and theatrical process. In the process of confession and penance, officials must expose themselves to a type of ritual martyrdom, which combines elements of shame, a commitment to absolute obedience and exposure to risk. This paper is based on original fieldwork comprising 50 interviews with high-, mid- and low-level officials across China during 2014 and 2015.

Keywords: redemption, honour, Communist Party of China, ethics, legitimacy, anti-corruption

Introduction

Since coming to power in late 2012, President Xi Jinping has set in motion an anti-corruption campaign against officials within the Party. President Xi referred to this campaign as ‘swatting flies and caging tigers’ (22 January 2013). Along with this campaign, President Xi has also introduced the ‘eight-point code’, which imposes restrictions on officials’ behaviour as a way of reintroducing and reinforcing the appropriate, correct and expected practices of communist officials. In order to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of the ‘eight-point code’ and to enhance ‘working styles’ among officials, President Xi also launched the Mass Line Education (MLE) programme for the purpose of eradicating the ‘four undesirable working styles’, namely, formalism, bureaucratism, hedonism and extravagance. He described these interdependent programmes as a ‘purification’ process whereby Communist Party members can make ‘spicy’ efforts to ‘sweat’ corruption out of their thoughts (19 March 2014). All of these measures are being taken in the name of improving the Party’s moral ecology, (the Party’s moral ecology, like any ecology is a relationship of interdependence whereby the high moral standing of the Party is to be achieved through officials being the servants of the masses which in turn facilitates the masses’ willingness to allow the party to continue to rule the country). We argue that all of these campaigns should be understood as part of President Xi’s ethical revolution, in which he is attempting to reform and remoralize the Party in order to help it regain and thus maintain legitimacy (Zhang & McGhee, 2017).

We further contend that these various campaigns should be understood as a complex system of power that enables different modes of power (sovereign, disciplinary and biopolitical power) to operate across the Party and among subjects (at various levels from the

macro- to the micro level). Thus, the Party is simultaneously articulating the relationship between sovereignty, morality and ethics through interdependent processes. We refer to these various interdependent initiatives as components of an attempted ethical revolution that has been initiated to boost the Communist Party's legitimacy in the eyes of people for the purpose of maintaining its non-democratic rule. These steps are viewed as part of a painful but necessary process that the Party must welcome and embrace if it is to maintain its legitimacy. In President Xi's words, 'we must have the courage to scrape the poison off the bones and cut our own wrists to fight against corruption' (15 January 2014). By October 2016, more than one million officials had been investigated and disciplined under the anti-corruption campaign since President Xi took power in late 2012, more than 200 of whom were at or above the vice-ministerial level.

Rather than examine the impact of the more high-profile 'show trials' and public confessions of high-ranking officials during the anti-corruption campaign, in this paper we explore, through the perspective of officials who experienced them, some of the behind-the-scenes rituals (for example, closed-door criticism and self-criticism sessions) aimed at promoting the emergence of ethical subjects. According to Foucault, in order to encourage the formation of ethical subjects, it is not sufficient only to impose duties but these duties should also be 'considered, fulfilled and executed on the basis of a moral attitude' (2005, p. 201). That is, due to its enforced nature, the "performance by design" approach has not been, and will not be[come], as effective as the Party desires in preventing the moral decay of Party members' (Gong, 2008, p. 151). We assert here that a successful battle against corruption and moral degeneration among officials has to 'rely more on ex ante preventive measures than on ex post prosecutions and sanctions' (Gong & Ren, 2013, p. 7). To be effective, such measures must not only be associated with the creation of a culture of fear (for example, associated with high-profile arrests and trials) but must also be combined with what we call a culture of

sacrifice. That is, these preventive measures are not only about the threat and fear of being arrested. They are also about a transformation of the self. We argue in this paper that redemption is a key part of the process of the remoralization and transformation of individual officials, especially those who have been disciplined within the Party. This can be observed in the Party's recalibration of the anti-corruption campaigns, from emphasizing public trials and punishments to carrying out more intimate, confessional and individual practices. For example, Wang Qishan, the chief disciplinary official of the Party, says,

We must stick with the principle of 'Four Supervision and Discipline Forms', which is to say, light disciplinary punishment and small position changes of mistaken members must become the majority of cases; heavy disciplinary punishment and significant position adjustment must become the minority; and cases that require legal proceedings must become extremely rare. The supervision within the Party must take discipline as the first resort, often carry out criticism and self-criticism during democratic life meetings and often interview problematic individual officials. We must ensure that practices of officials [being] 'red face[d] and sweating' become the norm. (24 September 2015)

Moreover, according to Farge and Foucault (2016), the legal process and consequent punishment are visible to the eyes of all and place the wrongdoers (corrupt officials) and the Party on display, without returning to them either esteem or reputation. Thus, juridical trials created a public scandal that the Party could neither absorb nor diminish (p. 258). Therefore, when the Party went before the courts this resulted in stigmatization and resulted in attention being drawn to the Party's moral failings through these public spectacles. In hiding the wrongdoers (corrupt officials) from the eyes of the world, 'light disciplinary punishment' could permanently wash away the stain of guilt (Farge & Foucault 2016, pp. 257-260). But

this erasure of guilt required repentance in order for the process to work (Farge & Foucault 2016, pp. 257-260).

In this paper, we focus on officials' experiences of 'the small position changes' associated with the 'light disciplinary punishment' introduced by the Party. In requiring all Party members to participate in group-criticism and self-criticism sessions and through employing disciplinary interviews to deal with those officials with more advanced or serious behavioural and attitudinal problems. Through these processes, as Wang Qishan suggests, we expose for analysis that the primary aim of these processes is to facilitate officials' self-diagnosis of their own corruption and also the forensic examination of self-diagnosed corruption in order for participants to collectively 'sweat' corruption out of the body of the Party.

The emphasis placed on these practices suggests there is a clear shift from legal punishment to Party discipline. Through this approach, the justice system is to be avoided through pre-emptive measures so that the Party can avoid the uncertain, costly and potentially 'shaming' (for the Party) outcomes of legal processes (Farge & Foucault 2016, p. 134). Only those who fail to pass the Party's disciplinary practices, that is, criticism and self-criticism and disciplinary interviews, then proceed to what Wang Qishan refers to as heavy disciplinary measures, or even legal prosecution. Thus, only those individuals who, as agents of the Party, fail to make 'spicy' efforts to 'sweat' corruption out of their thoughts will be subjected to procedures designed by the Party to 'scrape the poison off the bones'. Through these exercises, the Party is not only changing the direction of the anti-corruption policy from one of carrying out 'heavy' legal discipline to one of 'light' Party discipline, but is also simultaneously changing its strategy from ex post punishment to ex ante preventive measures.

We show that this strategy of prevention contains another important function, that is, to achieve the potential redemption of corrupt officials. As we demonstrate, in the context of this ethical revolution, it is becoming compulsory for all Party members to identify, confess and thereby transform their past immoral thoughts and behaviours. In this context, then, everyone is assumed to have ‘sinned’, and the mandatory criticism and self-criticism sessions are the institutional means through which all officials can be ‘saved’ from their corruption (sinfulness) and as a consequence be transformed and redeemed as ethical and loyal subjects of the Party.

This paper is based on original fieldwork, in which we conducted 50 interviews with high-, mid- and low-level officials across China during 2014 and 2015. The participants were from provincial governments, universities, state-owned companies and other public sectors, organizations and departments. Due to the sensitivity of our research, and for the sake of protecting our participants, their identities are anonymized. In the next section, we examine individuals who are considered redeemable and honourable Party members. In the third section, we address the relationship between the Party’s legitimacy and the self-redemption of Chinese officials. In the fourth section, we examine the practices of penance and redemption achieved through exposing oneself to the shame of verbalizing one’s previous wrongdoings, incurring the risk of speaking the truth about the self and the riskier process of not speaking enough of the truth about the self in criticism and self-criticism study sessions.

‘Redeemable and Honourable’ Party Members

As Wang Qishan states above, there are three different types of disciplined and punished party members: those who receive light disciplinary punishment, those who receive heavy disciplinary punishment and those who are legally punished. Thus, although all officials are assumed to have ‘sinned’, only a certain type of disciplined and punished member is deemed

‘redeemable’ through ‘a small position change’ or adjustment. In other words, penance can result in transformation, and the chance to earn redemption is only awarded to certain subjects (Elden, 2016, p. 124). This process of discerning who should be considered eligible for ‘light’ confession/redemptive methods, or heavy and personally destructive procedures was commented on in our interview with an official from a provincial government:

The official should not in the past have belonged to a faction that opposed the Party centre. In other words, if you were on ‘the wrong side’ in the past, there is no possibility of redemption. If this is the case, you cannot be saved, even if you strictly follow all the procedures of confession. There should no interests or political power involved in this. However, if this is the case, your past faults will be indefinitely amplified, reducing the possibility for you to be reborn. In these cases, for example, even if you have no current faults, according to the prescribed Party standards, they will always find something to ‘stigmatize’ (*wuming hua*) you with, before punishing you. That is, if they want to punish you, they will always have to, first, prove that you are morally bad; otherwise, they would lose the support of the masses and hence lose their legitimacy.

Thus, the eligibility for various types of ‘punishment’ depends, from this participant’s perspective, on not only the degree to which the official is willing to be subjected to penance but also the type of sins he/she committed in the past. Factionalism and disloyalty to the central Party are deemed unforgivable, and consequently, the official is irredeemable. This is what officials call a ‘political death sentence’. Put another way, officials who are redeemable must always have been loyal to the Party centre. In the above case, officials who are redeemable are those who have committed some minor infractions that are regarded as not jeopardizing their primary loyalty towards the central Party. Those who are seen as having betrayed the Party (through giving their primary loyalty to a particular faction) in the past

will not be deemed salvageable even if their infractions were minor. In this context, Party membership is the source of their honour. Becoming a Party member involves certain ritual requirements (the swearing of an oath of allegiance), which includes the expression of one's political convictions. Thus, honour is expressed and demonstrated through officials recognizing the sacred nature of the Party centre, which is initiated when they swear an oath on joining the Party to defend this sacred centre. In short, if the sacred exists only by virtue of the point of honour which defends it, the sentiment of honour is only meaningful in the sense of the sacred (Bourdieu, 1979, cited in Barton, 1994, p. 45). We further examine the tension between shame and honour in the next sections.

This hierarchy of 'past faults', or sins, can also be observed in anti-corruption cases involving high-ranking officials, such as Zhou Yong Kang, Bo Xi Lai and Ling Jihua. All of these officials are allegedly leaders of or connected to powerful factions. Furthermore, their involvement in influential power blocs, it has emerged, is often the most serious aspect of their wrongdoing. Anti-factionalism is first and foremost a component of the Party's rehabilitation and, perhaps more importantly, its authority (Zhang & McGhee, 2017). This is to be achieved through investigating high-ranking officials and their affiliates who are singled out by the anti-corruption campaign as belonging to a particular faction. When a case involves both corruption and factionalism, then the 'heavy' ex post punishment route is invoked as the Party centre's authority is also threatened. However, in cases where anti-corruption does not involve such a threat to the Party centre's authority, an ex-ante preventive and redemptive option is deemed appropriate. On the other hand, those high-ranking corrupt officials who are deemed disloyal to the Party through their membership in a faction, are to be purged from the Party through the punitive equivalent of demonization which results in them being irredeemable in the eyes of the Party.

In factions, loyalty to the faction leaders replaces loyalty to the Party. The problem with this tension is that such leaders may enjoy acting as sovereigns in their semi-private realms. However, their activities are a direct challenge to the supreme sovereignty of the central committee, and this results in a potential threat to the Party's authority through what Russo (2006) calls the 'de-politicization' of the Party (p. 679). Thus, these strains between the private and the public are sources for radical critique in light of the depoliticization of the public sphere and the state (Sigurdson, 2010, p. 182). This is the place which enables potential revolutionary power struggles inside the Party to become a possibility (Huang, 2012). As a consequence, those officials who have been subjected to ex post 'heavy' and legalistic punishment are not redeemable in the eyes of the Party.

In this context, the Party uses the investigation of corruption or economic crime as a technique to govern officials, rather than the crime itself being its primary objective. Thus, even if an official is not associated with economic crimes but is affiliated with a faction, this would result in 'moral demonization', that is, the revocation of Party membership followed by legal punishment and eradication. What we can conclude from the problem of 'corruption' within the Party is fundamentally a problem of authority (Zhang & McGhee, 2017). Thus, for an official to be redeemable, he/she must not be associated with any potential threat to or competition with the ultimate authority of the Party.

However, the competition for loyalty within the Party can have some unintended consequences for its authority as a whole. As the official quoted above suggests, the Party's mishandling of individual cases can sometimes jeopardize its legitimacy for governing. Thus, the punishment of some officials, although legally justified, may not be perceived as being morally acceptable to 'the masses'. A mid-level official from the education department told us,

For example, in the case of Bo Xilai, many people think that he is a good leader who contributed so much to the development of Chong Qing city, and who is compared with other exposed corrupt leaders far less economically greedy. He received about twenty million yuan, of which only about five million went to him directly; the other fifteen million went to his family, which he allowed/agreed to. This was not a large amount of money [that was] embezzled for an official as high ranking as he. From the public viewpoint, he can be even considered an honest official.

Furthermore, there is a lot at stake when it comes to the Party's expectations of ritualized renunciations and declarations of loyalty to serve the Party exclusively. This becomes a matter of personal honour (or the lack of it). Those renouncing their allegiance to a corrupt leader have to enact a double betrayal that shames them and makes it even harder for them to be saved:

The first betrayal is their political betrayal of the current Party centre and the second betrayal is their now personal betrayal of their factional leader. Both of these betrayals together can be seen as evidence of a lack of personal ethical character. (An official)

Thus, the problem of breaking faith with either the Party centre or with personal factional leaders can bring a sense of shame and a questioning of officials' honour and character.

However, there are cases where, even though an official was subjected to the public humiliation of being associated with corruption, if he/she had not been subjected to the weight of a legal punishment, he/she could still be redeemable. For example, an official explained to us,

We had many cases of rehabilitating 'political rightists' after the Cultural Revolution. Their potential to be rehabilitated (*pingfan*) was that they should neither be legally sentenced criminals nor ordinary members who had been involved in 'big mistakes' in

the past. That is to say, they had to maintain their political significance (the Party membership) when their political enemies were still in power. They had to wait until there was an opportunity for them to remerge in mainstream politics, namely when their factional leader, such as Deng Xiaoping, was once again in favour and came back to power. Thus, they were redeemed through their powerful leaders successfully reclaiming their power.

As seen in these remarks, those who are legally sentenced are not redeemable. However, those who suffered heavy disciplinary punishment within the Party (short of legal punishment) and previously enjoyed political support from political leaders who were higher up in the hierarchy, had to wait for their factional leader to make a comeback in order to be rehabilitated. Therefore, their political significance was suspended (but they were not permanently deprived of it, as in the case of being legally punished), in which case they might be saved later, even though they were not currently redeemable in the eyes of the Party.

Below, we focus on the processes by which officials have been accused of redeemable wrongdoing, that is, activities that are assigned disciplinary rather legalistic punishment. The emphasis here is on how redemption in this context is associated with complex techniques of the self. As we show, the key to this status of ‘redeemableness’ is the obligation to manifest the truth of the self. This process involves unconditional obedience, uninterrupted examination and exhaustive confession. It entails politics of expressing sincerity, embracing honour and accepting shame of the self for the purpose of redeeming the self – and through this, reinforcing the legitimacy of the Party as the servant of the people.

Self-Redemption and Party Legitimacy through Criticism and Self-Criticism

Driven by the idea of ‘continuing the revolution’, the practices of criticism and self-criticism can be seen as of practices employed during previous reform movements in China. For

example, the so-called democratic life meetings were an important ‘discursive-historical axis’ of the process of the Chinese revolution and became the Party’s main mechanism for ‘ensuring that it perennially maintains “a close connection to the masses”’ (Li, 2012, pp. 436-437), for the purpose of preserving its legitimacy. Therefore, eradicating ‘impurity within the Party’ (Li, 2012, p. 416) through rituals of self-confession, cleansing and purging (Wydra, 2012, p. 57) has been a central component behind the various rectification campaigns within the Party. The history of such rectification programmes can be traced back to the beginnings of the Chinese communist movement in the late 1920s and early 1930s. At the time, the methods initially employed to reform captured enemy soldiers were relatively simple (Lifton, 1956, p. 86). In the beginning of the 1940s, more sophisticated techniques, such as criticism and self-criticism (*piping yu ziwo piping*) during ‘democratic life meetings’, were instituted in Yan’an as a means of achieving greater control over cadre behaviours (Ji, 2004, p. 161). Ever since then, criticism and self-criticism sessions have always been a major mechanism of disciplinary techniques for the Party (Dittmer, 1973, p. 708).

The concept of criticism and self-criticism was originally formulated by Lenin (Sullivan, 1985, p. 89). However, the CCP has integrated the concept into a more compressive process, one which goes beyond the procedures used by both the Russians and the Chinese, as the ‘special mystique of the totalitarian secular religion demanding inquisitions and conversion of heretics’ (Lifton, 1956, p. 86). Thus, like public servants in the West, officials in the Party system are expected to be a kind of new secular clerisy based on Anglicist assumptions concerning the ‘purity’ of their practices (Barratt, 2009, pp. 72-73). That is, ‘the government of ruling subjects’ (Osborne, 1994) is achieved through removing the personal faults and incorrect thoughts held by officials (Ji, 2004, p. 162). However, the rationale for this kind of government is different to the West, for ‘the government of ruling subjects’ in China is not only concerned with public administration, but is also more

importantly concerned with the Party's legitimacy for ruling the country. Just as the governmentality of the Party is often accomplished through the government of the people in the process of officials' implementation of various policies (Zhang & McGhee, 2014), it is also the case that the government of the people (the legitimacy of the Party) is achieved through the Party's government of officials through forging ethical ruling subjects (Zhang & McGhee, 2017). We argue that the Party's various purification campaign are always about preserving its legitimacy.

The practices of criticism and self-criticism are a form of antagonism that operates in a mediated and regulated conflict scenario among officials (Dittmer, 1973, p. 708). In terms of outcomes, it is believed that these practices can be a means of restoring the appropriate and expected hierarchy of loyalties and also provide officials at all levels 'with common goals and a common body of knowledge to use in solving concrete problems' (Teiwes, 1976, p. 23). A number of potential modes of delivery exist when it comes to criticism and self-criticism procedures, and these depend upon the overall aims of the party leadership at that time. For example, they can take the form of procedures which can be described as 'closed-door inner-party democracy', 'open-door mass democracy' and 'controlled open-door mixed democracy'. Each of these different approaches in turn necessitates different types of involvement of participants and audiences as they can be either a technique of individualization or a technique of collective truth building.

Initially, criticism and self-criticism in the 1942 rectification campaign were conducted according to what Max Weber has called the 'principle of collegiality' within 'a forum of formal equals, all of whom could use the same theoretical calculus in a fairly objective way to determine guilt or innocence' (Dittmer, 1973, p. 723). However, in the 'wash your face' campaign in the spring of 1947, these sessions brought the ordinary 'masses into the process by requiring all cadres to face criticism by a council of delegates elected by

the peasants' (Teiwes, 1976, p. 36). In this instance, peasants were entitled to offer censure of cadres and also to participate in decision-making involving the type of discipline that should be meted out (Teiwes, 1976, p. 40). The problem with this type of criticism and self-criticism process was that once it began, it could get out of hand quickly and thus 'expose party organizations to uncontrolled mass passions' to attack the cadres (Teiwes, 1976, p. 36). Therefore, all of the rectification campaigns of 1950-53 took place under the attentive watch of the Party, whereas the rectification campaign of 1957 stressed 'extra-party criticism from bourgeois intellectuals rather than peasants' (Teiwes, 1976, p. 51). This type of criticism and self-criticism became 'both a Party meeting and a mass rally', which resulted in extra-party pressure being applied. However, officials avoided a situation in which they went 'too far in dealing with the cadres as might happen in a purely mass meeting' (Li, 2012, p. 433). This is what Li (2012) calls, the 'quasi-institutionalized mode of operation of "mass-involved party rectification"' (p. 411).

Finally, during the Cultural Revolution "mass criticism", a type of public degradation ceremony, were introduced, these sessions projected the basic relationships of the small group criticism and self-criticism session to the nationwide level (Dittmer, 1977, p. 70). This is the ultimate step of a 'democratic life meeting', which involved 'turning loose extra-party forces on virtually the entire chain of Party command with only Delphic guidance from on high' (Teiwes, 1976, pp. 51-52). As a result, 'hundreds of millions were caught up in the whirlwind of accusations, counteraccusation, self-criticism and criticism of others' (Dittmer, 1973, p. 721). In this 'altered context, an institution originally designed to achieve political redemption and renewed unity within a closed circle of the elite resulted in non-redemptive purges and rampant factionalism in society at large' (Dittmer, 1973, p. 722). In short, criticism and self-criticism sessions can adopt open-door, closed-door and controlled open-door approaches each leading to a variety of outcomes, some more uncertain than others

(Teiwes, 1976, p. 51). This method, then, has always been a kind of revolutionary strategy waged by the CCP against itself (Li, 2012, p. 419) for solving different ‘problems’ within the Party, such as resolving factional struggles, indoctrinating people with regard to Party rules or realigning misaligned officials.

In view of this historical background, we argue that President Xi requires every official to take part in inner-party criticism and self-criticism sessions to consolidate his control of the Party, to improve the Party moral standing (in the eyes of the masses) and through the latter to regain the Party’s legitimacy. Therefore, throughout China, the Party is currently bringing back the practice of conducting criticism and self-criticism in ‘democratic life meetings’ as a method for officials to use to acknowledge their wrongdoings and criticize one another for the purpose of exposing traces of corruption and the ‘four undesirable work styles’ (Yuen, 2014, p. 45). As President Xi argues, ‘The weapons of criticism and self-criticism should be well wielded with some spice to make every Party official blush and sweat a little’ (quoted in Yuen, 2014, p. 42). As a result, the new Regulations on Conducting Democratic Life Meetings for Party Committees above Country Level¹ state,

Democratic life will be an important part of the Party’s political life. It is an important way of carrying forward inner-party democracy, strengthening supervision within the Party and resolving conflicts and problems by relying on the Party’s leadership’s own forces and strength ... It is very important for strengthening the Party’s ability to engage in self-purification, self-perfection, self-innovation and for improving the ability of self-realization, ... and maintaining the unity and centrality of the Party. (13 January 2017)

¹ see: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0113/c64387-29020646.html>

The processes of ‘self-purification, self-perfection, self-innovation, and improving the ability of self-realization’ transform the self into an object for itself. This self is ‘capable of entering its own experience, at first indirectly, by becoming an object to itself’, in which it gradually becomes conscious of the attitudes and roles of others within a social environment in which both the self and other are implicated (McCarthy, 2005, p. 68). Through engaging in self-criticism in democratic life meetings, individuals think, reflect and turn inward upon themselves. As we demonstrate below, in order to facilitate self-reflection and self-transformation, these meetings are divinized, ritualistic and theatrical. Moreover, we examine the transformation of the self through the redemption of the self, through the processes of officials’ verbal confession and through the accompanying evidence of involuntary physical atonement (red face, sweat and so on) in these meetings. As Shilling and Mellor (2010) argue, while degrading and painful experiences are often ‘incorporated within collectively sanctioned bodily techniques and practices’, this process ‘can be culturally and socially constitutive’ (p. 522). In other words, individual subjects can also be saved (redeemed) through degradation and pain (Shilling and Mellor, 2010, p. 523).

We argue that the criticism and self-criticism rituals, which encourage officials to formulate a discourse of truth about themselves, are an example of a ‘therapeutic intervention’, which is intended to open up the possibility of healing (Foucault, 2014, p. 14). As we will demonstrate below, as a way to ‘save souls’, ‘its emphasis upon guilt and shame, its demand for atonement, recantation, and reform ... resembles an induced religious conversion’ (Lifton, 1956, p. 85). These rituals provide “both the disease and the cure” (Lifton, 1956, p. 85). A high-ranking official from a provincial government explained the relationship between the MLE programme and the anti-corruption and anti-undesirable work style campaigns through a medical analogy:

It is similar to when you become sick, for example, with cancer, but your symptoms are just a fever. Therefore, the first step is to bring down the fever, which endangers your life. But a normal temperature does not mean the disease is gone. You need an operation to get rid of the tumour, and it is the surgery that leads to your recovery. I think the anti-undesirable work style program and anti-corruption are for the purpose of bringing down the fever by injection or ice pack, whereas the Mass Line Education programme is surgery that will cure the disease.

In this process, the subject is placed at the intersection between rules of conduct that must be remembered and future actions that should conform to the code (which is reinforced by the MLE, which includes compulsory criticism and self-criticism sessions). In other words, the subject is placed at the intersection between the code and actions. This is also where we observe that the techniques of discipline and the techniques of the self become fused. This process appears to be one in which, once officials have achieved self-realization (through criticism and self-criticism), that is, a particular relationship with the self as an object of self-knowledge, the Party's truth is expected to be inculcated and in this way internalized and ingrained in officials' subjectivities, which is to be evidenced through their transformation into an ethical subject and servant of the Party (and the people). As an official explained to us,

I think we need self-reflection. There is a Party standard that all officials should compare their actions against. Looking in the mirror means that as Party members, we should follow Party constitutions and some norms formulated in a code of conduct. That is, through the mirror, you can compare whether your words and deeds are in line with the Party. Once you meet the requirements, you are requalified as a real Party member.

In this discourse, the ‘mirror’ becomes the Party’s constitution and code of conduct for officials, which are reiterated, scrutinized and which result in the powerful processes of genuine criticism and self-criticism as officials examine the individual’s past conduct. This is clearly summed up by President Xi’s requirements for leading officials:

To be a good leader, we must have the following characteristics: loyalty to the Party and it is political character, personal cleanness is the official line, and professional distinction is the basic political criteria. These enable officials to do the right politics, stand firm and be clear-cut. Officials must learn to keep pace with the Party and improve its quality, dare to be distinctive despite the difficulties, safeguard the overall situation and provide mutual support, have strict self-discipline, be honest and upright, be a good cadre of conviction, serve the public and be diligent and pragmatic.

The ‘mirror’, or code of conduct, is the prerequisite for officials to look at the self. Thus, for an individual official to regain his/her honour in these meetings, he/she has to judge him/herself against standards set by the Party, as upheld by the criticism and self-criticism of group members. The mirror is the obverse of the criticism. Thus, the idea of ‘learn[ing] to keep pace with the Party’ is more ‘in a moral-emotional rather than an intellectual sense’ (Dittmer, 1977, p. 84). Furthermore, in order to fully internalize the spirit of the Party’s codes, officials are expected not only to learn these through formal examination processes but also to review their entire lives in the process of studying the Party’s codes. That is achieved through studying key lessons from bad and good examples and engaging in constant and detailed self-criticism (Nivison, 1956, p. 67). As truth is the accomplishment of knowledge (McCarthy, 2005, p. 37), so too must one’s own truth be accomplished through self-knowledge. In other words, in order to know the truth about oneself, one must know the eternal truths of the nation (Foucault, 2014, p. 117), which cares for the masses. This is a characteristic of learning a code, a rule of conduct and a way of life (Foucault, 2014, p. 132).

Thus, these processes of self-reflection can be described as an exercise dedicated to incubating knowledge about the Party, which is interdependent with improving self-realization, the function and aim of which are directed at oneself (Foucault, 2005, p. 422). This exercise of the self takes the form of ‘a relational mode of knowledge that asserts and prescribes at the same time and is capable of producing a change in the subject’s mode of being’ (Foucault, 2005, p. 238). Thus, the goal of practices of the self involves two opposite practices: those of self-creation through conforming to certain criteria of style, and those of self-destruction through a rejection of the self, an absolute self-renunciation, realized through a successive (self-)disassemblage of the subject (Horujy, 2015, p. 65). However, it should be noted that these techniques of the self in this context are for a particular purpose, namely, to promote the public good. In order to achieve for this ultimate purpose, the official has to be an honest man or woman and remember what the Party demands of him or her (Foucault, 2005, p. 201). This is how ethical and loyal members of the Party are produced. For example,

the reference is first the Party constitution, that is, whether you have met the requirements of being a member of the Communist Party of China; second the criterion of honesty, a code of ethics advocated by the Communist Party. This is the ‘mirror’ that we are to look into. Then there is self-inspection for the purpose of recognizing your own failings and for expressing the problems you have experienced in your work and life, especially if they are associated with extravagance, formalism, bureaucracy and hedonism. You have to identify and reflect on your own problems, and people will give you advice, including the director of the unit, to rectify them. (A mid-level official in a provincial government)

This is also where the current campaign differs from the practices during the Cultural Revolution. Whereas in a small-group criticism and self-criticism session the individual receives greater solicitude, since he/she ‘would be a visible and articulate participant familiar

to everyone in the group', when criticism is projected to a nationwide level, none of the checks on aggression characteristic of face-to-face relationships are operative. The individual's existence as a person is subordinated to his/her functional significance as a symbol (Dittmer, 1977, p. 74). Thus, small-group and self-criticism are more like a technique of individualization, whereas open-door criticism and self-criticism involve a method of truth building in which the rational confession of individual sins strengthens the symbol of the sacred truth of the Party (Wydra, 2012, p. 57).

As well as producing ethical subjects, these processes are designed to encourage absolute loyalty to the Party through the reassertion of the oath of the Party membership. Thus, not only do the regulations in the Party's constitution frame the 'mirror', but also the oath that officials take on joining the Party further intensifies the practice of looking in the 'mirror'. Because one could not have honour without having certain boundaries, without being bound, the oath is a means of binding oneself before witnesses in a way that will be recognized by others as providing a 'point of honour' (Barton, 1994, p. 54). The oath is an enclosed sanctity, a fence, something that shuts one in, that places one under obligation, that surrounds one with taboo (Barton, 1994, p. 90). Consistent repentance is thus guaranteed by the oath, by means of which the subject is to wipe away sins, to return to the purity he/she acquired, in the context under examination here, on swearing the oath when he/she joined the Party. Thus, the purpose of the oath is not to establish an identity (such as becoming a communist), but, on the contrary, to mark the renunciation of oneself, to effect a distancing from one's current self to become a new and improved self.

Voluntary Penance and Redemption

As we discussed above, although the discipline inspection system that was unleashed to drive out corruption amongst officials has the authority to compel Party members to conform to the

Party's political will through fear of exposure and punishment, it does not necessarily have the moral authority or persuasive power over Party members to engender an 'inner sense of duty' in them in order to encourage them to adopt the high moral standards expected of them (Gong, 2008, p. 151). For example,

Since cadre Wang Qishan raised the importance of 'Four Supervision and Discipline Forms', the discipline inspection organs at all levels adhere to the 'learning from past mistakes to avoid future ones and curing the sickness to save the patient' principle (*chengqian bihou, zhibing jiuren*). We cannot beat all of the problematic officials to death, but must consider the nature, severity, consequences and influence of their mistakes as well as their attitudes when confessing their faults. For those frankly and truthfully confessing officials, we must give them opportunities. For those who do not speak truthfully and who still make serious mistakes since President Xi became president, we will punish them even harshly and more severely.

Criticism and self-criticism thus represent a principled redemptive appeal of communist messianism and the struggle against deviant insiders that 'derives in part from the integral position of ... confession ... which in turn derives from a Confucian emphasis on educating and transforming the wrong-doer rather than simply punishing him' (Dittmer, 1973, p. 710), and in part from Christian values such as self-sacrifice and the transformation of a telos of Christian sainthood into leadership worship (Wydra, 2012, p. 55). This is an important technique that involves institutionalizing the redemptive and evangelical approach ('save the patient'), and it fundamentally aims at achieving 'god-like perfection in the Communist rites' (Lifton, 1956, p. 88). President Xi further urges officials that, in order to achieve this perfection, they must 'look in the mirror, dress up, take a shower and get therapy' (19 June 2013). As an official explained to us, he interprets 'look in the mirror' as meaning, to identify

shortcomings, and ‘take a shower’ as the process of washing away shortcomings through the ‘therapy’ experienced during criticism and self-criticism study group sessions. That is,

it is a process of learning the Party policies and then ... find[ing] the gaps between their requirements and our behaviours (for example, ‘take a shower’ means to wash off the shortcoming). This is the first step. The second step is to apply what you have learned to your actual work. (A disciplinary official)

The metaphor of ‘bathe the soul’ was first used in China between 1950 and 1951, when many Party members experienced intensive cleansing during the Thought Reform of the Intellectual movement. At this time, the officials being targeted were criticized and humiliated at open-door mass rallies (this was referred to as being washed in a big bath) (Ji, 2004, p. 73). In closed-door meetings, officials were directed towards the worship of greatness (the Party’s initiatives) and the struggle against the self. Officials were then induced to speak and write self-criticism and listen to their peers’ advice and perspectives. The language used in the criticism and self-criticism sessions was highly ritualized, with standard expressions and ‘linguistic formulae’ which have been stipulated for these sessions in addition to ‘more elaborate forms of linguistic ceremonial practices’ (Ji, 2004, p. 161). Thus, criticism and self-criticism are also part of a strategy of redemption by destruction, through which the group’s identity is ensured by expelling its waste matter (Wydra, 2012, p. 57). As Chairman Mao said the following with regard to criticism and self-criticism sessions ‘The first thing is struggle, the second is criticism, the third is transformation. Struggle means destruction, and transformation means establishing something new’ (cited in Eggli & Hasmath 2016, p. 1). Therefore, the Party attempts to inculcate a forensic scrutiny into all aspects of officials’ lives, including their private lives, thus turning the whole of officialdom into ‘thought police’ who monitor ‘words to detect incorrect thought’ (Ji, 2004, p. 2). The ‘confession ends with an emphasis of personal liabilities which still remain, attitudes in need of further reform, and the

solemn resolve to continue attempts at self-improvement and to serve the regime devotedly in the future' (Lifton, 1956, p. 81). Once the individual's 'confession is approved', he/she 'experiences great emotional relief'. He/she 'has weathered the thought reform ordeal, renounced his past, and established an organic bond between himself and the Government'. This is how the baptismal process of 'taking a bath' occurs. 'It is a symbolic expression of atonement and redemption', and 'an act of self-surrender in making one's peace with a demanding' theatre (Lifton, 1956, p. 83).

Shame of Verbalization of the Self

Criticism and self-criticism sessions are a theatre for truth telling, which requires strict validation procedures that officials must follow. These meetings encourage one to have a sense of shame, show total obedience, take risks and demonstrate honesty in the context of a fear of being punished and a desire to be reborn. In other words, the objective of the compulsory criticism and self-criticism session is that one becomes a penitent, which means living differently from others, and which in turn means that one has a particular, spatially determined place in the Party. In what follows, we examine the shame of verbalization, obedience to others and the risk of speaking the truth about the self in these rituals.

Speaking self-criticism, or verbalizing the truth about the self, is in many ways a practice of truth telling through confession, which is both a profession of faith and an act of avowal (Elden, 2016, p. 117). In the practice of confession, the crucial moment is verbalization, and the confession itself is made in words (Elden, 2016, pp. 124-125). In this practice, he/she who talks, is requiring him/herself to be what he/she says he/she is. While avowal ties the subject to what he/she affirms, it also qualifies him/her differently with regard to what he/she says (Foucault, 2014, pp. 16–17). In other words, the verbalization of the truth about the self denotes the process of conversion from unethical and unbounded officials to re-

ethicalized officials bound by their oath of allegiance and service to the Party and the people. Through the continuous exercise of verbalization, the official performing penance establishes 'the link between veridiction and mortification in his body' (Foucault, 2014, p. 113).

However, "“evil” thoughts cannot be expressed without difficulty and shame’, and this provides confession with a mark of truth (Foucault, 1997, p. 248). Thus, penance is associated with mortification, and in this process, officials achieve mortification of the self through the sacrifice of the self (Foucault, 2014, pp. 111-112). This sacrifice is a ritual act and a verification of oneself through which one shows the truth of oneself (Foucault, 2014, p. 112). This verbalization of the self thus requires a sense of shame that also becomes a central element of the intended transformation of the self through the rituals of criticism and self-criticism. Shame is painful evidence of an official’s self-criticism and his/her desire to change. It is an embodied process to be sweated out. As an official from an education department explained,

In my experience of the analysis of my own problems on undesirable working styles, I think I treat it very seriously and honestly. A lot of people also help you analyse your practices. It is not the same as in the past when the study sessions were organized loosely and superficially. No one treated it seriously before, and it did not go far enough in examining ourselves and others. This time it is different. If I didn’t mention a small aspect of my problems with regard to work styles, other colleagues would pick up on this and ask me about it. This would be very embarrassing.

As a result, ‘the repeated sharing of previously private thoughts and actions and the mutual demand for improvement, served to instil in participants a new collective identity’ (that is, subjects whose aim is to collectively prevail over their shortcomings, both ethical and political) (U, 2013, p. 631). Thus, the confession approximates ‘positive rites’, through which group sentiments and meanings are produced (U, 2013, p. 632). Moreover, on occasion, the

criticism and self-criticism can result in physical and emotional impacts, such as embarrassment, shame and sweating, especially when errors and wrongdoing are exposed by others in the sessions. When we asked participants what ‘sweating’ means in this context, one participant from a provincial government answered,

It is both a means of reminding you of what is expected and a kind of warning to yourself. For example, it is a process whereby people gradually change themselves; they realize that they have gone bad. As a result, you will then feel shamed and start sweating when you compare your behaviour with the Party’s standards. You become scared by what you have done in the past.

Thus, ‘sweating’ is an effect of the technique of self associated with, as noted above, the ritual of shaming that enables the self to compare, renounce and transform the self when the self performs sincere self-reflection. This is also what Foucault (1977, p. 135) calls, ‘a bodily rhetoric of honour’ (cited in U, 2013, p. 633). Moreover, there is a close connection between the purpose of purification and truth telling, in which truth telling purifies, and, through the physical act of sweating, ‘evil’ is extracted from the body and the soul of the one who purges it through avowal (Foucault, 2014, p. 13). This is the process through which the individual is brought, either by him/herself or with the help or the direction of others, to transform him/herself physically and mentally, and to modify his/her relationship to him/herself and ultimately to the Party.

The sense of shame and the practices of shaming are closely associated with the rituals for reintegrating transgressors back into society, which is premised upon their being purified through shaming practices (Braithwaite, 1989). This is a similar ritualistic process to what happens in criticism and self-criticism study sessions, where officials who confess to having committed errors of thought and judgement in the past face verbal abuse and the possibility that they may be ostracized from the group. However, subsequently, they are

‘welcomed back into “the fold”’ following their attempts to engage in genuine self-criticism (Ji, 2004, p. 162). For example, an official from the disciplinary department elaborated, on this process:

Meetings among the leaders on the themes of ‘strictly regulating the Party political activities, strictly observing Party discipline, deepening the development of work style, so as to be loyal and honest to the Party to fulfil the responsibility’ were held with the aim of strengthening the Party spirit, strictly disciplining themselves and forming earnest work styles for the purpose of serving the healthy development of the local economy – all of this was to be achieved through criticizing and self-criticizing, which requires ‘face blush and sweat with shame’.

Obedience to the Self and to Others

Interactions with others through conversation is another important technique of the self, for it can facilitate a return of the self (self-subjection), or it can lead to a drastic and fundamental change, that is, a transformation of the self (trans-subjection) (Horujy, 2015, p. 14). During criticism and self-criticism study sessions, officials take part in a rite of participation, in which they are expected not only to listen to others but also to contemplate their own practices (Foucault, 2014, p. 115). An official from a propaganda department told us,

In the study sessions for criticism and self-criticism, people sit together and make analysis, of oneself, of others or of each other. This is for the purpose of helping others and improving oneself, as we all help each other analyse our strengths and weaknesses. So, I think it is actually like introspection, where you can analyse your behaviours, discover your weaknesses and then try to correct them. So we have the study sessions, but we also have interviews, and through these processes, you begin to

see from the perspective of others that your well-intentioned practices can sometimes be perceived differently by others who have been hurt by them.

In criticism and self-criticism sessions, the obligation to tell the truth about oneself is further inscribed within a relationship of obedience and a relationship of submission (Foucault, 2014, p. 129). Obedience presupposes the total monitoring of behaviour by the master. It is a 'sacrifice of the self', a sacrifice of 'the subject's will' (Horujy, 2015, p. 55). Officials have to practice a pure form of obedience that does not owe its value to the order itself but simply to the fact that it was followed under any and all circumstances (Foucault, 2014, p. 137). In other words, there is an observable director and a directed relationship within this institution (Foucault, 2014, p. 131), in which colleagues or cadres take turns acting as directors and also as the individual who performs self-criticism. As a consequence, one can never assume in this circular process that one has attained a definitive state of mastery over others and the self (Foucault, 2014, p. 135).

Moreover, officials are also required to write self-examination reports employing established expressions, which include 'carefully crafted words, phrases, slogans and scripts expressing politically correct thought'. In these reports, they are expected to reveal (and present) what they have done wrong and explain why they did what they did. These reports are often read out in front of their comrades during study sessions and other meetings (Ji, 2004, p. 2). According to Amoureux, through 'writing self-analysis', we open up the self to the examination of others and not just the self. This type of writing constitutes a practice for shaping the self (2015, p. 87). Thus, by scripting the self through the exchange of letters, for example, with like-minded (colleagues) souls, the self is offered techniques and reasoned arguments for mastering personal flaws (Miller, 1993, p. 340).

In short, during these criticism and self-criticism study sessions, officials are expected to engage in unconditional obedience, uninterrupted examination and exhaustive confession,

which forms an ensemble of elements in which each reinforces the others (Horujy, 2015, p. 58). Thus, in the study sessions, there are

technologies of systems of signs which permit the use of signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; techniques of power which determine the behaviour of individuals, subordinate them to certain ends or to domination, and objectify the subject; technologies of the self which permit individuals to effect, alone or with the assistance of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, on their thoughts, their behavior and their mode of being; and to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.

(Horujy, 2015, p. 66)

The criticism and self-criticism sessions and associated interviews can be described as an institutionalization of individual asceticism, precisely because the asceticism of the self can only be achieved through a relationship with others, peers/colleagues and with the Party (Foucault, 2014, p. 128). Thus, the practice of truth telling can be a weapon (that is also how President Xi describes these study sessions) in the relationships between individuals; it is a means of modifying relations of power among those who speak; and it is an element within an institutional structure (Foucault, 2014, p. 28). In this sense, after undergoing all of these processes, the subject of self-criticism can potentially become a part of the established procedures of the institution, though his/her placement into this process may not be completely perfect (Connolly, 1993, p. 370). Thus, redemption and the regaining of honour of the self requires the approval of the institution.

Risks of Speaking the Truth about the Self and Others

It is not only the written forms, in terms of self-evaluation and self-criticism reports, that come under scrutiny, but also officials' spoken words and ways of speaking that are

examined. Only when individual subjects confess their errors with every appearance of sincerity will they be reaccepted into the Party. There is no objective measure of 'sincerity'. It solely depends on the judgement of others. If those other officials are receptive to the subject's self-criticism, it is then possible to eliminate the tension related to morality between the self and others. Nevertheless, there is a reciprocal risk in this process. The individual who confesses his/her wrongdoing runs the risk of disclosing information that could be damaging (Shirk, 1982, p. 129), while for the one who critiques, there is the threat that he/she may be regarded as a political opportunist taking advantage of a colleague's vulnerability. In this context, there are risky and less risky ways of performing self-criticism and criticism: here the dictates of honesty are combined with stipulations on acting authentically. In this sense, honesty, authenticity and responsibility are integrated into the self's honour, which is produced by the tensions between the self and others, and between the self and the Party.

It is extremely difficult and potentially dangerous for officials not to take part fully in the criticism and self-criticism rituals. Faking it would draw considerable criticism and the exposure of dysfunctional attitudes. An official from the disciplinary department told us in an interview that

everyone has to write a report of his thoughts in order to summarize and capture the spirit of the meeting. This summary is then submitted to the supervising organization department or superior leaders. Our reports will be reviewed and could even be returned for rewriting and revision. It is really a problem for you if you did not pass the test of this exercise the first time.

In this sense, officials have to speak and write their self-reports as if they were doubt-free supporters of the current political line, to protect themselves from political stigmatization and professional demotion (Shirk, 1982, p. 114). Thus, for officials, to successfully speak and write the coded language of the Party does not necessarily depend as much on the appropriate

referential meaning of pronunciation or tone as it does on the correctness of the discourses (Hansen, 2013, p. 48). In other words, it is the verbal and written act in itself that has interpretive value. In this sense, it is not a matter of true or false but of being sincere or not. This is also the risk of not speaking or writing the truth. Thus, speaking and writing about the self has introduced both a culture of fear and a culture of sincerity and authenticity.

As noted above, ‘self-revelation is, at the same time, self-destruction’ in multiple ways, both in terms of the positive expression of being reborn and being transformed, and also in terms of the one who confesses wrongdoing runs the risk of disclosing information that could be damaging (Shirk, 1982, p. 129), as noted above. As an official informed us,

We are reminded every time we engage in this kind of education in the meeting that it is for the purpose of achieving ‘unity’. Because if you are not in such a supportive environment, this kind of activity will evolve into a kind of mutual attack by finding out others’ faults, and this behaviour will become exaggerated. Human nature is very strange; we will not be objective for the purpose of evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of a person outside the meeting.

This is similar to the distinction Amoureux (2015, p. 16) makes between ethical reflexivity and strategic reflexivity, in which strategic reflexivity is more concerned with how to achieve a predetermined objective than with scrutinizing goals and normative guidelines. President Xi’s concerns that some Chinese officials are performing ‘strategic’ and half-hearted reflexivity has resulted in an intensification of the demands on officials to participate in even greater ‘ethical reflexivity’. President Xi remarks,

In the criticism and self-criticism study sessions, some people believe, whether I criticize you or not is totally dependent on whether you will do the same for me or

not; the superior care for the subordinate and the subordinate laud the superior, [and] by so doing, the counterparts act as a shield for each other. (9 May 2014)

Thus, while the Party attempts to encourage an environment of ethical reflexivity, some members can be engaged in strategic reflexivity, by which they attempt to meet the demands of the Party while minimizing the risks of exposing the self in front of other members. In this sense, the discourse of ‘sincerity’ denotes the notions of loyalty and righteousness, with which the official balances personal loyalties (to the self) with a more transcendent commitment (to the Party) while maintaining personal integrity (Shirk, 1982, p. 115). Thus, resistance and tension exist between an ethic of cultivation and the persistent circumstances of political engagement (Connolly, 1993, p. 379).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the obstacles to and opportunities for Chinese officials to achieve a state of ethical subjectivity in which their personal ethical code can become realigned with the Party through a process of sincere criticism and self-criticism. We have also considered the eligibility criteria which allow officials to undergo these compulsory practices. Legal sanctions, especially in the context of accusations of ‘treasonable’ acts of being disloyal to the Party through allegiance to a faction leader, put officials, particularly, beyond redemption. We have shown that, in the process of individuals attempting to regain their personal honour through self-transformation, it is possible for them to achieve conversion of the past self and careful observance of a specific moral code. In order to safeguard officials’ redemption, the criticism and self-criticism study sessions have become divinized, ritualistic and theatrical in contemporary China. In these meetings, individual officials have to pass certain tests. Key to this status of redemption is their obligation to sincerely manifest the truth of the self. In the process of manifestation, they can be redeemed

through unconditional obedience, uninterrupted examination and exhaustive confession. In the process of confession and penance, officials must expose themselves to a ritual of martyrdom, in which the shame of verbalization, obedience to others and the risks of speaking truth about the self are interdependent. The purpose of this conversion is the transition of the self into a new self. Horujy (2015) explains that

conversion implies a sudden change ... this change must be a unique and sudden event, both historical and metahistorical, which immediately reshapes and transforms the subject's mode of being. Secondly ... in this dramatic collapse of the subject taking place within history and also above history, you always have a transition: a transition from one type of being to another, from death to life, from mortality to immortality ... Thirdly, conversion can take place only if there occurs a rupture in the very interior of the subject. The self that converts itself is a self that renounces itself.
(p. 62)

Thus, criticism and self-criticism, as a type of ethical work, involve a politics of redemption, which is part critical activity and part thought experiment (Foucault, 1997, p. xxxiii). . We argue in this paper that these rituals are an attempt by the Party to introduce a 'bottom-up' internalization strategy which has as its objective the ethical transformation of each and every official.

In these ritualistic processes, Chinese officials regain their sense of self, their feeling of loyalty to the Party and their loyalty to the people – as sworn in their oath of allegiance on becoming members of the Communist Party. We further assert that these individualized processes must be placed in the context of the Chinese Communist Party's attempt to regain its legitimacy to continue governing the people, and that the highly individualized processes of confronting and potentially transforming the self are the other side of the coin in terms of

the top-down anti-corruption and anti-four undesirable working styles campaigns unleashed by President Xi.

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