



The Spirit of Selflessness in Maoist China: Socialist Medicine and the New Man (Palgrave Pivot)

Christos Lynteris

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Assuming power in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party was faced with a crucial problem: how to construct the socialist 'New Man'? On the one hand, led by Liu Shaoqi, the proponents of the technocracy advocated self-cultivation. Led by Mao Zedong, their opponents advocated the exact opposite technique: the abolition of the self and the institution of a mass subjectivity.

Examining this conflict through the analytical lens of Foucault's 'technologies of the self' and in relation to biopolitics, the book explores how the battle for the self in Maoist China revolved around the interpretation of the 'spirit of selflessness' as embodied by the heroic Canadian doctor, Norman Bethune, who lost his life as a volunteer doctor of the Red Army. The book narrates how, called to embody this selfless spirit, medical doctors were trapped in a spiral between cultivation and abolition, leading to the explosion of ideology during the Cultural Revolution.

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