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Ruiping Fan *Editor*

# The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China

 Springer

THE RENAISSANCE OF CONFUCIANISM  
IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

# Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture

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# THE RENAISSANCE OF CONFUCIANISM IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

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with assistance of Erika Yu

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 Springer

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*This volume is dedicated to Mr. Jiang Qing (蔣慶),  
an exemplary Confucian in contemporary society*



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: The Rise of Authentic Confucianism

Ruiping Fan

Many in the West are so fully embedded in their moral and political understandings that they take for granted that their moral intuitions reflect a global moral and political theoretical common ground. This conceit lies at the basis of the moral and political reflections of such contemporary Western thinkers as Ronald Dworkin, Jürgen Habermas, John Rawls, and even Richard Rorty. In different ways such presuppositions sustain the ideologies of such diverse parties as social democrats and neo-conservatives. The universality of these assumptions is radically falsified by China, which constitutes a moral, social and political counter-example. Although Western thinkers attempt to portray China as a country on its way to developing the moral and political commitments of the occident, China is in fact a country on its way to recapturing and rearticulating the Confucian moral and political commitments that lie at the foundations of Chinese culture and have a history reaching back even before Confucius (551–479 BCE) himself. China and her culture are nested in a life world with a moral and political thought style substantively different from that of the West.

This volume presents intellectual reflections on the renaissance of Confucianism in contemporary China. The essays show the vibrant and already well-articulated discussions that have emerged regarding how to re-appropriate Confucian moral and political thought for the 21st century. The positions articulated show a China that will not be shaped in the image and likeness of the West but is on its way to realizing a Confucian culture. The essays in different ways are embedded in Chinese culture and its struggle to regain its direction after a superficial, but nevertheless disorientating imposition of Western moral and political concerns. The essays reflect discussions within an intellectual and cultural community that is not hostage to the taken-for-granted moral and political commitments or moral discourse of the West.

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One finds in these essays, except for one chapter, no mention of human dignity, a notion which has now become a cardinal commitment of Western European political thought. In addition, one finds sparse attention to the Western notion of human rights. Where such notions are addressed, they are examined critically. There is a concerted effort to articulate moral and political concerns within a distinctly Confucian discourse. There is also a recognition that all concepts, and in particular moral and political norms, are nested within a particular background socio-historical contexts. Just as the extension and intention of such crucial concepts as space, time, mass, and energy change, depending on whether they are nested within an Aristotelian, Newtonian or Einsteinian account of physics, so too notions of beneficence or virtue have a different extension and intention within a traditional Confucian moral and political understanding than they would have within the various moral and political understandings of the West. This difference in framing meaning creates an impediment to reading back into Confucian thought social-democratic or neo-conservative views of liberty, equality, human dignity, and human rights.

Contemporary Chinese liberal scholars, including many overseas neo-Confucian scholars, fail to recognize that modern Western political thought has its deep cultural roots in Western culture in general and Christian elements in particular. They have tended to recast central Confucian concerns in terms of modern Western values, such as human equality and democracy, ignoring the fundamental cultural and religious differences between China and the West. Indeed, the moral and political discourse of the contemporary West cannot adequately be understood apart from appreciating that this culture developed out of the formative cultural synthesis of the Western high Middle Ages. At the end of the 12th and throughout the 13th century, Western European civilization produced a synthesis of Christian, Aristotelian, and Stoic moral and philosophical understandings in an attempt to create a harmony between *fides* and *ratio*, between faith and reason. As a consequence, a new understanding of natural law and eventually of international law emerged. It came to support the discourse of human rights characteristic of the contemporary West. From the first Scholasticism of the 13th century through the second Scholasticism of the 16th century, a Western Christianity was created that was, at least from the view of Orthodox Christians in the East, quite different from the Christianity of the first millennium. The result was a collage of moral and philosophical commitments that eventually provided a foundation for the secular moral commitments of the Enlightenment.

Here Gianni Vattimo's observation is illuminating. The moral and political commitments of the contemporary secular liberal democratic West can legitimately be regarded as nothing more than a secularized version of Western Christianity. As Vattimo puts it,

To embrace the destiny of modernity and of the West means mainly to recognize the profoundly Christian meaning of secularization. I return to the observation . . . namely that the lay space of modern liberalism is far more religious than liberalism and Christian thought are willing to recognize. . . .Christianity's vocation consists in

deepening its own physiognomy as source and condition for the possibility of secularity (Vattimo 2002, p. 98).

Against this background one can appreciate the quasi-religious zeal that marks the attempt of the contemporary West to convert others to its dominant secular moral and political discourse.

This view of the relationship between Christianity and the contemporary secular social-democratic commitments of the West is also embraced by contemporary European theologians. One might think, for example, of the Protestant theologian Peter Dabrock who makes a point similar to that of Vattimo:

A Christian ethics, especially from a European Protestant perspective, tends to converge with the general tradition of human rights and with the constitutions framing Europe's legal and social democracies. . . . The internally theological concept of man as the image of God and of his justification through faith provides a foundation with reference to which the axiom of human dignity and the ideal of self determination appear as a translation of that concept into the language of public reason (Dabrock 2010, pp.137–138).

This historical and conceptual bond between Western Christianity and the commitments of Western secular liberalism is so strong that Dabrock holds the secularized commitments of Western Christianity have become taken-for-granted truths for Western secular thought. However, China does not share this conceptual, moral, and political history of the West, not to mention its religious history. Among the major cultural differences that distinguish China from the West is that China is not a Christian country. It does not have a background of Christian culture. Instead, the moral and political commitments of China are framed against quite different background cultural commitments. These cultural differences have been pointed out and explored in the works of Jiang Qing, the protagonist of this volume, regarding Chinese culture and political Confucianism. In particular, these cultural differences emerge in this volume in Ping-cheung Lo's reflections on Jiang Qing's view regarding inevitable and permanent conflict between Christian faith and Confucian culture. In his reflections, Lo has in mind Western Christianity as articulated in Roman Catholicism and the various Protestantisms. Despite the attempt of Chinese Christian or liberal scholars to tone down or bridge the differences between Christianity and Confucianism, a deep disparity remains. In addition, despite the attempts of neo-Confucian scholars to read back into Confucian thought the commitments of liberal social democrats, neither do such commitments and understandings exist in Confucianism nor are they central to the emerging reality of contemporary China. Both in theory and in actuality, contemporary Chinese culture functions in ways that are different from those of the contemporary West. Contemporary Chinese governance has its own characteristics that are different from those dominant in the contemporary West. China is not a recapitulation of the West.

Jiang Qing's essay "From Mind Confucianism to Political Confucianism" opens the volume and provides a point of reference for the other essays in this

collection. Jiang characterizes contemporary neo-Confucianism as “Mind Confucianism” in order to underscore its disconnection from how Confucianism is actually embodied in institutions and practices. This strand of Confucianism has in particular overlooked the institutional dimension of traditional Confucianism, especially the issue of *wangdao*, the way of a true king (or the kingly way, for short), the unique Chinese synthesis that combines in a way of governance a concern for virtue, the transcendent, and tradition. In fact, contemporary neo-Confucianism has attempted to recast Confucianism in terms of the modern Western political institution of liberal democracy. For Jiang, such attempts by neo-Confucianism to transform Confucianism have led neo-Confucianism to be marked by four extremes: (1) an individualizing extreme which makes neo-Confucianism discount familial and social relations; (2) a metaphysical extreme which makes neo-Confucianism blind to important social and political issues; (3) an internalizing extreme which makes neo-Confucianism ignore the important role of ritual and legal systems; and, finally, (4) a transcendentalist extreme which has disconnected neo-Confucianism from a concern for the contemporary historical context. As Jiang argues, all these extremes have made contemporary Confucianism ignore the existence of political Confucianism as it exists in the Confucian classics and in Chinese tradition. Among other things, this one-sidedness has led neo-Confucianism to assume that modern liberal democracy is the only legitimate political system for China’s future. Jiang argues this is a major error. Instead, he proposes that contemporary Confucians draw on the rich resources of political Confucianism in order to build modern Confucian political institutions that can serve as an alternative to Western liberal democracy. Jiang holds that one in this way can overcome the problems of contemporary neo-Confucianism.

In the next chapter Ruichang Wang examines the background of the emergence of political Confucianism in contemporary China. He gives the name “Mainland China New Confucianism” to the new version of Confucianism now developing in current China. As he sees it, Confucianism is not a scholarship of followers repeating worn-out overseas neo-Confucian ideas as their commitments to democracy. Instead, mainland Chinese new Confucians have creatively gone in directions quite different from their overseas forerunners. In his account, Wang introduces “the three dimensions of political legitimacy of the politics of the Kingly Way” developed by Jiang Qing. For Jiang, western liberal democracy is deeply defective because it embodies only one dimension of political legitimacy, namely, the people’s will reflected in the consent of the governed. In contrast, based on political Confucianism, Jiang holds that to be fully legitimate, a political regime must meet three conditions: first, it must be in line with the holy and transcendent *Dao* (i.e., the Heavenly Way) as expressed in the Confucian classics and interpreted by influential Confucian sages; second, it must not deviate from the mainstream of the nation’s cultural heritage which constitutes the historical continuity of the country (in this it is traditionalist); finally, it must comply with the will or endorsement of the people in order to actually realize this fullness of governmental legitimacy. Jiang has proposed a



tri-cameral legislature corresponding to the three dimensions of Confucian political legitimacy: the house of Confucian scholars representing the legitimacy of the sacred way, the house of cultural continuity representing the legitimacy of the cultural heritage, and the house of the people representing the legitimacy of the people's will and desire. These houses are to provide mutual checks and balances so that all important decisions would need to be passed by all three houses. Although the proposal has engendered significant controversies in academic circles, Wang is confident that this proposal will gain more support and influence in the future.

The following chapter entitled "On One Continuity in Jiang Qing's Confucian Thought", contributed by Dan Lin, discusses the proper relation explicated by Jiang Qing between Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism in a comprehensive Confucian system. From Lin's observation, Jiang holds that Confucianism in the beginning had two parts, namely both Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism, and both originated from Confucius himself. Each of them has its own distinct characteristics and values that are necessary for a coherent whole of Confucianism, so each should not be confused or replaced by the other. Unfortunately, modern neo-Confucianism is predominantly a type of Mind Confucianism, as shown particularly by its interpretation of the Confucian idea "from inner sageliness to outer kingliness." According to its interpretation, the way of Heaven and the nature of human beings are inherent in the human mind; if this mind is to be cultivated well (namely, inner sageliness fulfilled), then proper outer activities as well as necessary political institutions will take place, embodying the way of Heaven and the nature of human beings (namely, outer kingliness realized). Although contemporary neo-Confucianism seems to have deviated from this route in calling for modern political institutions modeled on Western science and democracy, their work remains indicating a one-sided focus on, if not a mistaken conception of, the Confucian mind. For example, well-known neo-Confucian scholar Mou Zongshan raises a theory called "the negation of inner knowing": since modern science and democracy are about the phenomenal world while Confucian inner knowing is concerned about the moral world in the noumena, in order to have democratic politics resulting from Confucianism, inner knowing as moral rationality must "negate" itself to give way to intellectual rationality. In this way, he argues, Confucianism may accommodate and develop "New Outer Kingliness", namely, modern science and democracy. In contrast, Jiang holds that since modern science and democracy created by the negation of inner knowing in Mou's system are core modern Western values, Mou's "inner knowing" is no longer a Confucian notion of the mind, but becomes a Western metaphysical notion. If Confucianism was used as a foundation for developing such a democratic political system, Confucianism would no longer be Confucianism. For Jiang, Mou mistakenly corrupts Confucianism because of his narrow understanding – he sees Confucianism only as Mind Confucianism, neglecting Political Confucianism. From Jiang's view, we should not turn to Western science and democracy to build "outer kingliness" as Mou advocates.

Instead, there is resourceful political wisdom from Political Confucianism that we should draw on in order to build modern Chinese politics. Jiang holds that the proper “New Outer Kingliness” must be based on traditional Chinese culture, namely, authentic Confucian resources, rather than in light of modern Western science and democracy.

The next chapter developed by myself explores Jiang’s critiques of the modern Western ideas of equality. Equality, as a fundamental concept in modern Western society, constitutes one of the most important reasons to justify the political setting of liberal democracy. It has become a secular idol for many individuals to worship in contemporary politics. However, while many scholars seem to be obsessed with the ideas of equality, Jiang stands out in arguing that, from the Confucian point of view, equality should not serve as a substantive principle for morality, politics, or law in contemporary society. This chapter explores and summarizes a series of arguments that Jiang provides around the issues of equality. First, Jiang rebuts the claim of moral equality made by those who insist that everyone has freedom to refute the education of sages’ moral teachings and that the state should maintain neutrality in moral education among different moral traditions. From Jiang’s Confucian view, the mass in China should accept the moral education of the Confucian classics established by the sages because there exists the proper moral *inequality* between the Confucian sages and the common people in deciding the basic substance of moral education. This chapter also explores Jiang’s arguments in terms of the character of China’s history and culture to refute the requirement of state neutrality in moral education. With regard to political equality, the chapter focuses on Jiang’s proposal that Chinese people should accept the “more than one vote for intellectuals” position rather than the “one person one vote” arrangement. Confucians recognize that people in real life are unequal: they are different in virtue, intelligence, knowledge, ability, and so on. Therefore, as Jiang contends, the Confucian “kingly way politics” cannot accept the universal suffrage adopted by modern Western countries that gives everyone the equal right to cast one vote regardless of their virtues and vices. Moreover, as to the issue of “equality before the law,” the chapter argues that it is important to recognize that this principle should correctly be understood as a universalistic rather than an egalitarian requirement. Confucians accept that everyone should be bound by law, but do not accept that everyone should possess absolutely the same legal rights or obligations. Finally, the chapter concludes by pointing out that Jiang should have accepted a more accurate formulation regarding his Confucian view on formal and substantive equality: Confucianism does not object to the idea of formal equality (that similar situations should be treated similarly), but it is opposed to the idea of substantive equality (that individuals should be made equal even if they stand in different situations). This improved formulation would make a more coherent Confucian view of equality and democracy in Jiang’s account.

Whether Confucianism is a religion has been a controversial issue in modern Chinese history. Following Jiang Qing’s thought, Qingxin Wang in his chapter

on “The Confucian Conception of Transcendence and Filial Piety” challenges the prominent attempt of neo-Confucians to dismiss Confucianism as a religion. In particular, Wang disagrees with the neo-Confucian view that “religion” is a Western notion that presumes a special transcendence/immanence distinction that is not found in Confucianism. From Wang’s perspective, the significance of ancestral worship and filial piety in the Confucian tradition reveals considerable parallels between Confucianism and Western Judaic-Christian traditions despite various fine differences. First, Confucian ancestral worship is founded on a religious belief in spiritual beings and a transcendent world as well as their influence on the immanent world of human society. Descendants may receive blessings from their transcendent ancestral deities by properly performing the rituals of ancestral worship. Thus, a family bloodline becomes an important connection between the immanent and the transcendent worlds in the Confucian religion. Second, while the practice of filial piety may appear to be this-worldly, it actually also entails the immortality of human life and the flourishing of the family clan through the cultivation of the virtue of filial piety by its individual members. Hence, individual members of the family have duties not only to their parents in this earthly world, but also to their ancestral deities in the transcendent world. Wang further argues that, on a large picture, the religious aspect of Confucianism must not be overlooked because it explains why filial piety is fundamental to Confucian ethical and political teachings. For Confucianism, the practice of filial piety is central to achieving great harmony among Heaven, Earth, and Man because it prompts individuals to remember and appreciate the goodness that the transcendent world bestows on them in the immanent world. Wang concludes that the Confucian religious conception of transcendence as well as the connection between the secular world and the religious world not only presents a moderate alternative to the modern post-Cartesian Western antithesis between the secular and the religious worlds, but it also provides a solid foundation for moral and political legitimacy in this world, as Jiang Qing argues.

In the chapter “Towards a Proper Relation between Man and Woman: Beyond Masculinism and Feminism”, Tangjia Wang compares the feminine ideals embedded respectively in modern Western feminism and Confucianism. Inspired by Jiang’s discussion of the Confucian conceptions of marriage and family, Wang argues for a Confucian notion of woman that advocates gender differences that are not unfair or unjust. Facing the common feminist charge against Confucianism of maintaining a patriarchal social structure that justifies the oppression of woman, Wang distinguishes a distorted Confucianism that takes man to be superior to woman from a complete and healthy Confucianism that upholds that man should undertake more managerial responsibilities than women in relevant relations (such as the husband and wife relation) while they are of equal moral worth. Indeed, Confucianism requires that both man and woman be loved and respected under the Confucian virtue of benevolence. Based on the cardinal Confucian tenet that the family is a key social institution that contributes to the well-being of both man and woman, Wang discusses the

social roles and status that woman has in the Confucian family, and further explains why it is not rooted in the Confucian tradition that woman is inherently a subject of oppression. In contrast with modern Western feminism, Confucian wisdom lies in its emphasis on the dividing duties between man and woman owing to their natural differences, instead of stressing their universal rights. That said, Wang also points out that Confucius was indeed a pioneer in advocating universal education regardless of sex, an endeavor that is shared by feminists. Wang stresses that it is reasonable and significant to recognize that a complete Confucianism holds a proper view of woman and emphasizes a harmonious and complementary relation between man and woman. Wang concludes that feminists have positive elements to learn from Confucianism so as to appreciate that their female characters are the embodiments of a profound reality as well as the richness of life.

This part closes with Anthony Yeung's contribution, "The Soft Power in the Confucian 'Kingly Way'." Yeung joins Jiang to discuss the significance of the Confucian political doctrine of "the kingly way", particularly its insight on international relations as well as the relation between morality and politics. To begin, Yeung points out that despite the prominent view in the West that peace can be achieved without the presence of morally good means, political scientist Joseph Nye convincingly argues for an alternative with his idea of "soft power." In place of military or economic incentive that is central to "hard power," soft power fosters cooperation and peace by culture, political ideals, and policies that attract others and shape their preferences. According to Nye, soft power is crucial not only to win but to sustain peace. Based on Jiang's relevant work as well as classical Confucian teachings, Yeung compares this concept of soft power and the kingly way of Confucianism. He finds that although the kingly way is a kind of soft power and there are important similarities between the two, soft power is a thinner idea than the kingly way because it does not necessarily carry any moral implications as Confucianism requires. In Confucianism, the moral virtue of benevolence is central to the kingly way of Confucian politics, and this significantly distinguishes the Confucian kingly way from Nye's soft power. Although Nye recognizes that morality could be a good source of soft power, his primary concern is still power rather than morality. By following Jiang's view, Yeung argues that the relationship between morality and politics is not only positive, but morality is in fact indispensable to social and world order. He concludes that the benevolent rule upheld by the Confucian kingly way is not Western democracy or Rawlsian justice; rather, it must promote certain goods as a guide to national decisions and public policies, as well as international relations.

The next part of this volume, "Critiques and Responses," begins with Daniel Bell's chapter that focuses on Jiang Qing's proposal for Chinese political legitimacy. Bell shares Jiang's view that political transitions must draw on already existing cultural resources if they are to achieve long-term political legitimacy – in the case of China, political Confucianism must be drawn on because it is the most politically influential of China's traditions. Bell thinks

that Jiang's recommendations of the three types of legitimacy hold much promise, but they would need to be modified in order to better suit China's social and political context. In particular, while Bell agrees with Jiang that democratic legitimacy should not be superior because democratic majorities may favor policies that are harmful to those not able to exercise political power, like children, ancestors, and future generations, he feels that it is hard to tell or measure the effectiveness of legitimacy that comes from sacred sources or historical continuity for which Jiang argues. From Bell's view, the only real way to test the legitimacy of political institutions is whether the people governed by the political institutions endorse them. Accordingly, Bell concedes that he still has trouble grasping what it means to secure legitimacy from "history" and the "sacred sources of Heaven." But he concedes that there is something neat about the idea of the three types of legitimacy represented by the three political institutions that reflect the intergenerational outlook of Confucianism. It is obvious that a continuous exploration of Jiang's proposal on the political legitimacy from Heaven and history will be useful.

The next chapter by Jonathan Chan provides comments on Jiang Qing's response to the so-called "Global Ethic." In recent years, a group of scholars led by Hans Küng worked out a *Declaration toward a Global Ethic* in order to bind all the peoples living in different cultures and holding different ethics in the world. They claim that their "Global Ethic" rests on a common foundation that is present in all existing religions, that is, a minimal fundamental consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and fundamental moral attitudes. One of Jiang's main criticisms of the Declaration is that it is strongly influenced by the Western perspective, even if it is not Western-centered. He cites evidence from the Declaration that it presupposes and very much supports the so-called positive human values like freedom, equality, democracy, and mutual recognition and commitment to justice and human rights. However, Jiang sharply points out that freedom, equality, democracy, and human rights are products of Western culture, rather than "human values" *simpliciter*. From the Confucian point of view, Jiang argues that they are non-universal human values. Although Chan holds some reservation on Jiang's view of democracy as well as his proposal for divine rights, Chan supports Jiang's conclusion that a proper way of resolving contemporary human plight should be done by relying on tradition-based "local ethics" rather than a "Global Ethic" as endorsed by the Declaration – in fact, endorsed only by a small group of the so-called representatives of all major religions. From the Confucian perspective, it is doubtful that a genuine Confucian representative could fully uphold the substance of such a "global ethic."

The competition between Confucianism and Christianity in mainland China, as well as in Taiwan and Hong Kong, is one of the major foci of Ping-cheung Lo's chapter and his dialogue with Jiang Qing. Another major focus is the possibility and advisability of establishing Confucianism as the religion of China. Lo's reflection addresses the compatibility of Christianity with Chinese nationalism and with Chinese Confucian culture. Lo wishes to avoid what he

takes to be two extremes. The first is one in which there is an all-consuming nationalism that would have precedence over all other moral and religious concerns. The second is an extreme in which the dominant culture of China fails to be authentically Chinese. Lo recognizes that the loyalty of Christians is first to God through Christ. Yet Lo argues for compatibility with Chinese culture. In Lo's account, he never adverts to the ways in which Orthodox Christianity, which affirms the Christianity of the first millennium, seeks always to embed the local culture and national life of the people within the context of the Christian Church. Lo invokes the example of the Church of England in order to argue against the establishment of Confucianism in China. However, there are a number of important differences between the Church of England and Confucianism. Most importantly, the Church of England has become post-traditional, while Confucianism is precisely the pro-traditional core of Chinese culture. The question remains as to whether establishing Confucianism as the religion of China would be an important move against the influence of secular fundamentalist countries such as France, or whether, as Lo contends, it would tend to undermine the integrity of Chinese culture.

In recent years, private Confucian Academies have been recovered and rebuilt in mainland China. In his contribution, Xiuping Hong outlines and evaluates Jiang Qing's vision of the nature and roles of Confucian Academies in reviving Confucianism in contemporary China. According to Hong, Jiang holds that the Confucian Academy should be an educational institution that guides elites to be upholders of the Confucian Way and the embodiment of Confucian values, rather than training the masses to become vocationally competent or governmental bureaucrats. Moreover, the Confucian Academy should also be free and flexible in the sense that it encourages students to evaluate different interpretations of Confucian classics and refuses the rationalistic manner of professional training and the quantitative pattern of management that are common to modern universities and research institutions. In particular, Jiang argues that Confucian Academies should be privately run, non-profit, and supported by civil society; they should not be funded and run by government or business enterprises. Besides, Confucian Academies should be located away from big cities so that they will not be too close to politics. While Hong supports the general spirit of the Confucian Academy that Jiang upholds, he raises a series of stimulating concerns and questions for further discussion. On the whole, Hong finds Jiang's idea about Confucian Academies too conservative. It is doubtful that, from Hong's view, Confucian Academies could play a great role if they existed only in rural areas, given the ever increasing importance of cities in contemporary society. In addition, Hong contends that such Academies would be too exclusive if they were only meant to train elites, shying away from the masses. Finally, it is unclear what relations such Academies (that focus on the Confucian Way and classics learning from a small group of individuals) should have with modern universities and colleges (that educate a sufficient population with modern scientific knowledge and technology). As Jiang recognizes, given that Confucianism does not have churches like



Christianity, Confucian Academies cannot be run like Christian seminaries to train religious priests or ministers. Then what will be the real difference in students and graduates between a Confucian Academy and a Confucian university? Who will be interested in joining a Confucian Academy and what will they do after they leave the Academy? In short, Hong finds it rather uncertain if Confucian Academies under Jiang's vision will flourish in contemporary China, given all the challenges and problems they have to face.

In the next chapter Albert Chen provides an interesting comparison between Jiang's reconstructionist Confucianism rising in mainland China in the 21st century and the overseas neo-Confucianism active in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1950s. Chen selected Xu Fuguan as a representative of the neo-Confucian thought of that time. As Chen shows, both Xu and Jiang question the legitimacy of the existing political regime in mainland China and argue for the re-adoption of Confucianism as the guiding philosophy for the Chinese people. However, as to the relation between an authentic Confucianism and liberal democracy, their thoughts are in sharp contrast. Primarily, as Chen summarizes, Jiang sees that although everyone, under the Confucian view, has the potential to become a sage, they are in actuality unequal in their intelligence and virtue, so the positions of power and responsibility should be open only to the virtuous, whereas Xu argues that since Confucianism holds that human nature is good, people should be respected and trusted to make judgments and decisions for themselves, and therefore political power should be entrusted to them through liberal democracy. From Chen's view, Xu's interpretation of Confucianism, which renders it consistent with and supportive of democracy, is more convincing than that of Jiang's. This is because, Chen argues, there is no real conflict between the Confucian thesis that positions of political power should be held by the learned, cultivated, and virtuous, and the democratic thesis that ordinary people can be trusted to make judgments and decisions about who deserve to hold positions of political power. Of course, it is up to the readers of this volume to decide how to look at Chen's critique of Jiang's political Confucianism as well as the force of Chen's argument. But the readers should be reminded of Bell's observation made in the previous chapter that democratic majorities may favor policies that are harmful to those not able to exercise political power, like children, ancestors, and future generations, and that, therefore, there is a need for a balancing force of morally superior decision-makers able to take into account the interests of all affected by policies, including future generations.

The question of the last chapter in this part raised by Xianglong Zhang is whether Jiang's Political Confucianism is universalist. From Zhang's understanding, Confucianism is essentially not a universalist school of thought. He understands universalism to be a belief that most valuable things can be directly expressed in certain theses that always should and can be universally applied to all related phenomena, without regard for differences in time or space. In this regard, whether a culture or school of thought is universalist determines many of its key characteristics. For example, as Zhang sees it, the Western ideas of "clash of civilizations" and "end of history" are only applicable to cases where

universalist cultures meet and expand. Zhang supports Jiang's criticisms of the Mind Confucianism that Mou Zongsan developed, for it represents a type of Confucianism recast in terms of Western universalism. Zhang then analyzes the central tenets of the Political Confucianism constructed by Jiang and presents some evidence that paints the Political Confucianism as inclining towards universalism. From Zhang's view, although Jiang's somewhat ambivalent attitude towards "science" has created some universalist elements in the Political Confucianism he developed, its essential direction is not, and should not be, universalist. Readers can evaluate Zhang's conclusion from different perspectives. He is certainly well supported in pointing out the context-specific features of numerous Confucian statements in Confucian classics in general and the Analects in particular. He also makes a good point in urging caution in any attempt to "Confucianize" the West, just as is the case in any attempt to "Westernize" China, without regard to particular cultural characters or societal situations. But the issue remains: can one really be convinced that Confucianism does not, and should not, hold any universalistic theses that ought to be applied to all mankind under Heaven?

In the final part of this volume, Erika Yu and Meng Fan offer a brief history of Jiang's life, thought, and activities to provide background information relevant to the issues and debates that have been addressed in the previous chapters of this volume. It outlines the journey that Jiang has gone through to become an exemplary Confucian figure committed to reviving the tradition in contemporary China in spite of the various difficulties he faces. In particular, it explains how Jiang became a Marxist human rights fighter during his time at the university, why he later turned to neo-Confucianism from Marxism, and how he eventually parted company with neo-Confucianism and came to reconstruct his political Confucianism. While Jiang was fortunate enough to have exposure to Confucian classics and teachings in his early years, he was not a Confucian at the start. Rather, because of the political context at the time, the young Jiang was fascinated by Marxism and the human rights theories of the West. Being deeply perplexed by China's political reality, Jiang undertook religious studies of both East and West, and eventually was attracted to the 20th-century overseas neo-Confucianism, which engages in Confucian mind philosophy and self-cultivation on the one hand and attempts to recast Confucian politics in terms of Western liberal democratic views on the other. However, Jiang's extensive and serious studies of the classical works of diverse traditions in Chinese history allowed him to appreciate the distinctive value of classical Confucianism, especially the political philosophy of the Confucian *Gongyang* tradition. Importantly, the political tragedy in 1989 stimulated him to ponder Chinese politics. He recognized that it was superficial to see the tragedy simply as a call for a democratic politics. Instead, he saw the tragedy, like many other tragedies that happened in modern China, as being ultimately related to the circumstances of modern China in which a modern Western ideology was imposed on the Chinese people, forsaking their traditional cultural life and rejecting the Chinese political ideal. This has finally led him to recognize that the 20th-century



neo-Confucians have been mistaken in their attempt to recast the central concerns of Confucianism in terms of modern Western liberal values, such as liberty, equality, and democracy. He has since dedicated himself to the study of the Confucian *Gongyang* tradition and proposed his political Confucianism, which has distinguished him from 20th-century neo-Confucianism. In the last part of the chapter, Yu and Fan find it important to highlight Jiang's following point: contemporary China cannot develop a legitimate and effective politics without drawing on its own long-standing metaphysical, moral, and political values as well as a national identity that is essentially different from the West.

In closing this introduction, let me express my gratitude to my friends who have helped in different ways to make this volume possible. I am grateful to Xiuping Hong, the director of the Pinghe Confucian Academy in Zhuhai, who helped me organize a fruitful symposium at his Academy in June, 2007. Most chapters included in this volume were first presented at this symposium in the Chinese language, then reviewed by Jiang Qing, external reviewers, and myself, and finally revised and translated into English by the respective authors. I thank two Chinese entrepreneurs, Mr. Zhang Hua and Mr. Deng Liangping, who generously offered funding for the symposium. During the time of the symposium and the subsequent process of review, revision, and editing, Karen Chan, Joseph Chan, Ding Lianmeng, Liu Huaiguang, and Ni Weiguo provided useful suggestions and assistance. I greatly appreciate their kindness and friendship. In addition, I am indebted to my research associate, Erika Yu, who helped me complete a great amount of editing work. I owe special thanks to Aaron Hinkley, Jennifer Bulcock, and Susan Engelhardt for their hard work in changing the Chinese English into the English for most chapters. Finally, I must thank my mentor, Professor H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., the senior editor of Springer's Philosophical Studies in Contemporary Culture book series in which this volume appears, who offered invaluable advice and assistance with the editing of this volume.

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**Part I**  
**The Renaissance of Confucianism**



# Chapter 2

## From Mind Confucianism to Political Confucianism

Jiang Qing

### 2.1 Introduction

The 20th-century has seen a decline in Confucian morality in mainland China due to the denigration of traditional Chinese culture. Neo-Confucian scholars in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States, reacting to mainstream scholarship and dominant ideologies, have attempted to carry the burden of preserving and reviving this endangered Chinese tradition. They deserve enormous praise for having made an important and historic contribution by injecting new life into the Chinese tradition. Of course, contemporary neo-Confucianism has gone through some major ups and downs. Its initial development encountered strong opposition, but it was gradually accepted by academics as an important area of study within Confucianism that cannot be ignored.

Contemporary neo-Confucians, however, have encountered significant problems from the array of scholarly criticism raised by others. However, in my opinion, most of the critiques have missed the major issue of the institutional dimension of traditional Confucianism, i.e., the issue of *wai wang* (the kingly system). In other words, contemporary neo-Confucianism has mistakenly attempted to recast Confucianism in terms of the modern Western political institution of liberal democracy. Both neo-Confucianism and its criticisms are based on theories outside of the Confucian tradition, and few are based internally on Confucian logic. In this chapter, I evaluate contemporary neo-Confucianism based on the logic internal to Confucianism. In the next section, I will first point out the major problems of contemporary neo-Confucianism. Then, in the subsequent sections, I will further discuss the consequences of neo-Confucianism's overlooking the institutional dimension of Confucianism, the reasons behind this

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oversight, and the mistake of its democratic solution. Finally, I will propose Political Confucianism as an alternative, which can provide rich resources for overcoming the problems of contemporary neo-Confucianism.

## 2.2 The Major Problems of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism

Every great civilization in the history of mankind consists of at least two components. The first component is a conception of the origin of the universe that gives rise to human life, and the rules and laws that sustain the order of the universe and human life. The second component is a development of socio-political institutions that make it possible to maintain an orderly human society based on its conception of the rules and laws of the universe. The Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and even Indian traditions all contain these two components. Any tradition containing only the religious component of how the universe and human life originates, lacking all socio-political institutions, is not only incomplete, but also unable to sustain itself, because socio-political institutions are crucial for the passing of its religious beliefs between generations. In this section I will argue that the major problem of contemporary neo-Confucianism is that its scholarship is incomplete because it fails to conceptualize those socio-political institutions that should be developed in Chinese society based on the Confucian religious conception of the universe.

Contemporary neo-Confucianism is known as “Mind Confucianism” (*xinxiing ruxue*). Its main concern is the existential life of human individuals and their minds, rather than socio-political institutions. Based on the religious resources drawn from the Confucian tradition, neo-Confucians strongly emphasize the issue of *neisheng*, namely, the development of individuals’ morality and the self-cultivation of virtue within modern liberal democratic social-political institutions. These concerns are common to prominent neo-Confucians such as Tang Junyi (1909–1978) (see Tang, 1956, 1986) and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) (see Mou 1968, 1991, 1996). Caught up in the concern for individuals’ existential lives, they have assumed that liberal democracy is the social-political system that Confucianism has to accept. They have failed to explore a type of politics that is authentic to traditional Confucianism and crucial for maintaining a civilized and orderly Confucian society within which its members can cultivate Confucian virtues. The problems with contemporary neo-Confucianism are summarized in the following subsections:

### 2.2.1 *The Extreme Tendency of Individualizing Confucianism*

Contemporary neo-Confucians view the individual’s cultivation of virtues and one’s transformation into a sage as a matter to be pursued solely within the

individual's life and mind through self-learning, self-reflection, and self-cultivation. They overlook the important role of socio-political institutions in personal cultivation. Since they consider the scholarship of Lu Xiangshang (1600–1639) and Wang Yangming (1472–1529) of the Song and Ming dynasties as the orthodox inheritance of Mencius's Mind Confucianism (see Lau 2003) and the comprehensive Confucianism of Zhu Xi (1130–1200) of the Song Dynasty as heretical, they contend that the most fundamental concern of Confucianism should be to teach individuals to cultivate virtue and to perfect their personality through self-effort and self-study (see Mou 1990). They have little concern for how socio-political orders should be maintained because they fail to recognize how social institutions can help individuals cultivate virtues and transform individuals into sages. In this way they have essentially individualized Confucianism, downplaying the relation-based, family-centered, and politics-relevant features of Confucianism. However, anyone who has read Confucius is aware of the non-individualistic characteristics of Confucian thought that are clearly embodied in fundamental Confucian concerns, including the Confucian rites (*li*) and music (*yue*) for virtue cultivation (see Lau 1992).

### ***2.2.2 Overemphasis of Abstract Metaphysics***

Contemporary neo-Confucians have been heavily influenced by the metaphysics of classical German philosophers, like G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In response to the challenges Western culture has posed for traditional Chinese culture, they have borrowed metaphysical concepts from the West in an attempt to rejuvenate Confucianism in modern academia. Their strong emphasis on metaphysics, however, has inadvertently undermined the remarkable worldly-wise resources that Confucianism has to offer. Like their Western counterparts, neo-Confucians are absorbed in abstract metaphysical concepts and ideas that are very remote from social reality. They are interested in how to establish a logical and reasoning system of abstract metaphysical concepts and ideas without being aware of the demands and conditions of social reality. This is a betrayal of traditional Confucianism, which is founded on a system of ritual practices, not metaphysical concepts, meant to address social and political problems.

### ***2.2.3 The Extreme Tendency of Internalization***

Neo-Confucians have a tendency to attribute all socio-political problems internally to the human mind and view them as a matter of moral or spiritual beliefs. They also find that there are no objective socio-political problems independent of human subjective consciousness because they are all subjectively

created by men. As a result, their solution to these problems is the self-cultivation of virtue through individual effort. They assume that as long as self-cultivation of virtue is achieved, any social and political problems external to the mind can be solved. Moreover, neo-Confucians believe that the self-cultivation of virtue will naturally bring forth an orderly socio-political system, and therefore they fail to see the important role of external rules and laws in solving various socio-political problems external to individual minds. However, this is inconsistent with the position of Confucius who holds ritual practices in high regard for their invaluable function in maintaining a proper social and political order (see Lau 1992).

#### ***2.2.4 The Extreme Tendency of Transcendentalism***

Failing to place the individual mind and life within the context of history, neo-Confucianism also has an extreme tendency to resort to transcendentalism. They seem to assume that the human mind exists outside of space and time, and that the individual leads a life independent of the environment. As a result, they fall short of paying due attention to history and socio-political realities. Besides, just like their approach to social and political problems, neo-Confucians view history through a collection of abstract metaphysical concepts. This again betrays the essential spirit of Confucianism, because Confucius held that individual human beings do exist at a particular point in historical and social reality, and it is important that they be defined by particular socio-political relationships according to the rites. Indeed, Confucius strove to establish an ideal socio-political order throughout his whole life and saw this endeavor as a historical mission given by Heaven (*Tian*).

### **2.3 The Consequence of Neglecting the Institutional Dimension of Confucianism**

The failure of contemporary neo-Confucians to develop an institutional dimension of Confucianism has had some serious consequences for the preservation and revival of Confucianism, which can be summarized as follows:

1. As mentioned in the last section, the socio-political ideal of Confucianism cannot be realized in the absence of relevant Confucian institutions. Traditional Confucians have always stressed that the Way (or *Dao*) of Confucianism does not exist as remote from our daily life but permeates every aspect of it, and Confucian principles and ideals should be practiced to solve various practical problems. On the other hand, if the Confucian ideals of Heaven and human values cannot be actualized in reality, human life may lose its



meaning. Individuals' empty minds may then become terribly vulnerable and easily swayed by the various forms of modern nihilism.

2. The absence of an institutional dimension of Confucianism may render contemporary neo-Confucianism unable to withstand the evils of modern society. In traditional society, organizations were comparatively simple and people were relatively isolated from each other. As a result, traditional evils primarily manifested in individuals' bad behaviors, which could be remedied through individuals' self-reflection or religious practice. In contrast, modern society is highly organized and specialized, and evils manifest themselves primarily in highly organized or collective forms that cannot be readily cured by ordinary religious beliefs. Such modern evils can only be dealt with through institutional solutions, since only institutions have sufficient power to cope with organized evils. In the Confucian view, the institutions of rites and music are the best solutions for helping individuals cultivate their virtues collectively.
3. Neo-Confucianism also fails to accept the historical mission and political commitment of the Confucian tradition of building an ideal political and legal society. Confucianism, from the very beginning, was Political Confucianism. Confucius aspired to create a pacified world where everyone could cultivate the virtue of benevolence (*ren*). In the past few 1000 years, numerous Chinese Confucian scholars and followers were inspired by this strong sense of historical mission and political responsibility. They continued to strive for this socio-political ideal even if it could cost them their lives. Yet, contemporary neo-Confucians, who only focus on how individuals can achieve sagehood through the self-cultivation of virtue, ignore this historical mission and socio-political responsibility inspired by classical Confucianism. Worse still, they mislead people into believing that Confucianism is only concerned with the spiritual meaning of life and with how to perfect individuals' character through self-cultivation without any due regard or concern for any socio-political reality.
4. Contemporary neo-Confucianism's neglect of socio-political institutions makes itself unable to cope with the political reality of contemporary China. It also gives a misleading impression to the Chinese people that Confucianism is useless and irrelevant to the political reality of contemporary China. Neo-Confucians fail to pay attention to important political issues facing the Chinese today; they fail to provide guiding principles for Chinese political reforms, or to construct proper Chinese political and legal institutions. They believe that Confucians must fully accept the liberal democratic system as the only proper political system, failing to recognize that a proper Confucian political system is essentially different.
5. Indeed, there are two ways for people to identify their own culture. One way is to master the essence of the culture through learning its core values and the logic and philosophical reasoning behind these values. The other way is to learn these cultural values through the concrete social practice manifested in its socio-political institutions. However, very few members of the society

who are of high intelligence and intellectual caliber can accomplish the first way. And, if only a minority of the population identifies a culture, the culture is doomed to lose its vitality. This is another problem of contemporary neo-Confucianism, which attempts to advance some traditional Confucian values through philosophical reasoning that can only be understood by a few intellectuals. In contrast, the second way of cultural identification is more conventional and can be accomplished by most of the people of a society who are of average intelligence. This is one reason why it is important for Confucians to pass on traditional Confucian values through socio-political institutions, where a majority of the population can identify their own culture from various practices.

#### **2.4 Why Contemporary Neo-Confucianism Failed to Develop Political Confucianism?**

Complicated factors contributed to contemporary neo-Confucianism's failure to develop Political Confucianism. Some of them have to do with the recent history of China. Others are related to the nature of Confucian scholarship. They can be summarized as follows.

1. In the 20th century, the main attack against Confucianism focused on the institutional and political aspects of Confucianism. Confucianism has been described as a feudalistic ideology for the despotic monarchical system throughout the past 2000 years of Chinese history. The main goal of the Chinese revolution in 1911 was to overthrow the feudalistic monarchical system of China. It is natural that Confucianism, taken as the founding ideology of the feudalistic monarchical system, was the main target of the revolution and the May-Fourth Movement of 1919 when many radically different Western ideologies flooded China.
2. The major representatives of contemporary neo-Confucianism, such as Xiong Shili (1885–1968) and Liang Shuming (1893–1988), were themselves participants of the Chinese revolution against the feudalistic monarchical system. They misunderstood Confucianism as a mere defender of the past political order and rites and failed to recognize that the Confucian aspiration for external peace and greater harmony under Heaven through Confucian institutions actually transcended its view on monarchical political power justified by the feudalistic monarchical system. As a result, they rejected institutional Confucianism and focused on its spiritual dimension as espoused by the neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming Dynasties (see Mou 1983).
3. Contemporary neo-Confucianism also faced a daunting challenge to the logic and reasoning of Confucianism posed by Western scholarship and ideologies. Focusing on the spiritual dimension of the neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming dynasties was seen as a necessary retreat for defending and

reviving the core values of Confucianism. The neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming era is mainly interested in the spiritual and ethical dimensions of Confucianism. It considers politics a mere platform or instrument for realizing their ethical ideals. Thus, neo-Confucianism has a tendency to downplay the importance of politics and socio-political institutions. Such a tendency can be seen in the following aspects of neo-Confucianism:

- All neo-Confucians of the past and present eras find that the solution to political conflicts lies mainly in the resolution of spiritual questions about life and the cultivation of virtue. They suggest that once individuals cultivate virtue through self-reflection, all political problems can be solved.
- Since neo-Confucians focus on the mind dimension of Confucianism, they give the role of rites no place in Confucianism, because the system of rites is a socio-political institution that is external to the concerns of the mind.
- Hence, neo-Confucianism cannot make a real contribution to the politics of contemporary China because its focus on the mind overlooks the importance of politics.

## 2.5 Contemporary Neo-Confucian Solution and Its Mistake

To be fair, some contemporary neo-Confucians, especially Mou Zongshan, have recognized the weaknesses of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism in its downplaying of socio-political institutions and have sought to develop new socio-political institutions (see Mou 1983, 1988, 1996). However, before we review how such neo-Confucians have sought to develop new socio-political institutions, let us first look at how they view the deficiency of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism. Basically, they see three major shortcomings in the Song-Ming neo-Confucianism concerning socio-political institutions.

First, Confucianism is traditionally concerned mainly with public administration (*zhidao*) but not with political legitimacy (*zhengdao*). In other words, Confucianism stresses the proper ways of public administration rather than procedural political legitimacy. Consequently, according to these contemporary neo-Confucians, Confucianism failed to devise a legitimate procedural system to ensure the stable succession of political power. Moreover, since Confucianism focuses mostly on the moral practice of individuals and not so much on formal reason, it cannot use reason to establish the necessary institutions for solving the problems of procedural legitimacy. Finally, the Confucian concern about the relationship between virtue cultivation and institution building (i.e., inner virtue and external system) emphasizes the former as foundational and the latter as a derivative of virtue, rather than treating them both as equally important. In contrast, Western scholarship has founded its

democratic institutions and modern science on human reasoning (rationalism), making them of equal importance to moral (or inner) cultivation, which is also based in reason. Such equal treatment is vastly different from the Chinese tradition.

In response to these three major shortcomings of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism, contemporary neo-Confucians have proposed a solution. First, they find that contemporary Confucianism must solve the problem of political succession and avoid the violence and instability accompanying the Chinese history of politics by adopting the Western liberal democratic political system. In other words, from their view, the adoption of liberal democracy is indispensable to the revival of Confucianism. Moreover, after adopting liberal democracy as the only canonical political system, they fault Confucianism for failing to develop a liberal democracy because it is only concerned with moral and not institutional rationalism. Accordingly, they suggest that it is necessary to transform moral reasoning (concerned with virtue) into institutional reasoning (concerned with rational calculation) in order to modernize or democratize China's political system. Finally, in addition to accepting democracy as the legitimate political system, they regard modern science as intrinsically valuable. They want to place democracy and science on an equal footing with inner virtue, rather than in a hierarchical relationship, as traditional Confucianism does. In order to do this, they propose a transformation of the heart of Confucian morality, inner virtue, into a matter of the cognitive mind, rationalism, with the result of changing Confucians from moral individuals to rational individuals. In more typical Confucian terms, they find it necessary to relegate the Confucian conscience (*liangzhi*) to empirical rationality to fully develop democracy and science in Chinese society.

I think this contemporary neo-Confucian solution is mistaken because it treats Western democracy and science as the ultimate standard for the development of Chinese socio-political institutions, thus justifying the suspicion that it advocates a disguised version of China's westernization rather than authentically developing Confucianism. Neo-Confucianism's solution attempts to derive Confucian socio-political institutions exclusively from the Mind Confucianism scholarship and ignores the existence of another strand of the Confucian tradition, namely, Political Confucianism, which has many resources for developing political systems.

It is unfortunate that contemporary neo-Confucians regard modern science as intrinsically valuable. Science is only instrumentally valuable. The Chinese can certainly learn from and adopt modern science in their society, but they must regulate science according to Confucian moral values. Additionally, they fail to recognize that liberal democracy is a particular product of Western history and culture, closely related to Western religious, legal, political, and historical contexts and hence not universally applicable. When liberal democracy is held as the ultimate standard for reconstructing Confucianism, contemporary neo-Confucians are simply colonizing Chinese culture with Western culture and changing the basic direction of the Confucian spirit. The Chinese

can certainly learn from modern Western democracy, but Confucian political development should be founded on the essentials of virtue-based Confucian values.

Consequently, contemporary neo-Confucians have sought to modernize Mind Confucianism by relying on the modern Western philosophy of Kant and Hegel in reconstructing Confucianism. In this way they have shifted the main ideas of Confucianism and founded Confucian development on modern Western philosophy. In short, their mistakes lie in their (1) drawing exclusively on the resources of Mind Confucianism to develop Confucian politics, and (2) borrowing modern Western philosophy to recast the central concerns of Confucianism. What they have most unfortunately ignored is the other significant strand of Confucianism: Political Confucianism.

## **2.6 A New Direction in the Development of Contemporary Confucianism: From Mind Confucianism to Political Confucianism**

Today's Confucians must develop Political Confucianism, or Institutional Confucianism. Political Confucianism is derived from classical Confucian texts, especially *The Book of Rites (Liji)* (see Legge 1976) and *The Springs and Autumns Annals (Chunqiu)* (see Legge 1972b). The scholarship of Kung-Yang, developed during the Han Dynasty, represents the essential ideas of these two classical texts. Political Confucianism mainly refers to the Kung-Yang scholarship on Confucianism (see Jiang 1995). The Kung-Yang Scholarship can be traced back to Confucius' original writings, but it was elaborated by Kung Yang, made famous by Xunzi and eventually culminated in the writings of Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE) (see Dong 1968) and He Xiu (129–182) of the Han Dynasty. It was later revived by Liu Fenglu (1776–1829) (see Liu 1986, 1989) and Kang Youwei (1858–1927) of the Qing Dynasty (Hsiao 1975). Political Confucianism is another major strand of Confucianism that is distinctly different from Mind Confucianism. Political Confucianism has the following major features:

- Political Confucianism is faithful to the original classical texts of Confucianism and can be traced back to the original texts written or compiled by Confucius, whereas Mind Confucianism originated from those texts written by Confucius' student Zeng Zi (505–436 BCE) and Confucius' grandson Zi Si (483–402 BCE), which were later revived in the Song-Ming era. Confucius himself wrote *The Springs and Autumns Annals* and edited *The Book of Rites*. Political Confucianism emphasizes a faithful interpretation of the classical texts, whereas Mind Confucianism emphasizes the cultivation of virtue through self-reflection without relying on the original texts. As a result, it appears hard to determine whether Mind Confucians truly grasp the original meanings of Confucianism.

- Political Confucianism is mainly concerned about society and social relations, contrary to Mind Confucianism, which is primarily concerned with the spiritual life of individuals. It holds that in order to create a harmonious and orderly society, it is not sufficient just to cultivate individual virtues. Necessary institutions must also be built to correct people's behavior and to establish healthy social relations. For example, names should be rectified, the rites should be restored, and the forms of the Zhou Dynasty should be transformed while preserving the essence of the Yin Dynasty.
- Political Confucianism cares about social-political reality. It differs from Mind Confucianism, which is concerned mostly with metaphysical and philosophical concepts and reasoning. It recognizes the constant change in the social-political reality and stresses the importance of establishing concepts and names to correspond with the changing reality. It accepts the necessity and legitimacy of transforming the social-political reality and seeks to serve such needs. For example, prevalent in the Kung-Yang scholarship are the ideas of the restoration of forms and substances and the newly anointed king's reforming old institutions and creating a new political system. As one can see, the scholarship of Political Confucianism advocates social and political reform instead of resisting it.
- Political Confucianism observes that human nature is innately neither good nor bad based on empirical experience. Mind Confucianism, in contrast, holds the a priori assumption that human nature is innately good. Political Confucianism holds that human beings are not born with a good nature, but can become good if they are appropriately nurtured by their environment after birth. It finds that the selfishness of human nature can be transformed through institutional interventions and education. Mind Confucianism, on the other hand, holds that the innate goodness of human nature can be corrupted by adverse environmental factors, but can be restored or cultivated through self-learning and self-reflection. Despite the apparent differences, these two Confucian views on human nature can actually be reconciled because their solutions are not in conflict. While Political Confucianism's view is relatively negative because it primarily aims to solve socio-political problems, this does not contradict Mind Confucianism's relatively positive a priori assumption, which serves to assure the transcendental value of human life. In fact, Confucius holds that the natures of men are similar, while their habits are quite different (Lau 1992, p.171). Thus when Xunzi says men are bad by nature or Dong Zhongshu says human nature is neutral, they are both in accord with Confucius's view. It is therefore important to distinguish the empirical view of human nature from the a priori view of human nature. One should not confound these views.
- Political Confucianism uses institutions to scrutinize and correct the dark side of human nature. Unlike Mind Confucianism, Political Confucianism does not assume there is an innate force within humans capable of correcting human nature. Rather, in order to counter and correct bad human behavior, it is necessary to rely on external forces such as socio-political institutions or the system of rites. Political Confucianism values the system of rites and its

adaptation in realizing the Confucian ideals of benevolence and peace under Heaven. It sees adaptations meant to suit a new social reality as essential to establishing the institutional force for realizing Confucian ideals. This point, which has been elaborated by Xunzi and Dong Zhongshu, is consistent with the thought of Confucius. In *The Springs and Autumns Annals*, Confucius uses historical examples as a means for revealing the importance of rites and for realizing his political ideals. The well-known ancient historian, Shma Qian (145–86 BCE), held that the *Annals* was the major embodiment of the system of rites that was used to condemn treacherous ministers, unfilial sons, false doctrines, and rampant violence. The *Annals* exposed and criticized kings of the Zhou Dynasty, feudal lords and vassals, and other high-ranking officials who violated the system of rites throughout the span of two hundred and 40 years (Legge 1972b). As one can see, Political Confucianism not only employs the system of rites in condemning bad human behavior, but immoral politics as well.

- Political Confucianism is deeply concerned with historical reality. Its leading scholars have had very strong historical and political missions, and have striven to realize Confucian socio-political ideals. That mission is why Confucius traveled to many different states attempting to disseminate and actualize his ideals despite many difficulties. Likewise, Xunzi, in an attempt to realize his political ideals, went to the State of Chi to persuade its prime minister to establish institutions and to serve as a great minister of the states of Zhao and Qin. Dong Zhongshu's three principles of unity between Heaven and man and his restoration of ancient ideals through the adaptation of the institutions of his time marked the final realization of the political ideals of the Kung-Yang scholarship (see Dong 1968). Kang Youwei made use of the Kung-Yang scholarship when launching and guiding his political reforms during the late Qing period (see Thompson 1958). Thus, Political Confucianism views human beings as living in a historical context that is concrete and changing. Humans are always located within a particular point in history and space, rather than in a transcendental existence as postulated by Mind Confucianism.
- Political Confucianism also pays close attention to political practice. Instead of focusing on cultivating the individual through virtue and heart to serve Heaven, Political Confucianism seeks to use Confucian knowledge to establish a kingly government and a harmonious society by transforming a distorted socio-political reality. It thus aims to master the Confucian classics for practical use. According to Political Confucianism, sages are political practitioners who establish great political enterprises, not those who avoid the socio-political reality through seclusion. As suggested by Xunzi, Political Confucianism holds that it is only by relying on the system of rites that the vices of excessive individual desire can be curbed and transformed into virtue.
- Political Confucianism embodies the political ideal of Confucianism and its ethical concern for socio-political practice. More specifically, Political Confucianism considers the following political questions: How can a legitimate



government be established? How can a political system obtain its legitimacy through the divine and heavenly source? How can a political power be legitimized? And, how can political power be transformed into authority through the system of rites? In addition, Political Confucianism emphasizes both morality and politics, while Mind Confucianism only emphasizes morality because it expects political problems to be solved through purely moral exploration and development.

- Finally, Political Confucianism can develop socio-political institutions on the basis of Classical Confucianism. As a matter of fact, it has developed legitimate and effective socio-political institutions based on theoretical Confucian principles in its history. As we know, during the period of Spring–Autumn, China collapsed into chaos due to the rampant warring among states. During this time creating an orderly political system became the main concern of all Chinese intellectuals. Different schools of thought were established to address this most pressing problem, but none of the schools succeeded in doing so except Confucianism. Mohism did not appreciate the importance of active human intervention within society and therefore could not make a contribution to the reconstruction of an orderly political system. Legalism completely ignored the importance of moral education and relied on blatant force to create political order. While legalism allowed the state of Qin to unify China, its sole reliance upon power undermined the legitimacy of the Qin Dynasty. As a result, the Dynasty collapsed within two generations. The Daoist school of Huang-Lao may have contributed to the economic prosperity of the early Han Dynasty and the stabilization of the political system, but its acceptance of a naturalistic and fatalistic order likewise caused it to ignore the importance of moral education and the legitimacy of political order. Consequently, Confucian scholars who regarded the task as a historical and heavenly mission shouldered the onerous task of resolving political conflicts and creating a new political order. They advocated the creation of a socio-political order through the Confucian system of rites.
- According to the Kung-Yang scholarship of Confucianism, one can see that the political system in the Han Dynasty, including its institutions of rites, music and politics, originated from the writings of Confucius. The creation of the Han system began with Shu-Suntong’s design of institutional rules for the court of emperors and worship in ancestral temples, followed by Kong Sunhong’s interpretation of history based on classical Confucian texts, and eventually culminated in Dong Zhongshu’s exaltation of Confucianism as the primary state ideology of the Han political system. An ideal political order based on the Confucian systems of rites, music, and laws was thus established. This system was deemed the most reasonable and legitimate at the time, given that there were only three choices for Chinese intellectuals: continued chaos and war, continued reliance on blatant power to maintain political order, or the Confucian system of moral force backed by legal strength. If we examine the Han system within its historical context, rather



than by using a yardstick from the modern era, we will reach the conclusion that the Confucian political order of the Han era was in fact a very advanced system in the world.

It is important to note that although Political Confucianism has these merits, it should not be understood as being opposed to Mind Confucianism. Rather, a complete account of Confucianism must achieve the appropriate unity of Political and Mind Confucianism. It is important to keep in mind that because Political Confucianism focuses on the socio-political reality it may be possible for the ruling class to use it as an instrumental tool, thereby destroying its ability to critically evaluate and transform socio-political realities. Therefore, in order to maintain the moral purity of Political Confucianism it is necessary to use Mind Confucianism as a counterbalance to and a correction for its possible shortcomings. Mind Confucianism plays the faithful role of preserving and transmitting the Way (the ethical laws derived from Heaven). Without the counterbalance of Mind Confucianism, Political Confucianism may be corrupted and used as an ideological tool by the ruling class. This is what happened to some of the neo-Xunzi scholarship throughout Chinese history.

## **2.7 Traditional Resources Available for the Contemporary Development of Confucian Institutions**

As suggested earlier, contemporary neo-Confucians have admirably stressed the importance of developing new Confucian institutions, although they have incorrectly chosen Mind Confucianism as the basis for developing these institutions and have ignored the political dimension of Confucianism. I suggest below that Political Confucianism offers tremendous resources for the development of new institutions and further explain why such institutions do not have to be a part of Western liberal democracy.

The Political Confucianism to which I am referring is not the politicized state ideology of Confucianism put in place after the late Han Dynasty. This version of politicized Confucian ideology is known as the Scholarship of the Ancient Confucian Texts (*Gu Wen Jing*). It acquired this name because its texts were written in their original language during Confucius' time and were lost and rediscovered during the Han era. When I speak of Political Confucianism, I am referring to the Scholarship of Contemporary Confucian Texts (or *Jin Wen Jing* as they were known in the Han era), which focuses on the derivation of politics and socio-political institutions through the interpretation of those texts written and transcribed by Han Confucian scholars. It is sometimes referred to as the Kung-Yang scholarship, which played a leading role in guiding and transforming politics during the early Han era. Summarized below are the cultural resources the Kung-Yang scholarship has to offer to contemporary Confucians for developing Confucian politics.

1. The Kung-Yang scholarship is mainly concerned with the creation of socio-political institutions and their necessary transformations, whereas Mind Confucianism is preoccupied with existential questions. The Kung-Yang scholarship maintains that Confucius was primarily responsible for the creation of ancient institutions based on his book *The Springs and Autumns Annals* and regards him as the eternal creator of such institutions. These institutions include those of the hereditary succession of emperors, marriage, farming, selections of officials, worship rituals, nobility, and state ideology. These institutions were created on the basis of a rational and realistic understanding of human nature. Unlike Mind Confucianism, which views human nature from an abstract and transcendental perspective, the Kung-Yang scholarship views human nature from a concrete historical and political perspective and has a deeper and more realistic understanding. For example, according to the Kung-Yang scholarship, the stories of the murders of thirty-six kings and the dissolution of fifty-two kingdoms recorded in *The Springs and Autumns Annals* clearly reveal the weaknesses of human nature. It suggests that human nature may be innately good, but the goodness of human nature may not manifest itself under the rigid constraints of a concrete historical and socio-political environment (see Legge 1972b). Thus, the Kung-Yang scholars believed that in order to overcome and improve upon the weakness of human nature and to correct bad behavior, it is not enough just to cultivate virtue through self-learning. They also found it necessary to build institutions because they are a major source of power capable of inducing good human behavior. It is only through institutions that bad human behaviors can be countered and corrected. Thus, the Kung-Yang scholarship emphasizes the system of rites and views the system as a precondition for the establishment of an eternal world of benevolence. Founded on this view, a complete system of institutions serving different purposes was created in the Han Dynasty. This system was inherited more or less by other dynasties throughout the rest of Chinese history.
2. The Kung-Yang scholarship also puts emphasis on the parallel relationship between inner virtue and the kingly institutions of the external world of human society (i.e., *Nei Sheng Wai Wang*). The phrase *Nei Sheng Wai Wang* first appeared in the “Book of Tianxia” in *Zhuangzi*, the classical Taoist work by Zhuangzi (369–286 BCE) (Watson 1968). As pointed out by Zhuangzi, the theories of Confucianism include both internal and external aspects. The internal aspect is *Nei Sheng*, which refers to “worshiping God and Heaven and knowing the Mandate of Heaven for oneself.” The external aspect is about *Wai Wang*, which refers to “ensuring the lives of a multitude of things, harmonizing all under Heaven, and benefiting the masses.” Zhuangzi further classified the six books of Classical Confucianism as representing the ideas of *Nei Sheng Wai Wang*. According to him, *The Book of History* (Legge 1972a), *The Book of Poetry* (Legge 1967), and *The Book of Changes* (Legge 1963) embody the ideas of *Nei Sheng*, whereas *The Book of Rites* (Legge 1976), *The Book of Music*, and *The Springs and Autumns Annals* (Legge 1972b) embody

the ideas of *Wai Wang*. On the basis of this classification, we can conclude that the relationship between *Nei Sheng* and *Wai Wang* is a parallel rather than a hierarchical relationship with *Nei Sheng* as the foundation of *Wai Wang* (see also Pi 1961). While Zhuangzi was a Taoist sage, he was still in a very good position to evaluate Confucianism.

The most representative elaboration of the relationship between *Nei Sheng* and *Wai Wang* in the Kung-Yang scholarship was by Xunzi, who inherited Confucius's theory of rites and was a pioneering sage in the Kung-Yang scholarship. Xunzi believed that academic learning stopped only when satisfactory answers were found, and one can find satisfactory answers only when one reaches the culmination of both inner virtues and the creation of kingly institutions. As he further elaborated, the achievement of inner virtue means individuals can reach the consummate level of moral development within his lifetime, and the creation of kingly institutions means the creation of the most ideal socio-political institutions in human society. Thus, Xunzi saw a parallel relationship between *Nei Sheng* and *Wai Wang*, rather than a hierarchical relationship. To put this differently, there are different moral standards for *Nei Sheng* and *Wai Wang*. *Nei Sheng* is the achievement of sagehood through the cultivation of virtue. *Wai Wang* is the pacification of the world through sound or kingly socio-political institutions. Contrary to the interpretation of contemporary neo-Confucianism, *Nei Sheng* (inner virtues) do not have to be the foundation of *Wai Wang* or institutions of a society. Rather, *Wai Wang* (socio-political institutions) have their own ontological independence in the Confucian account.

3. The Kung-Yang scholarship has an epistemology that is open-minded and universal in its outlook. Unlike Mind Confucianism, which starts from inner virtue, the Kung-Yang scholarship focuses on the external universe as the center of investigation and theory, and seeks to explore the structural relationships and logical connections among a multitude of things within the universe. The institutional concepts of the Kung-Yang scholarship include an evolution of the three-stages of the world (*San Shi*), the establishment of eternal peace based on the principles of *The Springs and Autumns Annals*, the integrated traditions of the three ancient dynasties (*Tong San Tong*) based on the interpretation of personal changes in accordance with the theories of the Five-Elements (*Wu Xing*), the analysis of political change in accordance with the principles of *Yin-Yang*, the establishment of the system of nobility based on the Heavenly principles, and the classification of the internal organs of the human body based on the Heavenly principles. Unlike Mind Confucianism, which perceives the universe as founded on a spiritual noumenon, the Kung-Yang scholarship views the universe as highly structured, with all its parts being logically connected and existentially interdependent on each other.

In short, in the Chinese tradition, in addition to Mind Confucianism there is another strand of Classical Confucianism, Political Confucianism, which has

long been concerned with the construction of the appropriate socio-political institutions. Thus, the building of modern Chinese socio-political institutions does not have to rely solely on Western resources and therefore does not need to assume modern Western liberal democracy as the only canonical political system. Rather, Political Confucianism can provide a wealth of resources for constructing new modern Chinese socio-political institutions. It is high time for contemporary Confucians to make their efforts in this direction.

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# Chapter 3

## The Rise of Political Confucianism in Contemporary China

Ruichang Wang

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of three parts: (1) the background of the emergence of Political Confucianism; (2) the main arguments of Political Confucianism, and (3) some commentaries made by contemporary intellectuals about Political Confucianism.

### 3.2 Background of the Rise of Political Confucianism

Anyone who cares about China should not fail to notice that China is witnessing a revival of Confucianism and traditional culture: more and more scholars come to talk about “national studies”(guoxue); university teachers giving lectures on Confucianism at national television channels become “star scholars” overnight; classics recital classes for children are sprouting up in many parts of the country; thousands of books on Confucianism or traditional culture are piled high and sold well in book stores; attending “national studies training class” hosted by prestigious universities has become a fashion for businessmen, civil servants, and the fortunate and affluent population; even the state leaders, as Canadian political science scholar Daniel A. Bell puts it, have also “rediscovered Confucianism” (Bell 2006).<sup>1</sup>

Two decades ago, this situation was totally unexpected and unimaginable. Among various schools of thoughts, Confucianism was most fiercely attacked and condemned in modern Chinese history. It was discarded by “enlightened and progressive intellectuals” as the troublesome burden of China on her way toward the goal of science and democracy, and also condemned by the radicals as the “reactionary feudal ideology”. Wounded by the slings and arrows of the

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May 4th Movement in 1919 and the Cultural Revolution in 1969, Confucianism had become virtually extinct in mainland China in the late 20th century. Who could have imagined that the “four olds” would have another florescence, as is incipiently seen today?<sup>2</sup>

As some scholars have rightly remarked, while the present renaissance of Confucianism is still in its rudimentary stage of development, it cannot be denied that some remarkable theoretical results have been achieved and they are gaining worldwide attention and influence. One point especially worthy of attention is that quite a few distinguished Confucian thinkers have developed a full-fledged new school of thought – Mainland China New Confucianism – which has unmistakably emerged and taken form over mainland China’s intellectual horizon.

In 2005, Fang Keli (1938-), chairman of the Society of the History of Chinese Philosophy, observed:

Since the May 4th Movement, the new Confucianism movement in modern China has undergone three generations of Confucian scholars and three stages of development. I think, with the 2004 Confucian Conference in Guiyang Yangming Academy (also known as Summit Conservatism Conference) as the starting point, the whole New Confucianism movement has now entered on its fourth stage, i.e., a stage in which Mainland China Confucians represented by Jiang Qing, Sheng Hong, Kang Xiaoguang, and Chen Ming play the leading role (Fang 2005).

Jiang Qing (1953-, Head of Yangming Academy), Sheng Hong (1954-, Director of Beijing Tianze Institute of Economics), Kang Xiaoguang (1963-, professor of public policy studies at Renmin University) and Chen Ming (1962-, Chinese philosophy professor at Capital Normal University) – the four intellectuals mentioned by Fang Keli, are indeed the main figures of Mainland China New Confucianism, of which Jiang Qing is the most outstanding.<sup>3</sup>

It is necessary to take a brief look at the development of Confucianism. Confucius (551–479 BCE), living during the times of the late Springs and Autumns period, made a comprehensive summary, consolidation, and refinement of the previous cultural heritage represented by the sagely kings of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, King Wen, King Wu and Duke of Zhou, which had taken root and developed for more than 2000 years in China. He founded the Confucian School of Learning. During the Pre-Qin period (before the year 221 BCE), Confucianism was but one school of learning among “the hundred schools”. This changed in the Western Han dynasty. During the reign of Emperor Wu (on the throne: 140–87 BCE) of the Western Han dynasty, in accord with the advice of Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE), the policy of “discarding the hundred schools and respecting only Confucianism” was implemented, and from then on Confucianism became the state ideology and national religion until the early 20th century.

As mentioned above, after the May 4th Movement, and especially after the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism in mainland China had become virtually extinct. A few Confucian adherents such as Tang Junyi (1909–1978), Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), and Xu Fuguan (1903–1982) fled overseas and

managed to develop significantly the conservative line of thought represented by Confucian masters Xiong Shili (1885–1968) and Liang Shuming (1893–1988); they founded the world famous school of Modern New Confucianism. Tu Weiming (1940–) and other third-generation New Confucians even brought the New Confucian thought to North America and helped it to achieve worldwide recognition.

In a sense, Modern New Confucianism is a new neo-Confucianism, a modern version of the neo-Confucianism espoused by Cheng Hao (1032–1085), Cheng Yi (1033–1107), Zhu Xi (1130–1209), Lu Xiangshan (1139–1193) and Wang Yangming (1472–1529) from the Song to Ming Dynasties. While the Song-Ming neo-Confucianism was the product of cultural stimulation and exchange between Confucianism and Buddhism, the Modern New Confucianism is the result of cultural stimulation and exchange between Confucianism and modern Western thought. The main themes of New Confucianism focus on such topics as humanity, the reciprocal human-Heaven relation, moral metaphysics, national spirit, and science and democracy, most of which are also the main focus of the Song-Ming neo-Confucianism. However, modern Confucian scholars are usually well versed in Western thought and therefore are well equipped to re-establish and explicate these traditional ideas with their sharper “Western weapons”.

As to the question of politics and social development, the New Confucians unanimously hold that China’s traditional political system and the political ideas embodied therein are out of date and that China’s political and social future is destined to be modernized in the light of science and democracy of the West. They argue that although democracy, as well as science, has been created and developed by Westerners, it is rather a “universal instrument”. Furthermore, democracy, they hold, is actually the inner demand of the logic of Chinese cultural development. It is an instrument by which the ancient sages’ ideal of “making the world under Heaven impartial and common to all” (*tian-xia-wei-gong*) could eventually be fulfilled. In the words of the most creative and influential New Confucianist, Mou Zongsan:

Modernization takes its origin in the West. However, once it occurs, it is no indigenous product confined to particular countries; as far as it is truth, it is universal. Therefore, every nation must admit it. To put in our old Chinese words, we call it “the Way of kingliness”, or “Storing the world in the world itself (letting people themselves rather than emperors decide their own destiny)”. To put it in new words, it is “an open society” or “democratic politics”. This is a common ideal. For these reasons, although democratic politics originated from the West, we should also realize it according to the requirements of our own inner life. (Mou 2006, Preface to the new edition, pp. 15–16)

In 1978 Mou Zongsan again remarked: “Democratic politics is the last pattern of politics. If there is any development and progress in future, it will be development and progress in social betterment, not in the reformation of the polity.” (Mou 1997, p.185) Francis Fukuyama, a Japanese-American scholar, later echoed the voice uttered by this New Confucian master when he claimed that history would end at liberal democracy.



The Modern New Confucianism which flourished overseas has had a strong and durable influence on the intellectual circles of mainland China since Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1978 and the decreased tension between China and Taiwan allowed for cultural exchanges. The New Confucian masters have attracted many sincere followers on the mainland, some of whom have become quite prominent scholars. In a strict sense, I am not speaking of the scholarship of this group of followers who strictly uphold the ideas of their masters when I refer to “Mainland China New Confucianism”. I am referring instead to the thought of another group of scholars who, though influenced by the overseas New Confucianism in some degree, are more creative-minded and have gone in quite a different direction from their overseas forerunners. In short, Mainland New Confucianism is not a mere replication of the Overseas New Confucianism.

It should be kept in mind that Mainland China New Confucianism is a newly emerging school of thought, which is still in its maturing process. Additionally, one should note that the major scholars under this title have developed their own thoughts without the intentional cooperation of the others and that there is often disagreement among them over certain issues.<sup>4</sup> Political Confucianism, as developed by Jiang Qing, the leading scholar of Mainland China New Confucianism, is the focus of the present paper.

### **3.3 The Main Arguments of Political Confucianism**

#### ***3.3.1 Division of “Mind Confucianism” and “Political Confucianism”***

“Mind Confucianism” and “Political Confucianism” are a pair of terms first coined by Jiang Qing, an exponent of Mainland China New Confucianism, to denote two traditions recognized in Confucianism after Confucius. These traditions contrast with each other in many respects. First, the former is created out of “existential concern”, or “concern of life salvation”, while the latter is out of “institutional concern”, or “concern of political legitimacy”. Second, the former holds that human nature is innately good and therefore approaches the issue of elevating the human mind and human nature almost wholly by means of self-cultivation. Thus, moral improvement is none other than restoring one’s humanity a priori, and one’s social and political environment have very little relevance. The latter, on the other hand, takes a realistic point of view of human nature and deems it empirically bad. It holds that rituals, institutions, and penalties are critically important for improving human nature and for keeping men and women from moral degeneration. Third, the former is aimed at purifying one’s personal life to become a sage or saint, while the latter is directed towards the construction of a desirable and stable political system and the betterment of society. In a word, Mind Confucianism, by its nature, is oriented



to the inner life of moral idealism, while Political Confucianism is oriented to the outer political structure of social realism (see Jiang 1995, pp. 2–9).<sup>5</sup>

To be specific, Mind Confucianism is a tradition consisting of the teachings of Zeng Zi (505–436 BCE), Zi Si (481–402 BCE)<sup>6</sup> and Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. In a sense, modern overseas New Confucianism can also be included in this tradition. Political Confucianism refers to the School of *Gongyang* Studies, which flourished chiefly in the Han and late Qing Dynasties. Xunzi (c. 313–238 BCE), a pre-Qin philosopher, Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE), the Early Han Dynasty scholar who successfully promoted Confucianism as the official ideology of the Imperial state, He Xiu (129–182), a major scholar of the *Gongyang* School in the late Han Dynasty, and Kang You Wei (1858–1927), a leading Confucian reformist at the end of the Qing Dynasty, are the chief exponents of this tradition.

These two traditions, Jiang argues, are all handed down from Confucius and are equally important. Unfortunately, after the Han Dynasty, the Political Confucianism of the School of *Gongyang* Studies was neglected to such a degree that today's scholars equate the teachings of the Song-Ming neo-Confucianism and the modern overseas New Confucianism with those of authentic Confucianism. Jiang comments on this situation:

Our Confucianism consists of Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism. While Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism constitutes the former, the School of *Gongyang* Studies constitutes the latter. Although they differ in nature and in methodology of dealing with the world, each constitutes a part of the whole of Confucius' leaning, so each should receive a respect due to their respective places in the tradition of Confucianism. What is deplorable is that for more than one thousand years Political Confucianism was repressed, only Mind Confucianism was flourishing. Up till now Mind Confucianism has been carried on from generation to generation without breaks, studied and practiced with no worry of discontinuity, and great scholars usually emerged in this tradition in succession. As regards Political Confucianism, with no scholars showing interest therein, its academy courtyard has been left desolate, its learning and meaning disappeared. As a result, Master Confucius' Great Way was broken, and the whole of Confucianism was mutilated, just like a cart with one wheel lost and a bird with only one wing left. With countrymen having ever heard only of Mind Confucianism and having no idea of Political Confucianism, it is no wonder that Chinese political theorists can only turn to the West for inspiration. My book is meant to repair the Confucian tradition and present Confucianism with its full features to the world! (Jiang *ibid.*, preface)

The Political Confucianism presented in Jiang's work is not just a collection and report of the ideas of former scholars in the *Gongyang* tradition. Rather, his Political Confucianism is a systematic political philosophy that combines both the tradition and his own creation in a globalized contemporary Chinese context. It is meant not only to maintain the old scholarship but also to paint a picture for China's future, or even for the world's future. His writings contain rich themes and arguments, with which this paper cannot deal adequately. The following is a limited presentation of Jiang's central points regarding the legitimacy of a political system and the question of Confucianism as a religion.

### 3.3.2 *Theory of Three-Dimensional Political Legitimacy*

The central tenet of Jiang Qing's Political Confucianism is the doctrine of political legitimacy. He argues that "political legitimacy" is the foundation of, and the prerequisite to, all political systems, political processes, political activities and tactics, without which everything political loses its meaning and value.

For Jiang, to be fully legitimate, a political power or regime must simultaneously meet three conditions: (1) it must be at one with, or sanctioned by, the holy and transcendent *Dao* (i.e., the Heavenly Way) as expressed or implied in the Confucian Scriptures and as interpreted by the prestigious Confucian Scholars; (2) it must not deviate from the mainstream of a national cultural heritage or break the historical continuity of a nationality; (3) it must comply with the will or endorsement of the common people.

The first condition is of the divine foundation of a political power, which can be symbolized by *Heaven*. The second is of the historical foundation of a political power symbolized by *Earth*, since national culture and civilization are closely connected with particular regions on Earth. And the third is of the human or secular foundation of a political power, symbolized by *Human*. These are the so-called "three dimensions of political legitimacy of the politics of the Kingly Way", a political idea rooted in traditional Chinese political culture.

Jiang adduces plentiful reasons and excerpts from Confucian classics to support this doctrine in his writings; however, I cannot give a detailed account of them here. Instead, I would like to translate a relatively clear and concise paragraph from the original Chinese, which I believe will give a general idea of his main points:

The three dimensions of the legitimacy of political power constitute the central content of the politics of the Kingly Way; it pertains to the fundamental question of determining the validity of a political regime. The *Gongyang* Scholars held that "the King is he who penetrates the three of Heaven, Earth and Human", and that "the Kingly Way combines the three into one" — these words mean that a political regime cannot be valid unless it conforms simultaneously to the tri-dimensional legitimacy of "Heaven, Earth and Man". Heaven refers to the dimension of transcendence and divinity, for in Chinese culture Heaven can be understood as a quasi-personalized being with supreme ruling power or a sacred, transcendent, moral principle. Earth refers to the dimension of historical continuity of cultural tradition, for history and culture usually appear and develop in a specific territory on earth. Man refers to the dimension of human will and their desire, for peoples' pro or con towards a political power directly determines whether a political regime or authority is obeyed or not. The Doctrine of the Mean reads: "He who attains to the sovereignty of the world has three important things": "the Way of the true ruler is applied before Heaven and Earth and found to be without contradiction in their operation, laid before spiritual beings without question or fear" — this indicates the legitimacy of transcendence and divinity; "it is tested by the experience of the Three Kings and found without error... and can wait a hundred generations for a sage to confirm it without a doubt" — this indicates the legitimacy of historical continuity of cultural tradition, and "it is rooted in his own personal life and has its evidence in the following of the common people" — and this is directed to the legitimacy of human will and desire.<sup>7</sup> From the perspective of the politics of the Kingly

Way, the ruling authority depends on the approvals of the Heavenly Way, national tradition and the peoples' will. In other words, the politics of the Kingly Way embodies the Way (or *Dao*), the historic tradition and the peoples' will in itself and it can thus, to the maximum extent, make the power to rule the qualification to rule and make citizens' obedience a duty due to them. If a political power fails to simultaneously meet the qualifications of the tri-dimensional legitimacy...it would be frequently pushed to the verge of turmoil or collapse. Therefore, the Confucian politics of the Kingly Way aims at finding an all-round and comprehensive solution to the problem of the legitimacy of political power, with a view to establishing a stable and harmonious political order of long-duration (Jiang 2004, pp. 293–294).

The dimension of the legitimacy of human will and desire sounds easy to understand for modern people, especially Westerners, for it seems similar to the democratic idea that government is legitimate only to the extent that it is derived from the people's consent and support. But Jiang warns over and over again that this democratic dimension of legitimacy should not have superiority over the other two dimensions. A political system is legitimate if and only if all three dimensions of legitimacy are properly balanced, with no one dimension being superior to the others.<sup>8</sup> Jiang argues that it is the ancient Chinese "moderate and harmonious" way of thinking anchored deeply in the *Book of Changes* and the *Springs and Autumns Annals* that makes this non-linear and tri-dimensional understanding of political legitimacy possible.

The dimension of historical continuity of nationality is the most controversial one among the three, but Jiang insists that this dimension is indispensable. He cites Edmund Burke's view to support his stance. As we know, from Burke's perspective the state is an organic body, politics is the outcome of historical evolution, and thus social heritage, or even prejudices, should be taken with due respect. Burke states:

To avoid, therefore, the evils of inconstancy and versatility, ten thousand worse than those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice, we have consecrated the state, that no man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution, that he should never dream of beginning its reformation by its subversion, that he should approach to the faults of the state as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude. By this wise prejudice we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parent in pieces and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds and wild incantations they may regenerate the paternal constitutions and renovate their father's life (Burke 1987, p. 84).

For Jiang Qing, if the state were comparable to a father, then the legitimacy of historical continuity could be likened to a father's lifeblood, which cannot be neglected when considering the establishment of a political system.

While attaching great importance to sacred and historical sources, Jiang is cautious not to slide to the extreme of bluntly advocating absolutism. Unlike the rulers in pre-modern societies, Jiang does not deny the importance of the people's will, desire, and opinion. He is in agreement with democratic liberals in this respect. What makes Jiang different is that he insists that the people's will shall not be the only decisive factor in politics; rather, it should be checked and balanced by the voice from the holy Heaven above and the voice from the olden

times of our ancestors, which defined our national and cultural identity. As a result, Jiang's view can be understood as something between pre-modern absolutism and modern liberalism.

Jiang argues that modern people regard politics as something purely human, secular, and current, having nothing to do with the divine or historical. But this concept of politics, in Jiang's eyes, can cause, and has already caused, many grievous problems for society and the future of humankind, such as moral corruption, environmental pollution, and social and national conflicts.<sup>9</sup> Jiang believes that, unlike economics and legal matters, politics has far more comprehensive significance. It not only concerns the acquisition, allocation, and manipulation of power and interests, but it also has much to do with the meaning of human life, the significance of the being and becoming of the universe, and the value of history and cultural continuity. In other words, politics is not something purely instrumental. It should not be dealt with in the same way that purely secular matters are. Politics has a significant connection with the sacred kingdom and is deeply rooted in history (see Jiang 2004, pp. 321–323).

The political systems that have appeared in human history, Jiang expatiates, are always those of one single dimension of legitimacy. For example, in ancient Athens, legitimacy wholly hinged on the opinions of the citizens, which demonstrated “the unbalanced domination of human legitimacy.” In the Middle Ages, legitimacy was wholly determined by God. This was “the unbalanced domination of holy legitimacy”. With the rise and advance of modernity and the emergence of the theories of social contract and popular sovereignty, the “unbalanced domination of human legitimacy” reappeared and culminated in contemporary times. Throughout China's history, the three dimensions of legitimacy advocated by the *Gongyang* Confucian Scholars were neither well implemented nor fully guaranteed, for in ancient China the implementation of the Kingly Way was heavily dependent on the personality and wisdom of the emperors, which was clearly a matter of chance (Jiang 2004, pp. 328–337).

This theory of three-dimensional political legitimacy is meant, on the one hand, to recognize and, on the other hand, to circumscribe the unbridled selfish human desire of either a collective or individual nature, and in this way to create a better pattern of political systems for China as well as the world. For these reasons, Jiang asserts that human history, in a proper sense, has by no means “ended”, as Fukuyama claims. On the contrary, it urgently waits to be re-created to avoid the “vital defect” found in modern democratic politics.

### 3.3.3 Proposition of Tri-Cameral Legislature

To translate this theory of three-dimensional political legitimacy into reality, Jiang proposes to establish a tri-cameral legislature, with each house representing one dimension of legitimacy. The House of Profound Confucians (*Tong Ru Yuan*) represents the legitimacy of the sacred Way, the House of National

Continuity (*Guo Ti Yuan*) represents the legitimacy of cultural heritage and tradition, and the House of Plebeians (*Shu Min Yuan*) represents the legitimacy of the common people's will and desire.<sup>10</sup>

The particular way the members of each house of the legislature are chosen and the mechanisms of checks and balances among the three houses are quite complex and are still being elaborated. Of this I can only give a very brief hint. The members of the House of Profound Confucians are chosen by nomination and appointment by non-governmental Confucian organizations and official Confucian institutions. The members of the House of National Continuity should be representatives of religions (including Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity) and the descendants of ancient sages and historical figures. The members of the Plebeian House are to be chosen by elections and functional constituencies. According to Jiang's latest opinion in *An Explanation of the Diagram of the Kingly Way* (Jiang 2010), the position of the House of Profound Confucians is the highest, whereas the Plebeian House is the lowest, and the House of National Continuity is in between. Bills of great importance must be passed simultaneously by all three. If a bill is passed by all three Houses, it is a perfect law. If not, it may be delayed, suspended, or vetoed. Jiang hopes that the utilization of a tri-cameral legislature will embody the theory of tri-dimensional legitimacy.

### 3.3.4 Restoration of Confucian Religion as the State Religion

Jiang's Political Confucianism is closely connected with his views about the religion of Confucianism. For Jiang, Confucianism is not merely a theory or a system of abstract ideas, it is a great religion embedded in Chinese civilization, comparable to Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. In ancient China, Confucianism played the role of a state religion. To re-establish China's political system, the Confucian religion is indispensable and should be reinstated as the state religion. Jiang writes:

As a state religion, Confucianism has defined the nature of Chinese civilization, molded the cultural identity of the Chinese nation, and shaped the axiological consensus and spiritual convictions of the Chinese people.

In history the Confucian religion has performed three functions. First, it provided political legitimacy for the Chinese government by laying a transcendent and sacred foundation for politics. Second, it provided ethical norms to regulate the social conduct of the Chinese people on the basis of rites. Third, it provided religious faith for the people on the basis of transcendent and sacred values as interpreted by the Confucian sages. These three functions are not obsolete in the contemporary world. (Jiang 2005, p. 4)

Jiang insists that, being faced with all-round challenges from the West, China must restore the Confucian religion in all respects and at all levels. In Jiang's words: "It is a task of top priority."

To restore and revitalize the religion of Confucianism, Jiang proposes to establish a certain Confucian corporate entity, say, the Confucian Association

of China, something comparable to the Buddhist Association of China. He continues:

Like the Buddhist Association of China and other Associations of other religions in China, “the Confucian Association of China” is both a religious corporation and the religion of Confucianism itself. Although it is one corporate entity among others in civil society, the Confucian Association of China is not on an equal par with other religious Associations. Owing to the fact that the religion of Confucianism represents the mainstream of the Chinese civilization, the Confucian Association of China should boast some extra political, economic, cultural and organizational rights to which the other religious organizations are not entitled. (Jiang 2005, p. 5)

Specifically, these privileges should include taking an active part in political activities, obtaining endowments of movable or immovable properties as well as financial allocation from the government, devising curriculums for primary public schools, formulating important state etiquettes, and directing great sacrificial ceremonies in the name of the state, etc.

To be sure, Jiang is against the prevalent idea of the separation of state and religion, but he is careful not to go so far as to strictly bind state and religion together as was the case in the Middle Ages or the Tsarist era of Russia. Still, his proposal to enshrine Confucianism as a state religion is deeply unpopular in the intellectual circles of China, even among some scholars who are otherwise sympathetic to Confucianism. For example, one of China’s top Confucianism scholars and a professor of philosophy at Beijing University, Chen Lai, has welcomed the new Political Confucianism of Jiang and has even helped to get *Political Confucianism* published, but still rejects the unification of church and state (Eberlein 2009). The main worry is that if Confucianism becomes the state religion, other thoughts and perspectives will be seen as heresy and persecuted. Jiang responds to this concern in stating:

In the UK, the Anglican Church, the state religion established by the unwritten English common law, boasts its privileges. In Northern Europe, the Lutheran church, as the state religion, also boasts its privileges. In modern Greece, the Eastern Orthodox Church, as the state religion established by the Greek constitution, has its privileges as a rule. But all these countries remain the so-called liberal democratic countries. By the same token, to restore Confucianism as the privileged state religion by no means implies spiritual persecution. It only means a certain consensus and unity of the Chinese national spirit and mind. No worry is necessary. (Jiang 2005, p. 5)

In fact, the history of China also shows that such a fear is groundless.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.4 Reactions of Contemporary Scholars to Political Confucianism

As mentioned above, Jiang Qing’s Political Confucianism contains many great themes and arguments with which I cannot deal fully in this paper. I would like to conclude this chapter by summarizing some commentaries on Jiang’s theory made by current distinguished Chinese scholars.

Yu Dunkang (1930–), a fellow of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and an authority on Chinese philosophy and Confucian studies, in recommending Jiang's *Political Confucianism* to the press, remarked:

Based on an all-round understanding of Confucianism, the author makes a breakthrough in Confucian studies. . . .the author's approach is a continuation of the tradition of the School of Modern-Script Classics represented by such late Qing scholars as Gong Zizhen (1792–1841), Wei Yuan (1794–1857) and Kang Youwei (1858–1927). The many views put forward by the author will open up a fresh perspective of the world (Jiang, 2003).<sup>12</sup>

Chen Lai (1951–), a leading Confucian scholar and professor of the Department of Philosophy of Peking University, while not wholly in agreement with Jiang's views, fully recognizes the value of his efforts. In recommending *Political Confucianism*, he wrote:

Taking the stance of the classic Chinese political thought, this book makes a profound analysis of the New Confucianism on its proposition of wholesale westernization and liberal political ideas. There has been no such research work in present China. . . .most of the author's arguments are brand new and full of insights.<sup>13</sup>

Li Qiang (1953–), a distinguished professor of politics in the School of Government at Peking University, in commenting on the books published in 2003 that caught his attention, said:

Since the late Qing dynasty, it has been a perennial topic to reflect on the commonness and differences between the East and the West, and to investigate the relation between traditional Chinese culture and politico-social modernization. (Jiang Qing's) *Political Confucianism* is undoubtedly an important work that probes the relation between Confucianism and modern politics from the perspective of politics. The author criticizes the line of anti-tradition and westernization. Again he is not satisfied with the New Confucians who have vainly tried to bring forth "outer kingliness" out of "inner sageliness". Therefore he strikes out a new road in figuring out two directions of "Mind Confucianism" and "Political Confucianism" in Confucianism. . . .the author intends to steer clear of the way of "bringing forth outer kingliness out of inner sageliness" and to return to the Confucian tradition of "interpreting the scriptures in light of institutions". That is to say, to enrich the meaning of the classics by approaching them with a political eye, and to open up a new horizon for China's political construction (Li 2003).

The above-mentioned Canadian political scholar Daniel A. Bell (1964–) has shown the greatest sympathy with Jiang's theory. In his latest book *China's New Confucianism* (2008), there is an appendix "*Jiang Qing's Political Confucianism*", in which a critical introduction of Jiang's theory is made.

Zhang Xianglong (1949-), renowned professor of Western philosophy at Peking University, also shows great respect for Jiang's theory. In 2004, when Zhang taught in the Department of Sinology and Korean Studies at Tübingen University, he delivered a lecture – *The Issue of Universalism in Confucian Ethics Today: Jiang Qing's Political Confucianism and his Criticism of Mou Zongsan* – to German scholars.

In 2007 a conference on Jiang Qing's thought was held at Pinghe Academy in China's coastal city of Zhuhai, where nearly 20 mainland and overseas scholars,



including Jiang Qing himself, came together to have a comprehensive and deep discussion of Qing's thought. In fact, this conference was a dialogue with Jiang. In 2008, the papers presented at the conference were published in a collection titled *Confucian Dao and Modern Society: Dialogue with Jiang Qing* (Fan 2008). From the foreword of the editor, Ruiping Fan (a professor at City University of Hong Kong), "*Why Dialogue with Jiang Qing?*" we can see that Jiang's theory has gained remarkable recognition and exerted considerable influence on current Chinese thought.

To be sure, there are also many negative critiques of Jiang Qing's thought. Some more "progressive-minded" intellectuals have even interpreted him as an obscurantist and "a Confucian fundamentalist". This is not hard to understand. However, in my view, Jiang is undoubtedly one of the greatest living Confucians and thinkers in the modern era. I am confident that his political Confucianism will be more fully understood and appreciated in future.

## Notes

1. Daniel A. Bell is now teaching at Tsinghua University in Beijing. There are many other works about the present movement of the renaissance of Confucianism. Let me mention two pieces in English by Sébastien Billioud and Joël Thoraval: see Billioud, Sébastien and Thoraval, Joël (2008, 2007).
2. During the Cultural Revolution, traditional thought, traditional culture, traditional ceremonies and traditional manners were derogatively termed the "four olds".
3. Those who are engaged in Confucian studies and show respect for the Confucian values and way of life are great in number, but among those recognized scholars, for various reasons, the ones who have publicly claimed or acknowledged that they are the contemporary followers of Confucius and would think or even live a life by the teachings of the Confucian scriptures are scarce at present. To be sure, apart from the above four, there are also other scholars that can be recognized as "Confucians".
4. Concerning the differences among the Mainland China New Confucian Scholars, see Chen (2009).
5. It should be noted that this distinction is not absolutely clear-cut. Scholars of the Mind Confucianism are also keen on political affairs, but they are inclined to find solutions to political problems through personal cultivation and moral education rather than through constructing solid political systems, and they tend to reduce political questions to moral ones.
6. Zeng Zi was one of Confucius' disciples, who stressed the cultivation of one's own mind and the consciousness of filial piety, and so was regarded as the founder of the school of Mind Confucianism. Zi Si, the grandson of Confucius, was Zeng Zi's student and wrote the celebrated essay "*Doctrine of the Mean*" that exerted a huge impact on the neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties.
7. The words from the *Doctrine of the Mean* are adapted from Wing-tsit Chan's translation. See Chan (1963), p. 111.
8. This is Jiang's published view. Recently Jiang showed me his newly-drafted *An Explanation of the Diagram of the Kingly Way*, in which his idea is revised to the effect that while the Divine dimension is to a certain extent checked and balanced by the human dimension, the former is in some way superior to, and more prestigious than, the latter. The three dimensions are not simple equals or on the same footing with one another.



9. Jiang notes that the Bush administration of the US did not ratify the Kyoto accord on global warming partly because the current generation of American voters did not view it as in their interest to do so.
10. The names of the Houses are the present writer's tentative translation.
11. Events such as the Inquisition of the Catholic Church were unknown to China. In fact, the worst persecutions of Buddhism were actually carried out in the Tang Dynasty by the emperors who supported Taoism and believed they were descendants of Laozi.
12. This is my translation from Chinese of the back cover of *Political Confucianism* (Jiang, 2003).
13. *Ibid.*

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# Chapter 4

## On “One-Continuity” in Jiang Qing’s Confucian Thought

Dan Lin

### 4.1 Introduction

Jiang Qing has established the concept of “Political Confucianism” in recent years, expounded its characteristics as distinct from “Mind Confucianism”, and argued for its irreplaceability and irreducibility. The understanding of this concept is imperative for a thorough study of Confucianism. But does the distinction between Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism lead to a separation of the two? If we do not agree to separate them, does it mean that we must “unite” them in some particular way, such as “from inner sageliness (*Nei Sheng*) to outer kingliness (*Wai Wang*)”? Does such “unity” really conform to the Confucian ideal of “One-Continuity” (*yi yi guan zhi*)? Does it really conform to the traditional Confucian thought of “Oneness of Substance and Function” (*ti yong bu er*)? In this chapter I show how Qing’s distinction between Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism as well as his understanding of the idea “from inner sageliness to outer kingliness” does not lead to incoherence, but rather to a unity that properly exemplifies the “One-Continuity” of a coherent Confucianism.

### 4.2 The Distinction Between Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism

Qing holds that Confucianism in the beginning has two parts, namely, Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism, both from Confucius himself. Each of them has its own distinct characteristics and value that cannot be confused or replaced by the other. Qing states:

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The Zengzi and Zisi School and the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties are Mind Confucianism, while *Gongyang* Confucianism is Political Confucianism (Qing 1995, p. 1).

Mind Confucianism focuses on the cultivation of the personal life, studying not only the physical but also the metaphysical. It emphasizes the unity of Heaven and Man (*tian ren he yi*). “The major problems that Mind Confucianism wants to solve are problems such as the value of life, the meaning of being, the improvement of personality and reaching moral perfection” (Qing 1995, p. 2). Political Confucianism on the other hand focuses on politics and society and therefore considers such issues as the legitimacy of political orders, the reform and reconstruction of political systems, and historical conceptions of justice. As one can see, Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism have different emphases and problems to solve. Mind Confucianism can be considered the study of inner sageliness (*Nei Sheng*) since it looks inward, whereas Political Confucianism can be considered the study of outer kingliness (*Wai Wang*) since its focus on society is outward.

### 4.3 What Is the Relationship Between the Two? The *Daxue* View of *Nei Sheng* as Substance and *Wai Wang* as Function

If Qing’s position is that Confucianism has two parts, namely, Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism, what is the relationship between the two? Mainstream Confucianism since *Daxue* (The Great Learning), which is dominated by Mind Confucianism, holds that the relationship between them is from inner to outer: inner sageliness is the substance (*ti*) while outer kingliness is the function (*yong*). The substance, which rests in the internal human mind, is the foundation of the outer function. To reject this view is to separate substance from function and to deny the idea of the “Oneness of Substance and Function” (*ti yong bu er*). Indeed, in Chinese philosophy, it is generally understood that substance means the original and essence of something, whereas function means its derivative phenomena. What is Qing’s perspective on this?

### 4.4 Qing’s Response to the Substance-Function View

Qing insists that this point of view is partial and untenable.

On the issue of human nature, Political Confucianism does not hold that human nature is good but evil. In contrast, Mind Confucianism, from the transcendent point of view, holds that human nature is good, inherent in the mind and experienced by the original mind (*ben xin*). Since Political Confucianism from the empirical point of view holds that human nature is evil, man must make great efforts to study and change human nature. Besides, to resist the evil

of human nature, political and legal systems are required. Consequently, what Political Confucianism focuses on is not personal cultivation or how one can become a sage; that is the focus of Mind Confucianism. Rather, Political Confucianism focuses on how to make society perfect and harmonious. Man always exists in society; the change of social relations and the perfection of society are the preconditions of the perfection of personal life. Qing argues,

Unlike Mind Confucianism, which is interested in the metaphysical philosophical system, Political Confucianism is interested in real living beings. Political Confucianism holds that the Way (*Dao*) does not exist in some abstract conceptual system, but in a concrete political reality (Qing 2003, p. 30).

Political Confucianism pays close attention to reality as lived by humans, not to the abstract reality, which is the focus of Mind Confucianism. Since Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism have different characteristics, perspectives, and subject matter, they cannot be “united” forcefully by reducing Political Confucianism to Mind Confucianism or by holding inner sageliness as the substance of outer kingliness and outer kingliness as the function of inner sageliness.

Qing further argues that it is not only that the substance-function view of inner sageliness and outer kingliness is untenable because of the differences between Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism, this view also ultimately results in the loss of any outer kingliness whatsoever. As he sees it, since the Song and Ming dynasties, Confucianism has predominantly been developed as Mind Confucianism, which has resulted in the underdevelopment of political Confucian wisdom. Contemporary Neo-Confucianism is also predominantly Mind Confucianism, which is witnessed by its Mind Confucianist interpretation of “from inner sageliness to outer kingliness”. According to this interpretation, the way of Heaven and the nature of human beings are inherent in the depths of life, namely the human mind; if this mind is to be cultivated well (namely, inner sageliness), then proper outer activities and the establishment of the necessary political institutions must take place, embodying the way of Heaven and the nature of human beings (outer kingliness).

However, this way of interpreting “from inner sageliness to outer kingliness” has the unacceptable result that it leaves no outer kingliness. Although there is no doubt that the way of Heaven and the nature of human beings can appear in life, nevertheless they cannot be achieved in society nor can their corresponding institutions be established in China, as neo-Confucianism advocates. Such neo-Confucianism faces a risk of decline. Qing holds that proper Confucianism should not be construed primarily as a study of metaphysics as upheld by Mind Confucianism. The way of Heaven and the nature of human beings are meaningful for Confucianism only when they are manifested in the concrete way of real lives. However, neo-Confucianism has understood the way of Heaven and the nature of human beings as abstract philosophical concepts divorced from concrete ways of real lives. Thus, neo-Confucianism has no outer kingliness and in fact “separate[s] substance and function into two” (Qing 2003, p. 19).

#### **4.5 Objections to Qing's Position that Neo-Confucianism Has No Outer Kingliness – Mou's View and "New Outer Kingliness"**

Although Qing argues that neo-Confucianism has no outer kingliness, we know that Contemporary neo-Confucianism is indeed concerned with outer kingliness. "New Outer Kingliness" is a major topic of contemporary neo-Confucianism, and its development is seen as an important task. For example, Mou Zongshan, through transforming Wang Yangming's theory of "inner knowing" (*liangzhi*), has raised a systematic theory of "New Outer Kingliness."

Mou calls for Confucianism to form a system of knowledge modeled on modern science and democratic political systems. To do so, Mou introduces a theory called "the negation of inner knowing". According to him, since inner knowing is only concerned with the moral world in the noumena while science and democracy are concerned with the phenomenal world, in order to have democratic politics following Confucianism, inner knowing, as moral rationality, must "negate" itself to give way to intellectual rationality. Inner knowing thus non-linearly, as opposed to directly, changes itself into a political subject and allows politics to become an independent field. Subsequently, Confucianism may accommodate "New Outer Kingliness", namely, modern science and democracy (see Mou 1990).

#### **4.6 Qing's Response to "New Outer Kingliness" – Science and Democracy as Foreign to Confucianism**

Qing holds that since the negation of inner knowing creates science and democracy, which from the Chinese perspective are at the core of Western values, Mou's "inner knowing" becomes a Western metaphysical concept. If Confucianism were to be used as a foundation for developing a scientific system of knowledge and a democratic political system, it would no longer be Confucianism. For Qing, Mou mistakenly corrupts Confucianism because of his narrow understanding of it; he understands Confucianism only as Mind Confucianism and therefore neglects Political Confucianism. However, Political Confucianism is an equally important aspect of Confucianism. Furthermore, we need not turn to Western science and democracy to build "outer kingliness", as Mou advocates. Traditional Chinese culture provides a resource of political wisdom for Political Confucianism. Qing holds that the "New Outer Kingliness" must be created based on traditional Chinese culture, namely, authentic Confucian resources, rather than from modern Western science and democracy.

## 4.7 The Proper Relationship Between Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism

Qing has rejected the substance-function view of inner sageliness and outer kingliness as well as Mou’s view of New Outer Kingliness. So what is Qing’s own constructive view? Li Minghui holds that the primary feature of traditional Confucianism is the unity of “inner sageliness” and “outer kingliness”, making it impossible to speak of “outer kingliness” without speaking of “inner sageliness”. However, from Minghui’s perspective, because Qing distinguishes Mind Confucianism from Political Confucianism, “utterly denying the possibility of creating Political Confucianism from Mind Confucianism”, it results in “the loss of coherence of Confucianism” (Minghui 2005, p. 118), since both are derived from Confucianism; therefore, Qing “must acknowledge that the two sides of Confucian thought are incoherent” (Minghui 2005, p. 183). However, whether or not Qing is committed to the incoherence of Confucianism depends on how he understands “the oneness of substance and function” and the Confucian thought of “One-Continuity”.

Wang Chuanshan, a Confucian thinker of the late Ming dynasty, expounds the proper relationship of substance and function: “when speaking of the Way (*Dao*) correctly, one gains substance from function. When speaking of the Way incorrectly, one arbitrarily misconceives substance governing all functions” (Chuanshan 1977, p. 38). Yet, the true ontological assumption of “the oneness of substance and function” is that both substance and function are realities. They are dependent on each other and substance does not govern function. The oneness of substance and function is “inquiring into [the] principle (*li*) in things” (*ji shi giong li*), rather than “setting up a principle to confine things” (*li li yi xian shi*). “Wang Chuanshan strongly criticizes the tendency of “forcing all things into one”, which is called “Unifying-One” as opposed to the Confucian idea of “One-Continuity” (Wang 1977, pp. 215, 223). All things develop but do not harm each other; each comes to be itself but not as a distinct piece; all are coherent with the Way of Heaven. This is the “Oneness of Substance and Function” and “One-Continuity” (*yi yi guan zhi*).

According to Qing, the views concerning the relationship between inner sageliness and outer kingliness proposed by contemporary neo-Confucianism exemplify not “One-Continuity” but “Unifying-One”. Thus in criticizing these views, one does not necessarily commit the problem of fragmenting Confucianism. One can avoid fragmentation by properly understanding “One-Continuity”. Qing understands the relationship between Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism as “all things growing in the Way but not contradicting each other” (Qing 2003, p. 5). Qing holds that the way of Heaven and the nature of human beings must be realized in human society. If a political environment is unfavorable for one to become a sage in his personal life, Mind Confucianism’s pursuit of the value of life and moral ideals are difficult to realize. So Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism must be related through

“One-Continuity.” Therefore, even though Qing distinguishes Mind Confucianism from Political Confucianism, he does not *separate* them or make Confucianism incoherent.

Qing holds that Confucius is not a “philosopher” in the Western sense, i.e., someone who is interested in speculative theory. Truth in Confucian thought is not confined to logical or speculative truth. Truth is not the abstract existing in a philosopher’s universalizing theory. Rather, truth is lively, present in particulars and manifested in historical events. It is meaningful only when it is in human activities. Qing contends that according to Political Confucianism, Confucius is a king of sages. He “reaches the continuity between Heaven and Man, as well as the continuity between the metaphysical and the physical. The Way moving in politics, life and politics is not separated into two” (Qing 1995, p. 371). This is the Confucian spirit of “One-Continuity”. So Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism are naturally related in “One-Continuity”. Therefore, the so-called problem of “the two sides of Confucian thought [as] incoherent” does not exist.

#### 4.8 The Dangers of Unifying-One and Fragmentation

History repeatedly cycles between “Unifying-One” and “Fragmentation”. This is the consequence of the lack of “One-Continuity”. From Qing’s view, Western medieval times were characterized by “unity without diversity”: only Christianity was allowed. In modern times, at the other extreme, the medieval unifying values are denied: “diversity without unity”. In a society of diverse values, the value of unity may not be acknowledged, because “unifying” thought is considered as “autocracy”.

Qing sees that the diversity in modern society and modern politics, despite its positive values, has its disadvantages. The major disadvantage is its negation of unity among human social life, as well as its lack of metaphysical grounding and legitimacy in political life. Since transcendent value cannot be found in the human world, the world becomes meaningless (Qing 2003, p. 311). This is a kind of “fragmentation”. This fragmented society is a psychological hotbed of authoritarianism because external order must be put into the world, rather than realizing the order inherent in nature itself. This authoritarianism is a manifestation of “Unifying-One”. A vicious cycle between “Unifying-One” and “Fragmentation” is to a great extent unavoidable.

This tendency to regard “unifying” as necessarily contradictory to “diversity” and thus entering the cycle between “Unifying-One” and “Fragmentation” ignores the solution given to us from traditional Confucian wisdom, namely, a “moral” society of “One-Continuity”, as opposed to a “moralized autocratic” society or modern “moral revolution” that characterizes modern society (Liu 2000, p. 69). Political Confucianism and traditional Chinese thought cherish the idea of “grand unification” (*da yi tong*). Qing holds that “grand” means “to hold



in esteem”, rather than “big” or “large”. “Unification” means things seek for their origin, rather than forcefully governing all things through authoritarian methods. Political society must be dependent on metaphysical being so as to gain transcendent value and a sense that all things are reasonable and meaningful. Qing states:

According to Confucianism, Heaven gives birth to all things, yet things grow freely to become themselves. So Confucian thought does not contradict with a diverse society. Moreover, Confucianism raises the idea of “grand unification”, which does not deny the unity of a society despite the diversities found in it (Qing 2003, p. 312).

So, human society and all things have a metaphysical ground. This is “One-Continuity”. Given the Confucian doctrine that “the human being forms one body with Heaven-and-earth and all things” and its ethic of “the continuity of Heaven and man”, one can see that “Confucianism values things and lets all things be themselves but does not force things to serve human beings” (Qing 2003, p. 346).

Qing points out that “grand unification” uses the force of morality to sustain the whole society and to influence surrounding nations, rather than the compulsory measures used to govern a political society (Qing 1995, p. 293). It is the collapse of just such a society of “One-Continuity” that causes the “moral revolution” [of “Unifying-One”], and thereafter the vicious circle between “Unifying-One” and “Fragmentation” cannot be avoided. Traditional moral society does not cause this kind of moral revolution. On the contrary, it is the collapse of traditional moral society that causes the moral revolution and the inevitable cycles between moral revolution and moral collapse.

## 4.9 The Future Prospects of Confucianism

Because of the unity of life and thought, there is both a distinction and a unity between Political Confucianism and Mind Confucianism. But the reality of life and society today is far from that of traditional Confucianism, which is a great pity for contemporary Confucians, who are anxious to resurrect true Confucianism.

However, one must realize that the goal of reviving Confucianism cannot be achieved quickly. As Qing points out, “politics is not the construction of an abstract theory of human nature or a deductive effect of an abstract concept of human nature, but a long-term evolutionary effect of a specific culture” (Qing 2003, p. 270). To deduce politics from an abstract concept of human nature is to fall prey to “Unifying-One”, while “One-Continuity” calls for the long-term evolution of a culture. Thus, the revival of Confucianism requires a long-term process, and it cannot be “deduced” in a hurry. Traditional Confucianism needs a space where it can grow slowly and thrive. Given that there are few Political Confucian statesmen, part of this process may be the raising of more Political Confucian statesmen.

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# Chapter 5

## Jiang Qing on Equality

Ruiping Fan

### 5.1 Introduction

China has become a worldly economic power. Its financial policy, import and export trade, and market changes have begun to exert significant influences on the world economy. Chinese people have generally recognized that China should continue with its economic reforms and maintain a market economy. In contrast, opinions regarding political reforms and their objectives, as well as China's political future, are still divided among the people. No doubt, Deng Xiaoping's decision to table political disputes and give priority to economic development has gained China a huge national wealth. But this policy has also plunged Chinese society into political puzzlement and a moral vacuum. It is now high time to ponder where China is morally and politically heading. What should be a legitimate Chinese political system has become an unavoidable issue to address.

Liberal scholars believe that China must establish a Western-type democratic political system. In their opinion, liberal democracy is the “common law” of human society that represents the most legitimate and even a history-ending political system for mankind. The notion of human equality – roughly the idea that everyone is born equal and should be treated as equals – has been taken as the most important foundation of liberal democracy. This notion serves over and over again as the source of new principles and rules to push all contemporary societies to move in the direction of liberal democracy. Indeed, even in China's current political discussion, equality and democracy seem to have become the only politically correct language: whether you are a leftist or rightist, liberal or conservative, radicalist or traditionalist, socialist or capitalist, you will unexceptionally have to appeal to these “golden words” to convey your political ideals. Even contemporary neo-Confucians have enthusiastically recast their

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Confucian social and political aspirations in terms of equality and democracy, although the original Confucian concept of virtue, the doctrines of human nature, and familial and social rites do not have much to do with equality or democracy.

However, while so many scholars seem to be obsessed with the ideas of equality and democracy, Jiang Qing, an exemplary Confucian gentleman in contemporary mainland China, distinguishes himself by insisting that “the future of China’s politics should be the ‘kingly way’ rather than liberal democracy” (Qing 2004, p. 292).<sup>1</sup> He also clearly points out that equality should not be a fundamental principle for morality, politics, or law. His courage is laudable and his thought is original. In Confucian studies, his focus has been on the political Confucianism of the *Gongyang* School (公羊學), which has been overlooked intentionally by contemporary neo-Confucians with Mind Confucianism (心性儒學) as their focus. Through exploring Confucianism by giving equal weight to “the Three Powers (Heaven, Earth and Human)” in pursuing a legitimate political system, Jiang has proposed that a new Confucian political system must be legitimate in the triple senses of the Confucian *Dao*: “Heavenly *Dao*” (transcendent legitimacy), “Earthly *Dao*” (legitimacy in history and culture) and “Human *Dao*” (legitimacy in terms of the people’s will). Accordingly, he criticizes the modern Western liberal democracy as an improper one-sided politics – it gives top priority to public opinion, yet overlooks its legitimacy in a transcendent sense as well as historical and cultural senses. In order to distinguish the Confucian political system that he proposes from other systems, he gives it the provocative name of “kingly way politics” (王道政治). Although this proposal needs further exploration, revision, and perfection in theory as well as in practice, it will have far-reaching influences on contemporary Chinese politics.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter does not intend to address Jiang’s kingly way politics in detail. Instead, it intends only to explore his view on equality. As previously mentioned, equality, as a fundamental concept in liberal democracy, has become a secular idol for many people in contemporary politics. In their opinion, equality is not only one of the most important justifications of liberal democracy, it is also an inevitable result of the practice of liberal democracy. They are contemptuous of the “kingly way politics” that Jiang advocates primarily because it is a hierarchical system, thus going against the principle of equality. In today’s media it is usually assumed that the idea that “all men are created equal” is self-evident and irrefutable. Some adopt such “truth” as an incontrovertible social ideal to steer political reforms and they attempt to eliminate any inequality wherever it is found in society. For them, because “kingly way politics” does not embody such truth, much less pursue this ideal, it is inevitably outmoded and unjustified. Accordingly, in order to remove the barriers that have hindered people from understanding, discussing, and receiving Jiang’s kingly way politics, it is necessary to study, clarify, and comprehend Jiang’s view on equality. This is the main objective of this chapter.

Modern Western philosophy has witnessed an abundance of writings on equality and a popularity of widespread egalitarian theories of various kinds. This chapter will not deal with those strong egalitarian assumptions and requirements in the theories of equality, because Jiang himself has made no comments on them in any systematic way. Instead, given that many people are really interested in certain *liberal* ideas of equality, and that the form of these ideas is that everyone should be treated equally in a certain way, this chapter will address the three following important types of such ideas based on Jiang's relevant critiques: (1) morally everyone has an equal right to self-determination (in particular, the right to reject the moral teachings or instructions from sages); (2) politically everyone has an equal right to vote (which includes the so-called universal suffrage, ensuring "one citizen, one vote"); and (3) legally everyone has a legal right to equality before the law. Against these popular ideas Jiang has offered thought-provoking arguments that deserve our careful exploration.

## 5.2 Moral Equality

The liberal moral principle of equality is not a statement of facts, but a normative demand. Those who embrace the principle know that, as a matter of fact, there exist many differences or inequalities among individuals. Such inequalities are reflected in numerous areas of natural state and social conditions, such as age, appearance, height, sex, IQ, EQ, knowledge, ability, family, nationality, state, occupation, status, income, wealth, etc. It is in part because of the existence of these factual inequalities that modern liberal scholars require that individuals must be made equal in terms of a fundamental moral requirement, that is, the requirement of basic moral rights. In particular, they stress that everyone is entitled to the equal right of self-determination – one is free to choose any conception of the good or way of life as one sees fit, as long as it is consistent with other individuals' similar freedoms and rights. In this sense, they conclude, all individuals are morally equal.

Of course, liberal scholars do not have to deny that some individuals may have higher moral value than others – for example, great contemporary liberal thinker John Rawls' moral value must be higher than that of a loafer who does nothing but count blades of grass every day. However, they insist that such differences in moral value should not affect their equal status in moral decisions: everyone should enjoy the equal right to choices in life. This right, from the liberal view, should include a right to free choice in the content of one's moral education: even if an individual should be obliged to receive some basic education in empirical knowledge, legal requirements, and critical thinking, etc., one should not be bound to receive education about any particular moral tradition or value. Rather, it is entirely up to each individual (or an organization or association which one freely chooses to join) to decide what moral education one should accept or reject. Government must stay neutral in this regard – its

public schools should not implement moral education in favor of any particular moral tradition or religion. Everyone is thus morally equal in this sense. To this view, Jiang's following comments constitute a direct response:

Confucians do not accept this thought [of moral equality]. . . . As Mencius says, things in the world are different by nature—this is how things are. . . . Though everyone may pursue the ideal of cultivating oneself as a gentleman (*junzi*), it is impossible in reality that they can all attain this ideal. Instead, the difference between gentlemen and non-gentlemen always exists. In light of this, Confucians prompt people to accept the values adopted by sages with the arrangements of 'rites and music' (*liyue zhidu*), so that our society is of a divine structure consistent with the 'heavenly law' and that common people are educated towards goodness . . . . According to Confucianism, people are different by intelligence: those who are intelligent are entitled to govern those who are not and gentlemen to educate and enlighten base people—right of this kind is naturally entitled by sages and it may be called "inalienable divine rights" . . . in reality, there are indeed some in society that need to be educated and enlightened by others, for example, children by adults, base people by gentlemen, and common people by sages. A so-called 'egalitarian society' without such education and enlightenment is hardly imaginable—it can be nothing but a bundle of 'worker ants' with mediocre intelligence and of low morality who act by instinct (Jiang, pp. 125–128).

It is obvious that Jiang's Confucian view is vastly different from the liberal one that advocates the neutral stand of the state in moral education. Of course, Jiang needs to elaborate on what precise system of "rites and music" China should adopt in contemporary society and how it should spread sages' teachings in an "arranged" way rather than "neutrally" leaving the function of moral education to the folk and individuals. There are many questions that will not be expounded here for the time being. In any case, Jiang's logic is clear and coherent: if we admit that people's moral values are different in terms of loftiness and baseness, then we should accept that sages have the right to educate common people. Since sages have the loftiest moral values that humankind can possess and their teachings and instructions can elevate the values of life, why not accept this reality of inequality? Since liberal scholars stress that everyone has the equal right to choice in terms of morality, individuals are entitled to reject the teachings of sages. Jiang argues clearly that man should not have this right, because sages have the "inalienable divine right" to educate common people. No doubt, different scholars may attempt to refute this privilege given to sages by Jiang, armed with modern theories of various kinds. However, considering that most issues involved are theoretical and of little practical significance, such theories will not be discussed in this chapter. There are two views, however, that border on relativism and are particularly popular with many young people, rendering them worthy of a response. The first view is that there is no point in differentiating people by high and low moral standards: maybe I am dumber, duller, and lazier than you, but I remain on an equal footing with you as far as morality is concerned; I am against the assertion that you are a sage and I am a base person; as the Chinese saying goes, "you take your bright road, and I will cross my log bridge;" although we are different in moral life, our various ways of life are still of the same moral value; thus you

have no right to educate and enlighten me, or interfere with my way of life. To those who hold this view, Jiang's following comments constitute a response:

Throughout human intellectual history, whenever it comes to values or morality, hierarchies and differences are involved. Egalitarianism, however, erases these differences, elevates equality in mere form to an essential value, and even to the most important value in politics. Modern people are prone to strive for equality to sages. They believe that they have the freedom to choose their own morality and spiritual life—this is their right that no one else can interfere with, including those sages of all generations. Why? Because those sages are humans as I am and my freedom should not be subject to others' interference. In this way, modern people have found a perfect excuse for their rejection of the teachings and education of sages and have made peace with this situation. However, it has never occurred to them that sages are not ordinary people as they are and that the differences between them are as vast as those between humans and apes. Sages have cultivated their natural endowments to the fullest and exemplified the excellence of humanity; they are sagely inside and kingly outside, they complete themselves as well as other things and assist the transforming and nourishing power of Heaven and Earth, thereby forming a trinity with Heaven and Earth—what about you? Your life is still at the stage of natural life; you haven't increased that "little bit difference" that distinguishes you from brutes; you are still in a state of moral or intellectual darkness, ignorant of the ultimate meaning and value of life, missing the Way for improvement and direction, and still fully engaged in the undertaking of satisfying your desires for food, sex, fame and status. Under these circumstances, what makes you believe that you are justified to reject the teachings from sages? Yes, you have your human rights, but sages have the divine right that precedes human rights. With this divine right endowed by Heaven, they are entitled to teach and enlighten common people who are obliged unconditionally to accept the teachings and enlightenment. What is at stake here is the recognition of natural differences, which are not a matter of freedom and equality but acceptance of the arrangements set out by Heaven. In ancient times, common people took it for granted that they should be instructed and enlightened by sages, because they knew what and who they were and that they could absolutely not seek equality with their instructors and enlighteners. They were keenly aware that they were born to receive such teachings and enlightenment, which may elevate their lives, transform themselves from ordinary, pathetic, base people into respectable gentlemen, and bring them good. So, they were pleased to be educated and enlightened. Nowadays, however, under the influences of the liberal egalitarian values, people have developed an egoism to make excuses for rejecting the sages' teachings with a series of "freedom and equality" talk. What effect can this do to sages? It is modern people who have been most severely affected. It is the result of their own choice that they are degrading and reducing themselves to the state of natural life (Jiang, pp. 50–52).

Harsh as his words seem to be, Jiang has honestly managed to give an upright response to the relativist view. Indeed, this view is, as a matter of fact, built on an assumption that one's own lifestyle, whatever it is, is of the same moral value as those of others and even sages. This relativist view is as radical as it is abstract for gaining a firm footing in further discussion, for a bit of comparative evaluation will readily reveal its extremity. Jiang did mention one crucial difference between a sage and a common person: a saint's judgment is different from that of a common person's. Unlike the latter, the former's heart has not been seized by

selfish desires and can thus know clearly what is good and what is bad so that it may pursue goodness and purge the world of badness (Jiang, p. 190).

What is worthy of in-depth exploration is the second more complicated view: even if I admit the moral differences between sages and common people, I still need to know which moral tradition to follow because in different moral traditions different sages are established and worshipped, who voice different ideas and implement different education and enlightenment. If I am supposed to accept the teachings of those Confucian sages, it must be proved to me that the morals preached by Confucianism are more superior or right than other morals. Yet no one can prove this, so this sort of issue should be left to my own choice, and the state should not meddle in my moral education. Based on this reasoning, everyone should have the equal right of choice of morality, including the right to reject the education and enlightenment of Confucian sages. The logical strength of this view lies in the fact that it is true that no one can complete such a proof without begging the question, because no one can do such a proof by standing outside of all moral traditions. However, acknowledging this fact does not mean that we have to accept the conclusion drawn in this view. As far as I can see, Jiang may use his argument for the legitimacy or justifiability of “earthly law” (i.e., the legitimacy of history and culture) to refute this conclusion. Although his argument has been developed to justify the legitimacy of a Confucian political system, I think it is equally thought-provoking and instructive for moral education.

Among the Three Powers [i.e., Heaven, Earth, and Human], Earth refers to a specific geographical space where all humankind’s activities have originated, unfolded, developed, and continued. Human beings have never been separated from this geographical space or its history and culture. Human history is always closely associated with Earth. It is for this reason that the Chinese often refer to history and culture as *shidi* [literally “history and geography”] and Earth in the Three Powers represents the legitimacy of history and culture in a country. In the “kingly way politics”, Earth does not refer to nature, which should instead belong to the realm of “heavenly law”. The legitimacy of history and culture is special and different from that of “heavenly law” and that of “humanly law” [public opinion]. Unlike the legitimatization of “heavenly law” which involves substantial values or of “humanly law” which allows an evaluation of the public opinion, the legitimacy of history and culture is completely formal and does not involve any value judgment. The legitimacy of a regime depends on whether it has inherited the dominant, orthodox historical and cultural tradition approved over a long stretch of time by the outstanding members of the nation in question and the broad masses of the people. Analogically speaking, this is like offspring paying tributes to their ancestors in the shrine. They acknowledge that their lives originate with their ancestors but do not inquire about their ancestors’ vices or virtues, nor do they deny their blood relation to their ancestors because of the historical mistakes that the latter may have committed. So in this sense, legitimatization of history and culture is only in form, not in substance. As long as a regime inherits the orthodox historical and cultural tradition, it meets the requirements of its legitimatization [no critical retrospective of Enlightenment rationalism is needed here]. As far as China is concerned, the orthodox historical and cultural tradition is Confucianism, which has been universally acknowledged by the elite members of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people in a broad sense. History has proven and will continuously prove that a regime in China can be



legitimate, or can acquire the legitimacy of history and culture, only if it inherits the Confucian tradition. Regrettably, many Chinese, especially those influenced by Western rationalism and the spirit of the Enlightenment, seem to have failed to understand this. They can only conceive of legitimacy from the rationalist perspective, but not from the perspective of tradition, history and culture. They do not know that tradition is a constituent of legitimacy. As a result, under the influences of the modern Western ideological trend characterized by liberty and democracy, they are particularly unfamiliar with and averse to the legitimacy of history and culture. They should be “enlightened” by the historical and cultural tradition rather than the modern Enlightenment that they preach (Jiang, pp. 352–354).

When this reasoning is applied to morality, it suggests that if one lives in a society where Confucian morals are predominant, it is legitimate for one to receive considerable education concerning Confucian morals. Likewise, if one lives in a society where Christian morals are predominant, it is equally legitimate for one to receive considerable education concerning Christian morals. I think Jiang’s reasoning is tenable. First of all, one’s perception of morality and relevant actions are inevitably related to those of other people existing in one’s same historical and geographical environment. These “other people,” from a Confucian point of view, include not only your current family members, neighbors, teachers, classmates, etc., but also your ancestors. These people naturally educate or influence you with their morals and actions. It is also canonically appropriate for them to do so in order to live their lives consistent with their moral beliefs. Hence, in a society where Confucian morals are predominant, it is legitimate to enforce the education and enlightenment of Confucian sages, and it is equally legitimate for one to accept such education because it is taken for granted by the society. This legitimacy cannot be negated by the fact that one cannot prove that Confucian morals are the “best” or “most superior” over others in the world, because their establishment in the society is formal, not substantial: as a moral being, man cannot avoid receiving a moral education, the tenets of which are not necessarily those that can be proved to be the best, but those predominant in one’s region. Given the fact that China is a society where Confucian morals are predominant, it is legitimate for China to spread the teachings of Confucian sages through moral education.

Some may want to argue that, more often than not, many different moral traditions exist in one cultural and geographical environment. A person’s lifestyle may be the result of the combined effects of many different moral traditions and values. For example, it is often agreed that the Chinese lifestyle embodies the mores and values of three religions, i.e., Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Therefore, there is no reason for the state to implement only the teaching of the Confucian sages in its moral education. This is to say, that even if it is legitimate for the state to enact the teachings of sages, the teachings should not be limited to one tradition. Yet, according to Jiang, any stable country, even if it is a multi-ethnic country with multiple traditions, must unite its people under a predominant ideology and give it the footing of a kind of a “national church” by constitution (Jiang, p. 48). Even in a society with diversified values, not all values are of the same weight. There exists a set of

“predominant values”, which has acquired its predominance by winning the long-term support of the elites and the public in the country (Jiang, p. 347). As far as China is concerned, “when Confucianism gained its predominance as a result of Chinese intellectual consensus during the Han Dynasty, the Chinese had gradually realized after the test of hundreds of years that the theories of Confucianism were superior to [or, in today’s language, more advanced than] the theories of other schools and that it represented the most advanced culture of the time” (Jiang, p. 61). Despite the fact that there have been “varied beliefs or philosophies” among the common people or even the imperial family, Confucianism has always been adopted in China as the “official and canonical” system of basic principles (for state governance) and major mores (for guidance of life), despite the existence of Taoism, Buddhism, and theories originating from numerous thinkers in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (Jiang, p. 47). Therefore, even though there exist different moral traditions in Chinese society, it is not inappropriate for the state to enforce the moral teachings of the Confucian sages.

Liberals may retort that contemporary China is quite different from traditional China. It cannot be more obvious that the influences of the Confucian tradition on modern China have been significantly weakened (even Jiang himself has acknowledged the disintegration of the Confucian ritual system as well as the loss of Confucian learning and the Way in modern China). Chinese society is becoming increasingly diversified. Not only are Buddhism and Taoism, the traditional rivals of Confucianism, no less influential than Confucianism, the influence of Western religions (such as Christianity) is also increasing. In this situation, liberal scholars believe that no matter what China was in the past, today’s Chinese government should stay neutral – it ought not to take advantage of its administrative power, policies, or funds to promote or sponsor the Confucian religion and its set of morals, but to safeguard everyone’s equal rights so that individuals may freely choose the morality they will hold.

However, even though Jiang admits the thorough disintegration of the Confucian tradition in the contemporary Chinese political system, he does not deny that Confucian morals still exert their powerful influence on the Chinese way of life. In particular, he has seen clearly that the Chinese are still unwilling to accept moral individualism because the Confucian communitarian moral view is still deeply rooted in their minds: “Confucianism stresses universal but differentiated love for all the people under Heaven. Confucian individuals must practice this love in taking care of their community and cultivate themselves in interpersonal relationships, such as the relations between monarch and official, father and son, husband and wife, brothers, friends, family, clan, society, state, etc.; that is, they should not live their moral lives as isolated individuals. . . The value of the individual has to be realized in communitarian morality” (Jiang et al. 2005, *Dialogue at Longchang*, p. 206, unpublished manuscript). Therefore, the vast majority of modern Chinese still hold a non-individualist and non-instrumentalist view of the common good, which differs from the liberal view that the common good is nothing but the sum

of the values of all distinctive individuals. The Chinese still believe that a society is an organic body with intrinsic values (i.e., their common good) that cannot be completely reduced or degraded into individual values. Thus, the state must have its people pursue and realize such a common good. The virtues and values preached by Confucianism, such as benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), rites (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), integrity (*xin*), kindness (*ci*), filial piety (*xiao*), loyalty (*yi*), and harmony (*he*), respecting the old and looking after the young, valuing peace, caring for the disadvantaged, and so on, remain the common values for modern Chinese society.<sup>3</sup> Even today, the vast majority of Chinese still believe that it is the state's bounden duty to preach and promote these values and it should not maintain a neutral attitude towards them in comparison to other moral values.

Finally, the claim that common people should receive the teachings of the sages arranged by the state does not imply moral or spiritual dictatorship. Jiang has made it clear that the canonization of Confucian morals and the deprivation of common people's right to reject the teachings of the sages means that the government can require and arrange for the teaching of Confucian classics in schools, but may not muffle the different perspectives at the schools. In fact, Confucianism, marked by its tolerance in history, advocates the "kingly way" that prevails upon others by virtue and generosity, rather than the "hegemonic way" of social Darwinism that subdues others by power and might. What I have attempted to do is to use Jiang's arguments to justify the Chinese government requiring every school to offer and every individual to receive basic education in Confucian morals, while leaving enough room for each school to develop freely. That is, what can be rightly required is only the active provision of basic education in Confucian morals, rather than forced prohibition of other kinds of moral education, in the Chinese educational system. In this way, Jiang has successfully argued against the view that one has the freedom to refute the moral teachings of the Confucian sages. In other words, it is not true that the government should remain neutral regarding moral education so as to maintain moral equality between the sages and the common people in choosing the basic substance of one's moral education in China.

### 5.3 Political Equality

In contemporary politics, the principle of equality requires universal suffrage that ensures "one person, one vote": all citizens, regardless of what they are or where they reside in a state, are entitled to equal legislative representation, as long as one is an adult who has not been deprived of the political right due to criminal conviction. This principle requires that everyone have an equal right to political participation. Originally, classical liberal writers were not entirely in favor of this kind of political equality. For example, when John Stuart Mill defended a representative democratic system, he asserted that those

well-educated, wise, and knowledgeable should enjoy the privilege of casting more than one vote (Mill 1991, chapter 8). However, in the present world, elitism is silenced while the “one person one vote” egalitarianism is embraced. Some individuals have even taken this kind of egalitarianism as their life cause. Most politicians are keen on using anti-elitist speech to curry favor with the public. However, in Jiang’s opinion, a “differential voting system” should be used to replace the “one person one vote” system. He states,

As far as the voting system is concerned, the Confucian “kingly way politics” cannot accept the universal suffrage adopted by Western countries that gives everyone the right to cast a vote regardless of their virtues and vices. Because, as Confucians see it, people in real life are unequal: they are different in morality, intelligence, knowledge, ability and many other aspects... Therefore, when designing a political system, we should take into account and pay due attention to these differences, rather than apply the absolute equality of a “transcendent world” politics to this world’s politics. When it comes to an electoral system, we cannot practice “one person one vote” regardless of all the differences among them, because this equality in form may cause inequalities in effect. For instance, an 18-year-old unemployed young man cannot be compared to a 60-year-old professor, whether in intelligence, or learning, or social experience, or the sense of social responsibility. To exaggerate this difference, let’s compare an 18-year-old man with Confucius. Their differences, in Nietzsche’s words, would be greater than “those between man and ape”. If each of the two is entitled to one vote, qualified state leaders may not be elected because the former is a moron who lacks the judgment to tell who the fittest candidate is. Moreover, this may constitute the greatest unfairness for the latter by reducing his virtues, intelligence, knowledge, and social experience, as well as sense of social responsibility to the rank of the former, which is, in effect, a slight and humiliation. As Aristotle pointed out long ago, ignoring the existing factual inequalities amounts to the greatest inequality of all. Yet this is exactly what the “one person one vote” election does. Hence, a differential voting system should be adopted in place of the “one person one vote” system. That is, those who are virtuous, intelligent, knowledgeable and have rich social experience as well as a strong sense of social responsibility should be entitled to cast more votes than those who do not have these qualifications (Jiang 2004, pp. 384–385).

Some may reject Jiang’s view immediately by saying that a “differential voting system” is in fact not as reasonable as it seems to be: some people are intelligent but not knowledgeable, some receive considerable education but lack experience, some are able but not virtuous, and still others, though smart and able when young, are now stupefied and muddled in old age. So who in the world should be given the right to cast more votes? It appears that factors such as income and wealth should also be taken into consideration. For instance, should the number of votes a person is entitled to cast be in proportion to the taxes one pays? If those who do not pay any taxes have the right to vote, does this constitute encouragement for lazy and shiftless people to live on welfare? One can see that, in the opinion of these people, even though the “one person one vote” system is not the best, it is most likely the fairest and most practical system in comparison with others.

Jiang does not answer these questions directly. I think he would approach this question from the perspective of the historical and cultural traditions of a specific country. Take China as an example. Traditional Confucian intellectuals

have always shown a moral concern and a sense of historical mission for the well-being of the world. This tradition has been handed down to the current intellectuals and has won recognition and respect from the vast majority of the Chinese. In fact, the way of selecting for worthiness and talents favored by Confucianism involves exams (i.e. “imperial examinations”), not only voting. Even today, it may remain a decent way of selecting public servants (see, e.g., Bell 2006, chapter 6). To say the least, if China adopts a voting system, it should be a “differential voting system”. Of course, as for the details, more discussions are needed. However, given the Confucian tradition, Chinese people would be more likely to accept more than one vote for intellectuals rather than “one person one vote”. The former would be a more appropriate way of selecting for worthiness and talents in Chinese society.

## 5.4 Legal Equality

“Equality before the law” has been a basic principle of modern societies ruled by law. Some people understand this principle as the very principle of equality to which one should never be opposed, even if one is not in favor of any other principle of equality. For them, we have every reason to support “equality before the law” as a reasonable society. However, a real issue is what exactly this principle of equality means. People’s understanding of this principle is often ambiguous or simply misleading. The most important question is what does “equality” mean in this principle? Some analyses indicate that the word “equality” adopted in this principle may have been misused because the principle in essence does not demand “equalization”: it does not require that everyone has exactly the same legal rights or obligations, and neither does it require that everyone receive the same legal treatments (Letwin 1983, p. 46). For example, the constraints of the law on children are naturally different from those of adults, and it has become common practice in modern society to formulate special laws for ethnic minorities. Indeed, this principle may accurately be described as a “universal” norm that requires all individuals be protected and bound by law. That is, this principle implies that no one should be outside of law – it is universal; but it does not imply that everyone should be treated similarly under the law – it is not egalitarian. Specifically, this principle states that whoever one is – king, president, or civilian – one cannot be unconstrained by law or above the law. It may also be taken as stating that everyone should enjoy fair juridical procedures and that judges should not have too much unjustified discretionary power. However, it cannot be saying that everyone receives the same legal treatments.

Confucianism does not object to this general norm – everyone should be bound by the law. In the past Chinese dynasties, Confucian scholars and the literati have tried every means of restricting the power of rulers in terms of rules, rituals, institutions and laws, although they were not fully successful. Some

rulers and ministers often tried to trespass the rituals and rules of Chinese society, but Confucians never attempted to seek legal equality because it is not a Confucian ideal (moral or legal – see below for further explanation). In mentioning Confucian ideals, some may contend that traditional Confucian society only had criminal laws to punish people and had no constitutional or civil laws to protect the people. In response to this assertion, Jiang points out,

Criminal law was not the only kind of law China had in ancient times . . . China had its constitutional law too, which was called “rituals” (*li*). These rituals were China’s fundamental regulative systems, including the *mingtang* (“bright hall”) system, the throne succession system, the *taifu* (literally “prince’s teacher”) system, the “three highest-rank officials” system, the “prime minister” system, the “offering sacrifices to Heaven” system, the *chadi* (offering sacrifices to ancestors) system, the *chaopin* (“dukes or princes paying visits to the monarch to show their respect and obedience”) system, and other systems concerning the Imperial College, retirement, and resignation. All these systems revolved around the rituals and made structural and procedural arrangements for the creation and implementation of state power. Therefore. . . constitutional law does not exist only in the West; China has it, too. Most modern Chinese, being stereotyped by the US and French statutory constitutional laws, have failed to understand that unwritten law is . . . more consistent with the spirit of constitutional law. For instance, though the UK has no written constitution, the customs and conventions left over through hundreds of years are more effective than a constitution and need no altering—as is the case with the French constitution – or amending – as is the case with the US constitution. As far as constitutional law is concerned, the essential value hidden behind it counts the most. This kind of law was called *yifa* in ancient China. *Yifa*, in today’s words, is the fundamental or constitutional principles that are superior to the constitution itself, because they guide the formulation of a constitution and serve as the origin and basis of the constitution. By writing *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Confucius had in effect laid down the fundamental principles of Chinese constitutional formulations for later generations. To be more specific, Confucius established the constitutional principle of the “kingly way politics”, whose legitimacy is based on the aforementioned triple senses of the Confucian *Dao* and ensured by the checks and balances of the three powers. These constitutional principles, when embodied, become the rituals, i.e., . . . constitutional law (Jiang, pp. 423–424).

As one can see, Jiang has clearly demonstrated that there was a kind of constitutional and civil law – the ritual systems – in Chinese tradition. The principle of such laws requires that law bind everyone, including the emperor. However, this principle is not an “equalizing” demand for the same juridical and legislative treatment for everyone. That demand would run counter to the spirit of differentiation embodied in the Confucian rituals. As Jiang argues,

The spirit that underlies the rituals is differentiation. . . Confucians believe that we can establish a modern legal and political system according to this spirit. For the sake of . . . justice, we should design a system to ensure that the worthy and talented can obtain the power, money and honor they deserve. This system of “rituals” guarantees a relatively fair allocation of social resources, such as power, according to people’s virtues and abilities. To be more exact, those who are virtuous and able will be given more power, while those who are not will be given none. This is “differentiation” and a system created in accordance with this spirit is that of “rituals”. In fact, the “tricameral Confucian legislature” developed by me is consistent with the ritual system in light of such a spirit of differentiation. . . In fact, there is no system that can ensure everyone to

obtain an equal share of power (Jiang et al. 2005, *Dialogue at Longchang*, p. 217, unpublished manuscript).

His argument is clear: the Confucian spirit of differentiation embodied in the rituals runs counter to the idea of equalization by law. This point is so significant that it requires further clarification. Indeed, even liberal scholars admit that the requirement of equal treatment is directed at those in similar situations, not at those in different situations. The question then becomes, what are the pertinent factors on which we can tell whether two situations are different or similar? Liberal scholars stress that many personal features, such as age, gender, intelligence, health, wealth, social status, etc., should not be included as pertinent factors. That is, from the liberal view, differences in these personal features should not constitute a relevant difference for legal treatment. For example, the situation in which a son breaks his father's leg is similar to that in which a father breaks his son's leg. The differences between the father and the son regarding their respective age and social status should not make a difference in the terms of legal liability.

For Confucians, these classifications reflect a kind of individualism and egalitarianism that is at odds with the Confucian values of relationalism, familialism, and communitarianism. As Confucians see it, a father thrashing his son is quite different from a son thrashing his father, although both may be acting wrongly. From a Confucian perspective, the father is responsible for educating his son and though it is not right for him to thrash his son, he is excused to a certain extent. In contrast, the son who thrashes his father commits a hideous crime because he transgresses the bottom line of human morality. Hence, for Confucians, the two situations are different. The father and the son should be given different punishments. This Confucian account of differentiation should not only be conceptually analyzed, but should also be perceived and felt with the "heart" in considering human nature and relations. Traditional Chinese law, which has been heavily influenced by Confucian values, indeed represents many types of differentiation. They may not all be right, but they should not be rejected simply because they do not embody the liberal principle of equality (see, e.g., Fan 2004).

Under the influence of the Western liberal principle of equality before the law as well as the United Nation's *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990), China has followed certain Western societies in promulgating a "Law for the Protection of the Child", which stipulates that children have the same rights as adults. Jiang criticizes such emulating conduct. Indeed, for over the past 100 years, the Chinese government has formulated a series of laws in the terms of modern Western liberal and individualist values. Such laws include those of marriage and other so-called civil laws. Although these laws still maintain some Confucian ethical values (for example, the Law of Marriage still ordains that children are obliged to support their elderly parents), their keynote is that of modern Western liberalism and egalitarianism. For example, the modern



Chinese marriage law grants an absolute right of self-determination to the child, denying any right of the parents in such decisions, as was upheld in the Confucian tradition. Such laws significantly deviate from an authentic Chinese life and are morally misleading. It should be of great importance today to review these laws, rectify their faulty prescriptions, and overcome their negative influences.

Jiang has considered this issue at a deeper level. In his view, we need to think about the relation between the “rule of virtue” and the “rule of law” for contemporary society. As he sees it, the modern Western rule of law is defective in its orientation:

From the Confucian perspective, the Western idea of the rule of law regards law as the foundation of state governance. It dismisses the important role of virtue in ruling a state. What underlie the “rule of law” are the “supremacy of law” and the “primacy of rights”. These are hard to have accepted by Confucianism because it gives top priority to virtue. The fundamental idea of Confucianism is not the rule of law, but the rule of virtue. It regards universal human morality as the basis of governance, and this universal human morality is the “common way” and the “common sense” embodied in the Chinese sages’ doctrine of “fundamental principles” (*yili*). Nevertheless, Confucianism does not object to using law in governance. Rather, it holds that law should be put in a proper place, namely, playing the function of assisting virtue cultivation in ruling a society. Therefore, a Confucian way of ruling a state is virtue first, law second. In other words, Confucians think that law is only of instrumental value (Jiang, p. 260).

As Jiang sees it, if we continue to follow the Western idea of the rule of law by stressing the primacy of rights, we shall end up living clad in an “armor of rights”. That way of life is not only tiring, but is also short of encouragement for self-improvement (Jiang, p. 261). Furthermore, the central principle of Western civil law is a *Vertragsprinzip*, a principle of contract in terms of the careful calculation of personal interests. Such a principle should not apply to our religious, political, public, marital, or family life (Jiang, p. 264). I think all these criticisms stand to reason. However, the task that lies ahead of Confucian scholars in contemporary society is to expound and implement the Confucian rule of virtue with the aid of law. Certainly, one possibility, like ancient China, is to get our work done through ritual systems maintained by common people, without a series of statutory laws to be promulgated. However, the difficulty is that the Confucian ritual systems have long been disintegrated. More and more people are willing to have disputes settled by the courts, which require laws as a basis for judgment. If, as Confucians hold, law can be used to aid virtue, then the issue will not be whether we should formulate laws, but what laws to formulate. This is to say, even if Confucians are primarily in favor of the rule of virtue rather than the rule of law, it does not mean that they do not want to formulate and use laws. Rather, they must explore precisely what kind of laws China should formulate in order to cultivate virtue. Importantly, given the Confucian spirit of differentiation in virtue cultivation, as Jiang understands it, Chinese laws based on Confucian thought should not be made in terms of the modern Western principle of equalization for legal treatments.



## 5.5 Formal Vs. Substantive Equality

Thus far I have shown Jiang's sharp critiques of the modern Western views of equality, in particular, the concepts of moral equality, political equality, and legal equality implicit in modern Western views.<sup>4</sup> However, it is necessary for Jiang to improve his expression of the Confucian ideas of equality. Throughout his books and articles, he often states that Confucianism does not overstress formal equality (*xingshi pingdeng*), but seeks substantive equality (*shizhi pingdeng*). At one place, he explains from his understanding that the Confucian concept of "substantive equality" takes into consideration the particular differences among individuals to derive an actual equality that gives different individuals their due. Accordingly, he concludes, formal equality is in essence an inequality under the guise of equality, while substantive equality is an actual equality although it does not appear to be so (Jiang 2003, pp. 355–356). I think this explanation of the Confucian view of equality is incorrect. As I see it, the right way of putting it is that Confucianism does not object to the idea of formal equality, but it is opposed to the idea of substantive equality.

"Formal equality" basically means that "the same should be treated similarly, and the different should be treated differently." Confucianism does not object to this idea, because if two situations are really the same, we have no reason to treat them differently. But Confucianism does not emphasize this idea, because it recognizes as a matter of fact that there are rarely same or identical situations in human society. In order to find "same situations", one has to highlight some features and ignore others, although all of them are involved in the situations. For example, the formal equality of opportunity for jobs in contemporary society usually means that we should only consider an applicant's knowledge and talents, and should not consider their background, nationality, age, gender, etc. If the knowledge and talents of two applicants are judged to be the same, then their situations are taken to be the same, regardless of differences in their background, nationality, age, or gender. This is to say that only abstracting or excluding some relevant factors from consideration draws out such "formally equal situations". They are not really identical situations if all relevant factors are considered.

The problem is that those factors that are excluded from consideration under formal equality are the very important factors that significantly affect a person's acquisition of knowledge or talents. Indeed, a person's knowledge and talents do not come out of thin air, but are, to a great extent, attributable to one's family background and educational environment. This is why some liberal scholars have been discontent with the principle of formal equality and want to seek a principle of substantive equality. For example, contemporary liberal scholar John Rawls argues in *A Theory of Justice* that the equality of formal opportunity is not sufficiently fair; instead, he puts forth the principle of equality of *fair* opportunity requiring that a society must provide opportunities for public education to those members who are disadvantaged by their

familial or social backgrounds. This principle of so-called fair opportunity is a principle of substantive equality. It does not require the equality of formal opportunity based on the consideration of knowledge and talents, but the equality of “fair” opportunity based on the consideration of people’s familial and social backgrounds. However, depending on what factors are considered and made equal, some scholars hold squarely different views of substantive equality from that of Rawls. For example, Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize laureate in economics, has published a series of works contending that we should use capacity, rather than primary goods, such as income, wealth, and opportunity, to assess the substantive equality or inequality among people. This is because, in his opinion, two persons with the same income or opportunity are unequal in capacity and quality of life if, for example, one of them is healthy while the other is ill. Accordingly, instead of the principle of fair opportunity that Rawls argues for, Sen upholds a principle of capacity to determine substantive equality.

All these views of substantive equality are essentially different from what the Confucian tradition and Jiang’s reconstruction of Confucianism are primarily concerned with. As is well known, Confucianism does not pursue equality, but upholds filial piety (*xiao*), humanity (*ren*), and harmony (*he*). It does not advocate egalitarian love, but differentiated love (*cha deng zhi ai*). In social systems and interpersonal activities, Confucianism stresses ritual observation and urges people to practice the spirit of differentiation so that there is affection (*qin*) between parents and child, righteousness (*yi*) between ruler and subject, different function (*bie*) between husband and wife, proper order (*xu*) between senior and junior, and fidelity (*xin*) between fellow citizens. The Confucian ideal is to establish a harmonious, rather than egalitarian, society in which individuals can cultivate virtue and take care of each other. In addition, Confucianism wants the government to care for the weak and poor in society. But this care should be different from that stemming from Western egalitarianism or liberalism in the terms of substantive equality. The welfare system in a Confucian society is built out of considerations of virtue cultivation, character development, and family values, rather than out of the utopian ideal of everyone having equal rights. The objective of this system is not to eradicate the differences of the people in any special “substantive” aspect – wealth, income, fair opportunity, or capacity – because this kind of substantive equalization goes against the basic Confucian moral commitment of universal but differentiated love.

Some might say that we do not have to adopt the meaning of those Western terms: even if “substantive equality” in Western philosophy refers to equality in wealth, income, fair opportunity, or capacity, we can still use it with a different meaning. For instance, like Jiang, we may use it as an equivalent to the meaning of “equality in participating in ritual activities”, that is, the “actual equality” achieved by giving differences their due. In my opinion, there is no point to playing with such words. This usage of “substantive equality” cannot help elucidate the character of Confucian moral views, and

neither can it clarify the major differences between Confucianism and Western egalitarianism and liberalism regarding the idea of equality. In addition, there are conventional language rules for the use of the term “equality”, and breaking such rules will only lead to vagueness or ambiguity in one’s expression. This is true in both the Chinese and English languages. For example, if we state that a stone is equal (or unequal) to a rabbit, no one will understand what we are getting at. But if we say that since a rabbit can run and a stone cannot they are unequal in the capacity of movement, we can make ourselves understood. This is to say, the word “equality” is used for comparing the degrees of a quantifiable property shared in different subjects/objects – so that we may conclude that these subjects/objects are equal or unequal regarding this quantifiable property. Accordingly, in our proper language usage “equality” means “sameness in degree” rather than “sameness in kind”, and “inequality” means “difference in degree” rather than “difference in kind” (see Letwin 1983, pp. 10–11). If we take a comprehensive look at people’s activities and treatments in the Confucian hierarchy of rituals, it is hardly possible for us to abstract a quantifiable property (either income, wealth, fair opportunity, or capacity) from cardinal Confucian concerns that Confucianism would require everyone to possess “in the same degree”, because this requirement would be at odds with the Confucian ideal of a harmonious society where relatives should be loved and the worthy should be respected more than others. In Confucianism, there are also such concepts as “fairness” (*gongping*) or “justice” (*gongzheng*), but their meanings are not identified in terms of equality, as is the case in modern Western theories. So, my conclusion is, Confucianism does not object to the requirement of formal equality, but it rejects any sense of substantive equality imposed on the people by the government. I believe Jiang would support this conclusion.

## 5.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter shows that Jiang has offered thought-provoking arguments to challenge the nature of egalitarian society. In such a society everyone is equal to others in the sense that one is morally self-determining, is politically entitled to cast one vote, and is equal to others before the law. A fundamental defect of such a society, Jiang contends, is that it does not draw most of the people towards virtue and goodness. From his view, even if this society is just and fair in a certain sense,

the vast majority of the common people will not be motivated to cultivate their virtue without the incentives or stimulation offered by a good system, even if a few sages and virtuous individuals may still develop an inclination towards goodness. This is because even though humans are by nature good, they are not good in reality. As [ancient Confucian scholar] Dong Zhongshu puts it, human nature may have a potential for goodness but is not actually good yet, just as crops may yield rice but are not rice yet.

Therefore, just as we grow crops into rice through irrigation and cultivation, we must develop a good system to help people develop their potential for goodness. Hence. . . unless a good social environment and political system are constructed, individual self-improvement and perfection will be impossible (Jiang, pp. 420–421).

Indeed, Confucianism has long recognized the implausibility of egalitarianism. When the short-lived Chinese “egalitarianism” budded in the Mohist School in ancient China, Confucianism was already sophisticated enough to realize its problems. Today, under the influence of contemporary Western theories, equality has become the most legitimate principle in morality, politics, and law. However, a careful review of Jiang’s Confucian views on these issues can help us recognize the problems with these Western theories and help us devote our efforts to the real Confucian ideals, thereby bringing benefits to Chinese society and the whole world.

## Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations of Jiang’s words in this chapter are from his 2004 work.
2. See chapters by Wang Ruichang and Daniel Bell in this volume for more discussion of Jiang’s tri-cameral proposal.
3. In liberal scholars’ words, these values might be said to constitute the Chinese’s “overlapping consensus” and thus can be justifiably applied to public education. In fact, when Chinese liberal scholars stress the variety and diversification and thus resort to the principles of Western liberalism for guidance, they have, to a great extent, imposed the pluralistic features of modern Western society on China. It is true that different concepts or ideological systems exist side by side in any society and group; however, the degree of difference in Chinese society is in no way comparable with that in modern Western society. Even if Daoism, Buddhism and other religions in China hold different religious views from Confucianism, they have shared with Confucian morality in essential matters. Hence, in my opinion, it is groundless in China to resort to the liberal principles of neutrality regarding moral education.
4. Jiang’s thoughts regarding gender equality and the Confucian Three Bonds (*sangang*) are illuminating. See Wang Tangjia’s chapter in this volume for a discussion of Jiang’s thought-provoking ideas on this topic.

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# Chapter 6

## The Confucian Conception of Transcendence and Filial Piety

Qingxin K. Wang

### 6.1 Introduction

The religious dimension of Confucianism has been subject to intense controversy ever since Ricci Matteo, a Jesuit missionary, visited China in the late 16th and early 17th centuries: the late Ming period of China. The radical Chinese intellectuals existing after the May Fourth Movement of 1919 have denied altogether that Confucianism has a religious dimension. In the past several decades, many new Confucian scholars outside of mainland China have done admirable work in an attempt to restore the religious dimension of Confucianism. Drawing heavily on the Lu Xiangshan-Wang Yangming school of neo-Confucianism, which emphasizes the power of the subjective mind and the denial of the objective existence of the transcendent world, these scholars share the view that the Confucian religion does not make a strong distinction between transcendence and immanence. They characterize the religious concerns of Confucianism, such as cosmological orientation, communitarian ethics, and modes of individual self-cultivation for becoming a sage, as this-worldly (Tu 1985, 1989; Liu 1972; Ames and Hall 1987). In fact, they do not claim that Confucianism is a religion. Rather, they suggest that Confucianism manifests a “religious worldview” that is characterized by its cosmological orientation for harmonizing the triad among Heaven, Earth and man. The fact that they refrain from using the word “religion” to characterize Confucianism is closely associated with their understanding of a religion modeled on those religions of Western origin (such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), which are characterized by “theism, personal salvation, and natural/supernatural dichotomies” (Tucker 2004, pp. 2–3). In other words, because there is a lack of natural/supernatural dichotomies and a strong distinction between transcendence and immanence, Confucianism does not concern itself with theism and personal salvation.

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While the recent scholarship on Confucian spirituality has made an important advance, it still faces important limitations in addressing the religious worldview of Confucianism because these scholars have restricted themselves to the writings of Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming, consequently neglecting the classical Confucian texts and the neo-Confucianism of the Cheng Yi-Zhuxi School, which had been the dominant orthodox state ideology for nearly 800 years until 1911.

Jiang Qing's scholarship is important because he has gone beyond the work of the Lu-Wang school and its contemporary followers in his restoration of Confucianism by reviving the tradition of Political Confucianism developed by Xun Zi and by highlighting the parallel relationship between the Lu-Wang school and Xun Zi's Political Confucianism. More specifically, Jiang's work directs us to the writings of Xun Zi as a means for rediscovering Chinese rationalism, which is necessary for constructing contemporary Chinese institutions. In light of the juxtaposition of the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions, which exerted significant influence on the development of Western civilization, Jiang proposes Confucianism be re-classified into two different strands: Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism. According to him, Mind Confucianism emphasizes the cultivation of personal virtues. It does not reject the teachings of ancient Confucian classics or the teachings of the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism, but focuses on the Lu-Wang school of neo-Confucianism, which stresses the power of the subjective and free human mind. Political Confucianism refers to those classical writings that stress the art of political governance based on Confucian institutions and rules pioneered by Xun Zi. Furthermore, Jiang argues that the relationship between Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism is parallel to the relationship between the Greek rationalist tradition and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. This is because Political Confucianism was developed on the basis of a rationalism similar to the Greek rationalist tradition, which paved the way for the European Enlightenment, and Mind Confucianism was founded on a metaphysics similar to that of the Judeo-Christian tradition. With this reclassification, Jiang's work has established an important foundation for the future study of Confucianism by making it comparable to Western civilization and by highlighting the importance of re-examining the religious dimension of Confucianism as it compares to the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Drawing on a variety of classical Confucian texts, I argue in this chapter that Confucianism is as much a religion as the major religions of Western origins are, because Confucianism shares the same kinds of ultimate concerns despite some important differences. Specifically, my arguments are as follows. First, contrary to the mainstream literature, there is in fact a dichotomy between the natural and supernatural worlds with a strong distinction between transcendence and immanence in Confucianism. Filial piety and ancestral worship are expressions of the Confucian religion in the existence of the transcendent world. Through acts of filial piety and ancestral worship, the transcendent world is affirmed. The *qi* (spirits), ancestral deities (*gui shen*), and family bloodline are the



connection between the transcendent realm and the immanent realm. The difference between Confucianism and Western religions is that Confucianism believes in a kind of polytheism, with Heaven, Earth, ancestral deities, sagely deities, and other kinds of deities co-existing in the transcendent world (or the numinous world) and exercising power and influence on the human realm, while major Western religions believe in monotheism. Second, there are strong ultimate concerns in Confucianism about the eternity of human lives, specifically; Confucianism is primarily concerned with the eternity of clan or family bloodlines rather than individual lives. Alternatively, Western religions are mainly concerned with the eternity of individual human lives. To put it differently, Confucianism is concerned with the salvation of the family bloodline, rather than individual lives, which are the domain of Western religions.

Lastly, like Christianity and other Western religions, Confucianism is also concerned with the realization of the ideal person and the ideal world. However, there is an important difference between Confucianism and Western religions. While Western religions hold that the ideal person and the ideal world do not exist in the human realm, Confucianism finds that the realization of the ideal person and the ideal world is possible in the human realm (or this world), rather than in the other world (or the numinous world). For Confucianism, the Confucian religious faith expressed in the form of filial piety serves as the ontological foundation for the cultivation of virtue and self-transformation. Self-cultivation is the foundation of transforming society into a harmonious ideal world on Earth, similar to the Christian notion of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Through the cultivation of virtues and steadfast adherence to the system of rites, family affairs will be properly managed, political affairs will be justly governed and eventually the world will be pacified so that there will be eternal harmony among Heaven, Earth, and man. Ultimately, for Confucians, filial piety is the ontological foundation for transforming this world into the world of eternal harmony or the creation of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

## 6.2 The Confucian Conception of Heaven (*tian*)

An all-encompassing supreme authority of the entire cosmic world of spirits was first conceived of during the Shang dynasty, the second ancient dynasty in recorded history (around 1766–1122 B.C.), in Central China. This personalized supremely transcendent power came to be known as *Di* or *Shang Di* (the high god). While some archaeologists have argued that the high god originally referred to a powerful ancestral god of the Shang royal clan, providing a major source of legitimacy to justify the Shang kings' political power, the majority of archaeologists agree that the high god referred to an all-encompassing transcendent deity, which ruled over the entire universe. This high god not only ruled over the entire kingdom of spirits (ancestral spirits and natural spirits included), but also gave birth to the Shang and Zhou people.

Moreover, the high god also provided a foundation for the kings of the Shang people to claim their legitimate authority to rule over the Shang people. In other words, the high god provided the moral basis for the universal king to claim his political authority in the human world (Schwartz 1985, pp. 30–31). In the words of David Keightley, the high god has dominion “over rain, wind and other atmospheric phenomena, harvests, the fate of urban settlements, warfare, sickness and the king’s person. He may share some of his functions with other spirits, but his ultimate sovereignty is indisputable” (Keightley 1985, p. 33).

The name of this transcendent authority was changed to *tian* (Heaven) by the founders of the Zhou dynasty, the dynasty succeeding the Shang dynasty, but the essential nature and all-encompassing power over the universe remained largely unchanged until the end of the last Chinese dynasty in 1911. From the Zhou dynasty onwards, Heaven’s transcendent power again provided political legitimacy for the universal kings in the human world and justified their exercise of political power, which was captured by a more elaborate doctrine known as “the Mandate of Heaven” (*Tian Ming*).

The appropriate conception of Heaven has become very controversial in the modern era in light of its many different interpretations after the revolution of 1911. Influenced by the Western Enlightenment ideas of science and democracy, many have criticized the Confucian belief in supernatural powers, attributing them to China’s backwardness, and have begun to advocate the view that the Confucian notion of Heaven refers to the “impersonal” physical order of nature. Only a small group of scholars has maintained the Confucian notion of Heaven that connotes a moral consciousness of the cosmic order or a personal god. Jiang’s view is a good representative of this latter type. This chapter follows Jiang’s view in holding that the Confucian conception of Heaven refers to a transcendent power. This is because, as Schwartz aptly reminds us, the new understanding of a Confucian conception of Heaven after 1911 has been heavily influenced by a radical antagonism between a human world centered on the human subject as the sole source of meaning and an indifferent “valueless” or even hostile universe in the post-Cartesian West. In fact, in the Chinese tradition, there is no such sharp distinction between the human world and the valueless universe. The problem applies to the contemporary understanding of the Confucian conception of Heaven (*tian*). In contrast to the post-Cartesian West, the Confucian tradition has never established such a “rigid antithesis between Heaven as ‘order of nature’ and Heaven as cosmic consciousness”. As Schwartz argues, the Confucian conception of Heaven is very similar to the Judeo-Christian conception of God, even though Heaven does not speak as God does in the Judeo-Christian conception (Schwartz 1985, pp. 120, 126).

We can find much evidence in the classic Confucian texts to support the Classical Confucian view that Heaven is a transcendent power. As Confucians believe, Heaven is the ultimate creator of the cosmos and all things, including human lives. Moreover, Heaven has a moral consciousness because it provides material abundance to sustain the lives of its creations. The benevolent virtue of

Heaven lays the foundation for all human virtues. As the *Book of Odes* says, “Heaven produces the teeming masses, and where there is a thing there is a norm.” *The Book of Change* praises Heaven’s biggest virtue as its benevolence toward living things.

Furthermore, Heaven creates humans with the innate moral potential of fulfilling Heaven’s moral purpose, which is known as *Tian Ming* in Chinese (or the Mandate of Heaven), as well as moral rules to govern their relations on the basis of the benevolent virtues (*ren*) and justice (*yi*). This is evident in the introduction to *The Book of Change*. In other words, Heaven is immanent in humans, that is, Heaven’s spirits live in the human heart so that humans acquire the potentiality of Heaven’s benevolence. This is similar to the Christian conception of the immanence of God. The introduction to the Confucian classic *Zhong Yong* reads, “What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called the Way. Cultivating the Way is called education” (Chan 1963). Thus, Mencius firmly believed that human nature was innately good because humans are created by Heaven and are governed by Heaven’s moral rules. As Mencius said, humans are born innately with four different kinds of moral potentials: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. In Mencius’s own words,

the heart of compassion is possessed by all men alike; likewise the heart of shame, the heart of respect and the heart of right and wrong. The heart of compassion pertains to benevolence, the heart of shame to dutifulness, the heart of respect to the observance of the rites, and the heart of right and wrong to wisdom. Benevolence, dutifulness, observance of the rites and wisdom do not give me a luster from the outside; they are in me originally (Lau 1970, p. 125).

Moreover, Mencius said, “for a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. The retention of his heart and the nurturing of his nature are the means by which he serves Heaven” (Lau 1970, p. 145).

Lastly, like God in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Heaven is capable of enforcing his moral order. Heaven can punish those who do not comply with heavenly laws. As Confucius says in the *Analects*: “when you have offended against Heaven, there is nowhere you can turn to in your prayers” (Lau 1979, p. 69). Likewise, Mencius also says that Heaven can reward compliance with Heavenly rules and punish the violator of these rules: “those who are obedient to Heaven are preserved, those who go against Heaven are annihilated” (Lau 1970, p. 79).

Specifically, Confucius’ faith was based on the existence of the golden age of the three ancient dynasties, whereas Mencius’ faith was founded on his belief in the goodness of human nature (Ivanhoe 2004, 2007, pp. 211–220; Tucker 2004). In any case, Confucius and Mencius, as well as numerous other classical Confucians, had strong faith in the existence of Heaven as a transcendent power with a good will to maintain the moral order of the world.

### 6.3 The Confucian Conception of Deities

Unlike Christianity, which believes in three worlds: heaven, the earthly world, and hell, Confucians believe in the existence of only two worlds: the earthly world (*yang jian*) and the other world (*ying jian*), or the numinous world. While Western religions conceive of the earthly world as transient and consequently attach great importance to personal salvation in order to achieve the eternal happiness of the personal soul in the Kingdom of Heaven, Confucianism believes that the numinous world may be eternal but also may not be all bright. Instead, Confucianism conceives of the earthly world as the most amazing and beautiful world created by the mysterious and benevolent power of Heaven and believes in the possibility of attaining the greatest happiness in the earthly world through the cultivation of virtue and self-transformation. Thus, Herbert Fingarette made an important point when he observed that Confucianism views the secular world as the sacred world (Fingarette 1972).

Moreover, unlike the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Confucian tradition conceives of the numinous world of polytheism. While Heaven is the ultimate creator of all things and exercises the ultimate power in the human realm, there are different kinds of deities that can also exercise certain power and influence the human realm. Thus, they are to be respected and worshipped. There is a wide range of deities, including those of rivers, mountains, ancestors, and the Confucian sages who made an exceptional contribution to the Confucian scholarship during their lifetime and whose names were enshrined in the Confucian temples. I will focus on the conception of ancestral deities below because it is the most popular and has continued to persist in the religious practices of most parts of contemporary rural China.

Confucians conceive of every human being as a spiritual being living inside the human body. When the human body is dead, the spiritual being will leave the body and continue to live in a transcendent world for eternity and will continue to exercise an important but mysterious power over his or her descendants in the human realm. For example, the Confucian classic, *The Book of Rites* (Chapter 24), reads,

Confucius said, the *qi* is the manifest spirit of divine beings (*shen*); the *po* is the manifest spirit of ghosts (*gui*). To worship them together is the top priority in educating the ordinary people. . . Everyone will have to die and return to the earth eventually. The human remains are called ghosts (*gui*) and will degenerate and become a part of the earth. The divine spirits (*qi*) will leave the human body and rise up to the heaven. When the people feel the presence of the divine spirits, they will be sad and sorrowful. The spirits (*qi*) are the essence of the myriad things and the manifest power of divinity. Because of the essential power of the divine spirits, they are treated with high honor. They are referred to as spiritual deities (*gui shen*) to be respected and worshipped by the ordinary people. Numerous high officials are in awe of them, and the hundreds and thousands of the ordinary people submit to them (Chapter 24, my translation).

Likewise, the classic, *Zhongyong*, states,

Confucius said how abundant the display of power of spiritual beings is! We look for them but do not see them. We listen to them but do not hear them. They form the substance of all things and nothing can be without them. They cause all people in the world to fast and purify themselves and to put on the richest dresses to perform sacrifices to them. Like the spread of overflowing water they seem to be above and to the left and to the right. *The Book of Odes* says, “the coming of spiritual beings cannot be surmised. How much less can we get tired of them?” Such is the manifestation of the subtle. Such is the impossibility of hiding the real” (Chan 1963, p. 102).

## 6.4 The Connection Between Ancestral Deities and Family Blood Lines

From the Confucian perspective, life exists not just in the form of individual human beings, but in the form of a biological familial bloodline with all members of the clan family integrated as a biological entity traceable to ancestral gods. The physical bodies and lives of descendants are seen as the biological extension of the lives of parents and ancestral gods. The moment humans are given birth by their parents, they become integrated parts of the family bloodline. This mysterious biological reality will never change. Thus, protecting one’s physical body and life is like protecting the physical bodies and lives of parents and ancestors. *The Book of Rites* reads, “Master Zeng said, our physical bodies are an integral part of our parents’ physical bodies. When we act through our parents’ physical bodies, how can we not respect the bodies?” (chapter 24). Likewise, as recorded in the *Analects* (Book Eight), Confucius’ disciple Zengzi, the author of the *Book of Filial Piety*, showed his students that he protected his body so well that he dared not harm a dint of his body while he was dying. Zhu Xi, the neo-Confucian sage of the Song period, interprets Zengzi as believing his body was given to him by his parents and, consequently, that any harm to his body would constitute an insult to his parents.

The Confucian religious belief that parents and children are integrated parts of one biological entity is also evident in the two famous but controversial stories recorded in the *Analects* (Book 13, chapter 3) and the *Mencius* (Book 7, Part I) respectively. In the story from the *Analects*, when the Duke of She brags that in his country “there was a man called upright Kung. His father stole a sheep and Kung bore witness against him.” Confucius replies: “In my country the upright are different from this. A father will protect his son and a son will protect his father” (Waley 1938, p. 96). In the story in the *Mencius*, an official asked Mencius what Shun, the exemplar sage king of antiquity, should do to his father, if his father was accused of committing some murderous crime. Mencius replies, “Shun would look upon casting aside the empire as no more than discarding a worn shoe. He would have secretly carried the old man on his back and fled to the edge of the Sea and lived there happily, never giving a thought to the Empire” (Lau 1970, p. 153). Commenting on the story in the *Analects*, Benjamin Schwartz rightly suggests that “it is not that he approves of

stealing. It is that the sacred familial ties are so overriding in importance that even in a case as painful as this they must be preserved” (Schwartz 1985, pp. 102–103). But Schwartz only focuses on the ethical importance of this choice and does not recognize the religious meaning of this story.

Due to lack of attention to the religious implications of these passages, these controversial stories have been subject to various misinterpretations. Some even suggest that such typical Confucian conduct constitutes a consanguinism that imparts a very corrupted practice of family-oriented favoritism (Liu 2007). In fact, Confucian familial favoritism is religious-faith-related and virtue-oriented (Fan 2008).

The Confucian conception of all clan members as integral parts of the biological whole is similar to the Biblical conception of all Christians in the New Testament as being integral parts of one single unit. For example, the First Book of Corinthians reads,

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. . . . But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (I Cor 12:12–14, 24–27).

This is to say, there are significant similarities between Confucianism and Christianity in this regard.

## 6.5 The Meaning of Ancestral Worship and Religious Rites

Worshipping ancestors is a very important part of the religious lives of the traditional Chinese. While Heaven is the ultimate creator of our physical lives, ancestors and parents are the direct creators of our lives and the transmitters of the family bloodline. In other words, together with Heaven and Earth, ancestors and parents have participated in the creation of lives and the transformation of the world by giving birth to our lives. Thus, Confucians emphasize that they are worthy of respect and honor.

Confucians believe that worshipping rituals are an essential process of communicating with ancestral deities and receiving their blessings. When worshippers come to the ancestral temples to perform proper rituals and to think about their deceased ancestors in their hearts and minds, the ancestral deities will appear in the temples and hear the prayers of the worshippers. Confucians faithfully believe that it is important for the descendants to observe the proper religious rituals because ancestral deities continue to exert power and influence over their descendants after they depart from the human world. As Benjamin

Schwartz writes, “ancestors can confer benefits or inflict woe on descendants who do not abide by their rituals. They in turn are much dependent for their sustenance and welfare on the proper ritual behavior of the lineages to which they belong” (Schwartz 1985, p. 22).

Moreover, worshipping ancestor deities makes us remember where we come from and the great debts we owe to our ancestors, thus appreciating the precious gift of life that we receive from them. Lastly, worshipping ancestors also reminds us to pay back the debts we owe to our ancestors and to avoid humiliating our ancestors by cultivating the virtues and seeking harmony within social relationships and the world.

Chapter 24 of *The Book of Rites* states it clearly,

All the rites under Heaven include the rites to worship the original creator of the universe, the rites to worship spiritual deities, the rites to maintain social harmony, the rites to achieve righteousness and the rites to maintain humility. Worshipping the original creator enhances the foundation of our understanding of the world, worshipping spiritual deities makes us respect their power, performing the social rites makes the people discipline themselves, performing the righteous rites helps reduce the conflicts between the superior and the subordinates, performing the rites of humility reduces social competition and conflicts. All together, these are the five kinds of rites to govern all under Heaven. . . .

. . . The ancient sages thought this was not enough and thus established temples for worshipping these deities. They built different kinds of ancestral temples to distinguish ancient ancestral deities from more recent ancestral deities. The main reason for doing this was to teach the people to worship their ancestral deities and deceased parents in order for them not to forget where they came from.

Benevolent men always worship and remember their ancestors and parents because they do not want to forget where they came from. Therefore, they pay respect to their ancestors and express love to their deceased parents. They do their best to perform the religious rituals and pay back the debts they owe to their ancestors and do their best to worship them [my own translation].

Likewise, chapter 9 of *The Book of Rites* reads as follows:

Thus it is that the dark-coloured liquor is in the apartment (where the representative of the dead is entertained); that the vessel of must is near its (entrance) door; that the reddish liquor is in the hall; and the clear, in the (court) below. The victims (also) are displayed, and the tripods and stands are prepared. The lutes and citherns are put in their places, with the flutes, sonorous stones, bells, and drums. The prayers (of the principal in the sacrifice to the spirits) and the benedictions (of the representatives of the departed) are carefully framed. The object of all the ceremonies is to bring down the spirits from above, even their ancestors; serving (also) to rectify the relations between ruler and ministers; to maintain the generous feeling between father and son, and the harmony between elder and younger brother; to adjust the relations between high and low; and to give their proper places to husband and wife. The whole may be said to secure the blessing of Heaven (Legge 1967, pp. 370–371).

. . . They proceed to their invocations, using in each the appropriate terms. The dark-coloured liquor is employed in (every) sacrifice. The blood with the hair and feathers (of the victim) is presented. The flesh, uncooked, is set forth on the stands. The bones with the flesh on them are sodden; and rush mats and coarse cloth are placed underneath and over the vases and cups. The robes of dyed silk are put on. The must and clarified liquor are presented. The flesh, roasted and grilled, is brought forward. The ruler and



his wife take alternate parts in presenting these offerings, all being done to please the souls of the departed, and constituting a union (of the living) with the disembodied and unseen (Legge 1967, p. 371).

Thus, this Confucian understanding of the significant meaning of ancestor worship and sacrificial rites explains the continued presence of widespread ancestral temples and clan associations in rural China and in overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. It also explains the long and important tradition of recording the names of members of the family bloodline in the Records of the Clan family (*zu pu*) maintained by the Chinese people.

## 6.6 The Meaning of Filial Piety

Filial piety is the most important and concrete expression of the Confucian religious faith. It provides the transcendent connection between the Heavenly realm and the human realm. To be filial is to remember where we are from and to seek to pay back the debts we owe to our ancestors and parents for the precious gift of life we have been given by properly conducting religious ceremonies in their honor.

From the Confucian classic, *The Book of Filial Piety*, we read,

Confucius said, humans are the most valuable creation in the world. Filial piety is the most honorable human act. There is nothing more important than honoring the father among all the acts of filial piety. There is nothing more honorable than worshipping him on a par with Heaven after his death (Chapter 9, my own translation).

From another Chapter of the same classic, we find,

When worshipping rituals are conducted in ancestral temples, the ancestral gods will come to the temples. The consummate acts of filial piety lead to a spiritual connection between humans and their ancestral gods, allowing the glorification of ancestors in the four seas and the cultivation of all human virtues (Chapter 16, my own translation).

Furthermore, to be filial is to respect and honor the moral wishes of all our creators, Heaven, ancestors, and parents. To put it differently, to be filial is not just to love and honor our ancestors and parents; it is to avoid humiliating their names, to glorify them by showing love and compassion to other people, to cultivate our virtues and to carry out our social obligations. Thus, it has been an important Confucian tradition to emphasize that a benevolent man (*junzi*) will seek the three so-called social accomplishments: contributing to the betterment of the society and the world, striving for perfect virtues, and establishing academic scholarship (*li gong, li de, li yan*). These accomplishments are important for proving he is worthy of being a descendant of the family bloodline (*rong zong yao zu*). This also explains why the Chinese consider “saving face” as



particularly important because the “face” of a Chinese individual not only represents the self-esteem of that individual, but also the honor of his family, his clan family, and his ancestors as well.

As *The Book of Zhongyong* (Chapter 19) states,

Confucius said, King Wu and Duke Chou were indeed eminently filial. Men of filial piety are those who skillfully carry out the wishes of their forefathers and skillfully carry forward their undertakings. . .to revere those whom they honored, to love those who were dear to them, to serve the dead as if they were served while alive, and to serve the departed as they were served while still with us: This is the height of filial piety (Chan 1963, pp. 103–103).

Furthermore, Confucius says in *The Book of Filial Piety* (Chapter 1),

Our physical bodies, hairs and skins are all gifts from our parents and cannot be shamed. This is the starting point of filial piety. Establishing oneself and practicing virtues in accordance with the Way and making one’s name remembered by the people of future generations in order to glorify the names of one’s parents, this is the consummation of filial piety [my own translation].

Similarly, chapter 16 of *The Book of Filial Piety* reads, “Worshipping rituals are needed in ancestral temples to show respect and love for the deceased parents and ancestors so that they will not be forgotten. Cultivating virtues and behaving cautiously are necessary so that ancestors will not be humiliated” [my own translation]. Likewise, we can find similar thought throughout Confucian classics, including *The Book of Rites*. Generally, Confucians hold that there are three necessary acts of filial piety. The first is to honor one’s parents, the second is not to humiliate their reputation, and the third is to take good care of them. For most Confucians, since our parents give birth to us, we can only be considered filial when we take good care of our physical bodies. Only when we do not harm our bodies and do not disgrace our names can we be considered completely filial.

Thus, filial piety motivates people to cultivate virtues through learning and to seek the self-realization of moral virtues. The role of filial piety is very similar to the love of Christians for Jesus Christ. Once Christian believers develop their faith in Jesus, their savior, their intense love for Jesus may be transformed into a love and caring for other people because they believe they owe so much to God and Jesus that their loving other people is one way of paying back their debts of gratitude to God and Jesus. Thus, the way filial piety inspires and motivates people to self-cultivate the virtues is very similar to the way Jesus inspires and motivates Christian believers to pay back their indebtedness to God by promoting their souls and cultivating the virtues. For example, in the New Testament in the Book of Matthew (18:21–35), Jesus used the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant to describe that every man owes to God. Likewise, St. Paul wrote in the first book of Corinthians that all Christians should do everything to glorify God.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, to be filial does not mean just taking good care of one's parents and paying due respect and tribute to one's ancestors and glorifying them. To be filial also means that every male has the obligation preordained by his ancestral gods to ensure that the family bloodline continues to survive and thrive in the earthly world. In practice, this means that he has the obligation of fathering male descendants and ensuring the healthy growth of his descendants so that the family's biological bloodline can continue to prosper and live eternally. Unlike the Western religions that regard individual human beings as totally independent in the earthly world and attach great importance to personal salvation for the eternal happiness of the souls in the Kingdom of Heaven, Confucianism conceives of the earthly world as the sacred world and thus is not concerned with the salvation of personal souls in the numinous world. Instead, Confucianism attaches great importance to the thriving of the family bloodline in the earthly world. While each individual human being is very precious as an integral part of the clan family's biological bloodline, the Heavenly rule dictates that it is impossible for each individual being to survive and live eternally in this earthly sacred world. Nonetheless, it is possible for the family bloodline to survive and live in the earthly world eternally so long as each generation of male descendants carries out their utmost filial obligations and fathers a new generation of male descendants. That is why Mencius said, "there are three ways of being an unfilial son: the most serious is to have no heir" (Lau 1970, p. 86). This is the Confucian conception of salvation if there is one. However, this Confucian conception of salvation takes the form of the eternal survival of the family bloodline in the earthly world, rather than the salvation of the individual souls in the numinous world.

## **6.7 The Relation Between Filial Piety and Cultivating Benevolent Virtue (*ren*)**

From the Confucian perspective, filial piety not only connects life in this earthly world to life in the other (numinous) world, it also serves as the foundation of all human virtues in this earthly world. This is because filial piety is the most original and natural love of one human being toward another and it serves as an example for setting the standard of human beings loving people outside of the family circle. Because humans are endowed with the Heavenly innate potential to love all humans, it is possible for a human being to learn to extend his love of family members to others outside of the family. By loving one's parents and ancestors and by paying back the debts owed to

them, one learns to love others outside of one's family. Ultimately, filial piety serves as the ontological foundation for self-transformation and the creation of the ideal ethical socio-political order in this earthly world.

In particular, [chapter 9](#) of *The Book of Filial Piety* points out,

Children's love toward their parents is naturally nurtured because parents take close care of their children. Such love intensifies as children grow into adults and take care of their parents. The sages teach people to respect authority because children naturally respect the parental authority. The sages teach people to love other people because children naturally love their parents. The teachings of the sages are accepted by the people without stringent enforcement. The political authority of the sage kings can be respected by the people without stringent enforcement. The reason is because the sages go back to the roots of love and respect for authority to establish their teachings [my own translation].

Similarly, Mencius said, "there are no young children who do not naturally love their parents or will not respect their elder brothers when they grow up. Loving one's parents is benevolence; respecting their elder brothers is righteousness. What is left to be done is to simply extend these to the whole empire" (Lau 1970, p. 148). Finally, Confucius states in *The Book of Rites* (Chapter 24), "to teach everyone to love starts with loving one's own parents, so that people will live in harmony" [my own translation].

This is why all Confucians of different eras have treated filial piety as the foundation of all other human virtues and have also closely associated filial piety with the ability to govern a country. As Confucians see it, a king who is a genuinely filial son will know how to pay back his debts of gratitude toward his parents by showing great compassion to his subjects and carrying out the heavy obligations of governing the country. This point is clearly shown in chapter 20 of *The Book of Zhongyong*:

The ceremonies of sacrifices to Heaven and Earth are meant for the service of the Lord on High [i.e., High God], and the ceremonies performed in the ancestral temple are meant for the services of ancestors. If one understood the ceremonies of the sacrifice to ancestors it would be as easy to govern a kingdom as it is to look at one's palm (Chan 1963, pp. 103–104).

For Confucians, all roots of the family bloodline can ultimately be traced to Heaven (*tian*), the ultimate creator of the universe. When one extends the act of filial piety to the extreme, all men in the world become brothers because every human being ultimately comes from Heaven, although through different and various family bloodlines. That is why it is said that "all men within the four seas are brothers" in the *Analects* (see Lau 1979, p. 113). Accordingly, Heaven or the High God underlies the Confucian family-based religious and moral commitments of which filial piety is the cardinal idea. Unless one is a filial child, one cannot become a benevolent person toward others.

## 6.8 Conclusion

A rough outline of the Confucian conception of transcendence will be sketched below. There are two worlds, the earthly world consisting of living human beings and the myriad of things, and the other (numinous) world consisting of transcendent spiritual beings including Heaven and the ancestral deities. Heaven is the ultimate creator and regulator of both worlds. The whole of every biological family bloodline consists of two integrated parts: one part living in this earthly world, which includes all visible phenomena, and the other part consisting of the ancestral deities submerged in the other world, which is the invisible noumena that exist eternally. All members of a clan family, whether they are in the earthly world or the numinous world, are connected through the bloodline. The life of a family bloodline is eternal, so long as each generation of male descendants fathers a new generation of male descendants. Thus, the Confucian notion of salvation takes the form of the continuity of the family bloodline in the earthly world, as opposed to the salvation of personal souls in the numinous world as is conceived by Western religions. The clan family bloodline and filial piety are expressions of the Confucian religious faith and they constitute the ontological foundation of this unique Confucian religion.

For Confucians, it is possible to create the kingdom of greatest happiness, or the Christian Kingdom of Heaven, in this earthly world rather than in the other world. There are at least two reasons for this positive faith. First, there is an abundance of love and family happiness around countless lives in this world. This is what the Chinese call *tian lun zhi le* (the heavenly happiness). Second, self-transformation through the cultivation of virtue and the creation of an ideal ethical socio-political order in this world is possible due to the heavenly-endowed innately good human nature in everybody. Heaven creates the universe and humans for a moral purpose, that is, to transform the world into a perfect world whereby all men are transformed into benevolent men. This is like the Christian idea of establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth. Humans participate in transforming the world and creating the kingdom of heaven by cultivating the virtues founded on filial piety. But cultivating virtues is just a first step in the creation of the kingdom of heaven. Creating the kingdom of heaven also involves managing family affairs properly, governing political affairs properly, and eventually pacifying the world. This is the Confucian conception of the moral purpose of Heaven in creating the universe and humans, in which men participate in the transformation of the world to fulfill the moral will of Heaven.

The essence of this ideal is a world of great harmony or the unity among Heaven, Earth, and Man. This continues to be the aspiration of contemporary Confucians all over the world, not only in China. This ideal is summarized in *The Book of Rites* as follows:

When the grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes. They accumulated articles of value, disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. They labored with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it only with a view to their own advantage. In this way selfish schemings were repressed and found no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors did not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remained open, and were not shut. This was (the period of) what we call the Grand Union (Legge 1967, pp. 364–365).

In summary, Confucianism as a religion has been denied or misunderstood by many modern Chinese and overseas intellectuals, including neo-Confucian scholars. Following Jiang Qing's thought, I have argued in this Chapter that we cannot understand the nature of authentic Confucianism without recognizing its transcendent dimension. Drawing on a variety of classical Confucian texts, I have shown that Confucianism is as much a religion as are the major religions of Western origin. It shares similar kinds of ultimate concerns that are characteristic of Western religions, although it also has certain unique features. Importantly, the Confucian religious conception of transcendence and the connection between the secular world and the religious world presents a moderate alternative to the Post-Cartesian modern Western antithesis between the secular and religious worlds. It avoids the radical swing between the two extremes, which has characterized contemporary Western society: the extreme of a secular hedonism or nihilism on the one hand and the extreme of religious fundamentalism on the other. The Confucian religion as well as its emphasis on filial piety can present itself as a moderating force in the contemporary world of clashing civilizations.

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# Chapter 7

## Towards a Proper Relation Between Men and Women: Beyond Masculinism and Feminism

Tangjia Wang

### 7.1 Introduction

As an early 20th-century Confucian scholar has commented, “the womanhood in a nation is the flower of the civilization, of the state of civilization in that nation” (Ku 1922, p. 74). The status and treatment enjoyed by women in a civilization are associated not only with its forms of production, ways of life, political and economic affairs, and family structure, but also with the concept of self-consciousness that has been taken for granted in that civilization. Based on a particular concept of feminine nature, a civilization’s feminine ideals provide orientation and guidance for how women should be treated by men and women’s role towards men. Confucianism, as a long-standing institution, holds a specific understanding of feminine nature quite different from that of modern Western feminism. Many people seem to think that the important distinction between Confucianism and feminism regarding women lies within Confucianism’s emphasis on the differences between women and men, whereas feminism stresses the sameness of women and men. Accordingly, on the surface, these two conceptions of femininity represent two extremes. The Confucian perspective regards the differences between men and women as justified by its metaphysical account and is understood as normative in traditional Chinese hierarchical society. The feminist perspective, on the other hand, is rooted in a liberal conception of equality between women and men, which has become popular in modern Western society. This contrast gives rise to a few relevant questions that should be taken seriously. Is the Confucian view a form of masculinism that holds men superior to women? What is the authentic Confucian understanding of women and its corresponding understanding of the proper relationship between man and woman? What can Confucianism learn from modern Western feminism? And what can feminism learn from the

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cardinal spirit of Confucianism? Can we successfully overcome the one-sidedness of both masculinism and feminism?

In this chapter I shall use the scholarship of Jiang Qing to argue that the true Confucian view of woman is a form of neither masculinism nor modern feminism. Instead, as Jiang argues, Confucians see both similarities and differences between male and female: they are similar because they are both the most honorable beings under Heaven, and they are different due to the manifestations of their numerous distinct biological, psychological, social, and metaphysical features. In other words, the complete picture of woman and man provided by Confucianism shows a similarity in their differences as well as differences in their similarity. Failing to acknowledge either of them results in an improper one-sidedness. Regardless of whether one is confined to the extreme of masculinism or feminism, it will inevitably be harmful to both men and women. Confucians have recognized a basic truth: gender is the product of natural differentiations, and gender differences are inherent in natural selection. If the differences between male and female were to disappear, it would mark the end of the human world. In Confucian metaphysics, *yin* and *yang* constitute the basic elements of the universe and they must cooperate and be combined in order to make up an orderly world. Hence, man (as dominantly yang) and woman (as dominantly yin) must be united to complement each other in order to realize human reproduction, prosperity, and happiness (see Fan 2010, pp. 260–264).

This does not mean that we should adopt a feminism that requires absolute equality in rights and responsibilities between men and women. Given the metaphysical, biological, and psychological differences between men and women, their natural differences should not be neglected. Neither should their differences in familial and social roles, determined by differences in sex, be ignored in distributing their respective rights and responsibilities. Confucianism finds it natural and proper to have man bear more responsibilities in familial, social, military, and political issues generally. Requiring absolutely equal rights and responsibilities between men and women would not only endanger the order of society and the harmony between men and women, but it would also destroy their happiness. Such equality, attained by neglecting the differences in sex and gender roles is not a real equality, but a great inequality. It is an illusion and a false consciousness, which prevents individuals from pursuing the meaning and value of life that they deserve as women or men.

This is not a defense of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination tends to be a kind of masculinism, which regards man as superior to woman. On the contrary, Confucians should first and foremost take seriously the feminist call for the elimination of gender discrimination and sympathetically understand feminism's strong disapproval of masculinism. However, a moral protest against arbitrary masculinism with the hope of developing a new egalitarian ideology is unwise and harmful to all Confucians: both men and women, as well as families, society, and future generations. From the Confucian perspective, every human being should be loved and respected, regardless of whether one is a



woman or a man. However, this does not lead to the extreme view that women and men must possess identical rights and responsibilities within the family, society, and politics.

## 7.2 A Distorted Confucian Perspective on Women

Some believe Confucianism holds that women are inferior to men. For them, this Confucian view is responsible for the comparatively low status of women in traditional China. Indeed, Confucianism has established a family-centered and inner-balancing mechanism, which is not powerful enough to change the man-dominated hierarchy, but it nonetheless seeks to compensate for the losses of women in their familial and social lives. This inner-balancing mechanism is a systematic arrangement of individual responsibilities in accordance with a variety of roles everyone (women included) undertakes in familial activities. It includes general principles, rules, and rituals that a woman should observe in her horizontal relation to her husband as well as in her multiple vertical relations, such as those with her son, daughter, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, and so on. In this way, we can give a relatively clear description of the hierarchy and gender structure of traditional China and effectively explain the inner logic of the Confucian conception of women. Importantly, we should note that the way some Confucians treat women and how Confucianism as a coherent theoretical doctrine and practical wisdom expresses its view of woman are two different things, as is the case in other cultures. We should not rely on the particular comments or conduct of an individual Confucian scholar as a means for depicting the whole Confucian picture of women.

It is well known that Confucius held the precious idea that all humans should have an opportunity for education. It is also well known that he talks very little about women in the *Analects*. However, there is one, and only one, place in the *Analects* where he speaks of women directly, and it appears to express a despising attitude toward women: “only women and small men are difficult to deal with. If you let them get too close, they become insolent. If you keep them at a distance, they complain” (*Analects* 17:25; see Lau 1979, p. 148). The specific context of these words is unknown to us. It remains controversial whether the Chinese word “*nuzi*” was used to refer to “woman” in his time, as it is generally understood today. Some research suggests that it might only mean “maid”, not “woman” generally (see Li 2000). In any case, given the significant influence of the *Analects* in the Confucian tradition, this saying by Confucius might have exerted a significant impact on the formation of the masculinist view that “man is superior to woman” in traditional Chinese society. Moreover, many people would find the answers of the Song Dynasty neo-Confucian, Cheng Yi, offensive to women. When a student asked whether a widow could remarry, Cheng replied, “Starving to death is only a small affair, while losing chastity is a big affair.” When another student asked, “What if she has a child and leads a poor

life?” Cheng replied: “They said this only because they are afraid of starving. Still, starving to death is only a small affair, while losing chastity is a big affair” (Cheng and Cheng 1981, p. 301). Obviously, Cheng held that if a woman remarried, she would lose her chastity, while a man could remarry and have no problems with chastity. Of course, how much influence Cheng Yi’s comments have exerted over the Chinese reality is a complicated issue. As some scholars have commented, “no matter how powerful Cheng’s personal opinion was, it could not form the subsequent Chinese custom and rites – indeed, widows’ remarriages took place everywhere during the Song Dynasty” (Wu, Xu, and Zhao 2002, p. 102). However, it cannot be denied that when Song neo-Confucianism was regarded as orthodox in subsequent Chinese dynasties, Cheng Yi’s opinion of a widow’s remarrying was, too. If one goes to the Huizhou city of Anhui province, one can view the fully intact “chastity plates” of widows who decided not to remarry and can listen to the stories behind them filled with many tears and bloodshed. It is true that those widows who decided not to remarry did so in order to take good care of their children and parents-in-law, but how can it be true that whenever a widow remarries she loses her chastity?

This is a distorted Confucian perspective on women: women are inferior to men, and women should be subordinate to men. What we need is to gain an undistorted, complete Confucian view of women. However, modern Chinese history shows that this cannot be achieved by turning to a feminist view, which stresses absolutely equal rights and responsibilities between men and women. As is well known, Confucianism has been demonized in modern China since the May Fourth Movement of 1919. In 1949, Mao announced that his new China would be a brand-new socialist country achieved through the destruction of Confucian values. Mao established a strong egalitarian slogan: “women hold half the sky,” which emphasized the equal rights and responsibilities of women and men. More than half a century has passed, and Mao’s egalitarian society is far from being realized.

Obviously, in all changes of the countryside in new society we can notice a kind of asymmetry: new social organizations and structures have kept being developed, while professional and class divisions have experienced tardy changes. While the economic structure in the countryside is undergoing dramatic changes, the gender structure remains stable in essence, in spite of many seeming changes. We might as well state that in the process of economic transformation, no matter how great the industrialization develops, the gender structure in which man dominates over woman has not changed dramatically (Yu 2000, p. 3).

Equal rights and responsibilities may not benefit woman. Traditionally, Chinese women have worked at home, while their husbands have worked outside of the home. Mao’s egalitarian ideology pushed women to work outside of the home – “equal” to men – but they could not help but take care of their housework as well after they get home. This means that while traditionally women have only worked at home, they now have to work both inside and outside of the home, doing twice the amount of work. This is why many women

complain that they are exhausted by the new “equal” system (Jiang 2008, pp. 174–175). While women were once disadvantaged under the distorted Confucian view, they are now not benefitting from the modern Chinese egalitarian ideology.

### 7.3 A Complete Confucian Perspective on Women

In his book entitled *Political Confucianism* (2003), Jiang includes a chapter on the Confucian conception of marriage. A complete Confucian view of women as well as the man-woman relationship can be developed from the Confucian conception of marriage in conjunction with the Confucian understanding of human nature. This complete view differs from the distorted view previously discussed in the first section. Generally, Confucianism views the woman as a eudemon within the family, taking care of each family member in a loving and gentle manner. For the Chinese people, if women are no longer regarded in this way, civilized Confucian society will be lost. Accordingly, although one can see the character of women from various perspectives, Confucianism holds that one cannot understand women properly without considering the nature of the family as well as the woman’s status within it.

Why should we first establish the Confucian conception of women from the perspective of the family? Because Confucianism has assigned a uniquely important place to the family in human life. As the Confucian classic, *The Great Learning*, points out, “the ancients who wished to manifest their clear character to the world would first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their persons” (Chan 1963, p. 86). The Confucian emphasis on the importance of the family embodies the Confucian philosophy of promoting the virtue of the people, reflects the natural human feeling towards the unity of the family and the state, and exerts a proper impact on the ways in which human society is governed through proper policy. It has also established the aim of life that individuals should strive for – namely, virtue cultivation, through which one can nurture the emotion of love from one’s family and extend it to the state and eventually the whole world. As Ku Hungming remarks,

To us Chinese, a man who does not marry, who has no family, no home, which he has to defend, cannot be patriotic; he calls himself a patriot, we Chinese call him a brigand patriot. In fact, in order to have a true conception of a state or civil order, one must first have a true conception of a family. And of a family life, one must first of all have a true conception of marriage (Ku 1922, p. 345).

It is clear to Confucians that the family is the epitome of a country, which is regarded as a magnified family. The family is a fundamental economic unit and is the best school for teaching one how to be a good person. Therefore, among

the Five Relations that Confucianism takes as the cardinal human relations (the relation between ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, brother and brother, and friend and friend), three of them are familial relations. Two of these relations, the relations between husband and wife and between parent and child, constitute two of the Three Bonds (*sangang*) in Dong Zhongshu's *Luxuriant Dewe in Spring and Autumn* and Ban Gu's *Bai Hu Tong De* in the Han dynasty (2nd century BCE).

Moreover, for the Chinese public, the family is the center of their lives. It is the locus of their emotions and is inseparable from their purpose in life. In traditional Chinese agricultural society, the family life is one in which "man works in the field and woman knits at home." Indeed, the Chinese characters for woman (妇) and man (男) vividly illustrate the idea that "man is for the sword and woman for the hearth." In fact, this idea is clearly recorded in the Confucian classic, the *Book of Change*, (Zhou 1991, p. 129). From the Confucian view, this functional difference between man and woman is not only due to the physical differences between them, but is also due to woman's sacred nature and the role she plays in human reproduction, child-bearing, and child raising within the family-centered daily lives of human beings. In addition, Confucians generally believe the more children, the more happiness. As a result, a woman may have very limited time and energy to participate in activities outside of the home. Moreover, humans have always lived with the condition of resource scarcity. This is especially true in an agricultural society in which the simple social division of labor and limited land resources confine opportunities to only a few participants. The Confucian female ideal is essentially family-centered: a woman should become a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother. For a woman, bearing and raising children is more important than other things in the world. A woman's responsibility for her family is taken to be a sacred responsibility within Confucianism because it is related to one's ancestors and the Mandate of Heaven. This kind of sacredness makes the family the center of love and the woman the Mistress of the Kitchen ("主中馈") – an expression which carries all positive and desirable connotations for the Confucian Chinese. In short, there are good Confucian reasons to define a woman's function as family-centered.

Confucianism specifies a few key ideas about the life of a woman. First, it is morally mistaken for a woman to remain single throughout her lifetime. It is taken for granted by Confucians that both men and women should be married upon reaching adulthood. Neither men nor women should have the "freedom" to decide not to get married. If being single were to be regarded as a value or even a social ideal, Confucians would think it an abnormal ideal existing in an abnormal society. This is not say that there should not be any exception. But exceptional cases should not be seen as the norm or as a "fashionable" social development. For Confucians, the normal life of a woman includes getting married, having children, raising children, and loving and being loved by her close family members.

Second, a woman must be loved and respected by her children within the family. This idea is implied and emphasized by the Confucian notion of *xiao* (filial piety). In the *Book of Filial Piety*, it states that “filial piety is the root of morality” (Li 1999, p. 61). Normally, a woman plays various roles in her families depending on the different stages of her life: she should be filial to her parents and parents-in-law, and she should likewise be loved and respected by her children and children-in-law. In addition, a woman is cared for and protected by her maiden family in many regards. If she is not treated well by her husband or her mother-in-law after marriage, her maiden family members should fight for her and get her her proper due. If her new family leaves her alone, the younger generations of her maiden family should also support her financially. In her new family, she should integrate herself into it by playing the various roles of wife, daughter-in-law, mother, aunt, sister-in-law, etc. As time goes by, she will become a grandmother. As a mother and grandmother, she will receive love and respect from her children and grandchildren, and will hold considerable authority over them. Since Confucian family values have filial piety at their core, as a child, everyone, no matter what else one is, must be filial to one’s parents. This is to say that even if one is an emperor, one must also love and respect one’s mother. This is why some women have held genuine political power in Chinese history due to their “filial” emperor sons. In short, Zhu Xi presents the character of filial conduct this way:

A filial son who deeply loves his parents is certainly very kind in serving them. Such a kind person certainly has a pleasant expression on his face. With such a pleasant expression on his face, he certainly has a soft and courteous style. So if someone serves his parents with a rude expression on his face, he should not be considered as filial. To be filial is more than merely providing one’s parents with food, clothes and services (Zhu Xi 1983, p. 56).

Besides, women generally have a longer life span than men and, consequently, become the single authority over their children and grandchildren in the family once their husbands have died. Unfilial children are considered blameworthy and lose their reputation as normal human beings in their hometowns. Indeed, there are many Chinese stories about filial piety. It is no surprise that some high officials blatantly claim that the reason they became high officials was to please their mothers.

Third, women should undertake their proper responsibilities. From the Confucian view, whether inside of the family or in social activities, husband and wife should not argue or fight with each other, but they should support, help, and care about each other. All men and women should fulfill their respective responsibilities. This moral requirement, which is two-sided rather than one-sided for women, takes into account not only the natural and functional differences between men and women but also balances and complements the structure of both sexes. An influential Confucian scholar, Han Ying, in the 2nd century BCE, summarized the relevant Confucian ideal in this way:

In peaceful times, the people are engaged in their labor and services without overtime, man and woman get married at the time they become adults, and filial sons always conduct their filial acts towards their parents. Outside the family you can see no man around without doing anything; inside the family you can find no woman discontented and unhappy. There is no un-benevolent parent above or un-filial child below. Parent and child complete each other, and husband and wife protect each other (Xu 1980, p. 102).

Han Ying's remarks are reasonable such that modern-day feminists should find them agreeable. It accords with the moral ideal of "man for the sword, woman for the hearth" in traditional Chinese society. It embodies the basic Confucian moral requirement that all persons, both men and women, should be loved and respected and should also cultivate virtue and bear their respective responsibilities. The cardinal spirit of Confucianism is that everyone should play one's essential role and function: rulers should act like rulers, subjects like subjects, fathers like fathers, sons like sons, husbands like husbands, and wives like wives.

Han Dynasty Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu has been violently criticized for his proposal to proscribe all non-Confucian schools of thought while espousing Confucianism as China's orthodoxy ideology. His view of the Three Bonds has often been criticized as supporting the depreciation and oppression of women (I will turn to this issue later). Yet, he was a great Confucian political thinker with a benevolent heart. He contributed, from the Confucian perspective, a deep analysis of the Qin Dynasty's downfall after its 15-year reign and fought against the competition between officials and the people for benefits and profits. He also held that all natural resources, such as salt and iron, should belong to the people, not to the government. He argued that taxes should be reduced to strengthen the ability of the people to help themselves. He was courageous enough to argue that the slave-servant system as well as the Emperor's absolute executive power should be abolished. Indeed, his Confucian ideal was to enable rich men to show their nobleness, but not to be arrogant, and to ensure poor men the provision of food and clothing so they would not have to worry about their living. He wanted to realize a prosperous society in which there were peaceful and harmonious human relations (Dong 1989, p. 47). This is to say that there have been good reasons for history to choose Confucianism as its dominant ideology, which has been the case for over 2000 years in addition to Dong's proposal. Many schools of thought have competed with Confucianism throughout Chinese history. However, that Confucianism was distinguished and developed into an official ideology during the Han Dynasty was not the product of a contingent choice. It was adopted because it met the needs of political rule and social governance of its time. It was also the most successful, practical, and suitable moral system for the cultivation of individual virtue and the formation of a harmonious social order. It offered a cardinal strategy for maintaining long-lasting stability and security in Chinese society.

What are a woman's proper responsibilities in concrete terms? We cannot address this issue without engaging the Confucian doctrine of the Three Bonds

(*sangang*). As I mentioned, three of the five basic Confucian relations, the relations between ruler and subject, parent and child, and husband and wife, have been distinguished as the Three Bonds in order to stress their fundamental importance. Obviously, the original meaning of the Bond consists of both sides: in the case of husband and wife, the bond means that together they make a bond – a united force for making the family possible and powerful. Under this meaning of the bond, the union as well as the mutual assistance of each other is very much emphasized. As Dong Zhongshu commented, it is the normal way of Heaven that *yin* and *yang*, husband and wife, and father and son all exist interdependently and complementarily (Dong 1989, p. 73). On this meaning of the bond, one would be unjustified in accusing Confucianism of holding an unequal view of women and men – the view in fact emphasizes the importance of the mutual responsibilities between men and women.

However, it cannot be denied that the Three Bonds have also been used to mean the following: the ruler is the bond of the subject, the father is the bond of the son, and the husband is the bond of the wife. From this usage, a kind of authoritarianism and masculinism has been advocated on some interpretations. In the case of husband and wife, some have understood this usage of the bond to mean that the husband has authority over the wife, and that the wife should always obey the husband. Some have even taken this to mean that men are superior to women. Such interpretations are mistaken. I think the correct interpretation has been proposed by Jiang. According to him, the bond used here does not connote moral worth – that the man is superior to the woman – or that there is a power hierarchy, which implies that the woman should always submit to the man. It only connotes a meaning relating to managerial responsibility: the husband as the bond in the husband-wife relationship should bear more responsibility than the wife in managing it. This means that if the relation is broken, the major responsibility lies with the husband, not with the wife (Jiang 2008, p. 180). In this sense, if one does not object, we can translate the meaning of the Three Bonds into the “Three Cardinal Guides” (namely, that the ruler guides the subject, the father guides the son, and the husband guides the wife), where the meaning of “guide” is not one of power or authority, but only of management.

Of course, we should not overlook a major difference between the five relations (*wuchang*) and the Three Bonds. In each of the five relations, one’s moral obligation is reciprocal – if my friend does not want to treat me as a friend, my friendly obligation towards him would terminate as well. But the Three Bonds require much more – in fact, they require absolute moral obligations: even if my ruler is not a benevolent ruler, I still should be a faithful subject; even if my parent is not a kind parent, I still should be a filial child; and even if my husband is not a righteous husband, I still should be a good wife. This absolutely constitutes a one-dimensional moral requirement, which does not depend on what the other side is or does. As the Chinese philosopher He Lin pointed out in the 1940s, this kind of absolute one-dimensional moral requirement of the Three Bonds makes the Three Bonds in Confucian ethics constitute



something like Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative in Western ethics (He 1996). Of course, emphasizing the importance of such absolute one-dimensional moral requirements does not mean that the requirements should only be emphasized on the side of the subject, the child, or the wife, and not on the side of the ruler, the parent, or the husband. As Jiang points out, the discussions of the Three Bonds in traditional China tended to overlook the absolute requirements on the side of the ruler, the parent, and the husband, the oversight of which should now be corrected (Jiang 2002). However, the point is that the absolute one-dimensional moral requirement emphasized in the Three Bonds should not be understood as a problem within the doctrine. Rather, it is a brilliant moral norm.

At this point, three different perspectives on women have been presented: a kind of traditional Chinese masculinism, which sees women as inferior to men and expects them always to be obedient; modern Western feminism, which insists on absolutely equal rights and responsibilities between men and women; and finally, a complete and undistorted Confucian view (in particular, its reconstructed doctrine of the Three Bonds) of women, which disagrees with both masculinism and feminism. It does not hold that men and women have different moral worth so that either men are superior to women or women are superior to men. At the same time, it does not support the assignment of absolutely equal rights or responsibilities between men and women. Instead, it recommends that men should take on more managerial responsibilities in the man and woman relationship (such as the husband and wife relation). This chapter holds that this latter view is the proper view. It is consistent with the cardinal spirit of Confucianism regarding human life, both as a theoretical system and a practical wisdom. For this reason Confucianism, including the doctrine of the Three Bonds, understood properly as the "Three Cardinal Guides" in the sense of management, should be treated truthfully as managerial guidance in respective relations. For anyone who tries to learn from and apply Confucian wisdom to the contemporary world, the best way is to avoid the extremes of masculinism and absolute egalitarianism. One should find the following comments made by Jiang heuristic:

Confucianism supports neither masculinism nor feminism. Instead, it recognizes the differences between man and woman under the orderly combination of *yin* and *yang* in the universe. It is understandable that feminists have been opposed to arbitrary masculinism throughout history. But they should not move to another extreme in which they become blind to the differences between man and woman (Jiang 2002).

Confucianism throughout history has not been concerned with individual rights, either male or female. The primary Confucian concerns are virtue and responsibility. Modern feminists have positive things to learn from the Confucian view.



## 7.4 What Can Feminists Learn from Confucianism?

First, Confucius' ideal that "all should have an opportunity for education" is a great benevolent ideal that has been supported by feminists. In Confucius' time, education was only available to the nobles, not to ordinary people. Confucius not only announced this revolutionary ideal, he also practiced it in his time. Among his students there were quite a few from poor ordinary families. Given the limitations of his time, it was impossible for him to have female students. However, he certainly would not have objected to the education of women. In fact, Confucius himself was educated by his mother. From the fundamental virtue of *ren* (humanity or benevolence), which Confucius emphasizes most of all, women certainly should be loved and respected because it generally means that one must love all humans, although one must love one's parents and siblings more than others under the Confucian moral understanding. However, Confucius would not support a naive egalitarianism for treating all of his students. As is clearly shown in the *Analects*, Confucians hold that each student should be taught in ways that suit his personal character. Presumably, recognizing the physiological, psychological, and social differences between men and women, Confucius would not recommend that women and men should be taught in the exact same way under the slogan of equal rights.

Second, the Confucian appreciation of the importance of the family implies, among other things, that women should have a strong sense of family and should make an effort to become a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother within her life span. From the Confucian view, these are the most natural, objective, and important roles a woman can play. Some feminists suggest that women should employ their intelligence, independence, and autonomy in their work outside of the family. Such feminist views hold that they should show the richness of their lives in their work outside of the home and participate in social and political activities as much as possible. In their view, women should develop their own "subjectivity," which should be accepted by men and universally acknowledged. However, from the Confucian view, a woman's subjectivity is inherently related to the family and cannot be realized by distancing oneself from family life or even by completely giving up the family. Indeed, extreme feminists ask women to give up family values by remaining single to pursue one's "own" values. For Confucian women, this would mean that one has given up the core value of a woman for something that really is not most valuable for women. In this way, they have actually depreciated rather than enhanced themselves. In particular, giving up the right to bear children is tantamount to abandoning the very sense of rights they always talk about. From the Confucian view, it also abolishes the sacred responsibility of human reproduction that women are obliged to undertake. For Confucians, since human values are more important than other things, it is most important for a normal couple to reproduce and raise children as a means for cultivating virtue.

Finally, there are aspects of the Confucian view of marriage that should be appreciated and their functions should be exerted in contemporary society. Confucianism holds that marriage is sacred, and hence a decision to marry should never be made carelessly or without deliberation. For Confucians, the nature of marriage is grounded in Heaven, a marital decision is a response to the call of the Mandate of Heaven, and it is a step towards fulfilling human nature. The purpose of marriage involves human reproduction and survival. In the Chinese wedding, the bride and groom must bow to Heaven, Earth, and the ancestors. This is to help the newly married couple appreciate the profound meaning of their marriage. A marriage is not a contract between two individuals, but it gives rise to a family and a series of new social relationships, so the two relevant families must decide upon it. “A blessed marriage for a 100 years and familial prosperity for five generations” are usually used as the best wishes for a new couple from their relatives. As Jiang points out, the existence of man and woman is the manifestation of the Heavenly *Dao* of *yin* and *yang* in human society. A normal marriage formed by the union of a man and a woman is the embodiment of the Heavenly *Dao* in the human way. It is part of the content of the Heavenly *Dao*. Hence, human marriage has a metaphysical meaning, namely, a Heavenly transcendence (Jiang 2003, p. 215).

Jiang’s comments are supported by the words of Confucian classics. For example, in the classic *Zhongyong*, it states that “the way of the superior man is found to begin with the union of the husband and wife; in its utmost reaches, it shines brightly through Heaven and Earth” (*Zhongyong* 12; see Zhu 1983, p. 23). In the *Book of Rites*, we read,

A marriage is the union of two families of different surnames in friendship and love. It is in order to continue the posterity of the former sages, and to furnish those who shall preside at the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, at those in the ancestral temple, and at those at the altars to the spirits of the land and grain (Aigongwen; see Zhu Bin 1996, p. 742).

In contrast with the Confucian emphasis on the sacredness and long-lastingness of marriage, many modern marriages are characterized by indiscreet decisions and imprudent acts. Modern society is dominated by the shallow individualist notion that marriage is merely a contract between two individuals. Some young people even regard it as a short-term game meant only for pleasure. It has been reported that the shortest marriage in Shanghai lasted only for 1 day. Due to the prevalence of extreme selfishness and the over-emphasis of individual rights rather than responsibility, many individuals tend to insist obstinately on their own ideas and preferences and will not accommodate their spouses within their marriage. They eventually end up divorced as a consequence of over-asserting their “rights” or freedom. It is nothing to be proud of that the number of single-parent families is on the rise in most societies and even accounts for one-third of the total number of families in some countries. Such families have a hard time properly educating their children. If these children have rights, Confucians

would argue that such families have a hard time meeting the rights of their children to be loved and cared for by both parents in proper ways.

Contrary to the misunderstanding that the Confucian view of marriage ignores respect, the Confucian conception of marriage attaches significant importance to both love and respect. As it is remarked in the *Book of Rites*,

With the ancients in their practice of governance, the love of humans was the great point; in their exercise of this love, regulations according to rites were the great point; in their regulations according to rites, reverence was the great point. Of the great manifestation of reverence, we find its great illustration in the great rite of marriage (Aigongwen; see Zhu Bin 1996, p. 741).

Confucians hold that getting married is the best way to foster love and respect. They emphasize the idea that love is to spend both bad and good times with your beloved one, and it needs to be fostered and learned. The elder generation should tell the newly married to be respectful of each other. They should be modest, considerate, and tolerant of each other. Being respectful helps the couple learn each other's merit and how to overcome one's shortcomings so as to become harmonious with each other. Indeed, for Confucians, each side of the couple should improve oneself by learning from the other, understanding the other, and learning how to love through loving the other. Love is to shorten the distance between them, and respect is to keep a proper distance between them. This is why, in traditional Confucian families, there is a lot of aid and care for each other, which makes the mutual love long-lasting, even though to the modern ear they may not appear to have sufficient romance or sweet words for each other. Confucians give more attention to long-term happiness than to temporary pleasure. The ideal marriage, for Confucians, is one in which a couple can help each other, especially in harsh circumstances, live harmoniously, and age together until death. There is a poetic description of such an ideal marriage and family life in *The Classic of Poetry*, which is cited in the classic, *Zhongyong*:

A good union with your wife and living with your children is like the music of lutes and harps. When there is concord among brethren, the harmony is delightful and enduring. Thus may you regulate your family, and enjoy the happiness with your wife and children (*Zhongyong* 15).

Confucianism values harmony in a marriage and sets a lifelong marriage as the basic aim of marriage. Therefore, parents have to think seriously about what kind of person would be the perfect spouse for their child. For that purpose, the parents have to look at the family backgrounds and personalities of the potential spouses of their child. It is important to find out whether they are considerate and respectful of elderly people. In general, parents pay much attention to the personalities, characteristics, and abilities of the spouses of their children. Based on their own or others' marriage experiences, the involvement of parents in their child's decision to marry can effectively prevent the child from being too emotional or shortsighted, thereby ensuring the stability and harmony of the marriage. Even if one considers this an arranged marriage, it is still more desirable

than today's online-love or speedy marriages to gain profits. From the Confucian view, today's youngsters should be willing to listen to their parents' suggestions and to receive Confucian marriage wisdom, which has been tested for over 2000 years. Here Confucians think that liberty is only a means for gaining marital happiness. It is shameless for some scholars to think that the dramatic increase in the divorce rate of contemporary China is a good thing.

Marriage is also important because, as Confucians see it, the character of marriage in a society is inseparable from the character of its rites, morality, and politics. Confucianism understands marriage as the root of its politics. Promiscuous marriages lead to a messy society in many respects. As the classical Confucian Xunzi points out, "the way of marriage must be proper, for it is the root of the relationships between ruler and subject and between father and son" (Wang Tianhai 2005, p. 1054). Jiang has also remarked,

By observing the contemporary society and politics, we can find many examples of bad governance or social orders engendered by improperly playing the role of husband or wife. Governance is not only a use of power. It is affected by many factors, among which marriage is a significant factor that tremendously influences the operation of power (Jiang 2003, p. 228).

Evidently, many power-abusing phenomena in contemporary society, especially the immoral use of power by politicians, are closely related to marriages and the influence of spouses. It is right to the point for Confucianism to emphasize the importance of proper marriage and the upright ways of husband and wife in one's social life.

## **7.5 Towards a Proper Relationship Between Men and Women**

In modern history Confucianism has been aggressively attacked for its views on women. It has been assumed that Confucianism holds the view that men are superior to women. As we have shown in this chapter, this is a distorted Confucian view. Starting in the early 20th century, radical scholars have ascribed gender discrimination and the oppression of women to Confucianism. This attack lasted through the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, when the pursuit of superficial equality between men and women reached its climax. However, as analyzed above, Confucianism itself holds a healthy and well-balanced view of woman. It should not be held directly responsible for the oppression of woman. Only when Confucianism is distorted can it become a tool for the oppression of women.

Some feminists may still want to put Confucianism into the theoretical framework of masculinism. However, such feminists may have made their arguments by following the logic of masculinism. This logic is closely connected to the traditional Western metaphysics, which creates a logocentrism in the Western way of thinking. According to logocentrism, the world is full of

oppositions between two sides where one side always dominates the other. Of course, nowadays there are various types of feminism with different theoretical frameworks, modes of thought, and political motivations. It may be difficult to describe feminism as a kind of unified trend in a simple way. Still, as it is well known, the term “feminism”, which appeared at the end of 19th century, refers to a social and political movement for the equal rights of woman, such as the rights of equal opportunity in employment, education, and voting. In the 18th century some Enlightenment thinkers treated the issue of women’s rights as a matter of basic human rights. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Subjection of Women* (1869) by John Stuart Mill, and *Women and New Race* (1920) by Margaret Sanger all attempted to reconstitute the concept of womanhood on the basis of a strong criticism of male authority and the oppression of woman. After World War II, *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simone de Beauvoir and *The Feminine Mystique* (1974) by Betty Friedan became the two most representative feminist works emphasizing the further liberation of woman. According to Simone de Beauvoir, gender difference is mainly caused by a culture of male authority – a patriarchal culture, which leads to a division between the self and one’s identity as a woman. In her eyes, the two words “male” and “female” are asymmetrical – they are not relational like the two poles of electricity. Instead, male is representative of both the masculine and the neutral since the word “man” is generally used to refer to both male and female, while female is confined by its feminist features (de Beauvoir 1974, pp. xvii–xviii).

Following de Beauvoir, some feminists continue to struggle for the equal rights of women in all disciplines and insist that women should work outside of their families and should transform their minds and bodies to realize their individual freedom or self-determination. Naomi Wolf even characterizes what is happening as the great earthquake of gender in which women must act (Wolf 1993, p. 11). Some feminists try their best to argue that there is no significant difference in the feelings, psychological orientation, or ways of thinking and behaving between men and women. For them, gender differences are mainly the product of our social and cultural systems. They stress that, as a matter of fact, in some cases the differences between two men are more substantial than those between two women. Indeed, extreme feminists insist that women should adopt male standards as their own standard and act like men in all fields. Some of them even regard marriage and family as tombs for women. As a result, there is a new kind of tendency in which extreme feminism is developed into a new ideology, which brings men and women into a state of war with each other. Traditional research concerning the differences between men and women in the behavioral sciences and physiology has been frustrated as a result.

No doubt, Confucians should respect and take seriously the critique of distorted Confucianism by all reasonable feminists. According to the fundamental Confucian virtue of humanity (*ren*), gender discrimination, which sees women as inferior to men, is misguided. As I have shown, the Confucian virtue of humanity requires that everyone be loved and respected, regardless of gender differences.

We respect a woman not only because she is female, but first because she is a human being. Under distorted Confucianism, women have been unfairly discriminated against. However, it is reasonable and important to recognize that the complete Confucian view of women is proper and emphasizes a harmonious and complementary relation between men and women. No reasonable contemporary feminist should object to this Confucian perspective. Indeed, reasonable feminists do not want to change themselves into men, nor do they want to measure everything by the ruler of man. The liberation of women is not worthwhile if it only changes women into men (Brennen 1996, p. 92). If women act like men, it simply means that women have transformed themselves into a model of man. In this way, rather than rejecting masculinism, it is simply cloaked by the name of feminism. Thus, extreme feminism is nothing but a disguised masculinism. In contrast, reasonable feminists should not wish to give up their feminine character. Rather, they should, as Confucians do, understand their female character as the embodiment of a profound reality and the richness of life.

Both masculinism and extreme feminism treat gender differences from the perspective of an opposition between men and women. Confucianism, on the other hand, regards gender differences from a mutually complementary and beneficial perspective. Confucians do not want to wipe out the differences between men and women. On the contrary, they respect these differences and hold that men and women should develop and fulfill their own characteristics. This not only manifests the Heavenly *Dao* in the human world, but it also promotes the richness of human life as well as the happiness of men and women. The opposition and struggle men and women would experience in a culture war is not only harmful to both men and women, but also to the development and prosperity of human beings. From the Confucian perspective, the more men and women develop their respective characteristics, the richer the content of life will be, and the more human beings as a whole will flourish. The happiness of human beings depends on the harmony and cooperation of men and women, while a culture war between them will destroy human flourishing. Accordingly, humans should move beyond masculinism and feminism as well as the opposition and struggle between men and women. As Jiang points out, “the way of Heaven is the unity of differences, and the world of life is interdependent” (Jiang 1995, p. 388).

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# Chapter 8

## The Soft Power in the Confucian “Kingly Way”

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### 8.1 Perpetual peace

In his “To perpetual peace: A philosophical sketch” [1795], Immanuel Kant argues that perpetual peace in global society is guaranteed not by the improvement of the moral quality of the human race, but by the force of nature:

Perpetual peace is insured (guaranteed) by nothing less than that great artist *nature* (*natura daedala rerum*), whose mechanical process makes her purposiveness [*Zweckmässigkeit*] visibly manifest, permitting harmony to emerge among men through their discord, even against their wills (Kant 1983, p. 120).

This kind of problem [i.e., the problem of perpetual peace] must be *solvable*. For it does not require the moral improvement of man; it requires only that we know how to apply the mechanism of nature to men so as to organize the conflict of hostile attitudes present in a people in such a way that they must compel one another to submit to coercive laws and thus to enter into a state of peace, where laws have power. ... Consequently, the mechanism of nature, in which self-seeking inclinations naturally counteract one another in their external relations, can be used by reason as a means to prepare the way for its own end, the rule of right, as well as to promote and secure the nation’s internal and external peace (Kant 1983, p. 124).

In their coauthored book titled *Achieving Good by Good Means* (*Yi Shan Zhi Shan*, 以善致善), Jiang Qing and his colleague categorize Kant’s theory of perpetual peace as one advocating “achieving good by evil means.” Jiang does this for two reasons. First, Kant views that the achievement of perpetual peace does *not* rely on the moral quality of the human race. Second, Kant assures us that perpetual peace can be achieved *through* the process of confrontation among people (Jiang and Sheng 2004, pp. 2–3). Jiang and his colleague thus

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hold Kant responsible for the fierce arms race and mass killing that has transpired all over the world in the past few centuries.

Most scholars of Kantian ethics would find such criticism surprising: How can Kant, who has “constantly-increasing admiration” towards “the starry Heavens without and the moral law within,” and who advocates that only good will has unconditional worth, have taught us to pursue peace based on hostility? And how could he possibly be liable for the past centuries of slaughter among human beings?

We might need to modify Jiang and his colleague’s description of Kant’s theory a little in order accurately to capture Kant’s meaning. Kant’s view may best be described as that of achieving peace without good means rather than that of achieving it by evil means. He does not say that in order to achieve peace, we have to be hostile to and fight with each other. What he says is that evil intents will not triumph, as is shown in his quotation from Friedrich Bouterwek: “whoever wills too much, wills nothing” (Kant 1983, p. 124). Therefore, projects in pursuit of unreasonable self-interests will eventually be defeated, and thus he concludes that “nature irresistibly *wills* that right should finally triumph” (Kant 1983, p. 124).

How exactly, according to Kant, does nature guarantee the achievement of perpetual peace? His answer is composed of three key points. First, as quoted above, “self-seeking inclinations naturally counteract one another.” This explains why those who will too much end up gaining nothing. While motives of self-interest cancel out each other in time, motives of public interest do not. When the latter, which do not cancel out each other, compete with the former, the latter prevails. Second, inter-group interactions are inevitably subjected to hurdles of language and religion. In Kant’s eyes, such hurdles, on the one hand, have brought about disputes among groups, but on the other hand also made it difficult for any group to keep another group completely under its control. Of course, the difficulty in conquering grows with the mass of nations one attempts to conquer. Therefore, all projects to conquer the world will eventually come to failure (Kant 1983, pp. 124–125). Finally, while we can admit that competition is inevitable among people, it is important to note that cooperation is even more so, and these two types of relationships are in tension with each other. To illustrate his point, Kant raises the example of the tension between war and trade (Kant 1983, p. 125). The example is certainly an unfortunate one, for history has shown that we can indeed force a nation by physical power to open up her market as in the Opium War. The inappropriateness of the example aside, however, we can still say that cooperation and physical conflicts do not sit together comfortably. And in the end, Kant believes, it is cooperation that will prevail, for, unlike competition, cooperation is something without which humanity simply cannot survive.

All these show that Kant’s idea is not really one of achieving good *by evil means*. Rather, I suggest, we should call his position that of achieving good *without good means*. Notwithstanding this modification, one important idea in Jiang and his colleague’s interpretation is still correct, i.e., for Kant, we do *not* need moral people to achieve peace. And, turning to the real world, we can see that violence, or the threat of violence, has long been and still is an important factor defining international order. It would be nice if Kant’s idea were correct.

However, since the end of the Cold War, military rivalry has not disappeared among countries. In combating terrorism, the U.S. initiated the “anti-terrorist war,” which has not ended terrorism, but invited more people to join it. So it seems important to rethink the relationship between morality and peace. How should we evaluate the contrasting strategies of achieving good (such as peace) by good means and achieving it without good means? In coming sections, I will try to answer these questions with the help of Joseph Nye’s idea of “soft power” and the Confucian idea of the “kingly way” as developed by Jiang in recent years.

## 8.2 Nye’s “Soft Power”

What is soft power? It is the opposite of hard power. Hard power, to put it simply, is the ability to coerce or to pay in order to have one’s goals achieved (Nye 2004, p. x). This ability is boiled down, roughly, to military and economic powers. One may be tempted to equate coercion with military power and payment with economic power. This understanding, however, is only approximately true. It is often found that military power can also be used to buy one off by diplomacy. Providing another country with special protection can benefit one country with their cooperation in return. On the other hand, economic strategies can also be coercive, as in the case of sanctions. Whatever the particular means, hard power is always about benefits and loss.

Military power is, of course, the most typical form of hard power. It is, roughly speaking, the power employed, or to be employed, in large-scale physical conflicts. Whether such power is used to threaten or induce, the “threat” element is always there. For example, when a country with superior military force offers a weaker country protection in exchange for cooperation in return, more often than not the former has their eyes on the latter’s flawed self-defense. And for survival, the latter is left with no choice but to comply. In this way, although at the surface the powerful country is offering help, it is practically indistinguishable from a threat. A nation’s military power can influence behaviors of other nations, and since such influence originates from the necessity of existence, military power has always been extremely important in defining international order. In order to understand the nature of military power, let us begin by examining a few statements from Clausewitz:

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. Countless duels go to make up war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imagining a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to compel the other to do his will; his immediate aim is to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance (Clausewitz 1976, p. 75).

Kind-hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst (Clausewitz 1976, p. 75).

[W]ar is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the application of that force (Clausewitz 1976, p. 77).

The above quotations can be summarized in two points. First, military power is the power to make others surrender, i.e., obey against their wills. Second, war is the use of force, and this force has no logical limit. By having “no logical limit,” what Clausewitz means is that there is no boundary, so that, when surpassed, the use of force will cease to be effective. Clausewitz’s view is thus even more realistic than that of achieving good by evil means. Thus, it is might that rules the world, not right.

Yet even within the scope of hard power, there are also milder means, i.e., persuasion with benefits. This again can be done by means of either inducement or threat. For instance, nations that are more powerful can, in the name of offering help, induce smaller countries to coordinate with them in the implementation of their international policies. Or, wealthy nations may also force less developed nations to adopt their policies by threat of economic sanctions.

Whether coerced by economic or military means, weaker nations cooperate not because they enjoy the cooperative relationship itself, but because they have to do so in order to protect their vital interests. Once those external incentives are removed, foundations of collaboration collapse. Therefore, although it is the advantage of hard power that it can force others to cooperate against their own wills, it also has the disadvantage of being unable to gain the active commitments of the collaborators. It is precisely for this reason that Nye urges the United States to secure her international status by properly cultivating her soft power.

As we have discussed earlier, soft power is the counterpart of hard power. Contrary to hard power, soft power neither threatens nor induces. What it does is attract and convince, which comes from “the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideas, and policies” (Nye 2004, p. x). As a result, soft power, unlike hard power, does not only make people do what you want them to do; rather, it makes people like to do what you want them to do. “When you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction” (Nye 2004, p. x). The key to mastering soft power is thus to *please* others with what you are doing for them. Soft power, in other words, is “the ability to shape the preferences of others,” where preferences are nothing but the “shared values between individuals and countries, and the sense of responsibility thus derived” (Nye 2004, p. 5). So, to put it simply, soft power is the power arising from values and preferences. You possess soft power when others admire you, admire what you do for them, and find your behaviors morally agreeable.

So which is more important, soft power or hard power? Clausewitz would say the latter. Should I have the ability to wipe out all my enemies, while those who agree with me would of course concur, even those who do not would have to either surrender or become extinct. The world would continue to run in whatever manner I wished. This might well explain why John McCloy once roared in the face of John F. Kennedy, “World opinion? I don’t believe in world opinion. The only thing that matters is power” (Nye 2004, p. 9).

But there is a question here: Can anyone possess the power of wiping out all his enemies? Or we may ask a yet more prompting question: Can anyone have the capacity to maintain such a power forever? Nye’s answer to this latter question is a definite “no.” He does not negate hard power out of a passion for a moral ideal, but rather regards his position as a hard truth we have learned from history.

After its victory in World War II, the United States helped to restructure Japan’s economy, but it is hard to imagine that the United States today could effectively threaten force to open Japanese markets or change the value of the yen... Even nondemocratic countries that feel fewer popular moral constraints on the use of force have to consider its effects on their economic objectives. War risks deterring investors who control flows of capital in the globalized economy. A century ago, it may have been easier to seize another state’s territory by force than “to develop the sophisticated economic and trading apparatus needed to derive benefit from commercial exchange with it.” But it is difficult to imagine a scenario today... (Nye 2004, p. 20).

The United States bypassed the United Nations and attacked Iraq in 2003, stirring up rage almost everywhere in the world (including citizens of her own and her closest ally, Britain). In the eyes of many people around the world, the United States has become “a classical imperialist power” (Nye 2004, p. 127). The Germans were very sympathetic towards the US after 9/11. Yet, since the Iraq War, younger Germans became skeptical about the events of 9/11, and some even begin to conjecture that the incidence is a farce written and played by the US herself (Nye 2004, p. 130). A former Pakistan diplomat once reported, “the US invasion of Iraq is a complete gift to the Islamic parties. People who would otherwise turn up their noses at them are now flocking to their banner” (Nye 2004, p. 29). The so-called anti-terrorist attack has transformed into the inducement of further terrorist activities. Today, transnational terrorism has unveiled American vulnerability (Nye 2004, p. 129), and it is with this backdrop that Nye called for a remedy for the US impaired soft power. “Winning the peace is harder than winning a war,” says Nye, “and soft power is essential to winning the peace” (Nye 2004, p. xii).

### 8.3 Soft Power of the Kingly Way

“Winning peace is far more difficult than winning a war.” This certainly reminds those familiar with Chinese history of a conversation between Emperor Gaozu and the Confucian Lu Jia in the Han dynasty, which is recorded in *Historical Records* (Shiji, 史記). According to the record, Lu once recommended to Gaozu that he should take more seriously the study of Confucian classics such as the *Book of Songs* (Shijing, 詩經) and *Book of Historical Documents* (Shujing, 書經; or Shangshu, 尚書). Gaozu reproached, “I conquered the empire [by fighting wars] on horseback. What is the use of the *Book of Songs* and *Book of Historical Documents*?” “Of course an empire can

be conquered on horseback,” retorted Lu. “But can it be administered on horseback?” (Sima 1994, Book 97, my translation). What Lu means is similar to Nye’s opinion: hard power may help to win a war, but it is not likely to help build a peaceful order.

Very much like Nye, Confucians also believe in the power of attraction. For them, it is virtues that have the strongest attraction. Confucius says, “if distant people are not willing to comply, one has to civilize oneself and cultivate one’s virtues in order to attract them” (*Analects* 16.1, my translation). Mencius also says, “there are cases in which a nonbenevolent man is in possession of a state. But there has never been an unbenevolent man who got possession of the world” (*Mencius* 14.13, trans. Zhao et al. my modification). Confucians call power of attraction by virtues the “kingly way,” a term derived from Mencius’ famous statement:

One who uses force under the guise of benevolence can become a hegemon [i.e., leader among feudal states], but he must first establish a powerful state before achieving this. One who practices benevolence through the virtuous rule will become a true king, and a true king does not need a powerful state (*Mencius* 3.3, trans. Zhao et al. my modifications).

Xunzi has a nice explanation for why attraction is better than coercion. He divides three ways of “annexing” or gathering people: by moral power, by raw power, and by wealth. The power of morality convinces, and therefore people willingly work for it. As a result, the power of morality grows with the number of people it rules. Unlike the power of morality, the people moved by raw power and wealth do not do so willingly. Therefore, the more people one conquers, the more one has to invest in the control of these people. Therefore, in both cases, one’s power decreases with the expansion of one’s territories. Thus, Xunzi concludes:

One who uses moral power to annex people will become a True King; one who employs raw power to annex them will become weak; and one who employs wealth to annex them will become poor (*Xunzi*, 15.6a, trans. Knoblock).

Just like Nye, Confucians also believe that the superiority of the kingly way is a hard historical fact rather than a rosy ideal. Zhou<sup>1</sup> people, after overthrowing the Yin (殷; or Shang, 商) dynasty, inherited the Yin concept of Heavenly decree (*tianming*, 天命) with the understanding that governmental authority comes from Heaven. Unlike the Yin people, however, they learned from the collapse of the Yin Dynasty that Heaven has its own principles, and its decree can never be privatized by any particular group. In the poem “King Wen” (Wen Wang, 文王), Zhou emperors are reminded to learn from the lesson of the Yin dynasty and cultivate their virtues so that they can secure the Heavenly decree: in the “Major Odes” of the *Book of Songs* it says:

May you never shame your ancestors,  
But rather tend their inward power<sup>2</sup>,

...

In Yin you should see as in a mirror,  
That Heaven’s high charge is hard to keep (*The Book of Songs*, Poem 235, trans. Waley)

The message in this and other similar passages in the *Book of Songs* is interesting. On reflection upon the collapse of the Yin Dynasty, Zhou people concluded not that the Yin dynasty collapsed because it failed to possess sufficient might, but because it lacked moral virtues. Similarly, the *Book of Historical Documents* states firmly, “Great Heaven has no partial affections;—it helps only the virtuous” (*Book of Historical Documents*, XVII, 2, trans. Legge). This can be considered the earliest manifesto of soft power in Chinese history: the key to the survival of a government is not brute force but virtue. Consequently, the Zhou people developed an institution, which Confucius regards as an exemplary model of ideal society, whereas their reign has enjoyed centuries of stability before it degenerated into a state of social unrest. In the course of disorder, the Qin (秦) state adopted the legalist idea and depended chiefly on brute force in governing its people as well as conquering other states. Though Qin did end up taking over all of China, the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.) could not even be sustained to its second reign, which presented a remarkable lesson for later rulers and scholars.

The collapse of the Qin dynasty provided Chinese intellectuals with another perfect lesson on limitations to the use of brute force. When the Han (漢) finally replaced the Qin, Confucian scholars began again to try to convince their rulers that Confucian political ideals were indeed most desirable and practical. Besides Lu, another prominent Han Confucian Shusun Tong (叔孫通) also leaves us with a famous statement: “Confucians may not be good at aggression, but they are certainly good at maintenance” (*The History of the Former Han Dynasty* [*Hanshu*漢書], “Biography of Shusun Tong,” my trans.). At long last, Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒) succeeded in convincing Emperor Wu (武帝) to pursue Confucianism as the official ideology of the empire. Since then, the priority of soft power has gained official recognition, at least nominally.

Viewed in this way, Confucians have two points in common with Kant and Nye. First, there are limitations to hard power, which is precisely the opposite of the stance of Clausewitz. As both Kant and Xuzi have noted, power weakens as it extends. There is no such thing as hard power that can be infinitely projected. This is precisely what Mencius means when he says, “there has never been a nonbenevolent man who got possession of the world.”

Interestingly, when we look more carefully into Clausewitz’s view about military power, we can see that the limitation to it is also recognized implicitly:

If wars between civilized nations are far less cruel and destructive than wars between savages, the reason lies in the social conditions of the states themselves and in their relationships to one another. These are the forces that give rise to war; the same forces circumscribe and moderate it. They themselves are not part of the war; they already exist before fighting starts (Clausewitz 1976, p. 76).

In other words, there is a power emerging from the social relationships among people and nations, which exists prior to military power and sets the conditions in which military power takes effect. Quite contrary to Clausewitz’s own conclusion, then, these social relationships do set limits to the functioning of



military power, and thus, military power cannot simply be applied unlimitedly. And this power, which limits the applicability of military force, can quite properly be called soft power. Presupposing that morality is core to the building and maintenance of social relationships, there is good reason to relate this soft power with morality.

This brings us to the second agreement among Kant, Nye, and the Confucian. All of them recognize that morality is an important source of soft power. Both the Confucian and Nye have made this claim explicitly, while Kant does so implicitly when he describes the dynamics between egoistic and altruistic projects. The default order of nature seems to have decided that right is going to triumph over might in the end. What is called the order of nature here is called the Heavenly decree by Confucians, though the latter term may differ from the former that it carries a certain transcendent dimension in its meaning.

Even if we admit morality to be a major source of soft power, we still have to recognize three major limitations to its strength. First, although morality usually carries with it a strong soft power, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for the latter. The soft power Jesus possesses over his disciples is virtually indistinguishable from that which Osama bin Laden possesses over his supporters (Nye 2004, p. 2). Even gang leaders can have immense soft power over their gang members based on loyalty to the group. On the contrary, a person of virtue can also appear obnoxious because of his insistence on moral principles. Those who are judged by him as wrong, out of resentment, will naturally judge him as wrong in return. It is precisely for this reason that Confucius believes that a truly virtuous person is doomed to be loved by good people but hated by bad ones (*Analects* 13.24). Nye says that soft power is attraction rather than coercion or payments, but it is never easy to tell the former from the latter. And you do not have to be moral in order to be attractive. Looking sexy is certainly very attractive to many people, but it has nothing to do with moral virtue.

Second, whether it is Shusun's idea that Confucians are not good at aggression or Lu's idea that Confucian classics are not good for conquering the empire, the underlying message is that the kingly way is not particularly good at fighting. This can be fatal. Of course, being not good at fighting is not a moral fault. But when it comes to a point where invading troops are under your nose, your side will be brought to extinction, whether just or not. Confucius has made clear note of this when he says, "Military preparation is necessary for civil matters, while civil measures are also necessary in support of military actions" (*The School Sayings of Confucius* [kongzi jiayu孔子家語], "Being Councillor in Lu," my trans.). It sounds noble to insist that we need nothing other than moral virtues, but such insistence will not save a life. Fortunately, the kingly way is not totally useless in fighting either. According to legends, when Emperor Wu (武王) revolted against Yin, not only did the Yin people not fight back, but they joined hands with Emperor Wu to bring down Emperor Zhou (紂王) of the Yin dynasty. This is a very lively example of implementing soft power in military actions. In fact, this is precisely what soft power does: it gives direction. When the direction is made clear among a mass, hard power possessed by its



members can be brought together to serve the soft power. The only question is whether the people thus motivated possess the necessary hard power to achieve their goals.

Third, as Nye has pointed out, soft power depends (more than hard power does) on the existence of willing interpreters and receivers. Moreover, attraction often has a “diffuse effect,” creating “general influence rather than producing an easily observable and specific action,” although it can “make a significant difference in obtaining favorable outcomes negotiations” (Nye 2004, p. 16). Simply speaking, soft power takes effect only when others willingly cooperate. Here is where hard power becomes so absorbing: if people do not willingly cooperate, with it one can make them do so. This is what soft power cannot accomplish. Therefore, soft power cannot guarantee that good triumphs over evil in every single battle.

Although there are important similarities between Nye’s idea of soft power and the Confucian idea of the kingly way, they are still very different in some ways. The concept of the kingly way is basically a moral concept: it is about using one’s power *morally*. In contrast, soft power is basically a concept of power: once you successfully attract others, you possess soft power, whether your values are correct or not. Morality may help strengthen one’s soft power, but it is not necessary. Osama bin Laden has soft power. A hamburger has soft power. But none of these powers come from morality. So there are two gaps between morality and success. First, being more moral does not always guarantee greater soft power. Second, soft power does not always guarantee success. By attracting millions of absolutely powerless people I am still powerless, or nearly so. That is why Confucius emphasizes the importance of having military preparation in support of civil measures. Likewise, Nye also says, “Smart power means learning better how to combine our hard and soft power” (Nye 2004, p. 32).

We are thus living in a very complicated world. We cannot be as optimistic as Kant was, holding tight to the belief that evil cannot beat good. Nor do we need to be so pessimistic as to side with Gaozu, deeming that it is might that rules. We can take both sides into consideration, while tipping ourselves slightly toward the side of optimism for the reason that, whereas hard power is in no conflict with either morality or personal interests, soft power certainly sits more comfortably together with morality than unwarranted self-interests. In such a manner, morality would have a mild advantage over evil in the struggle between the two.

Jiang and his colleague have repeatedly stressed, in their *Achieving Good by Good Means*, that achieving good by evil means is never acceptable. From the above discussion, this position is supported by two important arguments. First, since nature does not guarantee that good will eventually triumph, the project of achieving good by evil means, or without good means, is excessively optimistic. Second, with morality itself being a major source of soft power, the project of achieving good by good means should certainly be reckoned feasible, although it does not mean that we have a guarantee for success. In what follows,

we will discuss in detail the Confucian ideas of just war and benevolent rule in order to see how the soft power of morality should be nurtured and employed.

## 8.4 Just War

From the perspective of the kingly way, war, as a form of brute force, should always be brought under the rule of morality. On the one hand, we may say that we do not bring it under the rule of morality for any specific purpose. We do it simply because it is the right thing to do. On the other hand, even speaking from a power point of view, we can still say that, in order to strengthen our power, we have to ensure certain soft power development at the same time when we use our hard power. Whether we are concerned with morality or power, we should have a touch of morality in us, at least in our observable behavior.

Confucians advocate the kingly way, which emphasizes virtues. And they see the soft power of morality as well. When King Hui of Liang (梁), a small state in the Warring States period (481–221 BC), asked about protecting his own state, Mencius advised him to adopt benevolent rule and help cultivate the virtues of the people. By doing so, explains Mencius, “the people will love their superiors and die for them” (*Mencius* 2.12, trans. Zhao et al.). With such devotion to the protection of their home state, the people of the Liang state would be able to defeat troops of powerful states such as Qin and Chu (楚), which relied on brute force alone and thus failed to have wholehearted support from their people (*Mencius* 1.5, trans. Zhao et al.).

There is a way to win the world: win the people’s support and you will win the world. There is a way to win the people’s support: make them like you and you will win their support. There is a way to make them like you: help them get what they want and avoid inflicting on them what disgusts them (*Mencius* 7.9, trans. Zhao et al. my modifications).

What was meant here runs almost perfectly in line with Nye’s idea of soft power: attraction is an enormous power. And for Mencius, benevolence is the greatest soft power of all.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, he says,

Hence a good ruler may prefer not to fight, but if he fights at all, he will certainly succeed because he has the world obey him, and his opponent has even his own relations turn against him (*Mencius* 4.1, trans. Zhao et al.).

If the ruler of a state loves benevolence, he will be matchless in the world (*Mencius* 7.7, trans. Zhao et al.).

Taken this way, the soft power of morality for Mencius seems not just enormous but all-conquering. It is difficult for us to decide whether Mencius means this literally or it is an encouragement, but his insistence on the strong power of morality is clear.

Xunzi, another prominent pre-Qin Confucian, shares Mencius’ belief in the strong power of morality. Xunzi divides authority into three types: morality (or

“the Way and its Power” as translated by Knoblock), harsh management (or “harsh and judicial and cruel judicial investigations”), and reckless use of brute force (or “deranged madness”). Xunzi insists that it is only morality that helps to strengthen a state or nation (*Xunzi* 16.2, trans. Knoblock). And his reason is the same as Mencius: One who does not love his people is not loved by his people, and thus cannot expect protection from his people. One who leaves himself unprotected invites conquerors. Given his inability to protect himself, he is doomed to be extinguished (*Xunzi* 12.5, trans. Knoblock). “Hence to be good at winning the support of the people is also to be expert in the use of the army” (*Xunzi* 15.1a, trans. Knoblock).

Within this framework of the kingly theory, Confucianism is against war. Mencius even says that “those experts at war should suffer the severest punishment” (*Mencius* 7.14, trans. Zhao et al.). Yet, it has not absolutely overthrown the use of force. When Emperor Wu revolted against the tyrannical Emperor Zhou of Yin, Mencius’ comment was that it was not a “regicide” but a “despot forsaken” (*Mencius* 2.8, trans. Zhao et al.), which implies that military actions can sometimes be justified. As we have pointed out, Confucius also admits that military preparation is very often necessary. In *Historical Records*, it is even reported that Ran You (冉有), a disciple of Confucius, learned how to fight a battle from Confucius:

Ran You led a troop for the Ji (季) clan to fight against the Qi (齊) troop and won the battle. Ji Kangzi asked, “Did you learn how to fight a battle, or are you just a born fighter?” Ran You answered, “I learnt it from Confucius” (Sima 1994, Book 47, my trans.).

Since Confucians permit the use of force on the one hand and insist on the priority of morality on the other, the only way for them to accommodate both considerations is to place the use of force under strict moral constraints. This gives rise to a Confucian just-war theory. Below I will sketch a model of the Confucian just-war theory.<sup>4</sup> It can be summarized in seven principles.

### 1. Caution principle

It is recorded in the *Analects* that there were three things with which Confucius was cautious, and one of those was war (*Analects* 7.12). Being cautious with war is, of course, a perfectly practical principle. It is so practical that, indeed, even the militarist has to adopt it, as stated in *The Art of War* (Sunzi, 孫子): “The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin” (*The Art of War* I.1, trans. Giles).

There are two meanings in what the Confucian calls caution. A first meaning is that one should try one’s best to avoid unnecessary military conflicts. Caution also has a second and very different meaning, namely, that we should not overlook the possibility of war either, and there should always be preparation for war. That explains why Confucius says that civil matters must be supported by military preparation, for he understands perfectly well the importance of a military force as the last resort to protect

a society and its members. For this reason, there is always an obligation for a government to get her people ready for war. So Confucius says, “Only when men of the right sort have instructed a people for 7 years ought there to be any talk of engaging them in warfare” (*Analects* 13.29, trans. Waley). Mencius also says, “To send the people to fight without training them first is to plunge them into disasters” (*Mencius* 12.8, trans. Zhao et al.).

## 2. Violence prohibition principle

War is evil because it is a form of violence. However, it is necessary to use a just war to protect people from unjust violence. This idea is most clearly stated by Xunzi. He says:

The military principles of which I spoke are just the means whereby to prohibit violent and aggressive behaviors and to prevent harm to others; they are not the means to contention and confiscation (*Xunzi* 15.3, trans. Knoblock).

We can find the same idea in Mencius: “In times of old, frontier barriers were set up to ward off violence” (*Mencius* 14.8, trans. Zhao et al.). In *Rites of Zhou* (zhouli, 周禮), we can also find a similar instruction: “Rescue the innocent and conquer the guilty” (*Rites of Zhou*, Summer Ministry with the Overseer of Military Affairs, my trans.).

## 3. People-based principle

Whether a war should be fought or not should be decided by people, or more precisely, by the people of the nation to be attacked. After defeating the Yan (燕) state, King Xuan of the Qi state asked Mencius whether he should take over the land thus occupied. Mencius’ answer was to let the Yan people decide.

If the people of Yan are pleased with your annexation, then annex it. . . . If the people of Yan are not pleased with your annexation, then do not annex it (*Mencius* 2.4, trans. Zhao et al.).

The people-based principle obviously has close connection with the violence prohibition principle. A war prohibiting violence is certainly welcome by those who are thus rescued. Therefore, a war that abides to the principle of prohibition of violence will also usually pass the test of the people-based principle.

## 4. Life protection principle

For Confucians, it is the basic responsibility of the government to provide the people with the conditions for leading a decent life. Thus, in case war is inevitable, government should strive to mitigate the harm done to the people. Thus, there should be no excessive killing or destruction on the one hand, and absolutely no looting on the other. In *Records of Ritual Matters* by Dai Senior (Dadai liji, 大戴禮記), it is stated that military forces should be used to “console people instead of robbing them” (Royal Speeches [zhuyan, 主言], my trans.). Mencius also has a similar idea when he refutes the theory as there was large-scale bloodshed when Emperor Wu revolted against Emperor Zhou. His idea is simple: A benevolent ruler does not let this

happen. (*Mencius* 14.3, trans. Zhao et al.). This may not be a good theoretical argument, but the underlying moral principle is clear.

The life protection principle can also be found in Xunzi, who further elaborates its content in much more detail:

The army does not execute the aged or the young, nor does it trample down growing crops. Those who offer allegiance are not incarcerated . . . nor are those who flee for their lives made prisoners. As a general principle, in punitive expeditions, punishment is not extended to the people, but rather only to those who have caused anarchy among them (*Xunzi* 15.1f, trans. Knoblock, my modification).

#### 5. Proper authority principle

Confucians have always emphasized the importance of hierarchical order, in which people of different ranks are endowed with different powers. Modern people may be tempted to believe that such an idea is workable in feudal societies, but not modern societies, but views of this kind are indefensible. In no country could or should a clerk in a governmental office have the same power as that of the president. When the idea of hierarchical order is applied to the issue of warfare, it results naturally that only the highest proper authority can legitimately initiate a war. With the feudal system of the Zhou dynasty, this highest authority is the emperor, which implies that no subordinating state in the nation has the right to launch an attack against another. This idea is expressed clearly in the *Analects*:

When the Way [i.e., the way things ought to be] prevails under Heaven, all orders concerning ritual, music, and punitive expeditions are issued by the emperor. When the Way does not prevail, such orders are issued by feudal princes. . . (*Analects* 16.2, trans. Waley, my modification).

Similarly, Mencius declares, “A punitive war is one waged by a ruler against his subordinates. States on an equal footing are not to wage punitive wars against each other” (*Mencius* 14.2, trans. Zhao et al., my modification).

Therefore, both Confucius and Mencius insist that subordinating states do not have the right to declare war against another state on the same hierarchical level. Projecting to the modern world, this would mean that no country has a right to declare war against another unless delegated by a higher international authority, say the United Nations. Should this principle be accepted by all nations worldwide, we would be close to achieving a peaceful order on a global level. However, even if we accept the principle of highest authority, a remark must be added here. When there is gross injustice in the world or in a nation, it is at least sometimes justifiable to restore order with the use of military force without permission from the alleged highest authority. It is in this vein that Mencius argues for the moral correctness of Emperor Wu’s revolution against Emperor Zhou. Therefore, the proper authority principle may allow exceptions. This, on the one hand, seems perfectly acceptable, but on the other hand also leaves room for misinterpretation and abuse.

## 6. Trustworthiness principle

In a debate with the militarist Lord of Linwu, who believed that tactics and deceptions are essential to warfare, Xunzi argued that a humane military leader should not use deception as a means to victory: “The army of a humane man cannot be dissembled” (*Xunzi* 15.1b, trans. Knoblock). Lord of Linwu’s position is exemplary to the militarist school. Sunzi, for example, states, “All warfare is based on deception” (*The Art of War*, I.11, trans. Giles). With this Xunzi firmly disagrees. As a Confucian, Xunzi has no doubt in the soft power in morality, and thus deception is not just unnecessary, but indeed harmful to the user. Likewise, Mencius argues that, to strengthen the power of a state, what one needs most is moral power, because that is the way to gain support from one’s people (*Mencius* 4.1). Mencius has not mentioned here the question of deception, but the meaning is equivalent: even at the moment of physical confrontation, the determinant of victory is still the power of morality.

What if insistence on morality actually costs the war? The attitude Confucians hold would still be positive. Sheng Hong quotes the comments of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* on the incident in which Duke Xiang of the Song (宋) State refrained from attacking the Chu army while the latter were crossing the river, and thus being defeated: “At a critical moment, [Duke Xiang] still kept steadfastly to the rules of propriety. Even [sage kings like] King Wen could do no better than that” (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 11). Such rigid obedience to moral principles may appear a little puzzling for some people. We shall come back to this point later.

## 7. Proper measures principle

The word “measure” here means whatever methods used in managing armies. All six principles above are derived from basic moral values or principles, but even the best values do us no good unless they are brought to be practiced properly. Governmental and military officials have the duty to manage troops well so that they can effectively protect the nation, and at the same time safeguard the moral values upheld by the government. *Xunzi* lays down detailed principles in ruling an army, which cannot be reported in full here. Briefly speaking, Xunzi’s major principles include: (1) troops must be perfectly disciplined, (2) material resources must be well managed and well protected, (3) intelligence work must be done in a professional manner, (4) decisions must be made independent of irrational emotions, and (5) there should never be any reliance on luck (*Xunzi* 15.1e, trans. Knoblock).

Just like Confucianism in the East, Christianity in the West also believes in just wars. The Christian just-war theory has a long history and has many formulations with minor and delicate differences from each other. Below, I will mention a modern version of it. The Christian just-war theory is composed of two parts. The first part is composed of principles deciding legitimate conditions for declaring war (*jus ad bellum*), and the second part is composed of principles setting limits to behaviors on battlefields (*jus in bello*).

### Jus ad bellum

#### 1. Just cause

War is permissible only to confront a real and certain danger, i.e., to protect innocent life, to preserve decent human existence, and to ensure basic human rights.

#### 2. Competent Authority

War must be made by competent authority with responsibility for public order, not by private groups or individuals.

#### 3. Comparative Justice

Even when there is a just cause to use military force, that cause can never justify the use of force without limits. Therefore, the use of force must always be limited within the scope deemed justifiable by its cause.

#### 4. Right Intention

War can be legitimately intended only for the reasons set forth as just causes. The pursuit of peace and reconciliation must remain the highest priorities in the process of conflict.

#### 5. Last Resort

It is only when all peaceful means result in no progress that one should fall back on the use of force.

#### 6. Possibility of Success

One who fights must stand a chance of winning.

#### 7. Proportionality

The damage to be inflicted and the costs incurred by war must be proportionate to the good expected by taking up arms.

### Jus in bello

#### 1. Proportionality

The same principle of proportionality is also applicable in this area. The damage done in military actions should not exceed the extent justifiable in terms of the good intended.

#### 2. Discrimination

The lives of innocent persons may never be taken directly (US Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter 1992, pp. 98–107).

When we carefully compare the Christian and the Confucian just-war theories, the two appear amazingly similar. The Christian principles of just cause and just reason resemble the violence prohibition principle and the people-based principle in Confucianism. Both theories regard a proper authority crucial to the legitimacy of a war. The principles of comparative justice, last resort, possibility of success, and proportionality remind us of the caution principle. And the final principle in the Christian theory, i.e., the principle of discrimination, parallels in spirit with the life protection principle. The only Confucian principle that fails to find a parallel in the Christian principles would be the trustworthiness principle. It seems then that we shall arrive at very similar conclusions about the moral values of warfare as long as we view the matter of warfare with a



proper sense of compassion. In other words, it is highly plausible that both the Confucian and Christian just-war theories should be applicable more or less universally.

Although Nye has not attempted to develop a comprehensive just-war theory, we can still find that his reflection on military affairs in some way resembles the Confucian and Christian theories. Nye believes that if there are occasions on which the United States really has to use hard power, she must be mindful to protect her soft power “by creating broad coalitions.” Although, given its present structure, it is difficult for the Security Council to pass any bill on the legitimization of any military action, the United States should still gain “the de facto support of a large majority of Security Council members” before she takes any military action (Nye 2004, p. 145). This is precisely a revised version of the authority principles from both the Confucian and Christianity just-war theories.

## 8.5 Benevolent Rule

Nye says that attractive cultures, political ideals, and policies are all sources of soft power. Such a belief is similar to the Confucian ideal of benevolent rule. As I have pointed out previously, this is still not necessarily the kingly way. To boost one’s soft power, the key lies within being wanted and preferred, not spotless moral integrity. Granted all these, however, it is worthwhile to see how much similarity there is between practicing benevolent rule and expanding soft power, for it will help us see why morality is much more than a useless ideal as some may think it is.

How do we cultivate soft power? There are three major sources according to Nye’s analysis: (1) culture, (2) political values, and (3) foreign policies (Nye 2004, p. 6). In what follows, we shall discuss the Confucian views on culture, foreign policy, and political values accordingly.

Let’s start with culture. Culture, on one hand, involves activities and products of high culture such as literature, art, and education, and on the other also involves popular culture, which focuses on mass entertainment (Nye 2004, p. 11). The relationship between popular culture and soft power is rather complex. On the one hand, people who enjoy hamburgers do not necessarily adore the United States. On the other hand, survey findings do indicate that American popular culture has established an image of being affluent, strong, attractive, trendy, and innovative in the eyes of people around the world. In order to explain the soft power of popular culture, Nye quotes the recent rights movement in China as an example. A young Chinese rights activist explained how they prepared psychologically to fight lawsuits: “We’ve seen a lot of Hollywood movies—they feature weddings, funerals, and going to court. So now we think it is natural to go to court a few times in your life” (Nye 2004, p. 12). This, of course, goes against Confucius’ idea of building a society where



“there were no civil suits” (*Analects* 12.13). Whatever the significance of the trend, this truly reflects that popular culture can edify. At the same time, however, “Hollywood movies that show scantily clad women” are also undermining the United States’ soft power by irritating people in more conservative societies (Nye 2004, p. 15). Apart from popular culture, personal contacts among people also provide important ways by which culture is transmitted, and thus may help to cultivate soft power (Nye 2004, p. 13).

The soft power of culture implies that culture helps to bind people together (and is therefore beneficial to the stability of society), and this is certainly well adopted by Confucians. This belief is made clear when Confucians discuss the importance of edification through rites and music. Confucius himself points out that, when the government fails to promote proper rites and music, the people will be so confused about ways to handle social life to the extent that they do not even know how to position their limbs (*Analects* 13.3). The chapter, “Record of Music,” in the *Book of Rites* further elaborates the edification function of rites and music. The idea is that every piece of music carries with it a particular emotional content, and there is a two-way interaction between the music we play or listen to and our feelings (*Book of Rites* XVII, I, 2). As a result, music is considered a perfect tool for emotional education and thus personality education. We can induce in people a sense of harmony and peace by continually exposing them to the right kind of music, and that will help bring peace to society (*Book of Rites* XVII, II, 14 & 18).

All the above messages, in words, are about the edification function of music alone. It is important to notice, however, that the word “music” in ancient Chinese can mean more than music as such and include poetry (poems were more often than not sung instead of simply recited) and dance. And these, together, cover almost all the forms of what we now call cultural activities available in their time. Therefore, what is true of music is also true of other forms of cultural activities, and we can conclude that, for Confucians, cultural activities play an essential role in the formation of the moral character of a people as a whole.

Therefore, it is essential that the government be extremely careful about the moral implications of its cultural policies. Without a set of careful policies to ensure the moral profundity of the culture of society, two possible scenarios may follow. First, with the influence of a culture of degraded morality, the moral quality of people will be eroded. This will then put society under the risk of disintegration, for morality as the cohesive force of society will then fail to function. Second, indecent cultural trends may irritate some social members with strict moral standards, and there will be fights and quarrels between them and people who follow those trends. To maintain a peaceful order, therefore, a government must pay due attention to the building of a proper social and moral atmosphere through cultural means.

A second issue to be discussed is foreign policies, which Nye takes to be essential for the nurturing of a nation’s soft power: “Domestic or foreign policies that appear to be hypocritical, arrogant, indifferent to the opinion of

others, or based on a narrow approach to national interests can undermine soft power” (Nye 2004, p. 14).

Nye’s concrete suggestion for America is that she must put more effort in striving for global welfare instead of defending her own on all occasions. For example,

[T]he Bush administration deserves credit for its efforts to align the United States with the long-term aspirations of poor people in Africa and elsewhere through its Millennium Challenge initiative, which promises to increase aid to countries willing to make reforms, as well as its efforts to increase resources to combat AIDS and other infectious diseases. Success in implementing those programs will represent a significant investment in American soft power (Nye 2004, p. 144).

Nye’s idea that the US needs to strive for global welfare in order to expand her soft power accords perfectly with the Confucian idea of the kingly way. Mencius says:

Now if you practice benevolence in your government, then all the officials in the world will want to find a place in your court, all tillers to plow your fields, and all merchants to store their goods in your marketplaces, all travelers to journey on your roads, and all those who hate their rulers to lay their complaints before you. Such being the case, who can stop you from achieving the end? (*Mencius* 1.7, trans. Zhao et al.)

In the same vein, Xunzi also says: “Accordingly, one who uses the state to establish justice will be a true king; one who establishes authority will be a hegemon; and one who establishes a record of expediency and opportunism will perish” (*Xunzi* 11.1a, trans. Knoblock, my modifications).

According to the Confucian ideal of the kingly way, striving for the well-being of all people all over the world is a joint duty of all governments. For the Confucian, foreign policy is but the extension of domestic affairs. The foundation of the pacification of the world is good governance in individual states, while the foundation of good governance in states is harmony in clans and moral cultivation in individual persons (*The Great Learning*). *The Doctrine of the Mean* says, “How great is the Dao [i.e., way] of the sage! Super abundant, it develops all things, extending up to Heaven” (*Doctrine of the Mean*, trans. Muller 2009b). That is to say that sages must strive to nurture the lives not only of their own people but also people in the entire world.

Finally, we come to the issue of political values. Political values drive a country’s domestic affairs, which eventually affect her soft power. Nye illustrates this with the examples of capital punishment and weak legal gun control in the US, which he thinks are undercutting American soft power on an international level (Nye 2004, p. 13). Likewise, refusals to cut down the emissions of greenhouse gases and domestic agricultural subsidies structured to protect wealthy farmers have also set back the American soft power (Nye 2004, p. 143). In the same vein, Confucians also say that the benevolent rule is not only able to make its people happy, but also attract foreigners (*Analects* 13.16).

The problem of political value is extremely complicated. It is easy to assure the importance of correct political values. It is much more difficult to spell them

out. The Confucian believes that core to correct political values is benevolence, but a popular answer from the contemporary West is that of justice. These answers can give rise to very different policies.

So let us begin with an examination of the idea of benevolence. What do we mean by benevolent rule? “When superiors and inferiors love one another,” says the *Book of Rites*, “we have the condition of benevolence” (*Book of Rites* XXVI, 4, trans. Legge). Benevolent rule is impossible without a certain sense of affection, or sense of connectedness, among people. On the contrary, the Western concept of justice is derived from the idea of social contract, which has nothing to do with interpersonal relationships, at least at the moment of contract making.<sup>5</sup>

A classic example of having justice as the primary political value comes from John Rawls. What makes Rawls’ theory particularly interesting in our discussion is that his theory is just another exemplary attempt to achieve good without good means. For Rawls, it is not only *unnecessary* for government to promote good, but indeed *compulsory* for it to *avoid* promoting good, in order to achieve the right form of governance.

Rawls’ position is very often called the position of moral neutrality, a widely accepted position among contemporary liberals. What Rawls means by moral neutrality is that the government should avoid siding with any *comprehensive* value theory. By comprehensive value theory, he means the following:

[A value theory] is comprehensive when it includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal characters, as well as ideals of friendship and of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole (Rawls 1996, p. 13).

Viewed this way, Confucianism is certainly a comprehensive value theory. Therefore, from a Rawlsian point of view, Confucianism must be an unacceptable political theory. But is he right?

To answer this question, we have to see first why the principle of moral neutrality is adopted at all. The reason, for Rawls, is that we are living in a world of plurality, i.e., a world in which people disagree about what constitutes a good life. It is not only that they disagree, but also that there is no way to have these disagreements resolved rationally. Consequently, in order to have people living together peacefully, the only reasonable thing for the government to do is to remain neutral about the correctness of these theories.

The political culture of a democratic society is always marked by a diversity of opposing and irreconcilable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines. Some of these are perfectly reasonable, and this diversity among reasonable doctrines political liberalism sees as the inevitable long-run result of the powers of human reason at work within the background of enduring free institutions (Rawls 1996, pp. 3–4).

If the government cannot assume the correctness of any particular comprehensive value theory, then the job of the government cannot be that of identifying and promoting goods of its citizens. Its job is rather to distribute certain primary goods in a fair manner. His list of primary goods includes the following:

- a. basic rights and liberties;
- b. freedom of movement and free choice of occupation against a background of diverse opportunities;
- c. powers and prerogatives of offices and positions of responsibility in the political and economic institutions of the basic structure;
- d. income and wealth; and
- e. the social bases of self-respect (Rawls 1996, p. 181).

There are two reasons why the government can take these goods, but not comprehensive ones, for granted. First, since political liberalism aims to provide a model for building a political system, its idea of goods must be political instead of comprehensive. Primary goods do not define good lives in general, but only enable us to participate in social activities as citizens (Rawls 1996, pp. 178–180). Second, what makes these primary goods different from comprehensive values is that they, rather than stipulating particular life projects, are prerequisites of all possible life projects. Therefore, even from a morally neutral point of view, we can still admit these goods as real goods (Rawls 1996, p. 187).

Against this, the Confucian can raise two objections. The first objection has to do with Rawls' separation of political or civil matters from personal matters. Consider a father who never cares about his child. Fatherly care, of course, is a family value and thus comprehensive good. But should we, then, say that fatherly care has nothing to do with political values? Is fatherly care totally irrelevant to, say, the civil education of a child? If, as Rawls permits, a just society can reward a judge because of his contribution to the legal system (Rawls 1996, p. 80), why cannot it also reward a caring father who, with his care, helps his child grow into a good citizen?

Second, if Rawls' primary goods can be recognized as good by a just government because of their all-purpose character, then a responsible government for exactly the same reason can recognize many comprehensive goods. Consider the following Confucian values: (1) ritual knowledge<sup>6</sup> (understanding of the rules according to which society has been working properly), (2) stable and reliable interpersonal relationships, (3) freedom from excessive desires, and (4) personal virtues such as perseverance.<sup>7</sup>

We do not have to assume that this list covers all our basic needs in our personal and social life. All we have to say is that the list does cover goods Rawls rejects as comprehensive and beyond the political realm. Our list deliberately declares that certain ways of living are good: ritual competence is good; stable and reliable interpersonal relationships are good; freedom from excess desires is good, and possessing certain personality traits such as perseverance is also good. Comprehensive as they are, however, they are all just as all-purpose as Rawls' primary goods. You need these qualities whatever your life project is. If I were totally ignorant of the established social norms (rites) of my society, or if I were incapable of behaving at least in approximate accordance with these norms, I would not even be able to become a full-fledged member of society, which Rawls admits is a necessary condition to self-fulfillment, and even less

can I pursue my personal goals in it. If I could not build reliable relationships with others, then at times of frustration and exhaustion, I would not be in reach of the spiritual and emotional support needed for recovery. Freedom from excessive desires is important because an overdose of desires undermines my concentration in the course of endeavors to realize my dreams. Finally, perseverance is also, beyond doubt, a quality one must possess in the pursuit of any dream. If all these qualities are just as all-purpose as Rawls’ primary goods, why should the government refrain from admitting them as real goods?

The above discussion explains why moral education is always the core of benevolent rule. For the Confucian, personal goods and social goods form a spectrum instead of two independent realms, as is expressed thus: “When the self is cultivated, the clan is harmonized. When the clan is harmonized, the country is well governed. When the country is well governed, there will be peace throughout the land” (*The Great Learning*, trans. Muller 2009a).

If it is inappropriate to expel morality from politics, then what morality should we introduce into society? A comprehensive Confucian answer would be too complicated to be presented here. Briefly speaking, we may say that it should at least be a morality of relationships. Interpersonal relationships are where real moral lives start. Furthermore, for Confucians, relationship building and maintenance cannot be done arbitrarily, but has to follow certain instructions. *The Doctrine of the Mean* states,

There are five pervasive relationships in this world, which are carried out in 3 ways. The relationships are those between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and between friends. The three ways of practice are wisdom, benevolence and courage, but they are practiced in unison (*Doctrine of the Mean*, trans. Muller 2009b, my modification).

From this, we may derive a set of rules governing a series of human relationships in a concrete manner. We can make up a list of personality traits that are favorable to relationship building and maintenance, such as wisdom, benevolence, and courage, as stated in the above quotation. We may also add to it such values as harmony, which serves as the ultimate goal of all human interactions. Harmony, though vague, should be reckoned with due respect today. Since the rise of imperialism and capitalism, the entire world has been overwhelmed by a relationship of keen competition, which is apparent not only in the military world, but also in the world of economy. Such keen competition disrupts not only the harmony among people, but also that between people and nature. Like numerous Confucians in traditional society, Jiang and his colleague see that the Confucian civilization can be characterized basically as a civilization of edification through rites and music (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 23). From Jiang’s view, “a civilization built on the kingly way, gentlemanship, and courteous deference” is most favorable to “the maintenance of harmonious human relations and sustenance of human livelihood” (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 35). Below I will elaborate these ideas a little further.

First, benevolent rule is not just a matter of institution, but also a matter of attitudes. One cannot equate benevolent rule to (for example) democracy, or social justice in the morally neutral sense. Benevolent rule means having the right values as a guide to social decisions and public policies. As Jiang points out, when all people are occupied by their personal interests, benevolent rules will be made incompatible with democratic procedure.

Personal interests of one person are mere personal interests. Personal interests of ten people are mere personal interests also. Personal interests of an entire nation are still mere personal interests. It is just that they are bigger (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 46).

Therefore, unless the people of a nation should vote for goods of the entire world, democracy would serve at best the personal interests of a particular nation (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 46). He goes on to explain the limitation of the democratic procedure as a mechanism to authorize governmental power: "Since the days of Machiavelli up until now, the problem with the West lies within its effort to drive morality away from politics, which ended up with a total separation of the two" (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 58).

By paying attention solely to the procedure of voting but not to what people vote for, and by paying attention solely to the reception of the candidates' political programs but not to whether they can serve as role models of people, we shall water down the moral standard of a nation. This is the major problem. Politics, as understood in the Chinese tradition, cannot do without morality. We have to realize moral values by political means. We have to guide, transform, uplift and correct politics with moral values. ... Political power is legitimized by moral values. Politics is by nature moral rather than non-moral (Jiang and Sheng 2004, pp. 58–59).

Second, under the benevolent rule, we cannot propagate the pursuit of personal interest as a positive aspiration. Of course, it is neither possible nor right to forbid citizens from pursuing their interests. The best we can do is let the pursuit of self-interests lead its own way without making propaganda out of it. We may acquiesce in its existence without making it a public moral claim, still less make it the leading value of society. Comparing the Confucian ideal with our society today, we will find the main trend of its development deeply disturbing. In a society where only public opinion counts, a government stands no chance of survival if it fails to fulfill its promise on significant economic growth, even when we know that endless economic growth cannot help but further destroy the natural environment. Universities, high schools, and elementary schools alike, which should aim at knowledge and education, have all explicitly made competition for rankings, subsidies, and public examination results their goals. This may sound harmless, but we have to note that all these purposes are private interests of educational institutes instead of social responsibilities. By replacing the growth of students or pursuit of knowledge with funding or ranking as goals, educational institutes risk betraying their real ideals.

## 8.6 Force Led by Virtue

What role should morality play in the building of social and world order? From Kant to Rawls to Nye, we have seen three distinctive attitudes. Kant finds moral virtues dispensable, while Rawls actually dispenses with them. Amongst the three, Nye’s attitude towards moral virtues is most positive: he reasons that moral virtue is a supportive power we should never ignore. However, as we have pointed out, Nye’s core concern is still power instead of morality. Nonetheless, since he has pointed out the soft power of morality, Nye’s idea remains most favorable to the Confucian idea of the kingly way.

We mentioned earlier that both the concepts of hard power and soft power are concepts of force instead of morality. As Nye says, the smart use of power requires a combination of the use of hard power and soft power. What is implied here, provided that morality is an important source of soft power, is that we can put together morality and power. How should we do that?

Confucians have two clear principles in answering this question. First, there is the principle of the priority of virtue over power. As Mencius says, “[The ancient sages] would not have done an unjustifiable thing or killed an innocent man even to win possession of the world” (*Mencius* 3.2, trans. Zhao et al.). Putting the use of hard power strictly under the guidance of morality may strike some as being too naive. In some ways it is. If a small trick can save the life of the entire nation, it is not at all easy to decide whether it is wrong to do so. But there is still a sense in which Confucians are correct. Power is a tool. It must serve certain purposes. The question is what our purposes are. When our purpose is self-interest, we direct the use of our power to the pursuit of self-interest. When our purpose is the welfare of the entire world, we direct the use of our power to the promotion of their welfare. The second strategy is by no means less rational than the first.

The second principle is giving priority to soft power. This principle is clearly presented in the *Analects*:

Zigong asked about government. The Master said, “Sufficient food, sufficient weapons, and the confidence of the common people.” Zigong said, “Suppose you had no choice but to dispense with one of these three, which would you forgo?” The Master said, “Weapons.” Zigong said, “Suppose you had no choice but to dispense with one of the remaining two, which would you forgo?” “Food. For from the beginning of time death has always been the lot of all people; but a people that no longer trusts its rulers are lost indeed” (*Analects* 12.7, trans. Waley).

The Master said, “Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisements, and they will flee from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by ritual, and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord” (*Analects* 2.3, trans. Waley).

Sufficient weapons present a coercive force. Sufficient food serves as an inducement. Adopting Nye’s terminology, they are both hard powers. To have the confidence of people in the government, however, is clearly a form of soft power, and Confucius clearly opts for the latter. Similarly, political punishment



is a hard power, whereas virtues and rites are soft power. And once again, we see Confucius' preference is for the latter. Yet neither principle overrules the implementation of hard power. And Confucius clearly has recognized this when he parallels civil matters with military preparations. What then, in practical terms, is the relationship between morality and hard power? Jiang has made some interesting suggestions, on which we may elaborate a little further.

When applying our principles to foreign affairs, according to Jiang, two things result. First, a country must not expand her army in the name of cosmopolitanism. We have to achieve good by good means, and more particularly, attain peace by peaceful means (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 2). Since military power is the last resort to defend one's homeland, Jiang adds:

The moral basis for military force is merely to defend oneself and to avoid evil. The principle is thus that of self-protection, which guards us against the endless arms race as prescribed by social Darwinism (Jiang and Sheng 2004, p. 2).

Second, we bring the "wisdom of timeliness and the golden mean" into practice, by which Jiang intends "giving up the goal *temporarily* if the necessary means appears despicable" (Jiang and Sheng 2004, pp. 9–10, my italics).

We have to admit, though, that these principles are somewhat difficult to apply. Yes, it is true that we do not want to be dragged into endless arms races. But arms races are never goals in and of themselves. Everybody knows that an arms race is a lose-lose game. Yet a sense of security requires freedom from threats, and freedom from threats requires one to be stronger, or indeed much stronger, than one's potential rivals. For this reason, there is no situation in which both parties feel that they are safe. The only situation that comes to this is a state of security based on mutual assured destruction. This is peace on the edge of extinction, and therefore not the kind of peace anyone would find pacifying. Moreover, the second suggestion that one should give up one's goal temporarily if the necessary means appear despicable is not always feasible either. In many cases, once you give up your goal, you give it up forever. If the only way to save your life is to fight a dirty war, then either you do it or you die. There is no third option as to giving up your goal temporarily.

But then we see again the shared wisdom of the Confucian and Nye. What is essential is not only to uphold correct moral principles, but also to make good use of soft power. To end the arms race, the only feasible means is to build trust among countries by well-managed foreign policies. Violence does not build trust. Trust is built on proper images, cooperative relationships, and flexible as well as friendly foreign policies. Similarly, to avoid the necessity to fight dirty wars for survival, a nation has to build powerful and reliable alliances. This again requires making good use of soft power.

Of course, that is not to say hard power is useless. As the Chinese idiom states, "Weak countries have no diplomacy." Hard power is indeed necessary to back up soft power. Therefore, smart policymakers use hard and soft powers together. On the one hand, they take hard power seriously, and on the other, they make good use of their soft power in order to build up cooperative



relationship with other countries. Indeed, this is precisely what makes a powerful nation: a solid hard power as a last resort combined with an inexhaustible soft power to support her long-term development.

There is an old Confucian view about the relationship between the shaping of a moral culture on the one hand and the use of legal coercion on the other. The view might be translated as “punishment led by morality” (de zhu xing fu, 德主刑輔). This idea was originally aimed to apply to domestic affairs only, but we can extend it to a wider scope, resulting in the idea of “force led by morality.” Confucians have always emphasized the priority of morality in a nation’s policies, whether foreign or domestic. Benevolent rule is achieved not by universal suffrage alone, nor by abiding to rules of justice as defined in terms of moral neutrality. It is achieved by guiding one’s behaviors and policies with moral values and thus building a society with a great “wealth of culture” (*Analects* 3.14, trans. Waley), one in which people’s “words are sincere, and what they cultivate is harmony” (*Book of Rites*, Book VII, I, 2, trans. Legge). In short, it is a society of edification with rites, music, and other cultural activities. At the international level, the Confucian also seeks a morality-led approach with a focus on the building of friendly relationships among countries. It is only with the promotion of true moral values through the use of soft power, which is in turn supported by a solid hard power that we can achieve long-term stability and peace at both the national and international levels.

To conclude, Confucianism has a higher moral requirement for politicians than all the alternatives we have discussed. Both Kant and Rawls have thought of bypassing moral virtues to build world and social orders. Kant is not wrong when he says that right would prevail in the end. But then the idea about morality is unnecessarily developed by Rawls into the idea that we must, in some particular sense, get rid of morality in order to build society right. Finally, it comes to Nye, who, with concern for both world leadership of America and world peace, reassures the necessity of the strategy of “achieving good by good means.” I have in this essay demonstrated that, whether it is for the building of international or social order, such a strategy is the only feasible option. From the examples of Kant and Rawls, we may want to regard Western culture as one that strives to “achieve good without good means” instead of “achieve good by evil means.” The modern West does not try to build social and world orders by evil means. Rather, it tries to do so by, in some way, ignoring moral virtues. But in the end, not even this is going to succeed. Once we have bypassed morality, we can hardly build a decent social and world order – whether or not we have a moral concern in our own minds at the beginning.

We may then conclude that a good society must be one in which true moral values are given their due respect. But how is this possible? Before I end my discussion, I would like to add a few words about this question. Due to space limitation, my discussion is rudimentary and suggestive rather than comprehensive and conclusive. To revive a culture of respect for moral values, what we need is a multi-dimensional cultural reform project. If we want a simple answer, saying that we can fix everything by fixing just one thing, then we are doomed to

be disappointed. However, a multi-dimensional project, with its complexity, would appear incomprehensible, perhaps even to the wisest among us. Therefore, a certain clarification and simplification would still be needed. Below, I will provide a simplified sketch of what the project should look like.

Tasks in the project can be divided roughly into three levels: theoretical, institutional, and daily-life. In principle, it is the tasks at the theoretical level that constitute the core of the project, for we need theories to guide our practices. But in reality, theoretical work should also be informed by the experience we gain from actual practice at the institutional and daily-life levels. Therefore, work at these levels should have a dynamic relationship with each other. So, let us begin with theories. I believe the establishment of a theory of the kingly way should involve four major tasks. First, we have to prove the relevance of moral values to social order and institutions. Second, we have to develop a defensible version of meritocracy. Third, we have to re-assure the importance of certain basic forms of interpersonal relationships in moral life. Fourth, we have to enrich the moral language used in society. In the Confucian context, we may want to revive a series of terms in relationship to humanity and ritual propriety in public discourse.

When a theory of moral values and their relationship to social life is established, then it will be possible for us to implement these ideas into social institutions. There are just too many different ways by which we can blend moral and political concerns together, and I do not want to say too much about this, for there is rich discussion on the matter in this volume already. What I want to do is remark that I do not think we can decide a priori which model among those suggested by Jiang and others is the correct one. No institution can be proven correct until it passes the test of real social experiments. However, social experiments carry great dangers. A failed social experiment brings enormous harm to members of society. Therefore, my suggestion is that we begin with mild reform projects, proceeding to ones that are more radical, step-by-step and stop where experimental results tell us.

The third level is the daily-life level. Daily life is the ubiquitous transmitter of cultural ideas. Cultural ideas permeate into the invisible corners in our daily life and form rigid bodies of cultural sediments. These sediments are very useful for the revival of an endangered culture. For example, however hard the Chinese have tried to throw away their traditional values, the idea of filial piety remains a powerful moral concept among the contemporary Chinese population, educated and uneducated alike. Likewise, in spite of the predominance of individualism in our society, we all think that saving one's marriage is a meaningful social work. Therefore, through education and cultural policies, we can revive the relatively uncontroversial values in the Confucian tradition. (Other societies may want to revive their own traditions in the same way.) These will then serve as a path for us to gain an understanding of other related values that appear, though perfectly justifiable, less attractive at the present moment in a society heavily embedded with the idea of moral neutrality.

## Notes

1. Zhou is the name of a dynasty (1122–256 B.C.), whose “culture of rituals and music” has been the root of the philosophical reflection of Confucius.
2. An alternative translation of “inward power” (de, 德) is “virtue.”
3. One should be mindful, however, that Mencius has not carefully distinguished between true benevolence and populism here, although he has dealt with this problem somewhere else (see *Mencius*, 2.7).
4. My model of Confucian just-war theory is developed, with significant modification, out of a simpler model suggested by Lin Guizhen (林桂榛). For his model, please see Lin (2004).
5. We have to be careful that, while Confucians also frequently use the term “justice” (yi, 義), their justice cannot be understood independent of benevolence. In this way their understanding of justice is quite different from that of the modern West.
6. The word ritual comes from the word rites, which is one of the more widely acceptable, but not at all accurate, translations of the word *li* (禮) in Chinese. Other translations include propriety, ceremony, politeness, courtesy, manner, protocol, institution, etc.
7. Here, I do not presume that all Confucian scholars would come up with the same list, but I do assume the basic principle of such to be Confucian.

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**Part II**  
**Critiques and Responses**



## Chapter 9

# Jiang Qing's *Political Confucianism*

Daniel A. Bell

It is an honor to comment on Jiang Qing's work. Professor Jiang has written the most systematic and detailed defense of political Confucianism since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. It also requires a great deal of courage to put forward such views in present-day China. I share his view that political transitions must draw on already existing cultural resources if they are to achieve long-term political legitimacy (P, 39).<sup>1</sup> In the case of China, it would mean drawing on the tradition of "political Confucianism" – the most politically influential of China's traditions – and Jiang offers an interpretation of this tradition meant to be appropriate for China in the future. The tradition offers relatively concrete ideas for social and political reform, and it is a clear alternative to the political status quo as well as to Western-style liberal democracy. In this comment, I would like to discuss the actual political recommendations that Jiang derives from the tradition. I will begin by explaining Jiang's methodology and justification for his recommendations, and then I will move on to critical evaluation of his recommendations. My view is that Jiang's recommendations hold much promise, although they would need to be modified somewhat in order to better suit China's social and political context.

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## 9.1 Reviving the *Gongyang* (公羊) Tradition

Jiang's ultimate aim is to put forward political ideas for dealing with China's current crisis of political legitimacy. The current political system is not stable for the long term because it rests (too much) on coercion and fails to engage people's hearts and minds. There may be a case for the current system of economic liberalization combined with tight political control as necessary in the short term to avoid chaos during the highly unsettled period of economic development, but the system lacks legitimacy and there is a need for an alternative that can provide long-term stability. For this purpose, we need concrete ideas of social practices and political institutions inspired by Chinese cultural resources that are best able to remedy the crisis of political legitimacy. Jiang argues that such ideas are most likely to emerge from the *Gongyang* Confucian tradition. The *Gongyang* tradition is closely associated with Dong Zhongshu (79–104 BCE), the Han dynasty scholar who successfully sought to promote Confucianism as the official ideology of the imperial state, and it was revived centuries later by Kang Youwei (1858–1927), the Confucian reformist who championed what he saw as the anti-totalitarian message of the *Gongyang*. Both messages also form part of Jiang Qing's work. Jiang contrasts the *Gongyang* with the *Xinxing* (心性) Confucian tradition (namely, mind Confucianism as it is termed in other chapters in this volume), with its emphasis on self-cultivation. The *Xinxing* tradition inspired Confucian thinkers in Chinese imperial history who engaged with Buddhism, as well as 20th-century thinkers who sought to promote Confucian values in politically unpropitious times. Jiang argues that both traditions are necessary, but the most pressing political task now is to revive the *Gongyang* tradition because it offers more resources for thinking about reform of Chinese social and political institutions. To the extent that contemporary scholars, inspired by the *Xinxing* Confucian tradition, think about social and political institutions, they tend to look to Western-style liberal democratic models.<sup>2</sup> But following this road, according to Jiang, would lead to the obliteration of Chinese culture and would not help to resolve the crisis of political legitimacy. So we should look to the *Gongyang* tradition to deal with the current crisis.

In his book *Political Confucianism*, Jiang does not discuss his actual political recommendations in any depth. I would surmise that the main reason is political: in order for the book to be published in mainland China, Jiang could not discuss ideas for political institutions that substantially diverge from the status quo. However, he does discuss alternative ideas for institutions in his other book published in Taiwan: *生命信仰与王道政治: 儒家文化的现代价值* (2004) (*A Faith in Life and the Kingly Way of Politics: The Modern Value of Confucian Culture*).<sup>3</sup> This book consists largely of lengthy interviews with Professor Jiang on topics related to the contemporary value of political institutions, and I have received a copy by email.



Jiang argues that the current political system is not stable for the long term. That argument per se may not be radical because it is implicitly put forward by the Chinese Communist Party. According to the CCP's own formulation, the current system is the "primary stage of socialism," meaning that it is a transitional phase to a higher and superior form of socialism. The economic foundation, along with the legal and political superstructure, will change in the future. Where Jiang parts with the government is in rejecting any substantial role for Marxist ideology in shaping China's future. He does not make it explicit – again, no doubt due to political constraints – but he rejects the possibility that Marxist ideology should underpin the next phase of China's political development. The main reason, one would surmise, is that Marxism is mainly a foreign ideology and hence cannot underpin political legitimacy for the long term. Marxist ideals may coincide with Confucian political values, and in fact, Jiang argues that the two traditions have some in common, but the main source of legitimacy must come from Chinese cultural resources. And since the *Gongyang* tradition is best suited for thinking about political institutions (among the various Chinese traditions), then it – in revived form – should underpin China's political institutions for the future.

Why, one might ask, do ideas for political reform need to come from only *one* Chinese tradition? I don't think Jiang provides a good answer to that question. For example, the *Xinxing* Confucian tradition may have more to offer than Jiang suggests. Jiang criticizes it for the assumption that social and political change comes mainly from transformation of the ruler's heart-mind (L, 225). But few representatives of that tradition seriously held that view. Zhuxi put forward, and tried to implement, many ideas for reform of community-level social and political institutions that do not depend solely (or even mainly) on the emperor's change of heart-mind (心). The same goes for 20th-century Confucian scholar-activists like Liang Shuming. Some passages in the Mengzi seem to suggest the ruler's moral power is sufficient to change the world, but Mengzi also puts forward ideas for social and political reform such as the well-field system that do not depend solely on the ruler's virtue.

Nor is there any particular reason to be restricted to the Confucian tradition. If Legalism, Daoism, Mohism, and other Chinese traditions offer possibilities for thinking about potentially stable and legitimate political institutions, then it seems dogmatic to refuse to consider those possibilities. Even "foreign" traditions, once implanted in Chinese soil, can take on Chinese characteristics and may be able to provide ideas for reform. In one widely circulated essay, the "new leftist" thinker Gan Yang, for example, has put forward the idea of "Confucian socialism" as the way to think about China's future political ideology.<sup>4</sup> He argues that there are three main traditions in Chinese history – the Confucian tradition, Maoist egalitarianism from 1949 to 1979, and the free-market ideas that have emerged from the post-economic-reform period. The surprising part about the essay is that Gan Yang recognizes the political importance of reviving Confucianism (most new leftists have tended to disparage Confucianism according to the stereotypes of the May 4, 1919, activists: it encourages blind

subservience to rulers, it is rigidly patriarchal, it is incompatible with modern science, etc.). He doesn't say much about the content of Confucianism, but, like Jiang Qing, he invokes the *Gongyang* tradition. But it is only one source of inspiration, not *the* source. To the extent that Confucianism will be appropriate for the modern world, it needs to be reconciled with left-egalitarian values. It may be possible to plumb the *Gongyang* tradition for similar ideas, but why should we not make use of the socialist tradition that offers rich resources for thinking about social solidarity and material equality? To my mind, and here I agree with Gan Yang, the future lies in some sort of "left Confucianism" that combines Confucian and socialist values. However we term this revived tradition, it would need to be sufficiently inspired by traditional Chinese cultural resources so that it can be viewed as legitimate by the Chinese people. But it need not be exclusively Confucian, and even less so exclusively inspired by the *Gongyang* Confucian tradition. Confucianism can be enriched by engaging with socialism, and vice versa.

## 9.2 The Political Implications of Three Types of Legitimacy

Be that as it may, the actual political recommendations put forth by Jiang do not turn on the validity of his critique of the *Xinxing* Confucian tradition, or even on the tenability of the distinction between the two main Confucian traditions he identifies. If the aim is to resolve China's current crisis of political legitimacy, the key question is whether the political institutions he proposes can do so. So let us return to Jiang's actual account of the *Gongyang* tradition, focusing specifically on political implications said to derive therefrom. This tradition is characterized by 王道政治 (the kingly way of politics). The main content of the "kingly way of politics" is that there are three types of legitimacy for political power (L, 156–57). One type of legitimacy is 天 (Heaven), and it refers to the legitimacy that comes from sacred sources ("通儒院"代表超越神圣的合法性). The second type is "earthly" (地), and it refers to the legitimacy that comes from historical continuity. The third type is "human" (人), and it refers to the legitimacy that comes from people's endorsement of political power and makes people willing to obey their rulers (L, 157). The last type of legitimacy is more familiar to Western ears – it seems similar to the democratic idea that government is legitimate to the extent that it derives from people's support – but Jiang warns over and over again that democratic sources of legitimacy should not have superiority over the other two forms. A political system is legitimate, according to the *Gongyang* tradition, if and only if all three types of legitimacy are properly balanced (L, 157–58, 167), with no one type being superior to the others.

One reason democratic legitimacy should not be superior is that democratic majorities may favor policies that are harmful to those not able to exercise political power, like children, ancestors, future generations, and animals. For example, Jiang notes that the Bush administration did not ratify the Kyoto

accord on global warming partly because the current generation of American voters did not view it in their interest to do so (L, 162). Hence, there is a need for a balancing force of morally superior decision-makers able to take into account the interests of all affected by policies, including future generations.<sup>5</sup>

Another reason democratic legitimacy should not be superior is that it will not be stable without historical roots. In a Western context, it may be stable because democracy has a long historical tradition, and people will stick with the system even during hard times. Moreover, they will fight to defend democratic values when they are threatened, as happened during World War II. But in non-Western societies, democracy lacks historical roots, and people may not stick with the system when it no longer suits their interests. If democracy leads to economic decline and political instability (at least, if it is perceived as being responsible for bad consequences), then “the people” may opt for other non-democratic forms of government, such as fascism (L, 168).

So it is not sufficient to seek legitimacy via the people's support. A fully legitimate government should be legitimized to a certain extent by the people's support, but it also needs to be balanced by legitimacy that comes from decision-makers concerned with the interests of all those affected by the government's policies as well as legitimacy that comes from historical continuity. Only this kind of balanced government can be legitimate for the long term.

Jiang's proposals for institutionalizing the three types of legitimacy seem to owe more to his political imagination than to ancient texts. Such creativity is necessary, because any morally defensible attempt to revive traditions will involve putting forward new ideas and proposals. There may be good political reasons to appeal to past authorities to justify one's proposals – for example, they are more likely to be taken seriously if they are seen as coming from the minds of ancient sages – but fortunately Jiang does not merely recycle old ideas. He has thought hard about how to make real the three types of legitimacy in the Chinese context.

In the past, the three types of legitimacy took the form of autocratic rule (君主制) along with associated local, educational, and religious institutions (L, 169). In modern China, however, the old system has collapsed, the historical context has changed, and there is a need for new institutions appropriate for modern times. More concretely, Jiang argues that the three types of legitimacy should take the form of a tricameral legislature, with each house of government representing one type. The 通儒院 (House of Exemplary Persons) represents the legitimacy of the sacred sources, the 庶民院 (People's House) represents the legitimacy of the common people's endorsement, and the 国体院 (House of Cultural Continuity) represents the legitimacy of historical legacy.<sup>6</sup> The particular way of choosing the leaders and representatives of each house of government is quite complex. The members of the House of Exemplary Persons are chosen by nomination and appointment by Confucian organizations in civil society as well as official Confucian institutions. Regarding the latter group, they should be chosen on the basis of political experience as well as tested for knowledge and training in the Confucian classics (四书五经). The members of

the People's House are chosen by elections and functional constituencies, and the members of the House of Cultural Continuity should be representatives of religions (including Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and Christianity) and descendants of great sages and historical figures, including the descendants of Confucius himself (L, 170).

The key to balance is that none of the houses of government has more power than the others. Unlike Western democratic countries where the democratic house has ultimate power, and unlike Iran, where the Council of Guardians has ultimate power (L, 165), each house would have roughly equal power. In concrete terms, it means that no bill could be passed, no policy enacted, unless it has the support of all three houses. No part (or parts) of the system should dominate the other(s). That way, the three types of legitimacy could be balanced, and the ideal of the kingly way of politics could be realized.

### 9.3 An Evaluation of the Proposal for a Tricameral Legislature

The key to evaluating Jiang's proposal is whether it is likely to address China's current crisis of political legitimacy and to provide a long-lasting and stable political alternative. In Jiang's terms, the question is whether it is likely to secure the three kinds of legitimacy that ought to be secured. It is difficult to answer that question, because the political institutions Jiang proposes do not owe anything to actually existing political institutions. Although Jiang defends the *Gongyang* school of interpretation partly because it is concerned with actual historical experience rather than metaphysical speculation (p. 32), his actual political proposals do not seem to owe much to history, other than being inspired by a reading of the moral ideas put forth in "sacred" texts. If Jiang had been more concerned with historical continuity, he could have pointed to similar political institutions in past China – or, ideally, in contemporary China – that seem to have a certain degree of political legitimacy, then suggest how they can be reformed in ways that make them even more legitimate. Or perhaps he could have drawn on social science research showing that his recommended political institutions are more likely to be legitimate than others. In the Chinese context, he could have pointed to actually existing social groups more likely to support his proposal because it corresponds to their interests and aspirations. But Jiang does not do any of that. He seems rather pessimistic that his proposals could be implemented in contemporary China, and he pins his hopes on convincing the intellectual community of the merit of his proposals (L, 225–26). But if there is one thing we learned from the Chinese revolution, it is that the large majority of Chinese – namely, the farming class – must perceive political change to be in its interest. Unfortunately, Jiang does not try to put forward that kind of argument.

Of course, the farming class is likely to endorse the democratic house since it will be viewed as a way for its interests to be represented in the political process.

In that sense, it will be easier to satisfy the type of legitimacy that comes from people's endorsement of political power. But Jiang says that the People's House should also be composed of deputies chosen by functional constituencies, meaning that different professions and social groups vote for their own representatives in the assembly. Again, this proposal does not seem to come from mainland China's historical experience (or from sacred sources), so we have to look elsewhere to evaluate the likelihood that functional constituencies are likely to secure the support of the people (hence satisfying the criterion that legitimacy comes from people's endorsement of political power).

The idea for "functional constituencies" can be traced to Hegel's proposal for a lower house of corporations and social guilds (as put forward in *Elements of a Philosophy of Right*). He worried that individuals not tied to any groups or organizations would be, in his words, "elemental, irrational, barbarous, and terrifying" (sec. 303; see also sec. 308). According to Hegel, individuals come to take an interest in common enterprises and to develop a certain degree of political competence only by joining and participating in voluntary associations and community groups, with the political implication that the lower house should be composed of corporations and professional guilds (the upper house should be composed of the landed propertied class).

In the modern world, the closest approximation of Hegel's ideal is the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. In 1985, the British colonial government decided to institute elections for a number of seats in order to represent more authoritatively the views of Hong Kong people. But it disparaged the idea of introducing direct elections for universal suffrage on the grounds that this might lead to instability. So the government decided that a large number of seats should be allocated to functional constituencies based on various interest groups, a system that still exists, with the largest block of seats assigned to business groups and professional associations. The problem is that it is the least legitimate part of Hong Kong's political system: most functional constituency representatives are perceived as serving the narrow concerns of the richest and most privileged sectors of the community, and there are endless disputes over how to draw the lines within and between the various voting blocs. In poll after poll, the large majority of Hong Kongers prefer to replace this system with directly elected seats. And yet Jiang proposes to implement functional constituencies in the house that is supposed to be the most democratic among the three legislatures! If the house is to have any hope of securing political legitimacy that comes from people's endorsement of political power, the Hong Kong experience suggests that the lower house would have to be fully democratic, meaning that deputies would be selected on the basis of one person, one vote.

It would be even more of a challenge to secure the other two types of legitimacy in the other two houses. The problem is that it is hard to tell – to measure – the effectiveness of legitimacy that comes from sacred sources and historical continuity. The only real way to test the legitimacy of political institutions is whether the people governed by the political institutions endorse them. At minimum, it would mean refraining from rebellion, and at maximum

it would mean showing willingness to sacrifice for the political community in various forms, such as paying taxes, participating in the political process, and sacrificing for the country if it is threatened by outsiders.

The problem is that it is against most people's interest to support institutions that curb their own political power. In theory – and here I agree with Jiang – there is a good case to constrain the power of the majority. If majorities vote to oppress minorities, or to sacrifice the interests of future generations by pushing for rapid economic development regardless of the environmental consequences, or to vote for policies that impose substantial costs on disadvantaged outsiders (like agricultural subsidies from rich countries that penalize farmers in poor countries), or to support bloody unjust wars against other countries, then majorities *ought* to be constrained. The question is: how can we persuade most people that their power ought to be constrained? Jiang recognizes that true political legitimacy cannot rest on force or coercion, so at some level “the people” need to endorse political institutions like the House of Exemplary Persons and the House of Cultural Continuity that constrain their own power. Under what conditions are they likely to do so?

The most obvious answer – one supported by mainland China's post-reform experience, as well as the experience of other economically successful East Asian states – is that states derive an important measure of political legitimacy if they manage to be effective in implementing policies for the people, meaning that they provide the goods that most people care about. What do most people care about? First and foremost, economic growth that provides the foundations for material well-being, employment, educational opportunities, and decent health care. If nondemocratic states can deliver economic growth, then they will have substantial political legitimacy. At the very least, they will avert rebellions. At most, they may cause some people to defend nondemocratic models as morally superior to democracies, as when Lee Kuan Yew praises less-than-democratic states that secure goods like economic growth and social order over democratic states (like the Philippines) that seem to do the opposite.

So let us turn to Jiang's model of a tricameral legislature. Is it likely to lead to effective policies that lead to economic growth while minimizing bad consequences of development such as economic inequality and environmental degradation? Here one has doubts. The main problem arises from Jiang's argument that the three houses of government, each securing a form of political legitimacy, should be “balanced,” with no one house having more power than the other. Concretely, again, that would mean bills must be passed with the accord of all three houses. But what if the houses do not agree? What if the House of Exemplary Persons favors no-holds-barred economic development, whereas the People's House favors expensive measures that deal with global warming in the name of protecting the environmental well-being of future generations? Or what if the House of Cultural Continuity favors massive restoration projects for Qufu (Confucius's hometown), whereas the People's House prefers using those funds to provide for hospitals in poor areas? Such conflicts are bound to occur, and Jiang does not provide any mechanism for dealing with them. The



likely result will be political gridlock, with the country unable to put forward policies that are likely to provide for economic well-being and other desired goods that underpin political legitimacy in the real political world. The people will not put up with constraints on the democratic process if the government does not provide the goods, and there will be intense pressure to abolish, or at least to dilute the power of, the two nondemocratic institutions.

In short, there is a need for a constitutional framework that provides guidance for dealing with conflicts between the three houses of government. But no matter what the framework, it seems unlikely that three houses of government with decision-making power can ever function effectively together.<sup>7</sup> The risks of disagreement and consequent political paralysis are just too great. So the key political requirement for nondemocratic legitimacy – effective decision-making that provides the goods most people care about – would seem to require simplifying Jiang's proposal.

In my view, the most promising way to simplify the proposal would be to forgo the plan for the House of Cultural Continuity. For one thing, it can be viewed as a temporary political institution, according to Jiang's own logic. He notes that democracy is more deeply rooted in Western countries, so the legitimacy that comes from historical continuity can be secured by democratic institutions (L, 164–65). But Jiang's proposal has an important democratic component – the People's House – and if it becomes institutionalized in China's political future, then democracy would eventually become rooted in China, and there would be no need for an institution meant to safeguard historical continuity.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the actual political function of the House of Cultural Continuity can be secured by other means. Jiang says that the task of this institution would be to deal with such matters as the state religion, language, and territory (L, 170), but such matters could be put forth in a constitution, along with mechanisms for change that would involve deliberations in the other two houses. Most serious, perhaps, it is doubtful that the House of Cultural Continuity could ever be viewed as legitimate by the public at large. According to Jiang, this house would be composed at least partly of descendants of great leaders and cultural authorities of the past. But it would seem hard, if not impossible, to persuade contemporary Chinese that people are owed extra shares of political power due to their bloodline. Whatever plausibility such proposals may have had in the past has been undermined by the egalitarian ethos of the Chinese revolution. Such proposals are complete nonstarters, in my view, no more plausible than proposals to reinstate hereditary aristocrats in the British House of Lords.

What does have deeper roots in Chinese culture, in my view, is the idea of meritocracy: the idea that the most talented and public-spirited members of the political community should rule, or at least should be given extra shares of political power. The idea is that everyone should have an equal opportunity to be educated (in Confucius's words, "in education, there are no social classes," 15.39), and those with sufficient talent and virtue who succeed in open competition should be given extra shares of political power. This idea, of course, was

institutionalized by means of the civil service examination system in imperial China,<sup>9</sup> and Jiang's idea for the House of Exemplary Persons, with deputies selected (at least partly) by examinations that test for knowledge of the Confucian classics, may well receive substantial support, particularly given what seems to be renewed interest in reviving Confucian education in contemporary China. Moreover, the revived civil service examination system is one way of maintaining historical continuity with the past, so the House of Exemplary Persons could simultaneously secure two types of legitimacy: the legitimacy that comes from sacred sources and the legitimacy that comes from historical continuity.

There are still some questions to be raised about the House of Exemplary Persons. First, it may be misleading to refer to the source of legitimacy as "sacred sources from Heaven." Confucius himself, for one, did not regard himself as a sage. Moreover, few Chinese today treat the texts as "sacred" in the same way that, say, Islamic people treat the Koran as the word of God.<sup>10</sup> And the effort to promote them as sacred texts is not likely to succeed in contemporary China. Just as it is difficult to "reenchant" the monarchy once it loses its magic, so it is difficult to "resacralize" books once they lose their magic. More importantly, perhaps, does it really matter if the texts being used are viewed as "sacred sources"? For educational purposes, what matters is that they can teach deep ethical ideas that provide guidance for the good life. For political purposes, what matters is that the texts offer guidance to members of the House of Exemplary Persons, meaning that those trained in the classics are more likely to look out for the interests of those likely to be neglected in the People's House: future generations, minorities, disadvantaged groups, foreigners, animals, that is, all those affected by the state's policies who are likely to be neglected by democratic majorities. To my mind, what is good about the classics is that they teach people about the virtues that exemplary persons are supposed to exhibit, such as empathy, reciprocity, humility, and the ability to think as generalists. Such virtues should also be exhibited by political rulers entrusted with the task of looking out for the interests of all those affected by the state's policies, and that is why they should be studied by decision-makers. Ideally, the revived examinations would also test for other abilities and virtues more appropriate for modern-day decision-makers, such as basic knowledge of economics, science, and world history, as well as knowledge of a foreign language. There are many other questions to be answered, such as how to grade the exams in an impartial way, how to filter out clever but amoral (or immoral) exam takers, how to ensure representation by minority groups, and whether the decisions of the House of Exemplary Persons or the People's House should have priority in cases of conflict, but I shall leave these questions aside here.<sup>11</sup>

I suspect that Jiang will think that his proposals have been watered down to the point that they are not sufficiently Confucian, that without more state and institutional support for Confucianism, in particular, his interpretation of Confucianism, such proposals will not be sufficient to address the moral vacuum in contemporary China as well as the attendant crisis of political legitimacy. Hence, I would like to end by considering his proposal for enshrining Confucianism as



China's state religion. Jiang is careful to distance himself from authoritarian views. He argues that state support for Confucianism might translate into resources for Confucian educational institutions, but that it would not mean prohibiting other religions.<sup>12</sup> He compares his proposal to state religions in the United Kingdom and Sweden, where other religions can and do flourish without fear of persecution. Still, the proposal to enshrine Confucianism as a state religion is deeply unpopular in mainland Chinese intellectual circles, even by some thinkers otherwise sympathetic to Confucianism. Qin Hui, for example, says that "it is fine to study and promote Confucianism, but setting up Confucianism as the national doctrine seems to imply treating opposition to Confucianism as heresy. . . . I am very much against it."<sup>13</sup> The main question is whether the Chinese state can be trusted with the task of promoting Confucianism without acting against other religions. The history of imperial China offers some hope in this respect. Typically, the state officially sanctioned Confucianism while tolerating competing religions or doctrines such as Buddhism and Daoism (the worst persecutions of Buddhism were actually carried out by Tang dynasty Emperor Wuzong who was a devout Daoist). But the history of the Chinese state since 1949, to say the least, does not inspire confidence in this respect. In the future, perhaps, it will demonstrate more tolerance to opponents of official ideologies and doctrines. Until that time, however, we need to be very cautious about proposals to implement an official religion in China.

### ***Postscript (May 2008)***

I wrote the preceding comments for a conference on Jiang Qing's thought held in June 2007. Jiang kindly offered detailed comments on each paper, including mine. I have also met Jiang at another conference in August 2007. Let me report my personal impressions first. Jiang's moral integrity should inspire other innovative thinkers in China, whether or not they agree with his views. He clearly puts forth and defends an alternative to the political status quo, seemingly without fear of the consequences. He himself recognizes that it may take years for his ideas to have substantial political impact (he says 20 years, at least). Meanwhile, he has left his formal academic post and established a *shuyuan* (Confucian academy) in remote Guizhou province with the support of sympathetic businessmen. The academy is modeled on Confucian academies in the Song and Ming dynasties that were located in outlying parts of China so as to minimize the likelihood of political interference. The aim is to educate a community of friends and scholars in the Confucian classics and to plant the seeds of political Confucianism. They read classic texts in the morning, discuss in the afternoon, and sing together in the evening.<sup>14</sup> One Beijing University philosophy professor told me that participants are particularly moved by the evening's activities. With his deep and lovely voice, I can imagine Jiang makes quite an impression.<sup>15</sup>

At first sight, Jiang lends support to the view of his critics that he is an anti-Western “Confucian fundamentalist.” He wears the traditional Ming dynasty clothing of the Confucian intellectual and often greets people with hands clasped rather than the “Western” handshake. But when he greeted me, he shook my hand. As we parted, I tried to reciprocate by clasping my hands, but I put the “wrong” hand on top and he smiled, saying there was no need to worry about such things. This good cheer and openness also informed his response to my essay. He is not against Western ways. But the question is why they should be dominant in China. In personal life, why should Western clothing be regarded as “universal,” as the only acceptable form of clothing? In politics, why shouldn’t Confucian values inform political institutions? What he repudiates is the tendency to completely – blindly – repudiate the Confucian political tradition, in the manner of many 20th-century Chinese intellectuals (whether liberal or Marxist).

Does he go to the other extreme? Not in my view. He argues that Confucianism should form the moral and political framework and that learning from other traditions can and should take place within that framework. But what is wrong with that? It is no more dogmatic than Western liberals who show openness to other traditions, but only within the framework of liberal democracy. Institutionally, he says (in his response), it means that the House of Exemplary Persons should have priority over the more democratic People’s House. Ideally, the houses should try to agree on policy. But if they do not agree, the House of Exemplary Persons should have veto power of the decisions of the People’s House.

What about the worry that the People’s House would thus be marginalized from the political process? Jiang proposes to limit the power of the House of Exemplary Persons by limiting its veto power to three vetoes every 5 years. I am not sure that would work in terms of Jiang’s goal of securing the dominance of the House of Exemplary Persons: the People’s House might just force vetoes from the House of Exemplary Persons on relatively trivial matters in the first year or two, with the consequence that the House of Exemplary Persons would not be able to get its way on important issues later. But it is an interesting proposal and less convoluted, arguably, than the complex formulas for determining priority of political institutions in some Western constitutions.

Regarding the House of Cultural Continuity, Jiang concedes that it has been the most controversial of his political proposals, but he insists that it is necessary for a political institution to secure such goods as the protection of the Chinese language. I am still not persuaded, but there is something neat about the idea of three political institutions that reflect the intergenerational outlook of Confucianism, and one might imagine another variation: one institution with the task of securing the interests of ancestors, one for present-day people, and one for future generations.

Perhaps the key issue is not legitimacy but stability. I still have trouble grasping what it means to secure legitimacy from “history” and the “sacred sources of Heaven.” What is clear, however, is that the non-democratic political

institutions will not be stable for the long term if they do not secure the people's support. In his response, Jiang argues that "the Confucian House and the House of Historical Continuity that limit the power of the people do not need the people's agreement, because it is impossible to get people to agree to arrangements that limit their power." But that seems too pessimistic. Even countries with liberal-democratic frameworks have institutions that limit the people's political power, and such institutions are often widely respected. In the US, for example, the Supreme Court, the armed forces, and the Federal Reserve Bank – all appointed rather than elected bodies – score highest in surveys asking Americans which institutions they most respect. In the Chinese context, with its tradition of benevolent rule and respect for educational achievement, it may be even easier to secure support from the people for political institutions that limit their power. Obviously, such support would also be desirable. As Chinese history shows, "the people" will rebel against political institutions they object to. Perhaps that is why Confucius himself argued that the most important task of government is to secure the "trust" of the people (*Analects* 12.7).

Jiang notes another problem: that it is difficult to persuade ordinary people on rational grounds since they may not understand the issues at stake. His solution is to ignore the uneducated masses. But perhaps he underestimates the political intelligence of ordinary people and overestimates that of intellectuals.<sup>16</sup> Jiang is surely right that political capacities vary – not everyone has the same capacity to make sensible and morally informed political judgments – but that capacity does not always correlate with educational levels and other standard measurements. Hence, it's still worth talking to people who might not seem initially receptive to reasoned political argument. What about those – the majority, perhaps – who are mainly moved by narrowly self-interested or emotional concerns? For the purpose of stabilizing the political system, it is still necessary to secure their support at some level. Hence the need for political practices and social rituals that include the people and make them feel part of the system. The real magic of elections, arguably, is that they seem to empower the people without really doing so. Meritocratic examinations open to all also make the people feel part of the system. There may be other possibilities. At any rate, the question of how to persuade those inclined to selfish or emotional political judgments of the merits of political institutions designed to empower exemplary persons should not be swept under the carpet. Jiang needs to win the people's hearts and maybe even their minds.

## Notes

1. The "P" refers to 蒋庆, *政治儒学: 当代儒学的转向, 特质与发展* (北京: 三联书店, 2003) (Jiang Qing, *Political Confucianism: The Transformation, Special Characteristics, and Development of Contemporary Confucianism* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2003). This book, unfortunately, has yet to be translated in English.

2. Jiang offers several other reasons to favor the *Gongyang* tradition in Political Confucianism; see Jiang (2003), pp. 28–39.
3. References to this book will be noted by the letter “L,” followed by the page number.
4. See Gan Yang’s (Chinese language) article, available on the following website: <http://www.wyxyz.com/Article/Class17/200704/17083.html>, visited September 6, 2010.
5. One might add that there is also a need for exemplary decision-makers to take into account the interests of those who are often unjustifiably neglected by democratically selected governments, such as minority groups with legitimate interests in protecting their language.
6. I translate the names of the houses freely, according to my interpretation of the meaning.
7. The United States has three branches of government, but the judiciary, at least in theory, is meant to interpret the law, not engage in political decision-making. Jiang does not mention the judiciary, but it is hard to imagine that any modern society could effectively function without a judiciary. So if we include the judiciary, it would mean four branches of government under his scheme.
8. In Western countries, democracy (by logic) was not deeply rooted when it was first adopted, but it eventually became so, and one can imagine that China would undergo the same historical process.
9. The translation “civil service examinations” is somewhat misleading, because the people selected were meant to exercise political power, not simply implement the decisions of others.
10. See Angle (2007), unpublished manuscript on file with author.
11. Such questions are addressed in the context of a similar proposal for a meritocratic house inspired by the ideas of Huang Zongxi in my books; see Bell (2006), chap. 6 and Bell (2000), chap. 5.
12. See Jiang (2007), an article sent to me by email.
13. See Qin Hui, “The Fate of Confucianism”, <http://www.southcn.com/nflr/llzhuanti/Indjt/wqhg/200704020641.htm>, visited September 6, 2010.
14. Note the contrast with Marx’s relatively individualistic account of the “communist” way of life in the *German Ideology*: “hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner.”
15. I have met more than one person, including highly educated types, who consider Jiang Qing to be a modern-day sage who appears once every few 100 years.
16. My own studies have been tremendously enriched by conversations with our driver. She reads in her spare time and has an impressively detailed grasp of Chinese culture and history.

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# Chapter 10

## Declaration Toward a Global Ethic: Jiang Qing's Response

Jonathan Chan

The Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions, consisting of 65,000 participants from different religions, met in Chicago from 28 August to 4 September, 1993. In that meeting, a document entitled *Declaration toward a Global Ethic* drafted by Hans Küng was discussed on the floor of the Parliament, and it was endorsed with signatures by the vast majority of the delegates of the Parliament. The Declaration not only provoked vigorous discussion during the Parliament but also caused much controversy in the academic world. Jiang Qing, among others, writes to respond to the Declaration from the perspective of the Confucian (Jiang 2003, pp. 341–358). His response can be broadly divided into two aspects, namely, the practical and the conceptual. This chapter discusses Jiang's response to the Declaration, which consists of three parts. I first give an introduction to the background and the contents of the Declaration. I then present Jiang's main arguments of his response to the Declaration. In the final part, I provide a critical analysis of Jiang's arguments as well as the Declaration itself. This chapter discusses Jiang's response to the Declaration.

### 10.1 Global Ethics

Küng's work on the Declaration can be traced back to a colloquium taking place at UNESCO in Paris from 7 to 10 February, 1989, where he gave the keynote address entitled "Pas de paix entre les nations sans paix entre les religions" (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 46), responded to by distinguished professors from the six major spiritual traditions, namely, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Hinduism, and a professor who drew on the perspective of international law (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 46). On 9–10 March of the same year he gave another version of the lecture with the title "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions" at the

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universities of Toronto and Chicago. The ideas set forth in these lectures were taken up in his German work published in 1990 whose English-American edition appeared under the title *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (Küng 1991) in the next year. One of the main theses advocated both in the lectures and the book is that “there will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions” (Küng 1991, p. xv), and that “there will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions” (Küng 1991, p. xv). However, if each religion fully sticks to their standard of truth in dialogue, then the dialogue from the very beginning is bound to be fruitless. Therefore, according to Küng, different spiritual traditions should keep an open mind when speaking with each other. They should formulate the spiritual basis for dialogue and peace in such a way that, while attempting to seek common ground for such a spiritual basis, they should respect the differences among them. He believes that we should be able to work out such a basis. In his view, such a spiritual basis can be worked out in terms of a universal ethical standard based on the concept of *humanum* (or humanity).

Should it not be possible to formulate, with reference to the common humanity of men and women, a universally ethical, truly ecumenical basic criterion which is based on the *humanum*, that which is truly human, and specifically on human dignity and the basic values which are subordinate to it? (Küng 1991, p. 90)

He believes that only based on such a universal ethical standard, which, in turn, rests on the notion of *humanum* (or humanity), can a real dialogue between religions be made and real peace be realized.

It should be noted that, although Küng is a Catholic theologian, he does not think that the spiritual basis in question must be based on a particular conception of God. Rather, he thinks that it should rest on a universal ethical standard founded on the aforementioned concept of humanity. Küng takes the concept of humanity to be the starting point of formulating the spiritual basis for dialogue and peace for the following reasons. The first reason is that the concept of humanity runs all through various spiritual traditions. For Küng, a true religion must rest on the premise that takes true humanity seriously. And it is this premise by means of which we are able to distinguish good religions and bad ones (Küng 1991, pp. 90–91). The second reason has something to do with Küng’s view on the logical basis of the universal ethical standard. “For ethical criteria, the basic question in logic sense is: What is good for human beings? The answer is: those that can contribute to real life. . . . The basic norms of ethic go behind” (Küng 1991, p. 90).

According to Küng, right ethical norms should be formulated in terms of what is valuable for us as humans. And what is valuable for us is that which can help us realize our true nature, i.e., true humanity. Therefore, for Küng, the right ethical norms presuppose the following: “People should not live inhumanly and by pure instinct just as a beast, but stick to human nature and in a rational manner” (Küng 1991, p. 90). Also, according to Küng, to give full play to humanity a person should do the right things.

human beings should not be inhuman, purely subject to their drives, 'bestial', but should live in a rationally human, truly human way. So that would be morally good which allows human life to succeed and prosper in the long term in its individual and social dimension: what enables the best possible development of men and women at all levels (including the levels of drives and feelings) and in all their dimensions (including their relationship to society and nature). (Küng 1991, p. 90).

So much has been discussed about the background of the Declaration. Now let us turn to the Declaration. In my view, the Declaration is actually an extension of the previous work done by Küng. A main part of the Declaration is to represent the relationship between the global order and global ethic: there is no new global order without a new global ethic. The ethical requirement advocated in the Declaration is that every person be treated humanely. It points out that the world is experiencing a comprehensive and fundamental crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics.

Hundreds of millions of human beings on our planet increasingly suffer from unemployment, poverty, hunger, and the destruction of their families. Hope for a lasting peace among nations slips away from us. . . . More and more countries are shaken by corruption in politics and business. . . . Our planet continues to be ruthlessly plundered. A collapse of the ecosystem threatens us. . . . Religion often is misused for purely power political goals, including war. We are filled with disgust (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 7).

The Declaration holds that different religious doctrines provide us with a kind of ethic, which supplies the moral foundation for a better individual and global order (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 9). This global ethic does not represent "a global ideology, or a single unified religion beyond all existing religions or a religion dominating all other religions" (Küng and Schmidt 1998, pp. 11, 13). Instead, it rests on a common basis which is present in all existing religions, that is, "a minimal *fundamental consensus* concerning binding *values*, irrevocable *standards*, and *fundamental moral attitudes*" (Küng and Schmidt 1998, pp. 9, 13). In a more concrete term, the basic requirement of the global ethic advocated by the Declaration is that everyone should be treated humanely. Küng gives the following interpretation to this global ethic:

This means that every human being without distinction of age, sex, race, skin color, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity. . . . Humans must always be the subjects of rights, must be ends, never mere means, never objects (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 15).

In addition to these basic requirements, the Declaration also proposes a second supplementary basic principle – the "Golden Rule":

There is a principle which is found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousands of years: *What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others*. Or in positive terms: *What you wish done to yourself, do to others!* This should be the irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions. (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 68).<sup>2</sup>

According to the Declaration, this principle includes some very specific criteria that people must uphold. This leads to the acceptance of four broad and ancient



rules of human conduct that can be found in most religions in the world (Küng and Schmidt 1998, pp. 16–29):

1. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life;
2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order;
3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness;
4. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

In the above, I have briefly reviewed the main ideas of the Declaration. Now let us turn to the question about the nature of the Declaration. There are a few points deserving special attention. First, according to Küng's comment, the Declaration is not meant to be a repeat of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and this is what should be avoided. Otherwise, the criticism raised by various Indian religious communities that the Declaration is a typical "Western document" is unavoidable (Küng and Schmidt 1998, pp. 66–67). Nonetheless, the Declaration was drafted with a view to affirming and deepening the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 11). Second, the Declaration deliberately makes a distinction between the ethical level and the purely legal or political level. Therefore, it does not appear in the form of an international legal document or political statement in the very beginning (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 54). Furthermore, the Declaration is not meant to be a philosophical treatise. This is because the drafters hold that the Declaration should address more than intellectuals or educated people (Küng and Schmidt 1998, p. 55). Therefore, it strongly avoids the use of professional evaluation and jargons of science. Finally, the Declaration is not meant to be a religious proclamation, although the drafters consider that it has a religious basis (Küng and Schmidt 1998, pp. 55–57).

## 10.2 Jiang's Response

Having discussed the background and content of the Declaration, let us turn to Jiang Qing's response to the Declaration. Jiang fully affirms the motive of the Declaration.

On September 4, 1993, the Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions signed a document entitled *Declaration toward a Global Ethic* and published an introduction to give an exposition to the document which was meant to advocate a Global Ethic or World Ethic. . . . During this chaotic period, the thoughtfulness and kindness of the initiators of the Declaration is great and their determination and courage attempting to resolve the suffering by advocating a global ethic is worth high praise, and I myself am deeply moved (Jiang 2003, p. 341).

But he holds a critical attitude toward the objective of the Declaration which aims to put forward a global ethic as the moral foundation of the global order. He believes that the solution to human plight does not rely on the scholars



“Global Ethic”, but instead on tradition-based “local ethic” (Jiang 2003, p. 341).

Jiang comments on the Declaration from both the practical and the conceptual points of view. Let me summarize his comments as follows.

### *10.2.1 Problems of Global Ethic in Practice*

(i) Jiang thinks that at the present moment it is impossible for the global order to agree on a “Global Ethic” or “World Ethic” because both the historical and cultural conditions are far from mature for the global order to agree on a “global ethic” (Jiang 2003, p. 341). By appealing to the theory of the “three periods of the world” propounded by Confucianism, which divides the history of the world into three stages, namely, the chaotic period, the developing period, and the prosperous period, Jiang points out that the world is now at the stage of the chaotic period and is far from being in the developing period, let alone entering into the prosperous period (Jiang 2003, p. 342). In this chaotic period, the ideal of the Grand Union is not applicable (Jiang 2003, p. 342). It is because there are independent nations and states that have different cultural backgrounds. This means that conflicts of interests or values and clashes of civilizations are unavoidable. Thus, a “Global Ethic” which can exist only in the prosperous period is not applicable to the global order, at least at the present moment. For Jiang, “Global Ethic” is an ideal only for the future world (Jiang 2003, pp. 342–3).

(ii) His other argument for the inapplicability of a “Global Ethic” is concerned with the nature of ethics. He argues that each ethic has its specific historical and cultural background, and that no ethic can go beyond a specific history or culture. A Global Ethic is, however, exactly an attempt to abstract an ethic from any particular history and culture, and therefore divorce it from its inherent historical characteristics and cultural structure and to change it into a kind of “abstract ethic” or “transcendental ethic” (Jiang 2003, p. 343). He points out that “even [if] we can integrate the similar elements in various cultures, this Global Ethic cannot bind various nations in different cultures and countries in practice because this ethic is separated from any specific historical and cultural structure and does not have the characteristics of a particular affinity with a nation” (Jiang 2003, p. 343). He believes that this abstract ethic does not have the same authority as that of a certain ethic rooted in a specific history and cultural tradition:

Long-term historical accumulation and cultural identity have given its inherent ethic authority and effectiveness and makes ethic a habit, a tradition, a collective unconsciousness, a group memory, and finally an absolute law obeyed by a certain group of human beings (Jiang 2003, p. 344).

### 10.2.2 *Conceptual Problems of Global Ethic*

One of Jiang's main criticisms of the Declaration is that it is strongly influenced by the Western perspective, even if it is not Western-centered. He cites evidence from the "General Provisions" of the "Universal Declaration of Global Ethic"<sup>3</sup>: "We certainly support these positive human values – freedom, equality, democracy and mutual recognition and commitment to justice and human rights" (Jiang 2003, p. 348). He points out that freedom, equality, democracy, and human rights are products of Western culture, rather than "human values" *simpliciter* (Jiang 2003, p. 348). Jiang, from the Confucian point of view, argues that freedom, equality, democracy, or human rights are non-universal human values.

(i) The nature of freedom and human beings

On the value of freedom, Jiang makes this statement:

The Declaration regards freedom as the essence of life and states that as long as there is no violation of the rights of others or no disrespect of animate or inanimate objects, everyone has the freedom to exercise his right to use and develop his every ability. This is quite different from the thought of Confucianism. In the Confucian view, the essence of living a human life is not achieving a person's freedom but showing his conscience and reverting to its ontological nature (Jiang 2003, p. 352).

Jiang points out that it is an a priori truth that conscience exists in human nature. Therefore, it is not a result of our choice, and freedom can only be a means to achieve human nature. If we take freedom as the essence, ultimately morality and ethic will be cancelled out (Jiang 2003, p. 352). In addition, Jiang mentions that the understanding of "freedom" in the Declaration has problems and it is even very dangerous. This understanding of freedom implies that if persons do not infringe on the rights and property of others, they can do anything (Jiang 2003, p. 353).

(ii) The issue of equality

In terms of the value of equality, Jiang argues that

The Declaration is based on Western values. So in the development of the Global Ethic, equality is regarded as its basic principle, such as emphasizing the equality of all people, the rights of equality, the equality between men and women. . . . According to Confucian culture, formal equality refers to specific equality in front of laws. This equality is a kind of "one size fits all" and rational equality. This equality is a leveled one in the legal sense. So it is of legal significance only. However, this equality does not consider the actual differences among people, nor the reasonable value of the differences. It, instead, makes the actual inequalities even but allows some sort of legitimate real inequality. In fact, this is a kind of inequality. That is an inequality ignoring the relative differences among people. Therefore, according to Confucianism, attending to equality must pay attention to people's differences. Real equality is equality which is relative to the order of actual differences. And it is only this kind of real equality which can be actually perceived (Jiang 2003, p. 355).

## (iii) Issues of democracy and human rights

On democracy, Jiang asserts that Confucianism does not support democracy, because democracy is flat and secularized. This means voting for both the good and the poor which excludes the moral, wise, and talented ones from the circle of politics (Jiang 2003, p. 348).

About human rights, Jiang proposes that:

Confucianism is not entirely sure of human rights, for human rights stem from material desires rather than moral realization. They have only negative meaning for resisting oppression but not the positive value of high purpose (Jiang 2003, p. 348).

And he adds that:

The Declaration stresses its affirmation of human rights and respect for Earth. These are two rights – human rights and earthly rights, which are far from enough. There should be divine rights. Divine rights are transcendent rights. This means that in addition to human rights and earthly rights, Heaven should also have inviolable rights (Jiang 2003, p. 350).

### 10.3 My Comments

I am sympathetic with Jiang's view that we should resolve the human plight via tradition-based "local ethic" rather than a "Global Ethic" as endorsed by the Declaration – in fact, by a small group of so-called representatives of all major religions. However, I have some reservation about some other points he makes with regard to the Declaration.

(i) Should "divine rights" be added?

Jiang proposes that besides human rights and earthly rights we should add divine rights. It is true that Heaven, Earth and Humans are the three basic notions in the ethical perspective of Confucianism. The notion of rights, however, cannot be found in any Confucian classics. I argue in other occasions that the idea of rights is not compatible with the ethical perspective of Confucianism. Briefly, the concept of rights has a philosophical presupposition which asserts the moral priority of individual interests (Chan, 2001, pp. 94–112).<sup>4</sup> And it is exactly this philosophical presupposition which is in conflict with the ethical perspective of Confucianism because Confucianism would not endorse giving individual interests a moral priority over communal interests. What's more, the reason for adding divine rights given by Jiang is not compelling. He presents the following argument for his view:

People and properties are physical beings and have no transcendent sacred value. But "heaven" is metaphysical and has transcendent sacred value. The physical cannot share the value of the metaphysical. Human and earthly rights are short of metaphysical definiteness, so they do not possess any transcendent rationality or legitimacy. Therefore, people cannot be convinced to accept them (Jiang 2003, p. 350).

However, even if it were true that the two secular rights need a metaphysical basis, it would not be necessary to add divine rights. It is because there is a great difference between fleshing out a metaphysical basis and conferring a right to that basis. A more fundamental problem is that the definition of “divine rights” is not clear at all. In brief, rights has be understood in terms of interests. Then what are the interests of “heaven” or “sacred entities”? Interests are non-metaphysical. Then, how can rights be applied to the metaphysical?

(ii) Is Confucianism against democracy?

Jiang thinks that Confucianism disagrees with democracy. Apparently, the idea of governance in Confucianism supports Jiang’s point of view. Confucianism stresses the rule of virtue and elite politics. And these ideas seem to be incompatible with democracy. However, there are also people-oriented ideas in Confucianism. Therefore, if conditions permit, democracy can find better leaders than other forms of politics such as autocracy or oligarchy. So there is no reason to conclude that Confucianism is against democracy. This is certainly not to say that Confucianism is in favor of democracy. What we want to express is that Confucianism does not necessarily exclude democracy; instead, it accepts democracy with some conditions.

(iii) Freedom and equality

The issue of equality and freedom can be divided into three points.

- (1) Jiang points out that Confucianism does not take freedom to be the nature of humans. I agree with Jiang as to this point. This can be shown by referring to Mencius’s theory of goodness of human nature.
- (2) Jiang argues that from the Confucian point of view, the notion of individual freedom even though subject to the condition of not violating the rights of others or showing improper attitude toward the animate and inanimate objects is morally incomplete in itself. However, Jiang further puts forward that the Declaration should add this regulation: not only the dignity, value, or rights of other individuals, but also the dignity, value, or rights of nature and Heavenly *Dao* (*tiandao*), should not be violated (Jiang 2003, p. 352). I am afraid I cannot agree with this proposal. The first question is, what can be regarded as a violation of the rights of Heavenly *Dao*? from whence do such rights come? Are they universal?
- (3) As to the notion of equality, Jiang believes that equality in Confucianism is a relative idea, that is, it is equality of being relative to the order of actual differences (to call it “relative equality”). This equality is the equality of every person in actual situations. It is actual, real, and perceivable, while formal equality emphasized in Western countries is only equality in before the law. However, what exactly is this “relative equality”? How can this equality be perceived? Perhaps Jiang means that everyone has his or her specific identity, social role, and capacity, which should all be considered in treating him or her. This might be what Jiang calls the “equality of

actual people with differences” or “relative equality”: in the sense that people who have the same identity, social role, and ability should be given equal treatment. If this is what Jiang really means, using the word “equality” is misleading because the ideal of equality is to eliminate unequal treatment based on identity, social roles, or ability. Furthermore, the ideal of equality in Western society does not only mean equality before the law. It also requires us to respect other people’s rights. Therefore, the notion of equality emphasizes not only legal equality but also moral equality.<sup>5</sup>

- (iv) The feasibility problem of Global Ethic Jiang proposes two arguments against the feasibility of Global Ethic. The first argument is that Global Ethic can exist only in the prosperous period and therefore cannot be applied to the global order at the present moment. This claim is contrary to the Declaration’s view that it is exactly because of the fact that the world is now in a disordered stage that there is an urgent need to establish a global ethic. Jiang, however, nowhere argues why such an ethic can exist only in the prosperous period.

Jiang’s second argument is that the Global Ethic propounded by the Declaration is an “abstract ethic” or “transcendental ethic” and therefore does not have any moral authority over the actual people living in specific history and cultures. There is some merit in this argument. This can be seen from two lines of arguments expounded below. First, if the ethics in question is merely an ethic that the major spiritual traditions commonly affirm, then the moral force of the ethic comes from these traditions. In that case, the ethic does not have additional moral force going beyond that of those spiritual traditions. On the other hand, the major spiritual traditions are mutually exclusive with regard to their doctrines. This means that their doctrines and principles cannot all be true at the same time. Thus, the moral force of the ethic in question can only come from some but not all of these spiritual traditions. And it has moral authority only for the followers of the respective spiritual traditions. For those who have no religious belief, the moral force of the ethic in question is even more doubtful. As the Declaration adopts the so called “appeal to the consensus” approach to construe the Global Ethic, the reasonableness of the ethical values and principles of this ethic partly depends on the broadness of the basic consensus. But the evidence offered in the Declaration cannot meet the requirement that the consensus be broadly representative. The Declaration claims that there is a minimum ethical consensus among various religions in the world so that it could serve as the basis of the global ethic (Küng and Schmidt 1998, pp. 9, 13). This claim, even if true, does not have rational force for non-religious people, because the ethical consensus in question might not be shared by non-religious people.<sup>6</sup>

## Notes

1. The document is hereinafter to be referred to as the Declaration.
2. According to Kūng, similar interpretations of the “Golden Rule” can be found in major religions. “What you yourself do not want, do not do to another person” is the one in Confucianism.
3. “The Universal Declaration of Global Ethic” quoted by Jiang is not the text signed on the Parliament of World’s Religions. It is another document compiled by Leonard Swidler, a professor at Temple University and also the chief editor of *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. Although there are minor differences, the central idea is basically the same. Therefore, Jiang’s comments on the declaration of Leonard Swidler can also be applied to the Declaration.
4. Human rights are based on individual interests. Meanwhile, human rights set an insurmountable moral boundary (moral restrictions) to protect individual interests. These boundaries can limit a government or a community when they violate the interests of individuals in the name of traditional moral or religious boundaries or even the interests of the community as a whole.
5. For more detailed discussion of the issue of equality, see the chapter by Fan in this volume.
6. In fact, the global ethical values and principles proposed by Kūng have not yet been accepted by the United Nations, and have not been recognized as a basic consensus among ethnic groups. This shows that it is still quite doubtful whether the global ethical values and principles can become a basic human ethical consensus.

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# Chapter 11

## Jiang Qing's Arguments on the Inevitable and Permanent Conflict between the Christian Faith and Chinese Culture and on Establishing Confucianism as the State Religion

Ping-Cheung Lo

### 11.1 Introduction

In *Political Confucianism*, Jiang Qing discusses the Christian faith and Chinese culture at some length. His arguments are distinct in that, rather than comparing the thoughts and institutions of the two, he discusses them from the perspective of nationalism, national spirit, national life, and the “sole supremacy” of Confucianism, with the purpose of pointing out the inevitable and permanent conflict between them.

Although the book is written in a clear and well-organized manner, the subject is repeated because the volume brings together several overlapping essays (Jiang 2003, p. 8). In this article, Mr. Jiang's view on the inevitable and permanent conflict between Confucianism and Christianity are analyzed in four arguments with responses developed from the standpoint of Christian theology.

### 11.2 The Argument that Nationalism Requires Total Loyalty

Mr. Jiang's general argument revolves around the goal of “modernizing China” (Jiang 2003, p. 401), to which there is no objection. He then argues for the necessity of nationalism for the realization of that goal. He states this clearly:

Nationalism is a positive driving force for the establishment of a modern country. Judging from the development of modern nationalism, it can be justified as long as it does not degenerate into racialism or aggressive expansion. Contemporary research of comparative politics and politics of development has proven that substantial nationalism is an absolute essential for a developing country that wants to modernize its politics. The meaning of “substantial nationalism”, according to Professor Lucian

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W. Pye, is a pure, healthy nationalism that can overcome the conflict between tradition and modernism and that contains cultural ideals (Jiang 2003, p. 396; all English translations in this article are mine).

Mr. Jiang then explains the elements of nationalism and the meaning of Chinese nationalism.

Nationalism is, by definition, a national consciousness based on tradition. As French nationalist Ernest Renan said, nationalism consists of two parts: 1) a rich tradition to remember; 2) many people living together and hoping to develop their common tradition. . . . It is for this reason that I consider the Confucian tradition, which has been passed down through generations, as the very basis for Chinese nationalism. That is to say, it is utterly impossible to have substantial nationalism in China without the Confucian tradition, which represents the core values of Chinese history and culture (Jiang 2003, p. 397).

He then reiterates the value and importance of nationalism:

It is nothing but the history, culture and spirit of a nation that make it see what distinguishes it from other nations and enables it to modernize itself in a firm and stable manner. . . . To encourage its citizens to maintain their loyalty, a developing country must awaken their national awareness and make them remember its historical and cultural tradition, recall its past greatness and glory, and realize their obligation to their ancestors and posterity. To do this, nationalism must be based on the nation's historical and cultural tradition (Jiang 2003, pp. 402, 406).

Thus, although Sun Yat-sen emphasized nationalism in his Three People's Principles, Jiang finds this a "rootless" nationalism because:

Sun Yat-sen saw traditional Chinese culture as a means of unifying the country for a fight against humiliation by foreign countries instead of recognizing it as the core value and fundamental source of Chinese nationalism (Jiang 2003, p. 399).

Finally, Jiang proposes that a "pure and healthy" nationalism should not only have roots, but must also be "nationalism in its full sense" of demanding total loyalty to the nation state and its cultural tradition:

The rootless nature of Sun Yat-sen's nationalism is also manifested in the separation of personal faith from the national spirit among nationalists who believed in Sun's Three People's Principles. As we know, most of these people, especially those in power, were Christians but respected the Chinese cultural tradition, especially the Confucian tradition, where the nation was concerned. They drew a clear line between their personal faith and the spiritual life of the nation instead of imposing the former on the latter. This, which should be attributed to their humility and generosity, is praiseworthy. However, it cannot be denied that such separation was rather regrettable, for it means that the nation's life was torn apart and that its spirit failed to receive loyalty from all its members. . . . Strictly speaking, a Christian could not be a nationalist in the full sense, because the latter must not deviate from the Chinese cultural tradition either in personal or in national life – his personal faith should not be separated from the nation's spiritual life. In other words, a nationalist in the full sense must anchor his



or her life in the nation's cultural tradition and dedicate his or her full loyalty to it (Jiang 2003, pp. 399–401, see also p. 431).

To put it simply, the reason for the inevitable and permanent conflict between the Christian faith and Chinese culture is, according to Mr. Jiang, that Chinese nationalism demands that all Chinese unconditionally devote their full loyalty to the native Chinese culture. This is an exclusive demand. Thus, to believe in Christianity, a foreign religion, is to betray Chinese culture, as is to believe in Buddhism. “Liang Shuming chose Buddhism as his personal faith but chose Confucianism with regard to the nation” (Jiang 2003, p. 430), which according to Mr. Jiang was also regrettable (Jiang 2003, p. 431). This seems to be an echo of the old idea that “one more Christian or Buddhist means one Chinese less.”

In my opinion, this nationalist demand is rather dangerous, because it holds the country, the nation, and its native culture as the exclusive objects of loyalty, making the finite infinite, the relative absolute and the multicultural unicultural.<sup>1</sup> We must be wary of such ultimate nationalism, which was the foundation of Nazism and Fascism (Dahbour and Ishay 1995, pp. 222–237).

*[Jiang Qing's comment: By “pure, rooted, and healthy nationalism,” I mean nationalism based on Confucian values, which honor the Kingly Way and the “Distinction between the Chinese and the Foreign.” The essence of the Kingly Way is to rule by virtue rather than coercion, and the essence of the distinction concerns morality rather than race. Thus, full loyalty to nationalism based on Confucian values will not lead to Fascist rule or Nazi racial persecution. Instead, it will result in the rule of Confucian values, in which people are convinced by good deeds and other cultures are respected. This is determined by the content of Confucian values. Mr. Lo does not have to worry.]*

Christians have always stood for the idea of rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Matthew 22: 21). Each Christian is simultaneously loyal to one's country-nation and to God, with the former being restricted by the latter. Thus, loyalty to one's country, nation, and government is neither ultimate nor absolute. That is why Christians such as Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Yu Bin, and Luo Guang also advocated nationalism. Mr. Jiang criticizes such nationalism for being “rootless,” yet it seems simplistic to evaluate the different forms of Chinese nationalism by a binary distinction between having or not having roots. It may be fairer to evaluate them by the depth or quantity of roots.

*[Jiang Qing's comment: Christians are only loyal to God in faith, and their loyalty to the secular nation is subordinate to their loyalty to God. In this sense, they dedicate full loyalty to God. In a Western Christian country, there is no conflict between a Western Christian's full loyalty to God and his or her loyalty to the nation. However, in the same country, there would be conflict between a Western*

*Christian's full loyalty to Confucian values and his or her loyalty to the nation, because Confucian values are not that country's historical or cultural tradition and have no historical or cultural legitimacy in a political sense. For the same reason, in China, a country with a Confucian tradition, there will be conflict between full loyalty to God and loyalty to China, as was the case with such politicians as Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, because the Christian faith is not part of the Chinese historical or cultural tradition and has no historical or cultural legitimacy in a political sense. Admittedly, Sun and Chiang respected Chinese historical and cultural tradition more than any other politicians. That is why Mr. Lo argues that their nationalism was not without roots, but that it was a matter of the depth or quantity of roots. This is a cogent argument that I can accept. However, in this context, "roots" concern faith rather than practical engagement. Sun and Chiang did not have roots in Confucian values because they believed in Christianity. However, I do not mean to deny their actual adoption of the Confucian tradition for government, which was manifested in, for example, "the power of examination" and "the power of supervision" in Sun's Five-Power Constitution.]*

### **11.3 The Argument of the Inevitable Conflict Between Two National Spirits**

Mr. Jiang's other novel approach to the issue of the Christian faith and Chinese culture invokes the idea of the *Volksgeist* or national spirit. First, he stresses that individual faith must be linked to the national spirit:

Abstract individuals do not exist, for everyone exists in the form of a particular country and nation. Thus, humankind's faith cannot be purely individual beyond country and nation. As long as God's City is yet to come, as long as humans have to face God as members of a nation, and as long as humans exist in history, human faith will inevitably be expressed as a national spirit (Jiang 2003, p. 424).

Second, he accepts that all nations are equal and infers that all national spirits should exist on an equal footing and none should be eliminated (Jiang 2003, pp. 424–427). Third, he concludes that every national spirit has its limitation:

National spirit has its limitation, which is reflected mainly in the fact that it cannot transcend the limited existence of a nation and acquire absolute universality. This is because national spirit is a historical phenomenon. . . . Though an individual of a nation may believe that his or her faith is an absolutely transcendent truth of life, his or her faith is immediately expressed as a national spirit when he or she encounters another nation in the capacity of a member of his or her nation. Such limitation makes it impossible for the absolutely transcendent truth of life to be free of national characteristics during its propagation, thereby greatly reducing the universality of that truth (Jiang 2003, p. 428).

Thus, once more he reaches the conclusion of inevitable conflict:

Since national spirit is limited by a specific national identity, tensions and conflicts are inevitable when two national spirits meet, though fundamentally both embody the absolutely transcendent truth of life. Such tensions and conflicts cannot be dissolved unless there exists no nation any more and people understand and spread the truth of life as individuals only instead of members of nations. Thus, from a historical perspective, any truth of life is expressed as a national spirit during its existence. It will be strongly resisted by other national spirits, which seriously hampers its spread and prevents it from becoming entirely universal.

We may then draw a conclusion: since the Christian faith is expressed as a national spirit (the spirit of Western nations) when it meets Chinese culture, there will be inevitable tension and conflict between it and the national spirit representing Chinese culture, or, more specifically, the Confucian faith. Such tension and conflict are not only between two faiths, but also between two national spirits (Jiang 2003, pp. 428–429).

Finally, he states that the conflict between national spirits, which is the inevitable result of the spread of religion, can never be resolved.

While intra-person tension of faiths can be resolved by individual conversion, intra-nation tension and conflict of national spirits cannot be resolved by national conversion. This is because the national spirit is the soul of a nation and the fundamental sign of its existence. It would be the most immoral act to destroy a national spirit by national conversion, because that would destroy the nation (Jiang 2003, p. 429).

I have several comments to make regarding this complex argument. First, although individuals are limited by particular historical and cultural conditions, the spread of religion is not necessarily accompanied by the spread of a particular national spirit, because this differs among individuals and depends on the intensity of an individual's awareness of that spirit. National spirit is not an independent, self-subsistent entity, but rather the habits of a community preserved in their mode of thought, value judgments, and the ways in which the members interact with each other. As the members of the community differ, so too does the intensity of their common habits. In other words, national spirit is merely a general description of a community, and is expressed with different degrees of intensity by its members. During the spread of religion, it is possible that both the giver and the receiver have a strong sense of national identity or that neither does. If the latter is true, then there will neither be attempts to convert another national spirit nor strong resistance from that national spirit.

Second, as national spirit is not an independent, self-subsistent entity, we cannot deduce “the equality of national spirits” from “the equality of nations.” Equality is not a factual judgment, but a value judgment. That everyone should be treated equally does not mean that the behavior and values of everyone should be treated equally, because behavior can be good or bad, as can value commitments (e.g., sacrificing oneself for the benefit of others versus harming others for one's own benefit). Thus, there is no moral basis for the equal treatment of habits of behavior or value commitments. National spirit

represents the collective behavioral habits of a nation, [*Jiang Qing's comment: National spirit has an upper level and a lower level. At the lower level, it is "the collective behavioral habits of a nation," as Mr. Lo says. At the upper level, however, it is the spiritual value expressed by a nation's cultural tradition. Mr. Lo's interpretation of national spirit is incomplete because he overlooks the upper level. Although national spirit can be divided up and elements added or subtracted at the lower level, it is unified and interconnected at the upper level. It can be changed at the lower level, but not at the upper level, for otherwise it would not be the national spirit.*] hence one national spirit can be superior or inferior to other national spirits. Mr. Jiang is wrong in saying that "no national spirit is inferior to another, for all the differences are due to historical and cultural reasons" (Jiang 2003, p. 427).

Third, because Mr. Jiang acknowledges the historical limitations of national spirits, he should also admit that every national spirit is a contingent rather than necessary product of history. National spirit is not normatively immutable and can be altered by us as we see fit. No national spirit is perfect, and there is always room for improvement. It is thus inappropriate to consider national spirit to be "the soul of a nation."

*[Jiang Qing's comment: There would be no national spirit if there were no nations. According to Gong Yang's "theory of the three worlds," in the "peaceful world" there is no distinction between nations and consequently no national spirit. Until the coming of the Great Harmony, there will be nations and national spirits. National spirit is the fundamental trait of a nation, and serves as the fundamental sign that distinguishes it from other nations.<sup>2</sup>]*

Fourth, two national spirits cannot meet unless through two persons. Whether there will be tension or conflict depends on their attitude. It depends on whether one party tries to impose his or her national spirit on the other or tries to persuade the other with reason. It also depends on whether the receiver responds with arrogant inapproachability or with rational deliberation and assimilation of what is being offered.

Fifth, in terms of the motive for becoming a Christian, I have learned that some Chinese, especially in large cities, believe in Christianity because it is "Western enough." However, as far as the result is concerned, many people, especially those in the countryside, still maintain the traditional national spirit. The Chinese Protestant Church and the Catholic Church have practiced self-administration, self-propagation, and self-support (the so-called "three selves") for over 50 years. They have been so successfully indigenized that the form of religion adopted by many rural churches is not much different from traditional Chinese folk religion. Just as most Chinese-speaking Buddhists show no significant Indian national spirit and most Chinese-speaking Muslims show no significant Arabian national spirit, so few Chinese Christians are likely to show a significant Western national spirit.

*[Jiang Qing's comment: Despite the indigenization of Christianity, its cultural symbols are, after all, Western. The Old and New Testament and the "Four Books and Five Classics" represent two disparate faith systems that are impossible to reconcile completely. The indigenized Christian faith is still about the Jesus and God of the Old and New Testament, rather than the Heavenly Way and "xing-li" of the "Four Books and Five Classics." In this sense, the indigenized Christian faith is still ultimately Western and its fundamental faith system will not change. Indeed, the Western faith system of Christianity will not change even if the Old and New Testament are translated into Chinese and Jesus and Mary are depicted in paintings as ancient Chinese figures.]*

Sixth, admittedly, many Chinese Christians may choose to integrate the Western national spirit and the native national spirit of China. This is not immoral, because it is the result of free and rational choice. Rather than disappearing, a national spirit will change for the better or for the worse. Change for the better will renew and re-invigorate the national spirit, which is a renewal and regeneration of the nation. This is not the same as destroying a nation; Mr. Jiang has exaggerated the threat.<sup>3</sup>

*[Jiang Qing's comment: If, like ancient Buddhism, Christianity respects the orthodoxy of Confucianism and interacts with it in a constructive manner, consequently expanding its theoretical structure and enriching Chinese culture, then this will be the most successful paradigm in resolving the "clash of civilizations." I hope that the encounter between Confucianism and Christianity will result in this ideal solution. However, even if this is realized, it does not mean that the fundamental characteristics and ultimate faiths of the religions have been eliminated. There will remain a deep yet implicit difference and conflict, for otherwise Song and Ming Confucians would not have repeatedly criticized Buddhism on the basis of its faith.]*

Finally, I would like to respond to Mr. Jiang's appeal to Christians. Based on his argument of the inevitable conflict between national spirits, he makes an earnest appeal to Chinese Christians in terms of Christian theology:

For millennia, the Confucian faith has represented the national spirit of the Chinese races, endured their sufferings, maintained their unity, and anchored their life. For all the setbacks and damage it suffered in modern times, the Confucian faith now seems likely to be revived. I can confidently affirm that the Confucian faith will be restored to its original proper status and re-emerge as the symbol of the Chinese national spirit. This privileged status cannot be taken over by any other faith, for such authority was won through competition with other faiths over history. Thus, the Christian faith should respect the historical status and unique glory of the Confucian faith and pray for the restoration of its orthodoxy in the spirit of fraternity and humility. This is because God will never destroy Chinese culture and the Chinese national spirit. It is the obligation of all God's people to restore with commiseration what God has created (Jiang 2003, p. 429).

Mr. Jiang appeals only to the doctrine of creation in Christian theology, which, in fact, also contains the doctrine of redemption. If we agree that contemporary Chinese culture is not in a desirable state, then rather than destroying Chinese culture, God will renew and regenerate it. God will also renew the Chinese national spirit rather than destroying it. In Christian theology, all that was created by God is in a postlapsum disorder, and needs redeeming and renewing, which is the obligation of all God's people to participate. Chinese Christians should neither destroy the Chinese national spirit nor replace it with a Western national spirit. Instead, they should make it healthier, richer, and more brilliant. [*Jiang Qing's comment: That is my greatest wish, which I hope will come true.*]

The Western national spirit also needs renewing. Robert Neville, an advocate of "Boston Confucianism" and a non-liberal theologian, proposes the use of Confucian ritual culture to renew the US nation (Neville 2000). He and his colleagues do not consider this assimilation a disrespect of the American spirit.

#### **11.4 The Argument of the Inevitable Conflict Between Two Distinct and Particular Historic Cultures**

Mr. Jiang follows the same line in his next argument. He insists that Christian faith does not exist outside of history and culture, and that any Christian faith we see and meet is incarnated in a particular history and culture. Thus, the spread of religion is also the spread of culture. Based on this notion, he reiterates the inevitability of conflict:

Since a universal truth must be expressed in a particular history and culture, from which it cannot be isolated, its form of expression is in fact that of a particular history and culture. Thus, there will be tension and conflict when the universal truth expressed in one kind of history and culture meets one expressed in another kind of history and culture. Such tension and conflict do not stem from universal truth itself, but from its historical and cultural nature. In other words, though humankind can perceive but one universal truth ("there is only one Great Way" and "all laws have the same origin"), it is expressed in different historical and cultural forms. The encounter of universal truth in different kinds of history and culture is not only the encounter between abstract and transcendent minds, but also the encounter between particular kinds of history and culture. Thus, when two faiths meet, the uniqueness of history and culture will cause tension and conflict between them. This is determined by the finitude of human existence because human's faith cannot be free from history and culture and be completely transcendent and absolute. That is why the spread of one advanced religion will be resisted by another advanced religion, which greatly limits its universality (Jiang 2003, pp. 421–422).

Applying this general law of the inevitable clash of civilizations to the Christian faith and Chinese culture, Mr. Jiang draws the following conclusions.

When the Christian faith comes to China, there is inevitable tension and conflict between it and Chinese culture, and its universality is destined to be resisted by the

latter. This is because what encounters Chinese culture is not a faith completely beyond history and culture, but a historical and cultural form of that faith. The tension and conflict between the historical and cultural forms of the two faiths can be anticipated. I am sure that as long as humankind's history has not come to its end and the Christian faith continues to appear in a historical and cultural form, there will be permanent tension and conflict between it and Chinese culture, and no effort toward the creative synthesis of the two will succeed (Jiang 2003, p. 422).

Although Mr. Jiang does not use qualifiers such as "all" and "none" in the first quoted passage, the tone of the book and other arguments in it show that he considers the proposition of the inevitable conflict between two distinct cultures that encounter one another to be universal (Mr. Jiang, who admires Samuel Huntington's theory on the clash of civilizations, states that Huntington is "truly insightful" in pointing out that "the clash of civilizations is an eternal one" (Jiang 2003, pp. 436, 439). We can simplify the argument in the form of a syllogism. Premise 1: Conflict is inevitable when different cultures meet. Premise 2: the Christian faith and Chinese culture are different cultures. Conclusion: there will be inevitable and permanent conflict between the Christian faith and Chinese culture.

The validity of the argument hinges on the universality of the proposition in Premise 1, and a great deal of historical data is required to determine whether it is true or false. I cannot definitively resolve the issue because I am not a historian, but counterexamples do seem readily apparent. It was along the Silk Road that the Indian, Persian, and Arabian civilizations came to China. The Buddhist civilization was well assimilated into Chinese culture despite its initial rejection by the Confucian literati. Manichaeism and Nestorianism had little difficulty in reaching China and met no resistance, though neither lasted long. However, Islam was smoothly introduced into China and developed rapidly, and is now well entrenched in China.

As I have mentioned in the discussion of national spirit, a culture or civilization is not an independent, self-subsistent entity; it has no independent will. There is no encounter or conflict between two cultures per se. Whether there will be a conflict depends on the people of those cultures and the attitude they assume at the time of the encounter.

Take Professor Tang Yijie of Peking University, for example. No one doubts his affection and loyalty to Chinese culture, but his attitude toward foreign civilizations is in marked contrast to that of Mr. Jiang. He states in a recent book:

As the slogan of the Xueheng School goes, we need to "develop the quintessence of the national culture and incorporate new ideas." Thus, we should abandon the either-or mentality of total westernization and total revive-the-past conservatism, and be tolerant and open-minded in the establishment of our cultural standpoint. . . . The highest ideal of Chinese culture is that "all things develop without harming each other and all Ways co-exist without conflict." This is an idea of comprehensive harmony.

Today we still need to advocate Lu Xun's idea of 'taking' western culture instead of having it thrust upon us. Our culture cannot be renewed unless we have the ability and



courage to introduce good cultures of the West and other nations, not piecemeal, but completely and systematically (without narrow-minded pragmatism). We cannot have a full view of the strength and weakness of our culture unless we see it from the perspective of the alterity of other nations and cultures. As an ancient poet said, "I cannot see what Lushan Mountain is really like because I am trapped within it." (Tang 2007, p.1–2, 120).

For Tang Yijie, loyalty to Chinese culture does not mean hoping it will never change, but hoping it will renew and transform itself by incorporating good, foreign cultural ingredients.

*[Jiang Qing's comment: This attitude is fine on the abstract level, but the critical point is that enhancement "by incorporating foreign cultures" must be oriented toward the strengthening of existing Chinese culture if it is to be accomplished without changing the fundamental spirit and inherent nature of that culture. Thus enhanced, the culture in China must remain Chinese. Advocating the "equal and nonpreferential integration" of Western and Chinese cultures with the fashionable attitude of tolerance and open-mindedness I am afraid will result in the disappearance of Chinese culture. This is because modern Western culture is strong and dominant, and is supported by the hegemonic Western power over politics, economics, science, technology, education, and the media. It is expansionary and aggressive, whereas the Confucian culture, which has yet to recover from a century of damage, is rather weak. Considering the vast difference between their strength, "equal and nonpreferential integration" will inevitably result in the disappearance of Chinese culture. If Western culture is a vast ocean, then Chinese culture is but a small stream, which, if it does not grow into a lake, river, or sea, will be swallowed by that vast ocean. We should thus abandon the fashionable enlightened attitude of tolerance and open-mindedness and orient the absorption of Western culture only toward the strengthening of existing Chinese culture. When Chinese culture has grown into an ocean, there will be no need to stress this orientation.]*

The validity of Mr. Jiang's argument on permanent conflict thus does not depend on cultures per se, but on the people of those cultures.

*[Jiang Qing's comment: I find the opposite to be true. The critical point about cultural conflict is not people, but cultures per se. An individual with a transcendental mind can believe in a transcendental being beyond any particular culture, which is proven by the fact that some Chinese individuals with such a mind believe in God beyond Chinese culture. However, as a product of a particular history and tradition, culture cannot reach beyond itself, hence the permanent conflict of cultures. This conflict will not end until the foreign culture has completely changed the native culture and replaced it as the new orthodox, dominant culture, as has been the case in the Philippines and some African countries.]*



Conflict will be more likely if most Chinese adopt Mr. Jiang's attitude toward foreign cultures, but will be much less likely if most people agree with Tang Yijie.

*[Jiang Qing's comment: I am afraid that if most Chinese agree with Tang Yijie, then the result will not be a decrease in conflict, but the disappearance of Chinese culture.]*

At the end of the last quoted passage, Mr. Jiang further predicts that no effort toward the creative synthesis of the Christian faith and Chinese culture will succeed. I prefer to base this prediction on induction. In other words, it would be desirable for Mr. Jiang to explain why all previous efforts have failed, from Matteo Ricci in the Ming Dynasty to Lin Yutang, Xie Fuya, Zhao Zichen (T. C. Chao), Luo Guang (Stanislaus Lo), and Qin Jiayi (Julia Ching) in modern times.

*[Jiang Qing's comment: I do not believe that those people succeeded in integrating the Christian faith and Chinese culture. They were scholars who interpreted Chinese culture from the standpoint of the Christian faith, and they expressed nothing but their opinions on Chinese culture from the perspective of another culture. The so-called integration will not be realized unless a new culture is forged that harmoniously embodies the spiritual natures of both Western and Chinese culture and becomes China's orthodox and dominant culture. I believe this to be impossible, because the spiritual natures of the two cultures simply cannot be joined together without conflict.]*

## **11.5 The Argument for the Continuation of the Established Status of Confucianism in China**

Mr. Jiang claims that “the tension and conflict between the Christian faith and Chinese culture will last long and even forever (in history)” (Jiang 2003, p. 435). His final argument is that China should allow only Confucianism to enjoy exclusive supremacy, but Christianity still attempts to spread itself among the Chinese.

He proposes two reasons for the exclusive supremacy of Confucianism. The first is that “the Confucian faith represents the Chinese national spirit [...] This privileged status cannot be yielded to any other faith [...] For 2000 years Chinese culture has ‘settled down’ on Confucianism and it should and will remain so” (Jiang 2003, pp. 429, 435). The second is that the Confucian faith demands that the Chinese “believe in the Confucian tradition whole-heartedly” (Jiang 2003, p. 400).

There can be no more than one object of faith, and one should maintain absolute loyalty to it, because only in this way can there be an anchor for life and serenity for the soul [. . .] Specifically, in today's China, including Hong Kong and Taiwan, the Christian faith and the Confucian faith are contending for loyalty. Faced with the two, a Chinese should only choose one instead of being loyal to both. This is an either-or choice and it requires absolute earnestness [. . .] All in all, one cannot be loyal to two faiths. Many Chinese try to be Christians while keeping their faith in Confucianism, but this cannot be done. Besides endless anxieties and conflicts in one's mind, it is expressed as nothing but the lack of loyalty to either (Jiang 2003, p. 433).

I will not elaborate on the first claim (that Confucian faith should and will enjoy exclusive supremacy in Chinese culture and that the privileged status is permanent) because it is such a controversial claim that it has been heatedly debated for quite some time. The second claim, that the Confucian faith demands wholehearted belief and absolute loyalty, is a novel one and deserves some discussion. Mr. Jiang states in a footnote: "Though the Christian faith and Chinese culture cannot be creatively synthesized, they may well nourish themselves by the assimilation of good ingredients in the other side. In fact, the Christian faith does contain much for Chinese culture to learn" (Jiang 2003, p. 436). Mr. Jiang's view of the exclusivity of the Confucian faith seems to have been influenced by the exclusivity of the monotheistic faiths, i.e., Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The First Commandment states, "you shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20: 3; NRSV). The Shema, which observant Jews recite every day in the morning and evening, is also derived from the Holy Bible: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6: 4–5; NRSV). These words were later quoted by Jesus, who called it the first and greatest commandment (Mark 12: 29–30). Jesus also taught his disciples, "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6: 24; NRSV). Mr. Jiang's novel claim on the exclusivity of the Confucian faith sounds like a Confucian version of the exclusivity of the one and only God. It is interesting that most Chinese theologians reject neither Chinese culture nor Confucianism, because loyalty to both culture and God is acceptable in the Christian faith, in which culture is not ultimate and can thus coexist with God. However, Mr. Jiang does not allow this dual loyalty because he does consider Chinese culture to be ultimate. As he narrows Chinese culture down to the Confucian faith, he inevitably also rejects Daoism and Buddhism. None of the contemporary neo-Confucians in Hong Kong, Taiwan, or overseas, such as Liu Shu-hsien, Cheng Zhongying, and Tu Weiming, rejects Buddhism, Daoism, or Christianity. Indeed, Tu Weiming has gone so far as to say that Confucianism is but an "adjective," and can be integrated with any other faith. Mr. Jiang is the sole advocate of the exclusivity of the Confucian faith.

*[Jiang Qing's comment: The exclusive supremacy of Confucianism does not mean the exclusion of other cultures, systems of thought, or faiths. Rather, it means*

*establishing in China the orthodoxy and dominance of Confucianism, or setting it as the state religion. The orthodoxy and supremacy of the Anglican Church in Britain and of Lutheranism in Northern European countries has not resulted in the exclusion of other cultures, systems of thought, and faiths. As an individual, a modern Chinese person is free to choose his or her faith. Even if Confucianism is established as the state religion of China, Chinese citizens would not be forced to be exclusively and absolutely loyal to it, and individuals who believe in other systems of thought or religions would not be forced to have "dual loyalty." This is testified by Confucianism's history of respecting other faiths and its doctrine of tolerance. However, the Chinese are not free to not choose Confucianism as the orthodox and dominant state religion or not allow Confucian civilization to represent the historical and cultural distinctiveness of China, because this goes beyond the boundaries of personal faith into the domain of the "historical and cultural legitimacy" of a country. In this sense, the Chinese Confucian culture is ultimate, orthodox, dominant, irreplaceable and enjoys exclusive supremacy, as Mr. Lo says. Just imagine, will China still be Chinese if Christianity or Islam, rather than Confucianism, is established as the orthodox, dominant, state religion in China? The exclusive supremacy of Confucianism means the establishment of the Confucian nature of Chinese civilization, rather than the narrow-minded exclusion of other systems of thought and religions. However, Confucianism will exclude any system of thought or religion that aspires to become the orthodox and dominant state religion. Tu Weiming's idea that Confucianism is but an "adjective" cannot be accepted, because it is a form of self-deprecation. In my opinion, Confucianism cannot be revived and become an independent entity unless it is the subject.]*

## 11.6 Conclusion

Mou Zongsan wrote 50 years ago that "we do not oppose Christianity and we value the freedom of religious belief. However, we do not wish to see a Chinese who really cares for China to believe in Christianity" (Mou 1970, p. 69). Mr. Jiang agrees with Mou in this regard, but there is a difference. Mou wrote several books in which he compared the content of the Confucian faith and that of the Christian faith to prove that Confucianism, rather than Christianity, is "the perfect religion" and thus more worth believing in.<sup>4</sup> In *Political Confucianism*, Mr. Jiang repeatedly discusses the inevitable and permanent conflict between Christianity and Confucianism from the perspective of community and politics. However, none of his arguments are based on what the two faiths are actually about and, though original, they are somewhat lacking in substance. I look forward to seeing him articulate novel and more sophisticated discussions in the near future.

Although he believes in the clash of civilizations, Mr. Jiang has proposed several ways to decrease the impact.

Specifically, since the tension and conflict between the Christian faith and Chinese culture can never be eliminated, we need to draw a line between them so that each stays within its boundary instead of trying to infringe upon the other. Moreover, they should behave to each other with tolerance and respect so as to co-exist in permanent peace instead of hostility (Jiang 2003, pp. 435–436).

Put simply, Mr. Jiang’s solution for lessening the impact of the clash of civilizations is to keep all civilizations at a safe distance from one another, and to define a legitimate, sovereign sphere of influence for each with no infringement from others.

This solution is distinct in that it relegates all major world religions to the status of regional religions, and opposes the global spread of any religion. In economic terms, it means that each religion will have a monopolized market, and thus advocates protectionism. This solution is out of tune with the irreversible trend of globalization. The globalization of free trade entails the free exchange of ideas on a global basis. In today’s environment of free competition on the basis of ability and real strength, those who stick to convention will inevitably be eliminated, and flourishing can come about only through constant reform and renewal. I wonder whether it is beneficial or detrimental to the Confucian faith to adopt protectionism in relation to Confucianism in China?

*[Jiang Qing’s comment: Protectionism is the only choice in the contemporary world in which Confucianism is definitely weaker than the Western religions. When Confucianism becomes stronger, we will, of course, consider constructive interaction or even constructive competition with the major religions of the world. However, at the moment we must choose protectionism, because Confucianism is weak and in need of rescue.]*

### ***11.6.1 Epilogue: On the Benefits and Harm of the Establishment of Confucianism as the State Religion in Light of the Experience of the Church of England***

Mr. Jiang’s essay “On the Reconstruction of Chinese Confucian Religion” is highly original, and has been the subject of much discussion. Briefly put, he expresses his hope that Confucianism will rise again as “the royal and official doctrine” (the dominant ideology of the state), and that the Chinese Association of Confucian Religion will acquire exclusive supremacy through the implementation of the “upward policy (of persuading government officials)” and “downward policy (of persuading society).” The goal is that Confucianism will be the orthodox state ideology, but other schools of thought will not be suppressed.

Since Confucianism was and will be the state religion, the role played by the Chinese Association of Confucian Religion among Chinese religions should be equivalent to that of the Church of England among British religions. The Association should not only be privileged to have a say in politics and entitled to land, gifts and funds from the

state, it should also be privileged to design the curriculum of elementary education, to design the state's major ceremonies, and to hold grand sacrificial rituals on behalf on the state, and to have other privileges. (Note: The Anglican Church is the state religion of Britain by common law and has privileges, Lutheranism is the state religion of Northern European countries by constitution and has privileges, and the Eastern Orthodox Church is the state religion of Greece by constitution and has privileges. However, these countries remain free democracies. Thus, the privileged status of Confucianism as the state religion of China means only the consensus and unification of Chinese spirit and thought rather than spiritual and ideological dictatorship. My fellow Chinese need not to worry over this point.) (Jiang 2005).

Although I do not know much about Lutheranism in northern Europe or the Eastern Orthodox Church in Greece, I do know something about the Church of England in Britain. Thus, I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of England's policy of establishing one religion in the hope of shedding light on the Chinese situation.

First of all, the establishment of state religions in Western European countries was a result of historical contingency rather than purposive design. The various churches of Western European countries were originally part of the One Catholic Church and were loyal to the Vatican. After the Reformation, some states replaced the Vatican as the ultimate authority over the church. Owing to subsequent religious persecution and wars, state religions were gradually abolished as church became separated from state, and those that remain established have seen their role diminish.

There are now eight major clauses governing the role of the Church of England (the Anglican Church) as the established church of England:

- (1) The monarch is "the Supreme Governor" of the Church of England.
- (2) The monarch and his or her spouse must be members of the Church of England.
- (3) All leaders of the Church of England (the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of York, all bishops, all cathedral deans, and some vicars) shall be appointed by the monarch (nowadays usually nominated by the Prime Minister and nominally appointed by the monarch).
- (4) The doctrines and rituals of the Church of England are decreed by Canon Law, which is invalid unless passed by Parliament.
- (5) The finances and property of the Church of England are managed by senior government officials called Church Commissioners.
- (6) Archbishops and bishops are automatically members of the House of Lords.
- (7) The entire England is divided into parishes, with churches and clergy in each parish. These clergy serve all the people in the parishes, not just church members only, and are thus the spiritual leaders of the parishes.
- (8) The government supports Church-run schools, and all schools, whether run by the government or the Church, hold a brief prayer session every day that students are free to choose whether to attend (Bennett 2005; McLean 2004).

These rules have brought both benefit and harm to the Church of England. On the positive side, Rules 7 and 8 certainly would benefit the spread of the religion. However, the effects and costs of these beneficial elements are uncertain. For instance, how many more people have become Christians due to Rule 8? Why has the number of British people attending church services continually decreased in recent years? (Heubel 1965, p. 653) As for Rule 7, the government has decided that all parents have a legal right to have their babies baptized in the parish church, and that divorced people who have been baptized have a legal right to wed in the parish church. The clergy cannot refuse these requests, regardless of whether or not the parents of the child to be baptized or the couple to be married are sincere about the rituals. That is the cost (Bennett 2005).

If Rules 7 and 8 may benefit the Church, Rules 3, 4, and 5 are definitely detrimental to it. Take Rule 3, for instance. Although the Church negotiates with the government before the appointment of its leaders so that most of those nominated by the consistory will be nominated by the Prime Minister, in a minority of cases the Church will be disappointed, because appointments hinge on consistency between the political stance of the candidates and that of the government.<sup>5</sup>

Rule 4 caused much trouble in the 1920s, when the law still required that rituals in keeping with the *Book of Common Prayer* be used for worship in the Church of England all over the country. However, the book was unsuitable for contemporary use because it is still the version of 1662. Blatantly breaking the law, many clergymen designed and used a contemporary version of the rituals that deviated from the approved *Book of Common Prayer*. To prevent this awkward situation from continuing, the three courts (those of bishops, clergy, and lay believers) of the consistory approved a revised edition of the *Prayer Book* and submitted it to Parliament for approval. However, in two consecutive years (1927 and 1928), it was approved by the House of Lords but voted against by the House of Commons. The veto displeased the Church of England so much that the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Arthur Michael Ramsey, vowed to resist at the cost of withdrawing from the Establishment.<sup>6</sup> Later, the consistory of the Church of England published a report called “The Church and the State” in 1935 to officially state the strong desire for the disestablishment of the Church.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, the government yielded on this matter, but future conflicts on other issues cannot be ruled out.

Rule 5 is unfavorable to both Church and government, and needs no elaboration here (McLean 2004, pp. 8–9, 19–20). As for Rule 6, the privilege is expected to be lost when the House of Lords undergoes major reform. Rules 1 and 2 are obsolete. Rule 1 exists in name only, because the British monarch has no substantial power and the church is in fact “governed” by the Prime Minister and his or her staff. Rule 2 is unnecessary, which deprives members of the royal family of the freedom of religious belief (McLean 2004, pp. 18–19).

As a state establishment, how much aid does the Church of England obtain from the government to carry out its religious mission, and what are the effects? There are no definite answers. However, although the benefits are uncertain, the

disadvantages are rather obvious, *viz.*, the Church is inevitably controlled by the government where critical internal affairs are concerned. For this reason, there are often calls for disestablishment both within and without the Church. However, disestablishment has not become the consensus within the church for other reasons. First, many worry that disestablishment will turn England into a completely secularized country. If the state church disappears, then the state religion will vanish. This concern is also shared by other denominations.<sup>8</sup> Second, the Church of England has other concerns regarding the matter. As it is a state establishment, it is not the church but the government that has the initiative; the Church has no right to unilaterally announce the end of its status as the state church. Third, if the government initiates to disestablish, it may lead to the horrible result of the banishment of the Church from all the church properties which are owned by the government (Church Assembly 1936, p. 50).

In other words, from the perspective of the Church of England, the historical legacy of establishing a religion and a church has been far from desirable. It is for other reasons that it has yet to be abolished, but that may be only a matter of time.<sup>9</sup> How can England be a good model for turning Confucianism into a state religion as Jiang Qing envisaged? Britain is a free and democratic country under the rule of law. If the government there still manipulates the Church for political reasons, then the results will be much worse under different polities.

China's historical legacy is more similar to that of France than of Britain, which for a long time had a strong and healthy tradition of conservatism. Like France, however, China has experienced a thorough revolt against tradition, a historical trend that is very difficult to overcome. To return the historic privileges accorded to Confucianism to contemporary Confucianism, as Mr. Jiang has repeatedly advocated, seems impractical because it will meet with tremendous resistance. (I cannot imagine that the Roman Catholic Church in France will once again ever enjoy the privileges the Church enjoyed before the French Revolution.) However, if the goal is the revival of Confucianism without turning it into the established religion of China, there will be much less resistance and many more supporters.

Although the First Amendment to the United States Constitution explicitly forbids the establishment of a state religion, Christianity is a far stronger force in American society than in any other Western country. It is estimated that over half of all US citizens go to church every Sunday, and Christianity has a tremendous impact on public affairs. American Christianity has been more effective in influencing values and morals in society than would have been the case had it been the established religion.

In short, it is both unfeasible and undesirable to establish Confucianism as the state religion of China. It would be better to rely upon non-governmental Confucian groups than to pin all hopes on the appearance of another Han Emperor Wu (who established Confucianism two millennia ago), and better to join force with other Confucians than to wait for a Confucian Constantine to appear in the ruling party. Mr. Jiang wants "political power to become a vehicle of Confucian values." Should this occur, there would have to be a political deal



and the Chinese Association of Confucian Religion would in turn have to become a vehicle of political power. Mr. Jiang hopes that the Association will become “a non-governmental religious organization with political, economic, educational, and cultural privileges and governs over national religious life.” However, extraordinary privileges entail extraordinary responsibilities, including serving the government, which would transform the Association into a semi-governmental organization tasked with implementing government policies. For Confucianism, such a rise would also be its fall.

In the 1930s, “the last Confucian” Liang Shuming repeatedly appealed for the “union of government and moral inculcation” (*zhengjiao heyi*), with the purpose of “leaving the noble work of guidance of the soul to the most powerful group” (Liang 1992a, 1992b). It is noteworthy that his contemporary Qian Mu, a great scholar of Chinese history, objected to the idea: “In the West, the separation of the state from the church helps to maintain a balance between them. However, there will be trouble if we are satisfied with democracy through popular election whereas such an important institution as education is controlled by the government [ . . . ] The dignity of schools should go beyond politics [ . . . ] Lecturing should be free of manipulation by the government. The right of education should rest with individuals rather than with the government.” (Qian 1996, p. 82). In this essay Qian Mu repeatedly expresses his admiration of the Western model separation of church and state. This stance is worth pondering.

### ***11.6.2 Brief Rejoinder to Mr. Jiang’s Replies***

1. On Nationalism: According to Mr. Jiang, Confucianism has a good moral ideal. “*Thus, full loyalty to nationalism based on Confucian values will not lead to Fascist rule or Nazi racial persecution. Instead, it will result in the rule of Confucian values, in which people are convinced by good deeds and other cultures are respected.*” Pace Mr. Jiang, I submit that this kind of political idealism is wishful thinking. It simply does not accord with human nature, especially the nature of human groups, nor is it supported by the lessons of history. The French Revolution started with noble ideals – liberty, equality, and fraternity – but became instead a Reign of Terror. Thus, the critical danger lies not in whether the moral ideal of nationalism is lofty or otherwise, but whether we turn nationalism into the ultimate object of loyalty. As we can learn from lessons in Chinese and foreign history, when nationalism becomes a society’s sole, ultimate, and exclusive faith, its citizens lose the capacity for critical thinking and the result is human catastrophes. Furthermore, Mr. Jiang’s claim that “*In a Western Christian country, there is no conflict between a Western Christian’s full loyalty to God and his or her loyalty to the nation*” is false, because there are numerous examples of such a conflict in the history of Western Christianity. The most frequently discussed case is



that of the British politician Thomas More (1478–1535), who chose to stay loyal to the Roman Catholic Church when he could not be loyal to King Henry VIII simultaneously, and was beheaded by the King. This event inspired the movie *A Man for All Seasons*. Accordingly, when Jiang claims that “*in China, a country with a Confucian tradition, there will be conflict between full loyalty to God and loyalty to China, as was the case with such politicians as Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek,*” the conflict actually has nothing to do with the difference between England and China. The Christian faith is against ultimate or absolute loyalty to nation and country, and that applies to any culture. The Christian faith encourages citizens to love their country and nation, but such love should be sober-minded, open-minded, measured, and appropriate.

2. On National Spirit: Mr. Jiang Qing's division of national spirit into upper and lower levels does not answer my question, which is: is national spirit (at whatever level) eternal and unchangeable? Further, can we make value judgments on national spirits as good or bad? Is it permissible and necessary to renew and enhance the Chinese national spirit? Can Christianity contribute toward rendering the Chinese national spirit healthier, richer, and more brilliant? Mr. Jiang seems to be evading these questions by rejecting the Christian faith on the grounds of the inevitable conflict between Christianity and the Chinese national spirit.
3. On Heterogeneous Historic Cultures: I agree with Mr. Jiang's opinion that enhancement of the nation through assimilation of foreign cultural ingredient must be oriented toward strengthening existing Chinese culture. Thus, there is no inevitable conflict between two different historic cultures, nor is there any between the Christian culture and the Confucian culture.
4. On The Exclusive Supremacy of Confucian Religion: I will not elaborate on this point, as I have already discussed it at length in the previous section. I will add just two points here. First, I support religious pluralism and independence, and oppose the establishment of state religion, be it Confucian religion or Christianity. Second, Mr. Jiang says in his last reply to Daniel A. Bell's essay, “a state religion is not the same as an official religion [. . .] A state religion is rather independent, and is distanced from political power though connected with it, for the stress is on the superiority of the tradition of the *Dao (daotong)* to the tradition of political authority (*zhengtong*) [. . .] The state religion is not an accomplice to secular political power. Instead, it is the most powerful sacred institution for checking and taming the savage and imperious secular political power.” I find this rather utopian. Confucianism is very weak now, both in civil society and in government, yet Mr. Jiang wants to turn it into the supreme spiritual force ruling China and turn the Chinese Association of Confucian Religion into the powerful Papacy of the medieval Europe. If this ideal has never been attained or approximated in the last two millennia, then how achievable can it be in the future, when Confucianism will be bound to be far less influential than it used to be?

## Notes

1. In China, there was heated debate on Christianity and Nationalism in the 1920s. Some proposed that the nation would be saved by nationalism, that “traitors should be eliminated and foreign powers be resisted,” and that Christians who were backed by foreign power and bullied their compatriots ranked ninth among the ten kinds of traitors. Faced with such tremendous pressure, some church leaders advocated nationalism, but most were skeptical. See (Lam 1990, pp. 195–220; 1986, pp. 465–511). Lam comments in the first book, “In fact, the antagonism between Christianity and nationalism was a ‘religious’ conflict. As Liu Tingfang remarked, ‘Nationalism has become a fervent desire and almost a religion.’ As a secularized modern religion, nationalism easily wins unreserved loyalty from the people [...] Such faith cannot tolerate loyalty to any other religion” (Lam 1990, pp. 218–219).
2. Whereas Mr. Jiang likes to emphasize the “glory and greatness” of the Chinese national spirit, Bo Yang, the famous Taiwan writer, goes to the opposite extreme in stressing its ugliness. Lin Yutang seems to hold a more balanced view, suggesting that it has both virtues and vices (Lin Y. 1995, Chapter 2).
3. Mr. Jiang states that the choice of another faith over the Confucian faith by a Chinese person “is the greatest tragedy in the life of a nation because it tears the individual life away from the national life. As a result, the national life lacks the nourishment of individual lives and no longer receives the full loyalty and support of its outstanding members. This will lead to the decline of the nation’s vitality and the loss of its vigor. This is an abnormal and undesirable state” (Jiang 2003, pp. 431–432). However, as I have said, many Chinese who have chosen other faiths have done so in the hope of increasing the nation’s vitality and of renewing the national spirit and making it thrive again. They share the end that Mr. Jiang embraces, but not the means.
4. It is noteworthy that other “overseas neo-Confucians” such as Tang Junyi and Tu Weiming have similar views. See Lo 2001, 2005.
5. It is said that a candidate was passed over to be the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1963 because he opposed the abuse of military force by the government (Heubel 1965, p. 650, Note 19).
6. “What is absolutely necessary is that the Church must have certain essential liberties, and among them the liberty to choose her own form of worship. I intend to stand for these liberties – within the Establishment if possible, but outside it if there is no other way.” (Heubel 1965, pp. 650–651).
7. “In any case we cannot admit that nowadays, whatever may have been true in pre-Revolution times, a Parliament consisting of members professing any or no religion and representing not only England, but Scotland, Wales and the North of Ireland as well, can be regarded as in any true sense the authorized mouthpiece of the laity of the Church of England. Indeed, if it were true that Establishment involves such a conclusion, that would be a conclusive argument in favor of Disestablishment. We are clear that the present position is indefensible, and that no remedy can be satisfactory which does not recognize the inalienable right of the Church to decide all matters of doctrine and ritual uncontrolled by any authority not based upon membership of the Church [...] We should misrepresent the impression made upon our minds if we did not make clear our conviction that the case for Disestablishment is strong. Some of us deliberately consider that Disestablishment should be preferred to an indefinite continuance of the present relationship between Church and State” (Church Assembly 1936, pp. 46, 48–49).
8. “For although Free Churchmen reject the State control of religion they welcome State recognition of religion. We do not desire to see a secular State in England” (Heubel 1965, p. 647). “Nor must it be forgotten that to many the Establishment is the symbol of the official acceptance of Christianity as the national religion, and that if England, by

Disestablishment, should seem to become neutral in the fight between faith and unfaith in Christianity, that would be a calamity for our own people and, indeed, for the whole world" (Church Assembly 1936, p. 49).

9. The Church of England expressed a clearer intention to change the situation in later reports on the same subject (Dyson 1985).

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## Chapter 12

# The Characteristics and Prospect of the Confucian Academy: A Commentary on Jiang Qing's Ideas on the Confucian Academy

Xiuping Hong

The Confucian academy was a unique non-governmental institution in traditional Chinese society. The resurgence of Confucianism in contemporary China has led to the rise of a number of academies that claim to follow this ancient model. It is of indispensable benefit to analyze, discuss, and evaluate the main characteristics of the Confucian academy as well as its prospect. Over the past decade, Yangming Academy (Yangming Jingshe), founded by a great contemporary Confucian Jiang Qing in 1997, has established itself as the first and largest traditional Confucian academy in current China, including Hong Kong and Taiwan, since 1949. I myself have established Pinghe Academy in Zhuhai, and had a face-to-face discussion with Jiang on the principles of running a Confucian academy in contemporary society.

This essay reviews Jiang's ideas on the Confucian academy. It starts from the main characteristics of such academies as elucidated by Jiang, which are summarized as follows and are discussed further in the sections to follow. First, a Confucian academy is private and non-profit, instead of being run by the government. Its finance, property, structure, and those in charge of it, such as the director, should all be supported by the private sector. Second, the academy's main purpose is to disseminate the Way (*dao*), as opposed to teaching technical knowledge. Third, the academy is not a religious but a receptive and flexible academic institution. Fourth, the academy may discuss and comment on politics, yet it is not a political group or party. In the final section of the chapter, I raise a few critical points on Jiang's views, and Jiang's insightful replies to them are included.

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## 12.1 Funding and Operation: Private Based vs. State or Business Based

According to Jiang, the origin of the Confucian academy can be traced back to the ancient practice of Confucius who delivered lectures on the Apricot Platform (*xingtai*) in Qufu. There was no fixed venue or rules. It was probably in the Tang Dynasty that the academy began to have its name and system, such as a venue for classes, regular staff to manage it, rituals to follow, financial support, and books being used. In fact, the spirit of the academy originated from Confucius, Mencius, and Xun Zi, whose free lectures were not much different from those of the Song and Ming Confucians. Although Confucius lectured in Qufu, which was not in remote mountains (while Zhu Xi in Song dynasty lectured in a remote mountain area), he could be ignored and marginalized because Qufu was a very weak state at the time. In fact, few traditional academies were located in cities, and there was no urbanization in the old times. In contrast, today's urbanization is unprecedented and a majority of resources – human, financial and academic, including college education – are concentrated in cities. Still, I do not think a Confucian academy should be built in a big city today. A location that is far from cities is preferable if the academy is to adhere to the Confucian spirit and principle. The Confucian *Dao* should be higher than political authority. Hence, it is better to keep a distance between the two, and the former should be employed to scrutinize the latter (Jiang 2007). This principle was applied in the past and should still be applied in the present. This is the reason why Jiang located his Yangming Jingshe in a remote part of Longchang county in Guizhou province, rather than in a city.

Jiang stresses this because, as he notes, no academy that had a major impact on Chinese history was located in a city. The reason, he thinks, may lie in the fact that the important mission undertaken by the academy is to embody the superiority of Confucian *Dao* to the secular political order. Confucians did not always object to a political authority, but they hold that the former should transform the latter.

Confucian academies in mountains symbolized the orthodoxy; the imperial authority in the capital city represented the political order. A government's conformity to or deviation from the Confucian Way or the orthodoxy was not adjudicated by the emperor, but by Confucian literati in academies. That was the reason why few Confucians would locate their academies near the imperial palace. If they had done so, their lecture and philosophical study would have been under heavy influence of the political power. Since they believed that the Confucian academy represented the orthodoxy that is superior to the imperial power, they had to distance themselves from it. Since the birth of academies, most of them have been located in remote mountains that are far from the capital or prosperous cities. Yet, the influence of Western religion has led modern people to regard communication as the crucial element in a culture or religion. Perhaps it is true that communication, especially the flattering type,

works best around the imperial palace, and thus an academy near the palace would attract the emperor, change his mind, and thereupon change everything. But this was not the case in China. Confucians held a less optimistic view on politics, and their ideal world was far from the reality. They were not so optimistic to assume that they could persuade the emperor in 2 or 3 days and completely convert him. That was impossible and their mission was never so easy. Even if they did manage to attract the emperor, he was unlikely to be converted by their teachings. The great Confucians were keenly aware of the distance between the orthodoxy and political authority, as well as the magnitude of the task to transform the latter with the former. As a result, they were not enthusiastic about rapid change via communication (Jiang 2007).

What was taught at academies was authentic Confucianism according to lecturers' understanding, rather than any official Confucianism. For instance, in the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Xi's theory (*Zhuzixue*) was the official ideology, but the academies taught Confucianism based on scholars' interpretations of it, instead of the version that was adopted and expounded by the government. This was indeed the most fundamental characteristic of the academies (Jiang 2006). Regrettably, the tradition of the Song and Ming academies collapsed after the Qing Dynasty took over China. Unlike the Song and Ming academies, Qing academies had lost the right to academic freedom. Throughout the Qing Dynasty, many academies developed and even owned property and land, such as the Bailu (White Deer) Academy, but they were all run by the government. They were merely administrative branches of education whose principle, organization, and operation were all controlled by the government. Instead of destroying the academics, the Qing regime altered their nature through incorporation. The academic freedom enjoyed by Song and Ming Confucians was thus lost (Jiang 2007).

Moreover, according to Jiang, all Confucian academies in the real sense should be separated from commerce, and should be non-profit and supported by society (Jiang 2007). In particular, no academies should make money by running training courses. The government should not run an academy, and neither should an entrepreneur or a university. If they did, they would probably end up running something other than a real Confucian academy. An entrepreneur would run an institution that is for his interests, most likely to be one making profit through training courses. The government would turn an academy into an ideological mouthpiece, i.e., making it serve its ideology. Therefore, an academy should be run by a Confucian scholar in the traditional way. It must be non-profit and supported by the civil society, no matter how small and hard-up it might be, otherwise it would be a futile effort. Moreover, even an academy run by people from the cultural or academic circle will fail all the same if it deviates from the tradition, as is the case with the China Culture Academy, which, despite the grand name, had to solve its financial difficulties through doing business. Some "cultural academies" have seen better days, but their reputation has been soiled by offering profit-making courses, such as



accountant courses and courses for those who aspire to become competent in either military or civil services.

I think these are all insightful opinions. However, in his design of a political system governed by the Confucian “kingly way” (*wangdao*), it is well-known that Jiang has proposed the following idea: “The state shall establish the House of Confucians that train scholars well versed in the Confucian canon, such as the Four Books and the Five Classics, who, after probation and examination, will be appointed as members of the parliament of the state, provinces, cities or counties” (Jiang 2004, p. 314). In other words, in his ideal design, the Houses of Confucians are non-profit and run by the government, while Confucian academies are non-profit and supported by civil society. Obviously, Jiang needs to further explain the difference and relationship between the two. For instance, why are both necessary? Why is it not possible to train Confucian scholars only in private academies? Is it possible for Confucian academies to supervise their governmental counterparts in order to prevent or criticize academic corruption? If the answer is yes, will their distant location be a disadvantage? Finally, if a career is clearly designated for those who graduate from the House of Confucians (i.e., membership in the parliament of the state, provinces, cities, or counties), is there any for those who graduate from private Confucian academies? What exactly are the latter supposed to do? These points are worth clarifying.

*[Jiang's comments: For Confucianism to revive all over China and become her dominant doctrine, we need to revive its entire educational tradition. That is, we shall revive Confucian education in both the government and the civil society, i.e., the tradition of imperial college embodied by the Houses of Confucians, and the tradition of private Confucian academies. The general revival of Confucianism would be impossible without the synchronic revival of the two traditions. Admittedly, there are differences in their fields and environment, but they are not necessarily in contradiction. For instance, governmental academies appoint their graduates, while private ones do not. As a result, the former may degenerate into materialistic pursuit or turn into a downright ideological mouthpiece for the ruling class, while the latter is able to keep away from utilitarianism. If the degeneration takes place, the private academies will assume their responsibility to supervise and criticize their governmental counterparts, using the conscience of civil society as an antidote to corruption. As for Confucian scholars, they are trained not only in governmental academies, but also in private ones. Those from private ones may enter the former as legislators or political advisors through appointment or election, but they will be entitled to allowances instead of salaries. As for the appointment of graduates, it was and still is not of any concern for all Confucian academies because of their private status and aloofness from utilitarianism, and this tradition should be kept. As to your question “What exactly are the graduates from Confucian academies supposed to do,” my answer is, they are supposed to voluntarily practice the Confucian Dao, make up their mind to disseminate Confucianism, and to develop and pass on the Confucian Way and teachings through*



*their lifestyle and contribution to society. Admittedly, those with political talents may be appointed to important posts by the state, like many disciples of Confucius, Wang Tong, and Wang Yangming. However, belonging to a civil society, Confucian academies cannot be schools for training officials after all, and their essential purpose is to carry on and develop the Confucian Way and learning.]*

## 12.2 Primary Mission: Teaching the Way vs. Training Vocational Competence

In Jiang's opinion, strictly speaking Confucian academies are not only academic institutions, but also the embodiment of the Way. Their main purpose is to pass on the Way rather than technical knowledge. This does not mean that knowledge is of no importance; the Confucian *Dao* has been considered valuable knowledge over the past centuries, and Confucian classics were widely taught and studied. Yet, the main purpose of Confucian academies is in fact to lecture, develop, and disseminate the Way. Specifically, this entails *jingxue* (study of Confucian classics), *daoxue* (study of the Way), and *xinxue* (study of the philosophy of the mind) (Jiang 2006).

In Jiang's view, the most important difference that lies between Confucian academies and modern higher education institutions is not what they teach, but the purpose that they serve. For Jiang, even though the modern educational system is praised for being free, democratic, rational and neutral, it is indeed biased for it has to serve in the interests of the state, corporations, ruling class, or the masses. Thus if Confucian academies were to be a member of the modern education system, the Confucian Way and values would be jeopardized by rational bureaucracy that is in essence concerned about selfish interests and desires. Jiang hence finds that the indifference to the Confucian academy system or its decline over the past century was not so bad after all. Its collapse actually saves it from being transformed by rationalism, bureaucracy, or the so-called neutral modernity, and we may rebuild it in its original spirit. If they had been modernized and turned into institutions similar to today's universities and research institutes, Confucian academies would have utterly failed for they would have lost its values and be enlisted by interest groups (Jiang 2007). However, in fact, Confucian academies have not only collapsed, but been transformed as well. Jiang could not be unaware that in China the most important academies have been turned into tourist attractions, museums, or some sort of academic institutions in service of the government. But my most important question here is about his opinion on the contradiction between academies and contemporary free and neutral universities. Where exactly does the contradiction lie? A private Confucian university is free to study and explore Confucian values and doctrines, so how does this go against the emphasis on learning the Way? And what do "reason" and "selfish desires" refer to? Maybe the pressure of job hunting and its impact on the campus are

among the real issues. Moreover, today the pressure from society and the market is felt by students and universities alike. For instance, Hong Kong's New Asia College lost its independence because of such pressure. As its founder Tang Junyi helplessly put it,

This academy was intended to carry on the tradition of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, but it is still far from reaching that goal. Song and Ming academies had no concern for the career of their graduates. The primary requirement for disciples of Zhu Xi or Wang Yangming was to make up their mind to "carry on the teachings of past sages that would otherwise be lost and usher in a time of peace to last forever." This is beyond any career. Though some of them might take the imperial civil service examinations, the best among them would not deign to do so, for they were determined to play a leading role in history. Such an ideal is of course somewhat too high for today's students, and no teacher dares to compare himself to Zhu Xi or Wang Yangming. In addition, our perception of the times cannot be the same as theirs in the Song and Ming Dynasties. . . . Our ideal is considered too high both inside and outside the college, and we have indeed come across enormous difficulties in realizing it. Most of our students cannot be free from worry about jobs. In the past, if a scholar would not take the imperial civil service exam, he could study in the countryside while making a living as a farmer, which is impossible today. That is a major problem facing us. We are caught between the past and the present, the ideal and the reality, what is beyond career and the need to face it. These are serious challenges. Should we abandon our ideal? Should we orient our policy towards what our society wants and students' need to find jobs? (Tang 1960, pp. 1–2).

The destiny of Hong Kong's New Asia College is regrettable. Jiang insists on keeping the traditional Confucian academy away from the modern education system probably because he realizes that once the former is inside the latter, it will inevitably "orient our policy towards students' need to find jobs." Moreover, the separation also supports his idea on upholding elite education in such academies (this will be discussed later). However, in modern mainland China, most of the students do see education as a means to get diplomas and jobs rather than as a pursuit of truth and ideals. Yet, given that Confucian academies do not issue government-recognized diplomas or provide career-oriented education, how many aspiring young men and women would give up the chance for well-paid jobs for the sake of an ideal? Would our society justly acknowledge their academic status?

*[Jiang's comments: The modern bureaucracy and so-called rationality pervade and control our entire society like what Max Weber called "an iron cage". There is no value, ideal, freedom or hope in this cage, for there is nothing but shrewd reason and calculation of maximum interests. The first victims of this cage are the modern universities and research institutes that claim to be free but are in fact bureaucracies. Confucian academies, with their pursuit of values, ideals, freedom and hope, are in diametric opposition to the cage; once inside, it is impossible for them to refuse to be changed and they have to abandon their pursuits. A case in point is New Asia College's loss of the academic freedom that was enjoyed by the Song and Ming Confucian academies after its incorporation into the Chinese University of Hong Kong. More fundamentally, the subject matter studied in Confucian*

*academies is sacred, while that in modern universities is secular; the former is interested in the Way and the pursuit of faith and ideals, whereas the latter is about livelihood, material interests, diplomas, and jobs. Sages' sacred teaching is superior to secular knowledge, and it is what the elite literati will to study. The elite who believe in the Confucian values and dismiss material gains would come only from a tiny group of the population. Confucian academies, which carry on the Confucian Dao and aim to attract the elite instead of the majority, hence have no need to worry about jobs.]*

What really distinguishes Confucian academies from modern educational institutions might be the emphasis on ritual practice. In Jiang's opinion, starting from Confucius, the academies are not only a place to lecture, but also to perform rituals and music. The latter function is crucial. In *The Analects* Confucius not only gave question-and-answer lectures, but also practiced rituals. Accounts of the latter can be found in the book, though it is harder to put into words than theories. Furthermore, when teaching rituals, Confucius not only explained the theories but also trained his disciples to perform the rituals, for theory cannot be separated from practice insofar as rituals are concerned. One can hardly understand rituals if one only reads about them but does not practice them. And study of rituals in books is of little use for the refinement of temperament. The movements and spirit embodied in rituals can only be understood with personal experience. The purpose of ritual practice is for one to understand the cultural values and spirit behind the forms so as to build his or her character. This is why it is important to point out that ritual practice sets the Confucian academies apart from other educational institutions. Plato's Academy taught nothing but knowledge and philosophy; ancient Greek philosophers who believed in reason disseminated knowledge and lectured freely there, but they did not practice any ritual.

Regrettably, though, Jiang observes that ritual and music have gradually lost their importance as Confucian academies leaned towards teaching mere theories and technical knowledge. This is undesirable, and ritual practice should be revived so that equal importance is attached to learning classics and to performing rituals and music. Indeed, a large part of the Confucian classics cannot be understood without experience of rituals and music. For instance, the spirit of the *Book of Songs* would be lost to those who have no such experience because poems were accompanied by music and music was associated with rituals. Each poem in the book, especially one from the chapter *Daya* or *Xiaoya*, is a trinity of literary meaning, music, and ritual. The meaning is expressed by the lyrics and the music is necessary because the poem is supposed to be sung. Some poems are sung on specific ritual occasions, such as *Lu Ming* (The Cries of Deer), and are accompanied by dancing. It can be imagined that when Confucius taught a poem, it would include an explanation of its meaning, singing, and ritual dancing. Later, however, singing and dancing gradually disappeared and there remains nothing but lyrics. *The Book of Songs* has become a collection of lyrics, and the teaching of it consists of nothing but explaining the lyrics. *The*

*Book of Rites*, another Confucian classic, records many rituals that are even more typical combinations of literary meaning, music, and rite, such as the rite of archery (*sheli*) and the rite of drinking. You have to understand their significance by performing them, or at least you have to know the meanings of the moves, such as kneeling, mounting a step, and turning to the south or north. All these are deeply symbolic, and they are accompanied by music, singing, and bodily movements. Rituals are related to poems, for poems are sung during the performance. Some of the poems in *The Book of Songs* were sung during rituals to accompany the movements. Confucius' lecture at the Apricot Platform, thus the beginning of academy education, was called *zhu si xian ge* (music and songs by the Rivers of Zhu and Si). So the tradition of ritual practice should be revived in today's Confucian academies (Jiang 2007).

From Jiang's view, one of the reasons for the decline of ritual and music in Confucian academies was that some rituals were performed in society at large after Confucianism was widely adopted. Large-scale rituals such as the worship of Heaven, Earth, the monarch, the parents, and the teacher, and sacrifices such as those offered to one's ancestors or the sages in Confucian temples could be performed outside the academies. Eventually, only sacrifices to sages were offered in the academies. Moreover, with the emergence of the Confucian temple system, many of the rituals became sacrifices offered in the name of the state that had little to do with the academies. As a result, fewer and fewer rituals were left in the academies. Besides, interest in literature that was common among Confucians could be developed in literature societies. Consequently, the academies came to serve for nothing but lecturing on the sages' teachings.

Jiang emphasized the importance of ritual and music as the salient feature of Confucian academies. There was no ritual or music in the Song and Ming academies, and Cheng Zi lamented the fact that the ritual and music of the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang and Zhou) were no more performed by anyone but Buddhists. In the academy on Mount Tai of the early Song Dynasty, there was only reading and discussing of classics. There were no organized solemn rituals, music, or songs. In contrast, ritual plays an important role in other religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity. Ritual moves people and changes them more effectively than reason does, especially for laymen who are sensitive to ritual, not norms. Therefore, nowadays the Confucian ritual and music cannot be revived in society at large unless they are revived in the academies (Jiang 2007).

*[Jiang's comments: Symbolic ritual practice, such as Confucius' ritual practice under trees in the wilderness, does not need any financial support. But ritual and music in the academies should not be symbolic only; they should have a due scale and substantial meanings. Unlike lectures, they need a strong financial support and that is why Confucians said, "rituals do not apply to the common people" in the ancient time. Without such support, they would fail to be sacred and solemn. Confucius' ritual practice in the wilderness was due to the difficult circumstances,*

*and should not be held as an example to follow. Unfortunately, now that the academies have just been revived, financial support is in short supply even for lectures, let alone ritual and music. Nevertheless, the principle can be explained here so that it may be implemented some day in the future.]*

### 12.3 Academic Organization: Inclusive vs. Close-Knit

Jiang also distinguishes Confucian academies from religious institutions such as Christian theology seminaries or monasteries. Accordingly to Jiang, they have the following differences.

First, Confucius' lectures on the Apricot Platform and his behavior as recorded in *The Analects* show that a Confucian academy is comparatively free, inclusive, and flexible, as opposed to a close-knit Christian organization. Though there was no organization in the early days of Christianity, when it was spread by the Apostles, a well-organized system emerged with the establishment of the Church. In contrast, the freedom, inclusiveness, and flexibility of Confucian academies are characteristic of Confucianism and related to the vitality of Confucius' theory. As a result, no Confucians would turn their academy into a close-knit organization (Jiang 2007). In the Middle Ages there was the Inquisition and the church to judge Christians' interpretations of the Bible, and there was a uniform standard set by a supreme spiritual authority. These are absent in the Confucian tradition, which allows scholars to interpret the classics in different ways. There was no law against such differences: the common people might understand the classics this way, whereas the literati might understand them that way. Moreover, the latter's interpretations were divided into modern classic studies, ancient classic studies, philosophy of the mind, Neo-Confucianism, and the Practical Learning (*shixue*). There was no supreme spiritual authority to suppress unorthodox opinions, and no unified organization of power to judge what was correct. In the absence of an absolute standard and the Inquisition-like structure, Confucian academies enjoyed a large degree of intellectual freedom. The truth was determined by extensive and in-depth free discussions, a case in point being the famous "E-Hu Temple Debate" in a Song dynasty academy.

Second, due to its profundity, the Confucian doctrine is not spread by miracles or prophecies, but accepted through learning and thinking. Jesus' teachings were simple. Do you believe Jesus is the Messiah? Do you believe the heaven is near? And do you believe in Doomsday? If you do, you are converted to Christianity. Jesus' religion does not include extensive knowledge or profound theories, and all the Apostles were common people except for Paul. It was spread by moving people with miracles and prophecies, such as curing the blind and the paralyzed, and predicting resurrection. Paul himself was converted by miracles. In contrast, Confucius was an intellectual and he did not resort to miracles or prophecies. Confucianism was passed on through learning

ancient classics and reflecting on the value of life as well as on social and political ideals. Started by Confucius, this tradition was followed by Confucian academies in later dynasties.

Confucian academies embody the idea and system of “honoring virtue and pursuing learning”. Trying to cultivate a personality that was “sagely inward and kingly outward” (*nei sheng wai wang*), the academies were not only for moral cultivation and seeking the anchor of life and spirit, but also for reflecting on ritual, music, law, and politics, discussing social and cultural issues, voicing one’s concerns about the country and the people, and commenting on political issues. That is to say, the academies were religious on one hand, yet also carrying out rational exploration on the other. Their academic contributions were jointly made by teachers and students. *Chuan Xi Lu* was not written by Wang Yangming, but by his students who had debated and formed their own interpretations. The same is true of *The Analects*. Unlike today’s universities and research institutes, Confucian academies did not require their faculty members to give lectures or publish academic papers. The lectures in the Confucian academies were humane, free, and intelligent; learning and the Way might be found in a single phrase or gesture between a teacher and his students. It is the Western way of education for a teacher to lecture in front of a group of students. In the Confucian academy, a teacher would raise a subject and a few questions about it, and then most of the time was spent on debating and questioning. Students would sit together and the teacher would answer their questions. That was an effective way of teaching. Students should not be busy jotting down the lecture but be free to discuss their ideas (Jiang 2006).

Apart from discussing the Confucian doctrine, the academies also allow students to help each other to understand the Way. Students could share their understandings of the Way with their teachers and fellow students, who might agree or disagree. Whereas disapproval could remind students about what challenges still lie ahead, affirmation could strengthen their resolution and confidence. One who studies solely through reading and thinking alone could not be benefited as much, for all spiritual activities need confirmation by those with the same pursuit. This was another purpose of the traditional Confucian academies (Jiang 2006).

The Confucian doctrine consists in cultivating a personality that is “being sagely inward and kingly outward”. So which should an academy lean towards, a sage or a king? In Jiang’s opinion, as a prototype, Confucius’ teaching on the Apricot Platform did not distinguish a sage from a king, or aim to cultivate a moral character to stay away from politics. Instead, the two aspects were unified. A Confucian would protest against political corruption by invoking the Way, though that does not mean that he was a member of the opposition. In addition, he would cultivate his character. *The Analects* depicts a wide range of choices, such as Yan Hui and Zeng Zi’s choice of self-cultivation, Zi Gong and Zi Lu’s decision to enter politics, or Zi Xia and Zi Zhang’s choice to disseminate culture through political participation. Today’s academies should loyally follow Confucius’ eclectic approach to the question of “being sagely inward and



kingly outward” (Jiang 2007). That is to say, a Confucian academy should be at once a milieu for self-cultivation searching for the anchor of life and spirit, and an institution for reflecting on social and political systems and issues. This is the academy in its complete sense (Jiang 2007).

*[Jiang’s comments: Although they are not religious institutions, Confucian academies do perform certain religious functions, such as finding out Heaven’s Way and the natural law to find the anchor of life and spirit, as well as achieving harmony between man and nature by offering sacrifices to ancient sages and performing ritual and music practices. Confucianism does not distinguish the sacred from the secular, and neither do the academies, in which sacred sacrifice and secular discussion of politics are both parts of what they should do.]*

## 12.4 Roles in Public Affairs: Backbencher vs. Political Party

Since Confucian academies do discuss politics and differ from modern universities and research institutes, should they be regarded as a political group or party? Jiang’s answer is no. In his opinion, the Confucian concept of politics is a broad one, including society, morality, economy, education, culture, policy, and faith. But an academy is not a political group, it should not devote itself to political activities, and still less should it be an organized political party that tries to be in power in the modern legal sense. The Donglin Party of the Ming Dynasty was a political opposition group whose birth was prompted by corruption and Confucians’ concern for state affairs, and as a result the Donglin Academy became a political group of Confucian scholars who were critical of the political situation. The party mostly concerned itself with specific issues, impeaching corrupt officials and exposing eunuchs who interfered with government affairs. Thus the academy became a shadow government that was entangled in specific issues, as if it had replaced the state’s institutions that supervise internal affairs. A Confucian academy should not become a kind of ombudsman and monitor the performance of the government, because that was the business of the government, not the academies. The Donglin Party was admirable for upholding the Confucian principle of “protesting against political evils by invoking the Way”. However, an academy is not a political group after all, and it should not devote itself to political protests. Instead, its fundamental duty is to disseminate the Confucian *Dao* and to preserve and develop the Confucian culture. Though it may comment on the political situation and criticize evil policies, it should not turn into a political organization or an institution that impeaches corrupt officials, since the state had already established such institutions. This is consistent with the general Confucian attitude: if you do not hold the office, do not assume its duties.

Political participation is thus not the primary business of the academies, but that of political groups or parties. In light of the fundamental character and

spirit of the academy established by Confucius on the Apricot Platform, two extremes should be avoided. In the one end, Song and Ming Confucians' excessive focus on the mind and introspection turned the academies into spiritual groups like Western monasteries whose sole purpose was mind cultivation. In the other end, academies like Donglin in Ming Dynasty and Current Affairs School established by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao in the late Qing Dynasty were vehicles for specific political agendas. Such purpose should be served by political parties, not the academies. Later Kang Youwei and Lang Qichao even set up the Society for Strength (Qiang Xue Hui), which was in fact a political party despite its academic-sounding name (Jiang 2007).

Traditionally, the academies might indirectly assist in administering the state by training members of the literati. According to Jiang, when Wen Zhong Zi taught Wei Zheng in Sui dynasty, his purpose was not to train a senior minister, but to teach his student that the aim of a political career should be to realize the Confucian ideal of the Kingly Way. Wei Zheng was at first a political strategist (*zong heng jia*) who was concerned with his fame and fortune instead of political ideals. Yet, after staying a month with Wen Zhong Zi, he became a Confucian. Though he continued his political career, his purpose was no longer fame and fortune, but to realize the Kingly Way and to undertake the historic task of reviving the Confucian culture. The Confucian culture was eventually revived by students of Wen Zhong Zi and formed the basic values of the Tang Dynasty, ushering in the Flourishing Age of Zhenguan characterized by that culture (Jiang 2006).

In Jiang's opinion, the academies should train Confucian scholars, officials, and merchants. But the most important are gentlemen, for one should be a Confucian gentleman before he assumes the role of a merchant or an official. Being a gentleman determines one's belief in values, while being a merchant or an official is merely a career choice. Indeed, one could not possibly become a Confucian merchant or official without also first being a Confucian gentleman, because the latter is crucial for cultivating oneself with the necessary virtues to become the former. In Chinese history, Confucian gentlemen were held in higher regard than Confucian merchants and officials. Most Confucian officials were honored in the Lingyan Tower or Martyrs' Shrine, while Confucian gentlemen were given places in Confucian temples (Jiang 2006).

In Jiang's opinion, those who intend to establish the academies in civil societies and revive Confucianism should embody three Confucian elements – benevolence, the doctrine, and courage. The embodiment of benevolence is comparatively easy, because the Chinese are by nature attached to their culture and cannot bear to see it collapse. The embodiment of courage is also not difficult, for most of those with such intentions are aspiring young men. Without heroism one can never make a Confucian, for a Confucian must be confident in one's grasp on the truth. Our arguments with liberalism or socialism are not about technicalities, but principles. We should be proud of ourselves as the sole upholders of the Way. Now we are left with the embodiment of the doctrine, which is the weakest in today's China. Chinese culture has been



deconstructed by Western culture, and we no longer have any clear idea about our own doctrinal system and the Confucian values. We are arguing over what Confucianism is, and none of those who start a website, a magazine, or an academy knows exactly what kind of Confucianism they are going to revive. The current Confucianism websites do not lack benevolence or courage, but they differ in their interpretations of the Confucian doctrine and fail to delve into deeper meanings of it. We need to deepen our study of the Confucian doctrine and try to understand its values in an appropriate and comprehensive way. Yet it may require incessant efforts of more than one generation to arrive at a thorough understanding of the doctrine. So benevolence and courage are not enough, and we must strengthen the embodiment of the doctrine. We criticize the neo-Confucians in Hong Kong and Taiwan because, despite their benevolence and courage, their interpretations of the doctrine are tainted with westernization and are therefore not entirely acceptable to us. They fail to embody the unique values of Chinese culture because they lean towards the values of the modern Enlightenment and Western culture. All these are major issues concerning the doctrine. So the embodiment of the doctrine is now crucial for the revival of Confucianism and the development of Confucian academies (Jiang 2006).

*[Jiang's comments: one of the major purposes of Confucian academies is to study the Confucian doctrine, so "the embodiment of the doctrine" is the primary task for today's academies. Over the past century, Chinese intellectuals' application of Western theories to Chinese issues has destroyed the Confucian doctrine system, and as a result Confucianism can no longer explain itself with its own explanatory system. It is Chinese themselves who have westernized Confucianism. To restore it, we must apply Chinese theories to Chinese issues by reestablishing the explanatory system of the Confucian doctrine. Such application is "the embodiment of the doctrine", which should be the primary task of today's Confucian academies.]*

## 12.5 The Prospect of Elite Education in Confucian Academies

As mentioned, Confucian academies aim at elite education. In Jiang's opinion, it is the literati rather than the masses that are expected to embody the Confucian *Dao* and to use it to transform political power. The main purpose of the academies is not to train the common people, but to cultivate the literati or gentlemen with the Confucian values and personalities to govern the country. This tradition of elitism was started by Confucius in the Spring and Autumn Period. By his famous principle "education without discrimination", he did not mean in the modern sense of "education for all", but the intention to turn people from different classes, including common people, into gentlemen or members of the literati. Confucius' way to disseminate his doctrine differed from that of Christianity or Buddhism. Confucius trained elites, while Christianity and

Buddhism spread their doctrines among the masses. Confucius discussed the profound way of the universe and human life, the rational construction of politics, and the deep meanings of ancient classics. All these are difficult theoretical questions, which are more complicated than those offered by Christianity or Buddhism, from Jiang's view. Moreover, no other religion is concerned about political construction, but Confucianism is. Therefore, ever since its beginning, Confucianism has been a belief for the literati or the elite to hold.

Jiang also points out that Confucian academies are also for the elite because the masses would not understand Confucianism in the deep sense. The masses may accept the part about moral cultivation in *The Analects* that is more closely related to daily life, but they would not understand the profound philosophy and meaning of the *Book of Songs*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Rites*, the *Book of Changes* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The great principles and wisdom in history and culture, especially the subtle and profound theories about society and politics, cannot be taught to all; if they were, many would fail to understand them and that might result in trouble. Most people who come to their teachers are narrowly concerned with their own lives. They simply want their teachers to dispel their worries; if this is done, they will think that they have benefited and feel happy, but will grudge any more time they spend with their teachers. The majority does not care about any profound philosophy about the universe, the rational construction of politics, or the deep meaning in classics. So Confucianism is for the elite. Its profound theories can only be taught to a tiny minority of gentlemen or members of the literati, who are willing to listen and able to understand. Therefore, Confucian academies are not for the masses. In the Ming Dynasty, Taizhou School, one of the post-Yangming schools, tried to popularize itself, but that was never essential to Confucianism. In fact, it was not even essential to Wang Yangming's theory of Confucianism (Jiang 2007).

As Jiang put it frankly, the Confucian Academy he set up - Yangming Jingshe - is entirely traditional in its operation, management, and teaching. It is mainly for advanced learning and discussion of Confucianism, or what has been summarized as "studying, following the Way, and academic discussion" (Jiang 2006). Gentlemen cannot be trained by cramming courses. As a traditional academy, Yangming Jingshe runs no training courses, issues no diplomas, and conducts no public recruitment of students, but it influences elite via academic events. It spreads the spirit of Confucianism and embodies the traditional culture (Jiang 2006).

Jiang seems optimistic about the prospect of Confucian elite education. He pointed out that information spreads more quickly today than in the past, and this can help speed up the reinstatement of Confucian culture. Such restoration will be at hand if the Confucian values are accepted by China's elite, i.e., outstanding intellectuals, and if the Chinese can reach the consensus that the Confucian Way is the anchor of life and spirit, as well as the basis for peace and good government (Jiang 2006).

However, Jiang cannot be unaware of both the internal and external challenges against the revival of the academies. In 1901 the Qing government

ordered a reform of the academies. In 1912 the Republican government ordered that Chinese classic learning as a subject in primary schools be abolished. After 1949, an unprecedented cultural destruction befell Confucianism and the Confucian academies were completely shut down by the government. Although there have been efforts in the folk society to revive the Confucian culture and reestablish Confucian academies since the reforms in the 1980s, such efforts are weakened by the powerful influence of the West and its almost hegemonic higher education system. Worse still, the efforts are also subject to the influence of political climate, restrictions by laws and policies, and various forms of suppression in China, whether intentional or not. The government does not recognize the academic status and educational qualifications of Confucian academies, and their students are denied due recognition. Financial support is in severe short supply, and there is no regular income, let alone the build-up of equipment and staff. So how much room is really left for Confucian academies to develop in contemporary China?

More importantly, how much enthusiasm and intellectual resources do Confucian academies have? First of all, will there emerge great Confucians again in China? If so, how? All Confucians in mainland China today were born at the time when the learning of traditional culture was forced to stop. Considering the heavy influence of the poor education and academic system concerning Confucianism, it is questionable how much they know about the Confucian doctrine and values. As Jiang acknowledged, over the past century, the Confucian doctrinal system was seriously damaged. Although in recent years the government has allowed many traditional academies that were demolished during the Cultural Revolution to be restored, it is for the sake of tourism and there is no spirit of Confucianism or the values of Chinese culture in such structures. Moreover, even though the government is willing to spend money on restoring the traditional academies, very few would be qualified to lecture there. The situation may be similar to that in the early Han Dynasty after the horrible destruction of the Qin Dynasty, if not even worse. At that time Duke Shen of Lu was still alive, and the government invited him and other aged Confucians to its academy to reinstate Confucianism. Duke Shen of Lu, who was over 90 years old already at the time, was asked to lecture on *The Book of Songs*. Fu Sheng was also alive, but he was too old to come to the academy. So the government sent secretaries to him to take down his dictation of *The Book of History* and his understanding of the text so that the book would not be lost forever.

Yet, there have been several generations since the decline of Confucianism from now, and there is no one like Duke Shen of Lu or Fu Sheng in China today. The absence of great Confucians makes the revival of Confucianism more difficult than it was in ancient times. Jiang thought that the academies should be revived before the recovery of Chinese culture, but now he finds that before the revival of the academies there should be the training of teachers. The problem is that he believes teachers cannot be trained within a short period of time. Profound learning, especially Confucianism, cannot be acquired

instantly. For Jiang, it has to be “slowly nurtured through discussion by a couple of noble-minded persons in an old house on an unfrequented riverside”. For instance, the establishment of neo-Confucianism took the efforts of several generations of scholars of the four schools (Lian, Luo, Guan, and Min) in the Song and Ming Dynasties. If we intend to start an academy of traditional Chinese culture, we have to find qualified teachers. Yet not even people like the four professors at the Tsinghua University in the early 20th century (Wang Guowei, Liang Qichao, Zhao Yuanren, and Chen Yinke) are up to the task, let alone great Confucians like Duke Shen of Lu and Fu Sheng. Except for Chen Yinke, the four professors at the Tsinghua University were hardly Confucians in the strict sense. Traditional Confucians were people like Duke Shen of Lu, Fu Sheng, the scholars of the Schools of Lian, Luo, Guan, and Min, and Wang Yangming, who had clear roles to play in passing down the culture and a strong faith in the *Dao*. The absence of such Confucians is the greatest tragedy of our times and the greatest challenge against the revival of the Confucian culture (Jiang 2006).

It is true that there are no great Confucians like Duke Shen of Lu and Fu Sheng in today's China, and that Confucianism cannot be learned in an instant. Great Confucians cannot appear among those who obsess about the vogue, fame, and fortune, or even wallow in luxury. However, I think it may be biased to say that Confucianism is “slowly nurtured through discussion by a couple of noble-minded persons in an old house on an unfrequented riverside”. The first sage kings aside, none of such sages as Confucius, Mencius, and Xun Zi was from “an old house by an unfrequented riverside”.

*[Jiang's comments: The ancient sage kings and Confucius, Mencius, and Xun Zi were created by Heaven. Such persons do not appear in one generation after another, and they cannot be trained by any educational institution, including Confucian academies. Confucian academies can only train gentlemen or members of the literati instead of sage kings or sages. The saying “noble persons in an old house” is to emphasize the profundity of the Confucian doctrine, and the point that due to the deconstruction by westernization and collapse over the past century, those determined to carry it on and develop it need to spend a long time on the mission. It does not mean that the academies should become as isolated from our society as such an “old house”, and even less does it mean that Confucians can pursue their studies in isolation from reality.]*

Unlike Taoism or Buddhism, and even less like Christianity that pursues redemption after death, Confucianism concerns itself with the real world. As Jiang realized, the greatness of a Confucian sage cannot be isolated from the world, history, culture, or society. He can keep a certain distance between himself and the real world, but he cannot divorce it but must live in a society. Confucianism is never divorced from history or culture. So, if we are optimistic enough to believe that a great Confucian may emerge from a remote academy in future, I think it must be possible that he may emerge from a political arena that

has returned to the kingly way of benevolent government, or even from the business world. More importantly, how can it be impossible for great Confucians to appear among hardworking scholars? It is true that they are under the influence of the modern academic circle, policies, rules, classification of specialties, and authority, which frequently distract them from serious studies. However, specialized research is not entirely undesirable, because it enables deep analysis and debate that may result in more thorough understanding of a subject. If well done, it should not hinder a researcher's judgment of issues that are outside his specialty. On the contrary, it may help him to base his judgment on his strong Confucian faith acquired through analysis and comparison. More importantly, the modern academic circle provides good conditions for understanding modern theories such as liberalism. Just as the Song and Ming Confucians had to be well versed in Buddhism in order to respond to the latter's challenge, so contemporary Confucians have to be conversant with liberalism or other modern theories. Otherwise, they would fail to argue against their counterparts in contemporary society. Besides, modern theories can hardly be learned in remote mountains. In fact, Jiang himself is a Confucian coming from the modern academic circle. He could not have proposed the tripartite legitimacy of Confucian politics and the reconstruction of Confucianism without his understanding of the Western culture of liberalism and Christianity.

*[Jiang's comments: This is absolutely right. Real Confucian scholars and great Confucians may emerge anywhere and in any professions. For instance, Mencius was a scholar with no official rank, Xun Zi was a senior local official, Dong Zhongshu was a minister appointed by the imperial court, Wen Zhong Zi was a hermit in mountains, Zhu Xi was largely a hermit, Wang Yangming was an official who lived like a hermit, and Wang Xinzhai was a salt merchant. Therefore, real Confucian scholars and great Confucians do not necessarily emerge from remote areas. To say "learning is among the people, and the Way is in mountain" is to emphasize the academies' traditional non-government character and Confucians' capacity to practice the Dao as a common citizen. Although Xun Zi, Dong Zhongshu and Wang Yangming were officials, they conducted their academic studies as common citizens. Their writings were their individual spiritual undertakings rather than research projects funded and planned by the government. Moreover, now that rationalism and bureaucracy have swept the world, especially in modern universities and research institutes, it is necessary to highlight the non-government character of Confucian academies in order to maintain the tradition and avoid any harm to their spirit. However, this does not mean that no real Confucian scholars or great Confucian could emerge from modern universities or research institutes, though the courage, strength, and wisdom that one needs to break away from the "iron cage" of their rationalism must be so extraordinary that, as Mencius said, he will "forge ahead despite an army against him" with the belief that he is "the only one to do it." I pray for the day when real Confucian scholars or great Confucians emerge from modern universities and research institutes in China.]*

Second, Jiang needs to explain further the relationship between Confucian academies' orientation towards elite education and the Confucius' idea of "education without discrimination". Perhaps the purpose of the academies is to train gentlemen or elite, but is it acceptable for the academies to refuse admission to those who have set their minds on learning the Way on the ground that they are not intelligent or knowledgeable enough? Confucius' academy on the Apricot Platform would admit almost anyone who paid him ten strips of dried meat as tuition. He did not expel Zai Yu for sleeping during the day and indecorous speech, and neither did he tell Fan Chi to leave because of his mean aspiration only to become a peasant or gardener. Confucius' nobility consisted in teaching his students according to their aptitudes and guiding them tirelessly. It is difficult to tell if one would eventually become a gentleman at the beginning; hence it requires careful consideration and arrangement to reconcile elite education with the principle of education without discrimination.

*[Jiang's comments: As I have said, what Confucius meant by education without discrimination was not education for the masses, but an approach to elite education. Many of his students were from poor families. Instead of turning them away, he taught them in order to turn them into gentlemen or members of the literati, i.e., members of the elite. That was not the same as modern education for the masses, which only teaches students culture and knowledge instead of lifting them up above their class. Instead of contradicting elite education, Confucius' principle about instruction without discrimination was actually an approach to it. This should be carried on in today's Confucian academies.]*

Jiang may still be thinking about the way to carry out such elite education. There need to be methods for disseminating the Way, students to attend lectures, and time and financial support for ritual practice. Confucian seminars, whether regular or not, are no doubt helpful. There is indeed good reason to refrain from running profit-making courses for the masses. However, if there is political permission in current China, is it really desirable to refrain from running courses at all? Resources-wise, running courses are obviously more effective in disseminating the Way than private visits or person-to-person questioning and answering. Even though Confucian gentlemen cannot be trained by any course, this does not mean that courses have no benefit at all. The courses that are properly scheduled, located, taught, and enrolled with appropriate students would be more effective than any other approaches. Compared with the traditional academies, today's academies enjoy the advantage of efficient communication and transportation, and it might be pedantic to refuse such advantage.

*[Jiang's comments: I am looking forward to this! If the Confucian culture were revived all over China, Confucian academies would be found everywhere in the country, as was the case in the Song and Ming Dynasties. If so, would there be any difficulty in running "senior courses in Confucianism"? In the Ming Dynasty, a*



*lecture on the philosophy of the mind by a post-Yangming school in Beijing was attended by as many as a thousand, including the prime minister and other ministers. When Wang Longxi lectured in dozens of academies in Zhejiang, Anhui, and Jiangxi, his lectures frequently attracted a hundred in the audience, mostly members of the gentry. Were such lectures not superior to today's senior courses? If the Confucian culture should enjoy such glory again someday, how much would we care about "senior courses"? Yet today's Confucian academies are still under pressure to survive. They are little more than a symbol of the Confucian culture's revival, and we have to wait for them to grow.]*

Finally, what should the students of Confucian academies be like? Should they have received higher education? Should they have worked? Should they be married? Maybe none of these matters, and what matters most is the sincerity for learning and exploring the Way. Yet, as the students will work someday rather than spend a long time in the academies, how long they should stay is a relevant question. By saying that the academy is a way of life in Confucianism, we mean that teachers and students should study Confucianism, explore the Way, and practice Confucian rituals, not that the academy is the ultimate place to live as a Confucian. Unlike Taoist or Buddhist temples, or monasteries of the Orthodox Eastern Church or the Roman Catholic Church, Confucian academies are not the ultimate places to which Confucians belong. The ultimate places for the Confucian way of life are family, society, and the world, where Confucians put into practice their ideals of "cultivating the moral self, regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the whole world". Except for very few teachers and students, no one should stay for a long time in the academies. I would like to know Jiang's opinion on this.

*[Jiang's comments: Confucian academies are free and flexible, with simple rules but no rationalism or bureaucracy. As a result, anybody may come and go, spend a day, a year, or more to pursue learning and exploring the Way. A Confucian academy is not the ultimate place for a Confucian way of life, but for the pursuit of Confucian learning and the Way. As a result, there are various kinds of people in an academy, such as those who are in charge, those who intend to stay long, sojourners, and visiting scholars. The academy embodies a lifestyle of those who pursue Confucian learning and the Way, but not the sole way of life for Confucians. If someone has been a successful student of the Way yet does not choose to be a Confucian scholar, he is free to leave and apply the Confucian values he has learned in his society.]*

Maybe the ideal approach is for the academies to cooperate with and complement universities (especially Confucian universities, if there would be some in the future). Students who intend to learn the Confucian Way can be trained in an academy for a period of time, during which they will study the classics, practice rituals, explore the Way, and share each other's understanding of it under the director's guidance. Such training may take place before or after

graduation from college. While college education teaches them modern science and theories, the training in the academies will improve their understanding of the Way and strengthen their faith in it. Neither of the two is dispensable for today's Confucians.

In the final analysis, it is the Confucian ideal that the people could live happy and contented lives, that they would cultivate their moral characters, that everybody would assume his or her proper role in society, and that the aged and the young are well provided for. It is against such ideals to discuss philosophy far away from society without any concern for the people. One who knows little about modern science and theories is hardly able to disseminate the Confucian ideal in today's society. Obviously, Confucianism is unlikely to have a broad appeal if it cannot develop a large number of able believers who can testify for its value in today's globalized market economy. I would like Jiang to further discuss this point.

*[Jiang's comments: It would be ideal to establish cooperation and mutual complementation between Confucian academies and a Confucian university. The training of Confucians who are well versed in the Confucian doctrine and classics, who know modern theories, who believe in and disseminate the Way, and who testify for Confucianism in this globalized age would probably be impossible without such a Confucian university. Now that the tradition of Confucian academies has just begun to be revived since its decline in recent centuries, and because it is under pressure from economy, politics and westernization, the academies cannot produce a large number of able testifiers while they are struggling to survive. They will have to try their best even just to carry on the Confucian Dao and learning. As I said before, we have to wait for Confucian academies to grow.]*

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# Chapter 13

## Three Political Confucianisms and Half a Century

Albert H.Y. Chen

### 13.1 Introduction

Modern Chinese intellectual history was dominated by rejection and criticism of much of Chinese traditional culture and thought in general and of Confucianism in particular (Lin 1979). “Down with the Confucian school” (*dadao kongjiadian*) was one of the slogans of the all-powerful May Fourth Movement in which Chinese intellectuals embraced Western science and democracy and saw China’s Confucian heritage as an obstacle to its modernization and quest for power and wealth in competition with the nations of the world. Chinese communism, which was subsequently triumphant in giving rise to the People’s Republic of China, was one of the products of the May Fourth tradition of radical anti-traditionalist thought. So was Chinese liberalism, which however failed to exert significant influence on Chinese politics and society in the mainland, or on the island of Taiwan during the authoritarian era of one-party rule by the Nationalist Party.

In the early 21st century, the fates or prospects both of Confucianism and of liberal democracy in China seem to be changing. In mainland China, there has been a revival of interest in classical learning (*guoxue*) in general and in Confucianism in particular. In Taiwan, the transition from authoritarianism to liberal democracy that was initiated by the Nationalist Party in the late 1980s has been successful, as evidenced by the second democratic handover of power from one political party to another in May 2008 with Mr. Ma Ying-jeou assuming the presidency of the Republic of China. The case of Taiwan, as well as the progress made in the democratization of Hong Kong (though much more limited than Taiwan) and the successful practice of liberal democracy in South Korea, raises the spectre of “Confucian democracy” – can a Chinese society with a Confucian heritage become a liberal democracy in which civil liberties and human rights flourish and top government leaders are

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elected by universal suffrage in free periodic elections in which multiple political parties can freely compete? And if this is possible, is it desirable? This can be and should be one of the central issues of contemporary Chinese political philosophy.

Jiang Qing, our subject in this book, opposes the introduction of Western-style liberal democracy in China (Jiang 2003 [abbreviated hereinafter as “PC”]; Jiang 2004 [abbreviated hereinafter as “LF”]). So does Kang Xiaoguang, another influential contemporary Chinese thinker who advocates Confucian benevolent governance (*renzheng*) instead of democracy (Kang 2005 [abbreviated hereinafter as “RZ”]). On the other hand, the most well-known neo-Confucian philosophers of the 20th century fully embrace liberal constitutional democracy in the form that has developed in the West. In the *Manifesto to the World of Behalf of Chinese Culture* published in 1958,<sup>1</sup> they argued that not only are there seeds of democracy in the Confucian tradition, but “constitutional democracy is required by the internal development of the moral spirit in Chinese culture” (Tang 1974, p. 166). Xu Fuguan, who was one of them, wrote as follows: “I often say that whoever really understands and respects Chinese culture will believe that the efforts to build democratic politics today . . . are a development mandated by Chinese culture itself” (Xu 1980, p. 126).

This chapter first introduces the key elements of Jiang Qing’s political thought (Section 13.2). It then (in Section 13.3) compares it with that of Kang Xiaoguang, whose thought demonstrates that Jiang is by no means a lone voice in contemporary Chinese political discussion. It then (in Section 13.4) introduces the political thought of Xu Fuguan, probably the most insightful thinker on political philosophy among the neo-Confucian scholars of his generation. The chapter concludes (in Section 13.5) by arguing that Xu’s version of Confucian political philosophy, though half a century old, is more persuasive to us in China today than that of Jiang Qing’s.

## 13.2 Jiang Qing

One of the main themes of Jiang’s book *Political Confucianism* is to highlight the inadequacies of 20th-century neo-Confucianism that led to its failure to provide a true Confucian political philosophy for China in the modern age. Jiang argues (PC, chap. 1) that this neo-Confucianism, which adheres to the tradition of the Song-Ming learning of the mind-heart and human nature, may be labeled “life Confucianism” (*shengming ruxue*) or “heart-nature Confucianism” (*xinxing ruxue*). He identifies at least two other strands of Confucianism in the Chinese tradition, which he labels “political Confucianism” and “politicized Confucianism” respectively (PC, chaps. 1, 2). Political Confucianism is exemplified by the *Gongyang* learning on *Chunqiu* (the *Spring and Autumn Annals*) and much of Han Confucianism; it follows Xunzi in recognizing the darker sides of human nature, emphasizes the rites (*li*) more than benevolence (*ren*),

and deals with the practical tasks of the reconstruction and maintenance of political and social institutions. It may also be called “institutional Confucianism” (PC 32). Jiang is of the view that while political Confucianism as an official ideology did serve a legitimizing function for the imperial state, it also provided standards for the critical evaluation of the exercise of political power. On the other hand, politicized Confucianism, as exemplified by the Ancient Text Classics school (*guwen jingxue*) of the Han dynasty, which emphasized the sacred status and absolute authority of the emperor, was an ideology serving only the interest of the rulers. Jiang also points out that political Confucianism was actually a dominant strand in Confucianism for most of the time after the Han dynasty.

The strength of life Confucianism lies in its theory of conscience and the heart-mind, the development of the human person, and moral self-cultivation. Jiang points out that life Confucianism is grossly inadequate in failing to generate any specifically Confucian institutional proposal for the construction of the political and social order in modern China (PC, chap. 1). Jiang criticizes the neo-Confucian scholars for their embrace of Western-style liberal constitutional democracy in an uncritical manner (PC 47). While the neo-Confucians suggest that the evolution of Confucian thought in modern times logically and necessarily leads to democracy, Jiang argues that it is neither possible nor desirable that Confucian thinking should lead to Western-style democracy (PC 91). In particular, he criticizes Mou Zongsan’s famous theory that democracy may be achieved through the “self-negation of conscience” (PC 57–95).<sup>2</sup> Unlike Mou, Jiang does not consider democracy as it has evolved in the West to be universally applicable to all humankind (PC 46–47, 91). In his view, if China were to democratize in the same way as the West, China would lose her cultural identity and depart from the Confucian way (PC 3).

Although Jiang provides a critique of neo-Confucianism or what he calls “life Confucianism”, his purpose is not to denigrate its importance, but only to point out that “life Confucianism” is not the whole of Confucianism, and that what he calls political or institutional Confucianism is equally important particularly in this day and age. He believes that both strands of Confucianism have their rightful domains of existence and can nicely complement one another (PC 5, 38, 117; LF 406). For example, “life Confucianism” when practiced by political leaders will ensure that they will be persons of virtue, integrity, and moral character, and will be genuinely qualified for the task of governance (LF 435). Political Confucianism constructs institutions, structures, and norms that are conducive to the realization of Confucian ideals and that ensure that such realization is not solely dependent on the moral self-cultivation of individuals. In his more recent writings (LF 407), Jiang also identifies a third positive strand of Confucianism – social Confucianism, which is preached and practiced in the community or what is today called civil society, as distinguished from the state or the government apparatus. And he theorizes that the full revival of Confucianism in China would entail the simultaneous development of all these three strands of Confucianism.

What, then, are the precise institutional proposals of political Confucianism for the purpose of political and social reconstruction in contemporary China? The answer was not clear from Jiang's book on *Political Confucianism* but becomes much clearer in his book on *Life Faith and the Kingly Way of Politics*. The central premise of the book is that China should develop a political order that is simultaneously rooted in three sources of legitimacy: transcendent-sacred legitimacy, historical-cultural legitimacy, and democratic legitimacy, or legitimacy based on the will of the people. Jiang then puts forward a proposal for a tricameral Parliament (LF 313–315), consisting of the House of Confucians (*tongru yuan*) (providing the first type of legitimacy mentioned above), the House of the Nation (*guoti yuan*) (providing the second type of legitimacy), and the House of the People (*shumin yuan*) (providing the third type of legitimacy). Some details of the proposed tricameral Parliament are provided in Daniel Bell's chapter in this volume, so they will not be repeated here.<sup>3</sup> The proposal relating to the House of Confucians seems to be derived from the Chinese tradition of governance by Confucian scholars-officials and also partly inspired by Islamic theocratic institutions in contemporary Iran (LF 316); that relating to the House of Nations seems to be inspired by the House of Lords as the Upper House of Parliament in English history (LF 316, 380); and that relating to the House of the People is apparently derived from Parliamentary institutions elected by universal suffrage in the contemporary world.

Legitimacy is a modern Western concept and it is not clear why Jiang uses this concept as the basis of his political philosophy for the programmatic reconstruction of the political order for China's future. He stresses the importance of legitimacy for any political order, pointing out that no political order can rest entirely on physical coercion and every political order needs to win the voluntary acceptance and support of the people (LF 326–327, 438). He believes that his theory of triple legitimacy is not his own invention but can be derived from Confucian classical texts (LF 320–321, 350–352). A political order has transcendent-sacred legitimacy insofar as it is based on the Way of Heaven or expresses the will of Heaven. A political order has historical-cultural legitimacy insofar as it is rooted in the historical traditions of the people as evolved during a long time-span and is consistent with the culture and values of the people. A political order has democratic legitimacy insofar as it is consistent with the will of the people or public opinion. Jiang considers Western liberal democracy inadequate and inappropriate for China because it only has democratic legitimacy but lacks the two other kinds of legitimacy. Jiang claims that he is not against democracy, but considers that democratic legitimacy alone does not constitute a sufficient basis of legitimacy for the Chinese political order. He attempts to theorize on a political order that embraces and yet surpasses democracy (LF 430).

Jiang criticizes liberal democracy as practiced in the West as a system in which people's material interests and lower-order desires prevail and transcendent moral principles are disregarded (LF 295–296, 342). This is because liberal democracy has no built-in institutional safeguards to ensure that transcendent

moral principles will not be violated and that the political order has transcendent-sacred legitimacy (LF 299–300). As regards historical-cultural legitimacy, Jiang suggests that liberal democracy may have such legitimacy in the West because it is itself a product of the history of Western civilization (LF 358–359), but it lacks historical-cultural legitimacy in China (even if it is imported or transplanted from the West).

It is apparent from Jiang's writings that all three sources of legitimacy as theorized by him can be understood in Confucian terms. A political order that is consistent with the Way of Heaven is a Confucian political order that practices rule by virtue (*dezhi*) and benevolent government (*renzheng*) (LF 333). As far as China is concerned, a political order can have historical-cultural legitimacy only if it is Confucian, because (as interpreted by Jiang) Confucianism has been the dominant tradition in Chinese history and dominant force in Chinese culture (LF 324, 443–445). A Confucian political order also has democratic legitimacy, because Confucianism requires the ruler to govern in the interests of the people and in accordance with the wishes of the people (thus Heaven's will is understood as the will of the people, as in the saying "Heaven sees as the people see, Heaven hears as the people hear").<sup>4</sup> In modern times, democratic legitimacy is associated with the election of the government by the people. Jiang recognizes popular election as a vehicle of democratic legitimacy, and his tricameral Parliament includes one house that is popularly elected. It seems that Jiang regards both the Confucian *minben* (people-as-the-basis or government for the people or in the interests of the people) and *renzheng* tradition and the modern practice of electoral democracy or *minzhu* (people-as-the-master or government by the people) as instances of democratic legitimacy (LF 441–443).

In Jiang's thought, not only is Confucianism privileged as supplying all three sources of legitimacy; Confucian scholars and personalities also have guaranteed roles in state institutions. For example, the House of Confucians consists of Confucian scholars nominated by the people and Confucian scholars who have graduated from a state-established Confucian college and been appointed by the state to the House. The president or chairman of the House of the Nation is a descendant of Confucius himself. In a controversial article published on the Internet in 2006 (Jiang 2006), Jiang advocates that Confucianism as a religion (*rujiao*) should be recognized as the official religion, and the state should confer privileges on a Confucian Association formed in civil society. Jiang expressly points out that this proposal has its parallels in some Western states that have established official churches, such as the Anglican Church in Britain (Jiang 2006). He points out that his proposal does not mean that the Confucian Association should be controlled by the state, for in the Chinese tradition, there exists a distinction between the tradition of the Way (*daotong*) (as developed by true Confucian thinkers) and the tradition of politics (*zhengtong*) (as developed by the state) (LF 428–429). He also clarifies that the proposed state endorsement of and support for the Confucian religion does not mean the suppression of freedom of religious beliefs and freedom of thought, and different religions and thoughts should be allowed to exist freely in civil society (Fan

2008, p. 37). But he also suggests that if the majority of the Chinese people were to become Christians, China's national and cultural identity would perish (Jiang 2006).

In his more recent writings (Jiang 2006), Jiang puts forward concrete proposals and strategies for the revival of Confucianism and reconstruction of China's political order. One set of strategies relates to the state, and the other relates to civil society. At the level of the state, Jiang proposes that Confucianism should be affirmed in the Constitution as the state ideology (in effect replacing Marxism-Leninism and the thoughts of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping which are affirmed in the existing Constitution of the People's Republic of China); officials should have received education in classical Confucian texts and passed examinations based on them (a modern *keju* [examination] system resurrected from the traditional Chinese system for the recruitment of officials). In the domain of civil society, Jiang proposes the establishment of a Chinese Confucian Association (*Zhongguo rujia xuehui*) which should be given a privileged status in the religious life of the nation (for example, the Association will design and prescribe the rites for official ceremonies), and the revival of social Confucianism (Confucianism as practiced in people's daily life), including the promotion of the study of Confucian texts among children and students.

It is apparent by now that Jiang is in effect proposing the substitution of Confucianism for Communism as the ruling ideology of the Chinese state. He also considers that the existing political system in China is grossly deficient in legitimacy (LF 294), particularly because the adherence to Marxism is now no more than lip service, unlike the case in the first few decades of the People's Republic of China. And if one applies Jiang's theory of triple legitimacy to the existing Chinese state, its legitimacy deficit is clear and obvious. This probably explains why some of Jiang's writings have apparently experienced difficulties in getting published in mainland China. His book on *Life Faith and the Kingly Way of Politics* was published in Taiwan but not in mainland China. Some of the articles in the book can however be found on the Internet.<sup>5</sup>

Although Jiang is critical of Western liberal democracy and criticizes neo-Confucian political philosophy for its wholesale Westernization, he is not against the borrowing of elements of the Western democratic tradition. Like the neo-Confucian philosophers, he recognizes that a primary weakness in the Chinese political tradition is that it has not developed adequate objective institutional and procedural safeguards to prevent the abuse of political power and to ensure the fulfillment of the requirements of triple legitimacy when rulers fail to practice rule by virtue, rule by the *li* (rites) and benevolent governance (LF 334–335, 374–375). He praises the Western institutional innovation of securing peaceful transfer of power by periodic elections as a great contribution to the civilization of humankind (LF 426–427, 429). He also affirms that there is much that China can learn from Western political practices such as separation of powers, judicial independence, parliamentary government, and constitutionalism (LF 378–380). However, he stresses that any borrowing from Western political institutions can be based purely on pragmatic



considerations, and there is no need to engage in the philosophical project (which he thinks the neo-Confucians engaged in but failed) of trying to integrate or synthesize Western political theories of liberal democracy with Confucian political philosophy (Jiang 1996, p. 123).

It is clear that Jiang rejects some of the main tenets of liberalism and democracy that are taken for granted by most contemporary Western thinkers. For example, his proposal that the state should adopt Confucianism as its official ideology is the exact opposite of the liberal principle of the neutrality of the state, although this is by no means original in the Chinese context, since both the contemporary Chinese state and the traditional Chinese state have embraced their own official ideologies – Marxism and Confucianism respectively. As Joseph Chan points out in commenting on Jiang’s political thought (Fan 2008, pp. 37–38), drawing on Rawls’ theory in this regard, adopting a “comprehensive doctrine” like Confucianism as the basis of political rule would mean disrespect to Chinese citizens who subscribe to other religious, philosophical, and political beliefs. Jiang’s outlook seems to be out of place in a modern pluralistic and open society in which people with radically different values and lifestyles seek to live together in social cooperation. Whereas Max Weber’s thesis of the disenchantment of the world seems to be increasing applicable to China, though it originally describes the conditions of Western modernity, Jiang expressly seeks the re-enchantment of the world through political reconstruction (Fan 2008, p. 60). However, even those who share Jiang’s despair about the secularization and materialism of modern life and believe in the validity of transcendent-sacred principles will doubt whether Jiang is justified in assuming that as far as the Chinese people are concerned, Confucianism has an exclusive claim to the representation or interpretation of the transcendent and the sacred.

Jiang expressly rejects the principle, which is taken for granted since the Age of Enlightenment in the West, that all persons are equal and are the sovereign in the state (Fan 2008, p. 5). Jiang points out that according to Confucianism, although all persons equally have the potential to grow as human beings and to become sages, in practice people are different in terms of experience, learning, wisdom, and virtues (LF 384). Only the learned and virtuous are qualified to exercise political power; thus it is not true that all people in the state are equally qualified to participate in the running of the state. He therefore rejects the principle of equal rights of political participation on the part of all citizens of the state (Fan 2008, p. 6). He refers to the Confucian distinction between “the superior (or noble or cultivated) persons” (*junzi*) and “ordinary (or mean) people” (*xiaoren*), who are different in terms of learning, cultivation, and intellectual and moral caliber. Democratic politics based entirely on “one person one vote” is, according to Jiang, the politics of *xiaoren* (Fan 2008, pp. 9, 10, 27). It will only seek the satisfaction of the lower-level desires of ordinary people and ignore the claims of the transcendent and the sacred, and of history and culture. Thus Jiang openly advocates rule by the virtuous (*xianren zhengzhi*) or rule by scholars (*shiren zhengzhi*) rather than rule by all the people,



denies that rulers and the people (the ruled) should be considered equal, and defends paternalism to be practiced by rulers with regard to the people (Fan 2008, pp. 16, 61).

### 13.3 Kang Xiaoguang: By Way of Comparison

We now turn to Kang Xiaoguang, another leading advocate of the application of Confucianism in China's political reconstruction. Although he does not himself use the term "political Confucianism" which as mentioned above was coined by Jiang Qing, his theory can be regarded as another version of political Confucianism. Yet another version is Xu Fuguan's political philosophy, to be discussed in the next section of this chapter. In this section, we introduce the main elements of Kang's political Confucianism, drawing comparisons with Jiang's where appropriate.

Kang notes that many intellectuals in contemporary China consider liberal democracy a panacea to China's ills (RZ xlvi). He disagrees (RZ viii, xviii–xix). He argues that the introduction of Western-style democracy in China would not be able to solve the major problems that she currently faces, such as corruption, poverty, economic problems, and social injustice (RZ xix–xx). Problems such as corruption and poverty can only be gradually overcome as China achieves further successes in economic development (RZ xxi). Kang is of the view that democratization will not only fail to solve China's current problems but may give rise to new problems, such as political instability and risks of secession arising from ethnic conflicts (as the cases of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia demonstrate) (RZ xx, xxiii–xxiv).

Like Jiang, Kang believes that the current Chinese state suffers from a severe legitimacy deficit (RZ xv, 119–122). And like Jiang, he advocates the substitution of Confucianism – particularly Confucian benevolent government (*renzheng*) for Marxism as the fundamental belief system of the Chinese state. This probably explains why his book on *Renzheng: The Third Road for China's Political Development* was not (probably because it could not be) published in Mainland China but was published in Singapore.

Given the legitimacy crisis faced by the Chinese regime, Kang suggests that there are basically two options from which China can choose in mapping its future: either "re-Westernization" (as the embrace of Marxism was also Westernization) (i.e., wholesale Westernization) or re-Sinicization (RZ xlv). Kang theorizes that if the first option is chosen and Western culture triumphs in China, then China will become a Western-style liberal democracy. On the other hand, if Confucian culture revives, then *renzheng* will be practiced as the Chinese system of government. Kang himself advocates re-Sinicization, which includes restoring Confucianism and Confucian *renzheng* as the foundation of the Chinese state. Only such a return to China's tradition and indigenous culture can supply the legitimacy that the existing Chinese state desperately

needs. Kang does not object to learning and borrowing from the West, but insists (like Jiang) that this should be done on the basis of the principle of “Chinese learning as the body, Western learning for use” (*zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong*) (RZ xlv).

Kang argues that the Confucian doctrine of *renzheng* is less concerned with how political power originates (e.g., whether the government is elected by the people) than with how it is exercised (RZ 124). *Renzheng* is practiced where such power is held in trust for the people and is exercised for the benefit of the people. Like Jiang, Kang characterizes the essence of the Confucian tradition of government as government by the community of Confucian scholars (RZ xxx). And he proposes that government by the Chinese Communist Party be replaced by government by a new community of Confucians which may be produced by the metamorphosis of the Chinese Communist Party (RZ xlviii). In Kang’s view, paternalistic rule by such a political elite is justified, with the state educating the people in the virtues (instead of maintaining neutrality as advocated by liberalism) and encouraging their pursuit of the good life and of moral and spiritual excellence (RZ 128–130).

Like Jiang, Kang proposes a two-fold strategy for the realization of what he calls the “Confucianization” (or re-Confucianization) of Chinese politics and society. The first strategy relates to the state, and the second to civil society (RZ xlvii). As regards the state, Kang advocates the “Confucianization” of the Chinese Communist Party, the substitution of “the Way of Confucius and Mencius” (*Kongmeng zhidao*) for Marxism-Leninism as official ideology, the inclusion (or re-inclusion) of the Confucian classics (*sishe wujing*) in the syllabus of the civil service examination, and the re-establishment of the link between the Confucian tradition of scholarship (*xuetong*) and the tradition of politics (*zhengtong*) (RZ xxxii). Moving from the domain of politics and government to that of society itself, Kang proposes that Confucianism should be included in the school curriculum, and Confucianism as a religion (*rujiao*) should be recognized as the official religion (*guojiao*, or religion of the nation) of China (RZ xlviii). Kang holds that freedom of religion should be allowed, while at the same time certain privileges should be accorded to the Confucian religion (RZ xlix). These proposals are very much in line with those of Jiang Qing’s as discussed above.

As mentioned above, Jiang recognizes peaceful political transition in accordance with electoral arrangements to be a great achievement of Western civilization. Interestingly, Kang argues that transfer of power by competitive elections is not essential in the Confucian political order he advocates for China’s future; instead, a modern equivalent to the traditional practice of *chanrang* (handover of power to those who merit it) can be the solution to the question of the transfer of power (RZ xxxiii, 132–134). Kang actually suggests that this has already been practiced within the Chinese Communist Party in recent decades, with Deng Xiaoping handing over power to Jiang Zemin, and Jiang Zemin handing over power to Hu Jintao (RZ xxxiii, 135).

Like Jiang and the neo-Confucians, Kang acknowledges that in traditional China, safeguards against the abuse of political power were inadequate (RZ xlii). However, he believes that Western liberal democratic institutions are not essential and other safeguards can be devised for the political order of China's future. More specifically, he advocates a political, social, and economic system with the following features (RZ xxxv–xli): market economy, welfare state, “administrative absorption of politics” (with the elites in society being coopted into the government consultative system), corporatism (what Kang calls *she-tuan zhuyi*, with main social groups such as workers and entrepreneurs being organized into trade unions and associations representing their respective interests and the state coordinating with them) which implies freedom of association as its prerequisite, and freedom of the media (so that the press and other media can freely report matters of government errors and mismanagement, and public opinion will be mobilized to supervise government performance and subject it to critical scrutiny).

It may be noted that although Kang rejects liberal democracy as the model for China's political reform, the implementation of some of his concrete proposals, including those relating to freedom of the media and freedom of association, would entail significant liberalization of the existing Chinese political order. So would the implementation of some of Jiang's proposals, such as the election of one house of Parliament by universal suffrage and competitive multi-party elections. However, like Jiang, Kang also draws on Confucianism in opposing the liberal democratic premise of the political equality of all in the state. Kang points out that although Confucianism affirms the equality principle in the sense that all persons have the possibility of becoming sages, it also recognizes that in reality there are people with virtues and people without virtues, and only the virtuous are qualified to rule (RZ xxxi). The tasks of government are a heavy responsibility placed on the intellectual and moral elite, who are subject to particularly onerous moral requirements, and the people are under a duty to accept their teachings (RZ 127). Like Jiang, Kang believes that the will of Heaven is higher than the will of the people, and the Way of Heaven is more fully understood by the community of Confucian scholars than by ordinary people (RZ xxxi). Kang also suggests that in recognizing the inequality of persons Confucianism is more “honest” than liberal democratic theory which propagates the myth of the equality of all and the sovereignty of the people (RZ 127).

### 13.4 Xu Fuguan

Xu Fuguan (1904–1982) lived more than half a century before Jiang and Kang, in the era of Republican China, Nationalist Party rule, the Sino-Japanese war and the struggle between the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party. Unlike Jiang and Kang, he did not start his career as a scholar. He served in the army of the Nationalist regime and rose to senior ranks.<sup>6</sup> After the

communist takeover, he lived his life in Taiwan and Hong Kong. He devoted himself to teaching and scholarship, writing many articles and books on contemporary political issues as well as on Chinese history and philosophy. Together with several famous neo-Confucian scholars (Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and Carson Chang), he co-authored the *Manifesto to the World on Behalf of Chinese Culture* (“the Manifesto”) published in 1958,<sup>7</sup> which contains among other things the definitive statement of 20th century neo-Confucian political philosophy. We will first introduce the relevant ideas in the Manifesto in this regard, and then proceed to examine Xu’s own political thought.

The thesis of the Manifesto as far as China’s political development is concerned is that not only are there seeds of democracy within the Chinese tradition, particularly the Confucian tradition (I will call this “Proposition 1”), but the establishment of a liberal constitutional democracy (“LCD”) in China is the internal requirement or necessity of the development of the Chinese cultural tradition itself (I will call this “Proposition 2”). According to Proposition 1, Confucianism is compatible with LCD. According to Proposition 2, the development of LCD in China will (to quote from a passage in the Manifesto) “enable her national character to reach higher planes of perfection and her spiritual life to achieve a more comprehensive development” than ever before (Chang 1962, p. 469 [English translation]; Tang 1974, p. 158 [Chinese original]). It seems therefore that Proposition 2 is a stronger claim than Proposition 1.

As regards Proposition 1, the authors of the Manifesto adduce as evidence both ideas and practices in the Chinese tradition that are considered to be consistent with the spirit of democracy (Tang 1974, pp. 162–165). The relevant *ideas* include, for example, rule by virtue (*weizheng yide*), and the ancient ideas that the will of Heaven is reflected in the people’s will, that the ruler should heed the people’s views, that political power should be exercised so as to realize the people’s wishes, that all under Heaven belongs to the public (*tianxia weigong*) and does not belong to one person, and that everyone has the moral potential to become a sage, thus implying human equality. Very ancient ideas such as transfer of power to the meritorious (*chanyang*) (by Yao and Shun) and rebellion against tyranny are also referred to. The relevant *practices* include, for example, ministers’ remonstrance with the ruler, impartial chronicles by court historiographers, institutions such as the prime minister and the censorate, and the recommendation and examination system for bureaucratic recruitment.

The arguments for Proposition 2 are rather complicated in structure, and apparently dispersed in different passages in sections 8 and 9 of the Manifesto. The arguments may be reconstructed as follows:

- (1) China’s traditional political system was plagued by problems, resulting in dynastic cycles with alternating periods of order and chaos. “In order to break through this situation the only way is to establish a democratic government” (Chang 1962, p. 471; Tang 1974, p. 162).
- (2) Some of the seeds for democracy in the Chinese tradition mentioned above “serve to offset the monarch’s power and to bridge the gap between the

central government and the populace, although their effectiveness depended solely on the personal integrity of the monarch, since there was no fundamental law or constitution to check him. It is therefore clear that the limitations on the powers of the ruler must be transferred from the ministers to the people outside the governmental structure if they are to be effectual. Towards democracy, therefore, is the natural direction of development for Chinese political history” (Chang 1962, pp. 472–473; Tang 1974, pp. 163–164).

In this context, the Manifesto expressly advocates constitutionalism and peaceful transfer of political power as between political parties (Tang 1974, p. 164).

- (3) The ancient ideas of *chanyang* and rebellion against tyranny and that all under Heaven does not belong to one person imply that political power should be transferable. However, “the deficiency of Confucian thought in the past is that it did not understand that the legal system could be used to effect the transfer of the ruler’s power so as to realize the wishes of the people” (Tang 1974, p. 164).
- (4) The monarchical system is inconsistent with the idea of human equality mentioned above, because it denies that politically and morally the people may have equal status as the ruler. In a democracy such equality can be secured.
- (5) In the last paragraph of the section of the Manifesto on the question of democracy, the authors refer to “a more profound reason why the establishment of a democratic government is necessary for the development of China’s culture and history” (Chang 1962, p. 472; Tang 1974, p. 165). It is pointed out that even if the monarch practices the ideal of rule by virtue, the people in this case are no more than “passive recipients of virtuous rule, and their status as full moral agents (subjects, actors or *zhuti*) has not yet been secured” (Tang 1974, p. 165). Thus only the monarch is a full moral agent. Interestingly, it is further argued that in this case, the monarch can hardly be said to be truly virtuous and to be an authentic moral agent unless he is willing and ready to make his own position as ruler open and accessible to all and affirm the equal political rights of all. Hence it is concluded as follows:

The capacity for self-determination by the moral agent requires the possibility of his/her political participation. Here we see a fundamental contradiction between the moral spirit in Chinese culture and the monarchical system. The contradiction can only be resolved by a constitutional democracy that affirms that all are equal political agents (*zhuti*). Thus constitutional democracy is required by the internal development of the moral spirit in Chinese culture (Tang 1974, p. 166).

In line with the Confucian faith of the authors, the Manifesto privileges the moral consciousness and assumes that the subject (*zhuti*) in traditional Chinese culture is primarily a moral subject (agent). It is believed that it is the inner requirement of the development of Chinese culture in this modern age for this moral subject to become a political subject and a cognitive subject as well, so

that China can embrace democracy and science. For this purpose, one of the authors of the Manifesto, Mou Zongsan, developed the theory of the “self-negation” (*kanxian*) of conscience (*liangzhi*), which holds that in order to develop (*kaichu*) democracy and science in the Chinese cultural tradition, the conscience needs to undergo temporarily a process of self-negation.<sup>8</sup> Traces of this idea can be found in the Manifesto itself, when it suggests that the moral subject should temporarily forget itself in order to become a purely cognitive subject (Tang 1974, pp. 160–161). As mentioned above, Mou’s self-negation theory subsequently became one of Jiang’s targets of criticism.

We now turn to Xu Fuguan’s political thought.<sup>9</sup> His political thought is closely linked to his study of Chinese political and intellectual history and of the classical texts of pre-Qin Confucian thought. One of the central notions developed by him is the contradiction of “double subjectivity” (*shuangchong zhutixing*) in Chinese history (Xu 1980 [abbreviated hereinafter as “XS”], p. 104). By this he means that whereas, according to true Confucian thinking, the people should be the subjects (*zhuti*) or primary actors in the political order, in practice in Chinese history the monarch or emperor was the subject or primary actor in the political order. In his view, Confucianism requires the rulers to put aside their self-interests and to serve only the interests of the people. However, in the actual course of Chinese history, such Confucian ideal was seldom realized (XS 385). And Confucianism did not develop sufficient institutional safeguards to restrain the exercise of absolutist imperial power. It was only able to alleviate to some extent the oppressive use of political power (XS 54, 395). Xu stresses that in the course of Chinese history, some Confucian scholars and intellectuals did practice true Confucianism and spoke up and stood up against the abuses of political power; their history has been written in blood and tears (XS 386).

Xu distinguishes between true or original Confucian thought which developed before the Qin unification and its subsequently being distorted or compromised to serve the interests and needs of imperial rule during and after the Han dynasty.<sup>10</sup> For example, he believes that the theory of the Three Bonds (*sangang*) departs from the true spirit of classical Confucianism which emphasizes the reciprocal obligations in and mutuality of the relationship between monarch and minister, father and son, and husband and wife. The ethics of the Three Bonds leads to the subordination of the minister, son, and wife to the absolute authority of the other (superior) party in the relationship and their absolute loyalty and obedience to that party (Xu 1988 [abbreviated hereinafter as “RJ”], pp. 77, 137). Xu is also critical towards the traditional civil service examination, arguing that it was largely an instrument used by the regime to tame and control the intellectuals of traditional China (XS 193).

On the basis of his study of classical Confucian texts, Xu points out that Confucianism understands the system of political rule or government as being established by Heaven for the benefit of the people. “Heaven sees as the people see, Heaven hears as the people hear” (XS 51).<sup>11</sup> Rulers need to win the voluntary support of the people, and political rule should be based on morally exemplary conduct and virtues, rather than coercion. Rulers should practice benevolent



governance (*renzheng*), rule by virtue (*dezhi*), and rule in accordance with the rites (*lizhi*). In particular, rulers should govern in accordance with the interests and the wishes of the people themselves (XS 389; RJ 126, 213), and should not impose their own political blueprint on the people. This is Xu's interpretation of the concept of "doing nothing" (*wuwei*) as a political virtue (XS 105, 111–112; RJ 210). Xu interprets the Confucian precept on the pursuit of righteousness rather than profit (*yili zhibian*) as requiring rulers to pursue the people's interests (righteousness) rather than the rulers' own interests (profit) (RJ 136).

One of Xu's most important and original interpretations of Confucianism lies in his distinction between the Confucian notions of self-cultivation (*xijuji*) and ruling the people (*zhiren*) (RJ 203–220). He stresses that the standards to be adopted in these two domains are different and should not be confused with one another. In practicing self-cultivation, practitioners of Confucianism should impose the highest ethical standards on themselves and practice utmost self-discipline. But this does not mean that as rulers, political leaders, or officials they should impose such standards on the people. This would be oppressive, as encapsulated in the Chinese term *yili sharen* (killing people with ethics) (RJ 205; XS 112). According to Xu, Confucianism applies a different set of standards in the domain of political rule. In political rule, feeding the people (*yangmin*) takes priority over teaching the people (*jiaomin*); the natural life (*ziran shengming*, or physical life) of the people is the uppermost consideration (RJ 18, 197–198, 203). Furthermore, even when it comes to "teaching the people" (*jiaomin*, or education and cultivation of the people), what should be taught is no more than the basic principles of Confucian ethics, such as filial piety, benevolence, righteousness, and fulfilling one's duties to others in the context of ethical human relationships (RJ 199). Thus in Xu's view, Confucianism by no means justifies the kind of ideological indoctrination practiced in modern totalitarian states.

One of Xu's main theses about Confucianism and democracy is that the Confucian theory of the goodness of human nature (*xingshan lun*) provides the moral foundation for democracy (RJ 99).<sup>12</sup> In his view, this positive and optimistic view of human nature affirms human dignity and leads to respect for and trust and faith in the people (or *min* in Chinese) (RJ 152). Xu argues that democracy is based on such respect for and trust and faith in the people. He also argues that the opposite view of human nature – that human nature is basically evil (*xing'e lun*) – would lead to the opposite of democracy: if people are evil and not to be trusted, then authoritarian rule would be justified to keep them from evil (RJ 110, 153). Xu's view in this regard may be contrasted with that of Chang Hao, who argues that Western liberalism is closely associated with the distrust of human beings (particularly rulers) that originates in the Christian notion of original sin (Zhang 1989).

Xu fully embraces Western liberal democracy and believes that it is universally applicable; he expressly points out that there is no specifically Chinese style of democracy (XS 42). He suggests that if Confucius and Mencius were alive today, they would also be in favor of democracy (RJ 191). Xu's writings also affirm a basic proposition in the 1958 Manifesto discussed above: the



democratization of China is not only consistent with its Confucian cultural heritage but would be the natural development of the Confucian tradition and enable Confucian ideals to be better realized than before (XS 59–60). In particular, the historical tragedy of the contradiction of “double subjectivity” as mentioned above can be overcome (XS 126).

Although Xu was a firm believer in and was fully committed to Confucianism, he recognizes that there were deficiencies and weaknesses in the Confucianism tradition. For example, he points out that the Confucian conception of the “five cardinal relationships” (ruler-minister, father-son, elder and younger brothers, husband and wife, friend-friend) did not sufficiently address the relationship between the government and the people (XS 390). He suggests that traditional Confucianism looks at politics mainly from the standpoint of the ruling elite rather than from the standpoint of the people (XS 54–55; RJ 72). He also notices that in emphasizing duties and obligations, Confucianism and traditional Chinese culture did not facilitate the development of the individual subject’s self-consciousness and assertion of his subjectivity, legitimate interests and rights (XS 57–58). Thus he suggests that a modernized Confucian philosophy should not only preach the achievement of moral excellence by human beings but also preach liberty, equality, and human rights (RJ 190). At the same time, he believes that Confucian ideas of conscience and moral self-restraint in recognition of the interests of others can enable Western liberal democracy – which originated in the struggle for individuals’ rights – to find a firmer moral foundation (XS 53–54). Thus Confucianism can not only give rise to democracy in China but can also provide deeper roots for it in the West.

### 13.5 Conclusion

Xu wrote at a time when communism was at its heights in mainland China and authoritarian rule was practiced by the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) in Taiwan. He was critical towards both communist totalitarianism and the Kuomintang’s authoritarianism, and advocated Western-style liberal democracy for China’s future. However, unlike many Chinese liberals in modern times who were critical of traditional Chinese political culture and Confucianism, Xu believed in the reconciliation and synthesis of Confucianism and the Chinese cultural tradition on the one hand and liberal democracy on the other hand. Xu and other neo-Confucian thinkers who co-authored with Xu the 1958 Manifesto were of the view that democratization in China does not mean wholesale Westernization and the abandonment of China’s cultural tradition. On the contrary, China’s democratization should be, as Xu pointed out, the quest and dream of all those who understand and love the Chinese cultural tradition and Confucianism and who are committed to defending and promoting them (XS 126; RJ 72, 191).

Jiang and Kang write at a time when communism as a secular religion was on the wane in China and indeed all over the world and when China is experiencing an upsurge of nationalism and a renaissance of traditional Chinese culture and thought. Both of them question the legitimacy of the existing regime in China which still proclaims communism as its official ideology. And both of them propose the adoption or re-adoption of Confucianism (in substitution for communism) as the guiding philosophy for the Chinese people. This contrasts with Xu's endorsement of a liberal democratic constitutional framework in which no preference will be accorded to any ideology or political, philosophical, or religious beliefs, and different political parties and programs can freely compete for people's votes in an electoral system.

Although Jiang and Kang do not support the liberal neutrality of the state, neither of them rejects extensive borrowing from Western political and social institutions. For example, Jiang is in favor of a parliamentary system in which one of the houses is popularly elected in periodic elections with multi-party competition. Kang proposes the freedom of media, the freedom of association and corporatism. Both support the market economy with welfare provisions, and a vibrant civil society in which different beliefs and opinions can freely co-exist, although they would also like Confucianism to be recognized by the state as the official religion and to be accorded a privileged status.

The differences between Jiang and Kang on the one hand and Xu on the other boil down to the following issues. First, should Confucianism be privileged as an ideology, religion, philosophy, or belief system endorsed by the state? Second, should there be equality of political rights among all Chinese citizens in the sense that the highest political institutions should be elected by universal and equal suffrage on the basis of free and fair elections? The first question concerns the extent to which the Chinese state should be a liberal state. The second question concerns the extent to which it should be a democratic state.

On the first question, Jiang's argument is apparently that Confucianism should be privileged because it expresses the transcendent-sacred reality and has also been the dominant force in Chinese history and culture. However, it may be questioned as regards the first point why Confucianism should monopolize spiritual truth and why other religions, philosophies, or belief systems that are subscribed to by some members of Chinese society should be discriminated against. As mentioned above, this would constitute disrespect to them and to their human dignity and freedom of belief. As regards the second point, it may be argued that even if Confucianism was the dominant force in Chinese history and culture for a long time in the past, this is not a sufficient reason why it ought to be the dominant force in China's future. Whether it would be so should not be decided by the state but is to be decided by the people in their daily life as Chinese society changes and evolves.

We now turn to the question of democracy. Here both Jiang and Kang on the one hand and Xu on the other hand draw on Confucianism in defending their positions. Jiang and Kang argue that according to Confucianism, although everyone has the moral potential to become a sage, in practice some have

achieved higher levels of learning, cultivation, and virtues than others. Thus there is a Confucian distinction between “superior people” (*junzi*) and “ordinary people” (or mean/average people, or *xiaoren*). And the Confucian thesis is that positions of power and responsibility should only be open to the virtuous. Thus it is not right that everyone, irrespective of their moral and intellectual qualities, should have completely equal rights to political participation, and it would not be wrong to accord privileges to “superior” people.

Xu draws on the Confucian thesis that human nature is good rather than evil to argue that democracy (in terms of equal rights to political participation) has a Confucian foundation. He argues that because human nature is good, people have human dignity, they should be respected and they can be trusted to make judgments and decisions for themselves. Insofar as democracy is a system that trusts the people and entrusts political power to them, it is consistent with this Confucian insight into human nature. Xu also points out that Confucianism requires holders of political power to exercise it in accordance with the interests and wishes of the people, and not to abuse it so as to promote the rulers’ self-interest. This is also the principle and objective of democracy. Xu also makes the extremely important point about the distinction between self-cultivation (*xiuji*) and ruling the people (*zhiren*): Confucianism does urge practitioners of Confucianism and the ruling elite to engage in self-cultivation and to become *junzi*, but the distinction between *junzi* and *xiaoren* is only for the purpose of self-cultivation and not to be extended to politics and used to take away or diminish the political rights of ordinary people. Indeed, if ordinary people are to be regarded as *xiaoren* and not to be trusted, this would contradict the Confucian proposition that rulers should rule in accordance with the wishes of the people and win their hearts’ support.

In my view, Xu’s interpretation of Confucianism which renders it consistent with and supportive of democracy is more convincing than that of Jiang’s and Kang’s. It is true that, as stressed by Jiang and Kang, Confucianism has insisted that positions of political power and responsibility should be held by the learned, cultivated, and virtuous. But it does not follow that these people (or those who claim that they are such people) should become a self-perpetuating ruling elite who rule without any need to be held accountable to ordinary people (in periodic elections). If Xu is right, then ordinary people can be trusted to recognize who are learned, cultivated, and virtuous enough to deserve to be elected by them to positions of power and responsibility. This means that there is actually no inherent conflict between the Confucian thesis that positions of political power should be held by the learned, cultivated, and virtuous, and the democratic thesis (which, according to Xu’s interpretation of Confucianism, is also a Confucian thesis) that ordinary people can be trusted to make judgments and decisions about who deserve to hold positions of political power. In a society with a Confucian culture, the people will recognize and elect into positions of power persons with the moral integrity and strength of character that Confucianism affirms and preaches. On the other hand, if a society does not have a Confucian culture, it would be impossible and un-Confucian for a self-proclaimed and

self-appointed Confucian elite to impose their rule and their values on the people. This would not be Confucianism; it would be totalitarianism, known not to traditional China but well-known to modern China.

I would thus conclude this chapter as follows. The political Confucianism of Xu Fuguan and of the 1958 Manifesto is more persuasive than that of Jiang Qing or Kang Xiaoguang. Although developed more than half a century ago, it can speak to us directly today and resonate in our hearts. The mere substitution of Confucianism for communism as the ruling ideology of a non-liberal-democratic state is, as the Chinese saying goes, “changing the soup but not changing the medicine” (*huantang bu huanyao*). Instead, believers in Confucianism should push for more freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of religion, so that Confucianism – together with other religions or faiths – can flourish in civil society. And when Confucian culture revives and China democratizes, the people of China will then be able to elect into office leaders with the moral integrity and strength of character that is the product of Confucian self-cultivation, who will put the Confucian principles of benevolent governance and rule by virtue into practice.

## Notes

1. The authors of the Manifesto were Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, Xu Fuguan, and Zhang Junmai (Carson Chang). The Manifesto was first published in 1958 in Hong Kong and Taipei in the magazines *Minzhu pinglun* [*Democratic Critique*] and *Zaisheng* [*National Renaissance*]. The full Chinese version has been re-published under the title of “*Zhongguo wenhua yu shijie*” [“Chinese Culture and the World”] as an Appendix in Tang (1974), pp. 125–192. It has also been published in Tang (1975); Tang (1991), part II; and Zhang (1981), pp. 849ff. An abbreviated English version of the Manifesto has been published under the title of “A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture” in Chang (1962), pp. 455ff. For an English summary of and commentary on the Manifesto, see Chang (1976). For my earlier article on the Manifesto, see Chen (2007).
2. On this theory of Mou’s, see Mou (1991), pp. 55–62.
3. Note that Bell’s translations of some of Jiang’s terms are different from my translations here.
4. Oft-quoted passage from “*Taoshi*” in *Shangshu*.
5. See, for example, the collection of Jiang’s articles (Jiang Qing *wenji*) at the website of Pinghe College, a Confucian college in Zhuhai: [www.pinghesy.com](http://www.pinghesy.com).
6. For biographical information about Xu, see for example Liu (2001), chap. 1.
7. See note 1 above.
8. See note 2 above.
9. See generally Xu (1980); Xu (1988). For secondary sources, see Xiao (1999); Liu (2001).
10. See generally Liu (2001).
11. See note 4 above.
12. For a good critical discussion, see Xiao (1999), pp. 225–232.

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## Chapter 14

# Is Political Confucianism a Universalism? An Analysis of Jiang Qing's Philosophical Tendency

Xianglong Zhang

This is an age of universalism. The term “universalism” refers to the following mode of thought and action: It believes that the most valuable things can be directly expressed as theses that always should and can be universally applied, and thus form “standards” that are generally applicable to all related phenomena, without regard for differences in time and space. These most valuable things are alternatively called “truth” or “the ultimate good.” Within this kind of viewpoint, a formalistic mathematical proposition that has only one answer is “most true,” because it can always (and should) be universalized without modification, whereas its antithesis is impossible to universalize:  $7+5$  will always equal 12, for example. The more “certain” a natural science thesis is, the more it can be universalized, and the “truer” it becomes. When we have to take “possibility” or “special cases” into consideration, this universalism is weakened. Thus, biology is less universalized than physics, while psychology and sociology are universalized even less. The same follows for technology: the more efficient technologies should also be those that are most capable of universalization. For example, the Internet is seen as a wonderful technology because it can be universalized more readily than past technologies, and brings more universalized effects. While it is more difficult to universalize ethics, political science, or law, they should still strive towards that end nonetheless. The so-called “global ethic” is a modern manifestation of such thought.

However, more careful consideration reveals several ambiguities in the principles of universalism, since the meaning of “valuable” is closer to “possessing positive meaning” than to “capable of being universalized” or “capable of being unified.” It is quite easy to think many “universalizable” things, such as a virus that can kill every person on earth, that have no value, and similarly easy to conceive of “non-universalizable” things, such as our love for our family, that have ultimate value. Thus, there have been several anti-universalism movements

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in the post-Hegel world of Western philosophy, including Kierkegaard's existentialism and Nietzsche's philosophy. On the other hand, an epistemology or ethics that is established on the basis of "individual" or "historical uniqueness," while very provocative, is generally incapable of overcoming universalism. The "one" that Plato and Pythagoras emphasized can be both "all" and "only." Relativism and particularism seem to be nothing more than an afterthought of universalism.

Historical Confucianism, at least the thought and actions of Confucius himself, was not a universalism (this will be discussed more fully below). But what about the "Political Confucianism" that Jiang Qing now advocates? Based on Jiang's criticism of Taiwan's neo-Confucians, his doctrine is certainly not universalist. On the other hand, his own positive theory does *seem* somewhat universalist. This chapter aims to discuss whether Jiang's thought is, or should be, a universalist ideology. I believe that this is a theoretically significant question, as it explains the fundamental philosophical quality of a cultural and ideological system, but is also an important issue in actual practice, as it will affect the future implementation of that system. This is because the encounter of two incompatible universalisms will lead to a "conflict of civilizations," whereas no such conflict will occur when at least one side is non-universalist.

## 14.1 Jiang's Criticism of Mou Zongsan's Universalism

Mou Zongsan (1909–1985) remains the most influential representative of neo-Confucianism outside of the Chinese Mainland. His fundamental theories were strongly influenced by Kant and Hegel's universalism. In his theory, Confucianism is separated into two components: the "inner sainthood" and the "external kingship." The former refers to Confucian ethics and spiritual knowledge, whereas the latter refers to Confucianism's social and political goals. In some sense, the latter is the "real-world" projection of the former.

Mou, of course, believed that the "inner sainthood" was absolutely necessary, and was part of the Confucian tradition he held so dear. Thus, he claims that Confucian ethical claims are the "eternal way," in the sense that they are "eternally unchanging" and generally applicable to all men (Mou 1992, pp. 1, 13). On the other hand, he also admits that this "eternal way" loses its general applicability when applied in actual history, due to special circumstances. For example, this "way" manifested itself as a society led by emperors and Confucian gentry in Chinese history, which is not necessarily a social system that is generally applicable or that constitutes any "eternal way."

Faced with the new challenge from Western civilization, Mou believed that the Chinese civilization needed radical change, largely because it lacked two key elements: science and democracy, which represented, in his mind, "real" knowledge and politics that could be applied in real life (Mou 1992, pp. 13–14). Using Hegel's dialectic method as a foundation, Mou argues that Confucianism's ethical tradition must develop indirectly a new "external kingship" (Mou 1992,

p. 14) in order to survive in the modern world. This means that Confucian ethics must impose some kind of “self-restraint”, even “self-negation” on itself to encourage the emergence of “intellectual rationality” or “Verstand.” (Mou 1992, p. 503). Through this process, the non-attached, intuitive subject of ethics would then become an attached, intellectual subject, or a “logical, formal, and structural me that possesses self-awareness” and “corresponds” to external objects (Mou 1992, pp. 504, 506). Thus, China’s traditional “spirit of comprehensive logical thoroughness” dialectically becomes a spirit of analytical logical thoroughness, which is the essence of Western philosophy for Mou. He also believes that this dialectical development is not only suitable for establishing a science-friendly basis of thought, but is also capable of fostering the individualism necessary for democratic government (Mou 1992, pp. 13–15, 19–27, 131). This is the meaning of “modernization” (Mou 1992, p. 19).

Why must we modernize Chinese culture? Mou’s answer is that this kind of modernization is universally effective:

Modernization takes its origin in the West. However, as soon as it occurs, it has no local characteristics; as far as it is truth, it is universal. Therefore, every nation must admit it. With the old words in China, we call it “the Way of kingship” (王道) or “Storing the world in the world itself (Letting people themselves rather than emperors decide their own destiny)”. With new words, we say “an open society” and “democratic politics”. This is a common ideal. For these reasons, although democratic politics originated from the West, we should also realize it according to the requirements of our own [inner] life (Mou 1992, p. 20).

From what is presented in the last several paragraphs, we can easily notice a powerful universalism in both the “inner sainthood” part of these claims and the “external kingship” part. On the one hand, Confucian ethics is universal, extending beyond specific historical boundaries. On the other, scientific rationality and democratic politics are also universally effective and inevitable. Yet the link between Confucian ethics and Western social systems is Hegelian, requiring the ethnic ethos to adopt a self-negating mode of dialectic development.

Jiang does not agree with this self-negating theory. He believes that Confucianism is still viable in both “inner sainthood” and “external kingship,” and can still provide guiding principles in both areas that lead to a theory of “political Confucianism” that the neo-Confucians do not possess. In fact, he criticizes these neo-Confucians for focusing too much on Confucianism’s internal and ethical side while ignoring its political principles (Jiang 2003, p. 27), a prejudice that can be traced back to the 1911 Revolution and the New Culture Movement. Jiang considers Mou’s theory of self-negating just another form of “westernization” (Jiang 2003, p. 90), because it unconditionally assumes that “science and democracy” are the “common law of mankind” (Jiang 2003, p. 89). Jiang himself, of course, rejects any such assumption and labels democracy a distinct product of Western culture.

Democracy is neither universal constitution (公器) nor the universal principle of the world. ... As a political institution, it was the achievement of western history and culture. ... This does not mean to deny all values of the democracy, but merely to

comprehend it all-sidedly and correctly by putting it into the concrete historical and cultural traditions (Jiang 2003, pp. 46–47).

While he does agree that “democracy shares many things with Confucianism at the theoretical level, and might therefore be acceptable in China,” he also insists that “this kind of universal applicability is not existent at the institutional level” due to differences in historical tradition (Jiang 2003, p. 55).

From a philosophical standpoint, Jiang points out that Mou’s theory of westernizing Confucianism’s “external kingship” is deeply influenced by a universalist methodology:

Mou seems to understand science and democracy only in an abstract and philosophical sense, devoid of specific historical and cultural settings. Thus, he only sees their generally applicable elements, and overlooks their specificity to a certain cultural and historical background . . . and thus demands that other cultures follow a universal mode of historical development (Jiang 2003, p. 90).

Jiang argues that Mou seems to assume without careful consideration the presumption that science and democracy are standards towards which Confucianism must strive. Once Mou realizes that both are absent from China’s own traditions, he is then led to the conclusion that China has no “tradition of scholarship” and “tradition of government,” but only a “tradition of ethics” or “tradition of way”. Jiang completely rejects this, instead arguing that “Confucianism has its own tradition of scholarship, the ‘six arts,’ which are the origins of all scholarship in China, and its own tradition of government, the ritual and law system of the ‘great unification’ theory, which maintained China’s governance for 2000 years and created a political miracle” (Jiang 2003, p. 93).

As Jiang Qing sees it, the so-called “external kingship” part of Confucianism is inherently connected to its “inner sainthood” part, as Wang Yangming’s theory of “letting innate knowledge of the good appear” (*zhi liang zhi*) makes explicitly clear. “Innate knowledge of the good” cannot be self-negated as Mou thinks, or it loses its essence completely. Mou fails to see the fundamental connection between the internal and external, and between “innate knowledge of the good” and political institution/science. Neo-Confucianism, in Jiang’s words, “is not a system that is strong in “inner sainthood” but weak in “external kingship,” but is devoid of “inner sainthood” and even more devoid of “external kingship” (Jiang 2003, pp. 94–95).

## 14.2 The Central Theme of Jiang’s Political Confucianism – The Three Legitimacies of Political Regime

Much of Jiang’s thought stems from the *Gongyang* School’s interpretation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chun Qiu*), which stresses Confucius’ expression of “great principles” from “subtle statements.” Starting from this origin, Jiang rather creatively forges solutions to Confucianism’s modern plights, which

include discussion on how to establish the legitimacy of a political system and how to develop a modern "Confucian Politics." This is a rich theory, so I will only focus on the part of it that discusses political legitimacy.

In Jiang's opinion, the legitimacy of a regime or political system lies in "the way of the kingship," which has three dimensions: public opinion-based, metaphysical, and cultural. The first dimension is "rule for the people," that is, rule for the welfare of your people. This is categorically different from "letting the people rule" (Jiang 2003, p. 203), and is a manifestation of Mencius' "benevolent rule." Its essence is "obtaining public support through the way," "winning over people through virtue," "the people are more important than the ruler," and "ruling through protecting the people" (Jiang 2003, p. 204).

The second dimension of "the way of the kingship" is to "rule by imitating the heavens," thereby attaining "harmony with the heavens." This provides metaphysical legitimacy to a political system, and provides a balance to public opinion. According to Jiang, "the legitimacy of public opinion is only a worldly legitimacy, and is insufficient to fully support the legitimacy of a political authority. Thus, we must compensate it with a 'holy' authority, which is precisely what I call metaphysical legitimacy" (Jiang 2003, pp. 204–205). This concept has both a natural and a semi-religious aspect, as the "heaven" it refers to is both the actual physical "heavens" we see above us and the "heaven" of principle and authority.

The third dimension is "respecting the kingship under the broader principle of 'great unification,'" which provides cultural legitimacy. The "great unification" principle stems from the *Gongyang* School's interpretation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and has long been a powerful influence in Chinese political tradition. Jiang's reading of this principle is quite profound: he thinks that "great unification" does not refer to centralized political rule emanating from the highest authority, but to "respecting the kingship" in a cultural sense. In other words, it means to honor Confucius as the "kingship" (Jiang 2003, p. 328), and therefore to acknowledge the tradition that he represents as an essential, authoritative, and central part of China's political system (Jiang 2003, p. 208).

Obviously, the very notion of using historical tradition as a measure for political legitimacy is non-universalist. Although the notion is expressed in a universalist way, its meaning cannot be universal, since the concept of "historical tradition" is always specific to a certain time and space. In addition, Jiang also notes that "the way of the kingship" is not only to provide all three dimensions of political legitimacy to actual political ruling, but to establish proper checks and balances among them. He believes that this kind of check-and-balance system can find its roots in China's traditional thought. For example, the *Book of Changes* advocates that "everyone should rectify his own life, and thus maximize natural harmony," which differs essentially from the "either this or that" mode in which Western linear logic operates. This allows it to avoid the shortcomings of the Western political system, which focuses exclusively on popular opinion and democracy (Jiang 2004, pp. 296, 306). Thus, Jiang's "political Confucianism" is non-universal at the methodological level, and thus different from Mou Zongsan's neo-Confucianism.

### 14.3 Is There Universalism in Jiang's Political Confucianism?

From the above, we can see that Jiang realizes the dangers presented by universalist thinking: it wipes out the ontological meaning of cultural differences and leads to total westernization, biased extremism, and loss of political legitimacy. However, when he states his own principles, he tends to display some universalist tendencies of his own.

Jiang believes that “the basis for legitimizing a political order must be placed upon a supreme origin that will never change. This is the meaning of ‘as long as the Heavens do not change, then the Way will not change,’ which is, in turn, the ultimate hope and concern of human government” (Jiang 2003, p. 340). From a philosophical point of view, there are two levels of meaning to “unchanging”: first, it goes beyond all empirical variance and becomes akin to a logical truth that “cannot be wrong” regardless of the time and space; second, it goes beyond the dichotomy of “time-and-place alterations/eternally unchanging,” and reaches the “middle way” of “un-changing yet un-eternal.” The first level pre-establishes a certain unchanging and conceptually attainable “substantial world,” which can be either a formal one or a physical one. The second level, in contrast, refrains from such pre-establishment and actually consciously attempts to eliminate that “substantial world,” instead insisting that unchanging is actually created, born, and maintained by the “changeable.” The first level is actually a kind of universalism, because it surpasses any time or space constraint, and yet is conceptually conceivable as a vessel for values and standards. In which level does Jiang Qing’s “unchanging” rest? While it is difficult to make a blanket statement, some passages from his book tend to point towards this first level. For example, when he compares Mencius with Mo Zi, he notes that:

Mencius advocates that human Nature-Mind is naturally good, but the *Gongyang* school argues that it is the product of experience, and is not “above and beyond” in any sense. Thus, it cannot provide any basis for the legitimacy of a political order. . . . [T]he *Gongyang* school . . . has accepted, to some extent, Mo Zi’s belief that Heaven possesses a “will,” and does not agree with Mencius’ belief that Heaven is purely composed of principle. . . . Only through this concept of a heaven of both principle and will, which both swells with kindness yet is undeniably “above and beyond,” can we provide our political order with an origin and base that is both holy and “above and beyond” (Jiang 2003, p. 330).

By rejecting the possibility that human nature is “above and beyond” through emphasizing its reliance on experience, and thus denying it to be the basis for political legitimacy, Jiang seems to indicate that his viewpoint is one of universalism. His apparent agreement with Mo Zi’s notion of Heaven, which possesses no opportunistic aspects, only reinforces this impression. What, then is the difference between Jiang’s “unchanging way” and Mou Zongsan’s “constant way”?

In a revised version of his “Confucianism is an Advanced Culture” speech, Jiang Qing explained why China’s cultural tradition of sagesness was superior to a Western culture that he considered utilitarian. While there are many insightful comments in this speech, its concrete arguments smack of universalism. For example, when discussing which culture was “superior,” he suggested the following standard: “The main standard for determining whether a civilization is good or bad is how it deals with the relationships between men and nature, men and men, and nations and nations” (Jiang 2004, p. 84). More precisely, the standard is whether the “rules” that a particular civilization applies to these relationships can be universalized:

In terms of substantive content, a good “rule” is one that stems from kindness and morality, not from utilitarian power. In terms of form, it is a rule that can be universalized. What is universalization? It means whether this rule can win the acceptance of more people and bring them the most welfare. If it can be accepted by all mankind and can bring general welfare to all, then it is a universalizable rule, and therefore a good rule (Jiang 2004, p. 87).

If we adopt this standard, then Western civilization, represented by the United States, is actually quite backwards. Jiang argues that its rules forbid adoption by more nations and peoples, largely because adopting Western culture also means embracing high energy-consumption, arms races, and a less sustainable environment (Jiang 2004, pp. 88–91). He also believes that Confucianism, due to its focus on social harmony and ethics, does not possess this problem.

Clearly, there is something distinctly universalist in attempting to determine the value of a culture through some fixed standard, especially a standard that emphasizes whether a culture can be universally adopted. But if this is true, then it poses a serious problem for Political Confucianism. As we have discussed above, Political Confucianism’s attitude towards universalism is one of its most important differences with neo-Confucianism: its criticisms of Mou Zongsan and its “three levels of legitimacy” theory all clearly oppose universalism. But if its own methodology incorporates significant universalist elements, then it seems somewhat self-contradicted. Moreover, the standard itself seems dangerously close to the utilitarianism it so strongly criticizes: Suppose that we find a larger inhabitable planet and develop the means of galactic colonization, or obtain a new technology of dealing with the ecological crisis efficiently. Does that mean that the high energy-consumption that characterizes Western culture will no longer be a problem, and that Western culture then becomes “advanced”? At its very core, a universalist standard will often employ utilitarian calculations and follow the “might is right” principle.

In addition, why is Confucianism easily universalized? Christians might well resist its teachings of family-based morality and its emphasis on the father-son relationship by adhering to their belief in “general human love” and “universal morality.” Also, there is no consensus on whether Confucianism possesses significant social problems of its own. Many link it to despotic government, gender inequality and oppression, and even uncontrolled and environmentally



destructive population growth. Is it even possible to build a positive consensus in light of these perceptions? Seeing this, Jiang reasonably rejects the “global ethic” which tries to find one standard valid to all. Now the problem is that Jiang’s own establishment of a universal standard for measuring all civilizations faces the same challenge. Attempting to “Confucianize” the West might lead to the same kind of cultural clashes we currently see in the Middle East.

Is it really “Confucian” to judge the value of a culture based on some universalist standard? Can such a standard actually be applied to the “compassionate government,” “Heavenly Way,” and “innate knowledge of the good” that Confucianism advocates? Confucianism was extremely successful in maintaining “sustainability” during historical periods when universalism had yet to globalize, leading to historical consequences drastically different from Western universalism. But does this really mean that it is a superior culture? On the other hand, it seemed extremely brittle and weak after the 19th century, but does this mean that it is inferior? While I share Jiang’s faith in the value of Confucianism and believe in its suitability for future human survival, I doubt that this kind of value can be universalized, can be judged by some formal standard, or can be globalized as a model of “global politics.” In philosophical terms, this means that I do not believe that “rationality” and “value” are equal to “universalizable under a certain standard,” or that Confucianism agrees with some higher universalist standard. Instead, I believe that it demonstrates a *different* ethics and a *different* set of standards being *other than* the popular ones nowadays.<sup>1</sup>

#### 14.4 The Non-universalist Nature of Confucianism

In order to explain the philosophical uniqueness of Confucianism, we must go back to its origins and see how Confucius himself views our topic. The first question we ask might be whether *The Analects* espouse universalism. Without any doubt, Confucius did make many statements that seem universalist. For example: “Human beings are similar in their natural tendency (xing 性), but vary greatly by virtue of their habits” (*Analects*, 17.2, trans. Ames).<sup>2</sup> “Exemplary persons [*jun zi*] are anxious about the Way (*Dao*), and not about poverty” (*Analects*, 15.32, trans. Ames). “Fan Chi inquired about humanity (ren, authoritative conduct) and the Master said, ‘Love human beings.’ He inquired about knowing (zhi, realizing), and the Master said, ‘Knowing human beings’” (*Analects*, 12.22, trans. Ames). “The men of humanity establish other human beings in seeking to establish themselves and promote others in seeking to get there themselves” (*Analects*, 6.30, trans. Ames). These statements do not contain express limitations to a certain time and space, and therefore seem universally applicable. Thus, Confucius is stating that all men have similar natures, all exemplary persons worry about the Way, and all men of humanity “love human beings” and follow a golden rule for humanity. A closer reading of



*The Analects* tells us otherwise: these statements cannot be explained in a universalist manner, and differ from Kantian theses of general morality.

When Confucius claims that “Human beings are similar in their natural tendency,” he does not solidify this “similarity” as a conceptual object, unlike Mencius’ later claim of “human nature is good,” Xun Zi’s claim of “human nature is evil,” or the concepts of “rationality” and “subjectivity” with which quite a few Western philosophers identify human nature. Confucius’ “similarity” is more similar, in fact, to Wittgenstein’s theory of “family resemblance” in incorporating a tendency to go beyond simple dichotomies between general and special, or between right and wrong. Similarly, “exemplary persons are anxious about the Way” also cannot be generalized, since Confucius also states that “the exemplary person is neither worried nor apprehensive” (*Analects*, 12.4, trans. Ames). This kind of context-specific statement is commonplace in *The Analects*.

Confucians do stress “loving human beings,” but equally stress that one must first love his own parents and relatives (*Analects*, 1.2, 13.18, trans. Ames). Can this “love your parents and relatives” principle be considered universalist? Superficially, it can, but it also differs from such universalist rules as “love all men” or “love God (who is infinite),” since it always demands certain peculiarities in behavior that differ according to time and place: there are differences between parents and relatives, and one should not treat them all the same. This does not quite satisfy the universalist requirements underlying the “love human beings” principle.

In the history of Western philosophy, the rationalists have often attacked the skeptics by asking: “you claim that there is no certain truth, but is this claim itself a certain truth?” It would seem that there is no way the skeptic can answer this without self-contradiction. But if this kind of logic is always effective, then universalism is not assailable, since it would be impossible to claim that “there are no universalist truths.” However, the skeptic can simply answer: I am not making a universalist claim but insist that a counter-example may exist for any comprehensively expressed claim of truth. Since the skeptic seeks specific differences, not a universal affirmation, dual-valued logic is inapplicable to him.

From this perspective, the maxim that “humanity means that one should help others attain things that one also desires for himself” is also a non-universalist proposal, since Confucianism believes that only through “loving one’s parents and relatives” and learning the arts can one truly channel natural parents-children love towards other people in a time and space-sensitive manner. This is the only way one can understand how to appropriately and realistically forward the interest of other people, and thereby avoid absurdities caused by rigid applications of universalist rules: I encourage my son to smoke because I enjoy it, yet prevent others from eating garlic because I dislike it.

Precisely because he diligently avoided being caught in the dualistic dichotomy between the universal and the particular, the Confucius of *The Analects* displayed an unusual suspicion of any universalist thoughts or statements. This led to the repeated phenomena of “Confucius refuses to speak”: “We ... do not hear him discourse on subjects such as our ‘natural disposition (*xing* 性)’ and ‘the way of

*tian* (*tiantao* 天道)” (*Analects*, 5.13, trans. Ames). “The Master said, ‘I think I will leave off speaking. . . . Does *tian* 天 [Heaven] speak? And yet the four seasons turn and the myriad things are born and grow within it. Does *tian* speak?’” (*Analects*, 17.19, trans. Ames) “The Master only rarely spoke about personal advantage (*li* 利), the propensity of circumstances (*ming* 命), or authoritative conduct (*ren* 仁)” (*Analects*, 9.1, trans. Ames). Therefore, the examples provided earlier in this section, though they might seem universalist, cannot be taken as such. They are indeed Confucius’ devout beliefs and ideals, and he would certainly hope to see them expand their influence, but he also realizes that they cannot act as universalist standards. Instead, they are like a musical theme, constantly in need of realization and maintenance through real human experience. Thus, facially inconsistent or even contradictory statements are always possible in *The Analects*. Confucius’ teachings thus go far beyond the dualistic dichotomy between the universal and the particular: one and many meld together in an “artistic realm” that allows one to “give [his] heart-and-mind free rein without overstepping the boundaries” (*Analects*, 2.4, trans. Ames), and manifest themselves in countless different ways through diligence and “love of learning” (*Analects*, 5.28, trans. Ames). “[T]here were four things the Master [Confucius] abstained from entirely: he did not speculate, he did not claim or demand certainty, he was not inflexible, and he was not self-absorbed” (*Analects*, 9.4, trans. Ames). This perfectly epitomizes Confucius’ unique and profound genius. It is not understood by universalists, and fundamentally differs from Western religious and philosophical traditions: it is both artistic and moral, respectful or encompassing both human nature and the “ways of Heaven,” highly historical, yet still espousing an ultimate, but situation-sensitive, “Heavenly Truth.” It is of small surprise, then, that Mencius describes Confucius as the “the sage whose actions were timely” (*Mencius* 1970, p. 150, trans. Lau). Therefore, as described in the introduction, Confucianism is a typical non-universalism.

After Confucius, this subtle “timeliness” was gradually weakened with his successors. For example, Mencius and Xun Zi started to debate the fundamental “goodness” or “evilness” of human nature, and turned away from Confucius’ artistic interpretation of the Heavenly Way; the Han Dynasty Confucian scholars constructed the “Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues (*san gang wu chang*)” system of morality; whereas Song Dynasty scholars focused on a “Heavenly Truth” that was isolated from “human desires.” However, due to Confucius’ insurmountable position as founder and the catechistic status of *The Analects*, the overall philosophical slant and historical impact of Confucianism was still non-universalist. Mencius still advocated “holding the middle way,” and noted the importance of “weighing things up (*quan* 权).” Dong Zhongshu argued for “interconnecting the three traditions (*tong san tong* 通三统)” and for “resonance between Heaven and men (*tian ren he yi* 天人合一)”; while the “Heavenly Truth” the Song scholars pursued remained a “Great Ultimate” that combined one and many, *yin* and *yang*, and not a rigid system of moral edicts. Thus, Confucianism, or rather, China’s mainstream cultural tradition always followed “the Heavenly Way,” untroubled by the intolerance

and expansionist tendencies that marked universalist religions and cultures. China was generally free from religious warfare or crusading, and very rarely engaged in imperial wars of expansion. This was not lost on Mateo Ricci (1552–1610) when he arrived in Ming China. Despite its great power, he noted, the Ming Dynasty did not seek to conquer its neighbors, unlike Western nations that always lusted after the possessions of others. He writes:

It seems to be quite remarkable when we stop to consider it, that in a kingdom of almost limitless expanse and innumerable population, and abounding in copious supplies of every description, though they have a well-equipped army and navy that could easily conquer the neighboring nations, neither the King nor his people ever think of waging a war of aggression. They are quite content with what they have and are not ambitious of conquest. In this respect they are much different from the people of Europe, who are frequently discontent with their own governments and covetous of what others enjoy (Ricci 1953, pp. 54–55, trans. Gallagher).

This passage, written by a missionary priest some 400 years ago, still commands respect even today: it is a vivid and repeatedly confirmed observation that was generated at the intersection of two civilizations that were still “whole” in their own ways. Its reliability is probably much higher than later observations that were made by people already polluted by Euro-centrism. This can be seen not only in later history, but probably in the future as well. The inexorable drive for “the highest authority” that we find in Western culture is probably driven by its universalist nature. This universalism dictates that there can be only one victor or highest authority, whereas all others are losers or the conquered. On the other hand, China’s traditional culture lacks the “ambition to conquer,” yet possesses “noble character” and “fearlessness against death,” precisely because it stems from the artistic and timely “Heavenly Way” that Confucius inherited and developed. This kind of culture simply cannot be universalist. Quite the opposite, it is almost inevitably misunderstood and assaulted by universalism.

## 14.5 The Non-universalism of Political Confucianism

In his *Political Confucianism*, Jiang clearly states that “Political Confucianism is a Confucian tradition created by Confucius himself . . . and finds its roots in both the original Confucian classic, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and the various other classics that explain it” (Jiang 2003, p. 97). If this statement can really find ample theoretical and methodological support, it implies that Political Confucianism is non-universalist, and thus different from modern neo-Confucianism. After repeatedly reading and comparing his writings, I do believe that this is true, and that the elements of Jiang’s thought that resemble universalism are only attempts to gain recognition in this age of universalism and to earn its existence by resisting the repression of Western universalism with a universalist means. The essential quality of his thought is not universalist, or at least should not be universalist.

Apart from the various non-universalist aspects of Political Confucianism discussed above, Jiang also expressly criticizes the concept of “global ethics,” arguing that it is impossible to establish such a thing in today’s world, since “so-called ‘ethics’ are always intrinsically tied to certain historical cultures” (Jiang 2003, p. 343). He also notes that “the current ethic crisis that mankind faces does not stem from a lack of ‘global ethics,’ but from the decline of the ‘indigenous ethics’ of existing cultural traditions” (Jiang 2003, p. 347). Thus, he criticizes the *Universal Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* as Eurocentric and attempts to demonstrate this through inspection of its claims on rights, human nature, equality (including gender equality), cultural unification, and other issues (Jiang 2003, pp. 348–358). This shows that Political Confucianism’s central tenets are clearly anti-universalist. All in all, it seems difficult to believe that such a school of thought could be methodologically universalist.

Given this, what caused Jiang’s writings to resemble universalism in certain places? Apart from the “striving for recognition and existence” element discussed above, there is also a methodological reason: his wavering understanding of the cultural essence of science. Western science is perhaps the best representative of Western universalism, and, combined with the Western modern technology, is the foremost reason why that universalism has won so much acceptance. However, the immense success of such science makes it very easy for people to consider it generally applicable and beyond cultural definition. Thus, unlike their Ming Dynasty Confucian predecessors who met Matteo Ricci, modern scholars who possess strong cultural consciousness otherwise (such as the neo-Confucians) often lose the cultural sensitivity when dealing with Western science. As we mentioned before, when Jiang criticizes Mou Zongsan’s universalist tendencies, he argues that even science is not a “universal law” or “common law” that has no cultural characteristics, but is instead the product of Western historical development and thus has distinct Western characteristics. On the other hand, he seems to argue for the exact opposite in other parts of his book. For example, he notes that “we know science and democracy are very different: democracy is not a universal law, while science is universal, without historical and cultural forms, and without any difference between the West and China . . .” (Jiang 2003, p. 46).

Bacon once said that knowledge is strength. The most powerful defense of this statement is the success of modern science and technology, which has prompted China to almost religiously worship high technology as a source of economic power. This demonstrates that such blind faith in science and technology will always lead to the cultish worship of utilitarian power that symbolizes social Darwinism. Once losing the ability to critically examine such technological power from a cultural standpoint, we inevitably become converted to universalism, thus abandoning the Confucian “Heavenly Way” and losing the “metaphysical” and cultural legitimacies that Jiang speaks of. Moreover, many relatively recent discoveries and developments in scholarship have convincingly rebuked the notion that science is beyond cultural definition. Some of China’s best mathematicians and historians of mathematics, such as Wu Wenjun and Li

Jimin, have argued quite persuasively that China historically possessed a mathematical tradition that was quite distinct from Western mathematics, while the immense difference in both method and results between Chinese medicine and Western medicine is more well-known. These all demonstrate that Western science is not a universal law for all mankind. Once he clarifies his standpoint in a methodological sense, his Political Confucianism may well be able to discard the lingering scent of universalism that currently troubles it, and demonstrate with greater force the “Heavenly Way” of Confucian cultural tradition. Political Confucianism will not trigger any total conflict with Western culture or any other culture, or indeed possess any higher universalist quality. Instead, it fundamentally does not belong to the universalist battlefield created by the dichotomy between “universal and special.” For Western universalism, Political Confucianism and the potential practical existence it may yet obtain is neither another rising universalist threat nor a isolationist “exception” that can be ignored. Instead, it is a real “other.”

## Notes

1. It seems that phenomenology, especially Emmanuel Levinas's, provides a much more suitable methodological perspective than the Western rationalistic one for understanding Confucianism. See Levinas (1998).
2. See *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*, trans. Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. (1998, p. 203). This and the following citations of the *Analects* come from this book. But some words' renderings such as “ren”, “zhi” are altered to adjust to the terminology of this chapter.

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**Part III**  
**A Note on Jiang Qing**





# Chapter 15

## A Confucian Coming of Age

Erika Yu and Meng Fan

This brief introduction to Jiang Qing's life, thought, and activities has benefited tremendously from a detailed biographical work about him developed by Professor Ruichang Wang in the Chinese language (Wang 2008), although the work has never had a chance to be published because of political reasons. Given the main theme of this volume, this chapter will not attempt to touch on every important detail of Jiang's life and activities. Instead, it will concentrate on the essential process and scenarios in which he has come to be an exemplary figure in the renaissance of Confucianism in contemporary China. This summary chapter offers helpful background information for readers of this volume to understand better the issues and debates that have been addressed in the previous chapters.

### 15.1 Jiang's Youth

Jiang was born in Guiyang, the capital city of Guizhou province in the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1953. His father was a high-ranking Communist official who liked studying and had a strong work ethic, and his mother was an uplifting and generous person from an intellectual family. Under the influence of both his parents, Jiang developed a gentle and cheerful personality. He was a happy boy and had comparatively a wealthy life.

Jiang started his primary education in Guiyang when he was seven. Jiang was relatively privileged compared to his fellow students, because most of them came from ordinary or poor families. Yet, Jiang befriended his fellow students regardless of their backgrounds. He was an outstanding and popular student. He was interested in and good at music. He joined the school orchestra and took

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every opportunity to perform his music. This laid a solid foundation for him to appreciate the role and value of music later in his life. As is well-known, Confucianism does pay great attention to the role of rites and music in edifying the people in general and facilitating personal cultivation in particular.

In 1966, Jiang got into a secondary school in Guiyang. The so-called Cultural Revolution broke out in that year. Manual labor was given much higher priority over intellectual knowledge in official Chinese education at that time. His school was no exception, in which most resources and time were distributed to performing “revolutionary” meetings and physical work in order to get rid of any backward or anti-revolutionary thought. As a result, Jiang, like other students, failed to obtain any significant education. For example, the only English phrase that he learned during his secondary school education was the slogan “Long live Chairman Mao!” While normally students should finish their junior secondary school in 3 years, Jiang’s cohort eventually graduated in 1970 instead of 1969 due to all the revolutionary activities.

In the coming years, Jiang met four important persons who shaped his study interest. The first one was Wang, a university graduate that Jiang met in a factory. Because of the heightened tension between Russia and China at that time, students from Jiang’s cohort upon graduation were assigned to work in factories to produce useful machines rather than go to rural farms to raise grains, as had been the case previously. Jiang was bored by the factory work and was delighted to meet Wang, a knowledgeable person, in his factory. Wang was vastly interested in poetry and friendly to Jiang. Under the influence of Wang, Jiang determined to study hard and also developed a strong interest in classical Chinese poetry.

Jiang’s grandmother was another person who significantly affected Jiang’s learning. She came from an intellectual family and was still active in writing classical poetry and reading Confucian classics during the Cultural Revolution, even though she was already more than 70 years old at that time. Jiang was at first puzzled by his grandmother’s conduct, because the classics she was reading were officially criticized and banned at the time. But soon he came to hold that pursuit of such knowledge should not be restricted by the political authorities. He gained a great deal from his grandmother about the importance of learning from ancient sages, studying hard, and devoting oneself to a meaningful cause.

The other two important persons Jiang met were two old gentlemen who were both very knowledgeable about Chinese classics and poetry, but at the same time had a really hard time during the Cultural Revolution due to the possession of this classical knowledge. Both of them inspired and taught Jiang on Chinese classics and poetry. Their tough experience also caused Jiang to be aware of the dark side of politics. Under their guidance, Jiang studied hard and made considerable progress in his Chinese classic learning. This gave him a solid foundation in Chinese poetry and classics.

At that time Jiang loved poetry so much that he aspired to become a great poet one day. He also got into the habit of collecting books, especially antique ones. Yet, many books were difficult to acquire during the Cultural Revolution

because Chinese classics were taken to be rubbish left by the feudalist past, while overseas publications were deemed as bourgeois poisons. Even libraries were closed during that time. Jiang, nevertheless, managed to obtain a variety of books from an underground market, including some officially banned ones. Apart from building up his own book collection, Jiang also enjoyed being an amateur book seller in order to exchange books with others. Among the books that he secured were many Confucian classics. This gave Jiang an additional exposure to Confucian teachings.

While at that stage of life Jiang was not yet a protagonist of any particular school of thought, Confucian or other, he had well equipped himself to find his ideal. The rest of this chapter will introduce how Jiang became a Marxist during university, why he turned to neo-Confucianism later, and how he eventually became an exemplary Confucian in mainland China.

## 15.2 A Marxist Human Rights Activist

Like many other modern Chinese intellectuals, Jiang was once a committed Marxist scholar. Inspired by Mao's call to serve humankind through great activities, Jiang applied to and joined in the People's Liberation Army in 1974, hoping that he could excel his contemporaries in both theory and practice. He was admitted into an automobile army in Yunnan province and assigned a post to become an automobile technician.

During the time of the Cultural Revolution, the army was organized to serve as a "great" school for soldiers to grasp the Marxist and Maoist ideology. Accordingly, in addition to equipping himself with a good physique to cope with his demanding duties, Jiang seriously studied Marxist works, especially *On Capital* by Karl Marx, as he believed that this Marxist masterpiece would lead him to the final truth of human society. A year later, his growing commitment to study Marxist theories prompted him to apply for a secondment to a clerical post in order to obtain more time and more books to facilitate his study. While generally no one would like to be in a clerical post for more than a year, Jiang enthusiastically maintained himself in that post for two and a half years. In fact, he happily did the work until he left the army. Throughout that period, he fully devoted himself to reading various Marxist works, including the *Capitalism, The Theory of Surplus Value, The Communist Manifesto, The Origins of the Family, Private Ownership and the State*, and *The State and Revolution*. Though the Chinese versions of these original works by Marx, Engels, and Lenin are very obscure even for the scholars who have been trained in Western scholarship, Jiang rose to the challenge despite his limited educational background. This experience laid a solid basis in Marxist philosophy as well as certain relevant Western views.

In the last year before leaving the army, Jiang also started to read non-Marxist Chinese classical works that he collected from the underground

market. Although this was against the rule of the army, Jiang managed not to be caught. As time went by, Jiang was disappointed by the official version of the Marxist ideology propagated by the army. However, he still strongly believed in the truth of a “real” Marxism as well as the Marx-Lenin-Mao’s aspiration to serve the mankind. He was frustrated by the reality and saddened by the death of Mao in 1976. He became aware that the army was no place for him to realize his aspiration and determined to decline two promotion opportunities and resigned from the army.

Jiang then returned to Quiyang to further his study. The Cultural Revolution was formally ended soon after Mao’s death, and the National University Entrance Examination was restored. Jiang happily registered for this examination. Although he had only a month for preparation, his outstanding results allowed him to be admitted by the Southwest College of Political Science and Law (in Chongqing), which was the only Key Law School recognized by the state in 1978.

During the Cultural Revolution, the human values, individual well-being, and cultural heritage of the Chinese people were unprecedentedly challenged and devastated. By the time the Revolution came to the end, the whole nation was left with terror, paralysis, and massive civil unrest. The population started to reveal, question, and criticize what had been practiced during the Revolution. The people were trying to regain a sense of humanity and rationality. In universities, this resulted in rigorous intellectual exchanges, and the Southwest College was no exception. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, different Western ideologies, such as Western Marxism, humanism, liberalism, democracy and human rights were the popular languages in academic circles. Indeed, Jiang’s campus in Chongqing, like many other campuses in big cities of China at the time, was filled with debates about ideologies.

Jiang was soon bred to be a human rights fighter under such an atmosphere. He was very fond of the works of young Karl Marx, The Frankfurt School, Sartre, Camus, and Heidegger on humanism. At the same time, he was particularly interested in the ideas of individual liberty, equality, democracy, and human rights developed by Western classical liberal philosophers such as Locke and Rousseau. He tended to believe that China could benefit from all these different perspectives, and they could all be integrated into a coherent liberal Marxist doctrine to be used to save China from the turmoil. It was well-known among his fellow students that Jiang, at this time, was at the forefront of criticizing China from the perspective of human rights. With many other university students in the early 1980s, he was an activist in the democratic movement in China.

Jiang began to question the Marxism that he learned during the Cultural Revolution. His study of the “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” by young Marx and various Western theories of Marxism prompted him to hold that the Marxism that he learned during the Cultural Revolution was not the real teachings of Marxism, but only a version of Leninism that is dramatically different from the real Marxism. Jiang became particularly interested in Marx’s

theory of alienation and believed that Leninism had wrongly focused on class, class struggle, and totalitarian party politics. He thought that the essence of real Marxism is a kind of humanism, which is consistent with the core liberal values of individual liberty, democracy, and human rights.

To rectify the common misunderstandings of Marxism and restore people's faith in it, Jiang wrote an essay entitled "Back to Marxism" in 1980 when he was in his second academic year of his university education. The essay was well-structured, sharp in its view, and original for its insight. It argued that Marxism was a theory of humanism rather than class struggle, holding the essence of real Marxism to be consistent with and in support of individual rights, equality, and democracy. The essay drew serious attention once it was published on the notice board on campus and was considered to be a pioneer work in the 1980s enlightening movement in China. It was inspiring for those who shared Jiang's perspective and challenging for those who did not, because what the essay revealed was actually what people already had in mind but dared not or could not express.

Jiang, however, had to pay considerable cost for publishing the essay on campus. He faced various suppressions and criticisms from various authorities. He was denounced for a year by lecturers who tried to re-educate him. Scholars were called by the Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences to write a series of papers to criticize his essay. The essay was also documented as containing "serious mistakes" in a confidential internal reference that was circulated among top government officials. While the College intended to play down the case by offering Jiang a chance to confess his mistake in writing, Jiang refused and insisted that individual rights, humanism, and the view of alienation are central to Marxism. His extensive study of various original Marxist works and Western theories about Marxism allowed him to defend his case strongly against his opponents in various debates. Eventually, Jiang received a failure for his thesis "On Critique of Stalinism" which holds the same view as his essay, and he had to change the topic of his thesis in order to graduate from the college. He was barred from applying for graduate study because of his refusal to confess. Upon his graduation in 1982, while the university graduates at that time were all distributed to jobs by the government, he was assigned to a job in a remote rural court in Guizhou province, although almost all his fellow law graduates were assigned to important positions in Beijing or other major cities.

The unreasonable and unfair treatment that Jiang continued to receive due to his essay made him disappointed with politics and prompted him to turn away from political studies. Although he was eventually allowed to stay in the college to take up an academic position, he was intensely "supervised" by the college administration. Even though he was recommended by his supervisor to teach a course on "the history of Western political and legal thoughts", he was required – as the only instructor to receive such a requirement – to submit his syllabus beforehand for approval by the college. His refusal to undergo such unreasonable scrutiny led him to be left with the opportunity of instructing for only a few years. Being deeply frustrated, Jiang developed a strong repulsion towards politics.

### 15.3 From Marxism to Neo-Confucianism

Jiang then channeled his energy into religious studies. Being gravely perplexed by the reality, Jiang tried to seek transcendent insight to uncover the meaning of life and to overcome its problems. During that period of time at his university, Jiang abstained not only from politics or political news, but also from classes, meetings, debates, traveling, and even research and writing. He spent his time primarily on meditation, enjoying the natural environment, and reading. The works that Jiang was particularly interested in at this time were about Daoism (especially *Zhuangzi*), Existentialism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. Although Jiang was highly sympathetic to both Buddhism and Christianity, he did not convert to either of them.

Jiang made a devoted study and practice of Buddhism at this time. But he eventually could not side with Buddhism despite his appreciation of the wisdom it reveals. In particular, even if it is true the world could not stand still even for an instant as Buddhists hold, Jiang could not see that *sunyata* (emptiness) is the absolute truth. Rather, he recognized with Confucianism that the ever-changing world is a result of a creative universe with history and culture. Escaping from it would not free us from suffering because *samsara* (reincarnation) does not exhaust all problems faced by the mankind. We are also troubled by various issues that are inherited from history and culture. Hence, he came to recognize that the Buddhist worldview is defective because it overlooks and subsequently could not solve the problems faced by mankind. Since the Buddhist worldview lacks a sense of history and culture, it therefore fails to give us any guidance to settle those issues. In contrast, Jiang found that Confucianism has rich resources to offer in this regard.

Jiang also studied hard on Christianity and almost converted to it. He was highly sympathetic to its doctrines of original sin and salvation, and was deeply moved by the mercy shown by Jesus. He translated two Christian works into Chinese. He was recommended by a Christian friend to study theology with a full scholarship in the United States. He declined it. He found that he was held back from accepting the scholarship or even from saying the Christian prayers by something deeply rooted inside himself. In retrospect, Jiang believed that it was because he was already a committed Confucian person, even though he did not recognize this clearly at the time.

Jiang's return to the Confucian tradition was set off by exposure in 1984 to the works of Tang Junyi, a prominent neo-Confucian scholar in Hong Kong. Before then, he was unaware of the development of neo-Confucianism in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Along with Tang's works, Jiang also started to read the works by other important neo-Confucian scholars, including Xiong Shili, Liang Shuming, Mou Zongsan, and Xu Fuguan, even though some of them were then officially banned in the mainland China. Jiang was excited and inspired by the insights of these neo-Confucians. The 20th-century neo-Confucianism was an intellectual movement that inherited the basic thought of the neo-Confucianism



in the Song and Ming dynasties (11th–17th centuries). The latter neo-Confucianism was stimulated and influenced by Buddhism in its focus on the cultivation of mind – so it could be called Mind Confucianism. Both the Song-Ming and the 20th-century neo-Confucian movements shared the endeavor to reinvent the Confucian tradition by highlighting its metaphysical, transcendental, spiritual, and religious aspects. The study of mind, nature, and self-cultivation was central to both. However, the 20th-century neo-Confucians distinguished themselves from their Song-Ming predecessors by their attempt to draw resources from modern Western philosophies to synthesize a new Confucian doctrine for modern China. In particular, these overseas neo-Confucians contended that the Confucian doctrine is not only compatible with modern Western liberal democratic values, but it can also develop and shape these values in their full force from the central commitments of Confucianism. Accordingly, these neo-Confucians made endeavors to fight for a liberal democratic system founded on Confucianism.

Jiang was then determined to advance such neo-Confucianism in the post-Mao mainland China. Even though by that time there was no government or private funding for conducting research on Confucianism, Jiang managed to become a pioneer in the field by his own means. In 1985, Jiang had the opportunity to visit Mr. Liang Shuming, the most courageous and influential neo-Confucian scholar in mainland China in the 20th century. Liang encouraged Jiang to continue his effort to revive Confucianism in mainland China and suggested that he study the works of Wang Yangming, the most prominent Ming dynasty neo-Confucian figure whose thought had significantly shaped 20th century neo-Confucianism. Jiang thus started paying close attention to the Yangming school of mind. The teachings of these neo-Confucian scholars opened up Jiang's mind to reconsider taking part in political studies.

In 1988, Jiang moved to Shenzhen, a newly established Special Economic Zone next to Hong Kong, for the sake of being closer to his parents. Although Jiang was vexed by the business ambiance of this city, its physical proximity to Hong Kong increased his opportunities to have academic exchanges with Hong Kong and Taiwan scholars. Jiang, together with Luo Yijun and Deng Xiaojun, became the three prominent contemporary Confucian scholars in mainland China. Around that time more and more mainland Chinese scholars became interested in neo-Confucianism, but few of them were as devoted as Jiang, Luo, and Deng.

In the May of 1989, Jiang was invited by the Hong Kong Baptist University to participate in a conference on the theme of the ultimate concern for the post-modern world. He presented a paper entitled “The Meaning and Problem of Revitalizing Confucianism in Mainland China” at the conference. In his view, given that in mainland China – the homeland of Confucianism – Confucianism was not even accepted as its authentic cultural tradition, it was rather immature to discuss how Confucianism could fruitfully respond to the challenges posed by the post-modern West. The priority for Chinese scholars, according to him, should be exploring how Confucianism would tackle various local issues and

problems faced by contemporary China. In the paper, Jiang contends that the first and fundamental challenge faced by contemporary China is not to develop its economy or reform its political system. Rather, it is to revive Confucianism as its authentic culture in order to restore a strong sense of national identity. He points out that it is time for overseas neo-Confucians to bring back the Confucian tradition to mainland China, as Tang Junyi projected. Jiang is confident that once Confucianism is revived in China, it can provide resources to resolve various issues faced by China, no matter whether they are about ideological, political, economic, or educational issues. The article was warmly discussed and was eventually published in the *Ehu Monthly*, a neo-Confucian academic journal founded by neo-Confucian scholars in Taiwan (Jiang 1989).

#### 15.4 From Neo-Confucianism to Reconstructionist Political Confucianism

During the 1980s, the Confucian texts that Jiang studied were mostly neo-Confucian studies of mind, which fundamentally aim at individual self-cultivation. The Confucian ideas developed by Jiang, consequently, were also largely confined to concerns common to other neo-Confucians, especially those that were committed by Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi, Lu Jiuyuan, Wang Shouren, Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili, Tang Junyi, and Mou Zongsan.

The dramatic political turmoil in Beijing in the early summer of 1989 and the subsequent June Fourth tragedy stimulated Jiang to reflect on the modern history of China and ponder on the future of Chinese civilization, as well as re-examine the nature of the Confucian tradition by going beyond the general concerns of neo-Confucians. Viewing that the political event was indeed a man-made calamity, Jiang recognized that it was superficial to see it simply as a call for democratic politics. Instead, the tragedy, like many other tragedies that happened in modern China, was ultimately related to the circumstances of modern China in which a modern Western ideology was imposed on the Chinese people, forsaking their traditional cultural life and rejecting the Chinese political ideal. Hence, Jiang was prompted to redirect his study on political Confucianism. This re-orientation could be clearly observed from his correspondence with Mou Zongshan in January, 1990:

As your loyal reader, I was greatly honored to visit you in Hong Kong last year. Unfortunately, due to the time constraints, I was unable to consult you about some difficult issues in my mind. Upon my return to Shenzhen, the sudden and dramatic political turmoil had further deepened my concern about the future of China as well as Confucianism. Having seriously reflected on China's perplexing situation for half a year, I am convinced that China's problems could not be solved without the revival of Confucianism. I am thus determined to revive Confucianism by returning to the teachings of the tradition. Yet my focus since then has changed from the study of *xin-xing* (mind-nature) to an inquiry into the Confucian kingly-way politics. . . . I used to be interested in Western theoretical study, but I have found that Western theories are

elegant in form, yet cannot solve China's problems. From the works of Xiong Shili and Liang Shuming, I was excited to find the profound wisdom of traditional Chinese philosophy. My confidence in the significance of traditional Chinese philosophy continued to grow as I later learned from a relative of Tang Junyi about his works and yours. Seeing that Confucianism is an embodiment of Chinese spiritual life, I committed myself to the study of the tradition. While my focus at the time was on Mind Confucianism, the last year's political upheaval has driven me to the political teachings of Confucianism. Now I recognize that the most challenging issues faced by China today are the issues of outward kingliness (*waiwang*), and there is no hope to revive Confucianism if we do not turn to such issues. It would be difficult for the general public to accept Confucianism if its political teachings cannot provide a solid theoretical foundation for the subsequent political development in China. Hence, the crucial point of development of contemporary Confucianism is to reconstruct a new outward kingliness [namely, a new political Confucianism], to which I will dedicate myself from now on (Jiang 1990).

From this time Jiang began to recognize that there are two major traditions in Confucianism. One is the *xin-xing* tradition, namely, Mind Confucianism, that descends from Mencius, and the other is the *waiwang* (outward kingliness) tradition, namely Political Confucianism, that develops from the *Gongyang* School. While both traditions originated from Confucius, their main concerns, approaches, understandings of human nature, and specific implications are different. Jiang now turned his study to the Spring and Autumn's *Gongyang* School, since it offers concrete valuable resources for thinking about the reform of Chinese social and political institutions. He has since held that contemporary China cannot develop a legitimate and effective politics without drawing on the teachings of the *Gongyang* School. This eventually led him to recognize that the 20th-century neo-Confucians have been mistaken in their attempt to recast the Confucian central concerns in terms of modern Western liberal values, such as liberty, equality, and democracy. Instead, Jiang appreciates that Confucianism has held a different moral and political system from those of the modern West. As a result, Jiang's Political Confucianism has distinguished him against the 20th-century neo-Confucianism (Jiang 2004c).

Indeed, his significant turn to the study of the Spring and Autumn's *Gongyang* School from the neo-Confucian Mind School was triggered by the June-Fourth incident in 1989. On the one hand, he recognized that the discussion of the neo-Confucianism characterized by Mind Confucianism was too general to be relevant to the particular political institutions and policy in contemporary China. On the other hand, he came to see that Western liberal democracy as well as its underlying commitments and values were not those genuinely appreciated by the Chinese people under the Confucian culture. Even those Chinese intellectuals who claimed to be liberal democratic did not really behave themselves in liberal democratic manners. In particular, Jiang was vexed by the performance of some Chinese liberal political activists who begged some overbearing US legislators to manage to impose a liberal democracy on China, regardless of China's historical, cultural, and social circumstances. Through his study of Confucianism and Chinese history, Jiang understood that China had its own

long-standing metaphysical, moral, and political values, as well as a national identity different from the West. Here he had to part company with the modern neo-Confucians on the issue of liberal democracy, because the latter had accepted liberal democracy to be universally applicable, China certainly included.

Jiang coined the term “Political Confucianism” (*zhengzhi ruxue*) in contrast with the “Mind Confucianism” (*xinxing ruxue*) emphasized by the neo-Confucians. As Jiang sees it, both Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism originated in the teaching of Confucius and were developed respectively by his different disciples. As is generally agreed, Mind Confucianism was descended from Mencius in the pre-Qin classical time, through Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi, Lu Xiangshan, and Wang Yangming in the Song and Ming dynasties, and was eventually inherited by the 20th-century neo-Confucians. It aims to solve moral and spiritual issues about how individuals should fulfill one’s nature in relation to the nature of Heaven and Earth. In contrast, Jiang argues that Political Confucianism descended from Xunzi in the pre-Qin classical time, through Dong Zhongshu in the Han dynasty and the Confucian scholars in the Qing dynasty, and was inherited by some 20th-century Confucian scholars, such as Kang Youwei. It aims to solve the issues about how to legislate and legitimize a socio-political order according to the Mandate of Heaven, as well as how to formulate proper ritual systems and public policy in a country. In short, Jiang thinks that both Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism are indispensable parts of an authentic, complete Confucianism to be used in this contemporary time.

Because Political Confucianism was founded in the Spring and Autumn’s *Gongyang* School, Jiang in the second half of 1989 started to study this school and its development in Chinese history. He finished his work *An Introduction to the Gongyang School* in 1993, which was eventually published in June 1995 (Jiang 1995). Because the work provides Jiang’s views and arguments regarding Confucius’ teachings recorded in the *Gongyang* book as well as his disciples’ commentaries, it is a normative *Gongyang* study in order to disclose the fundamental concerns of Political Confucianism by expounding on its philosophy rooted in the *Gongyang* School. The book is in fact the first *Gongyang* publication since Kang Youwei’s book that appeared about 100 years ago. Jiang continuously devoted himself to the study of this school in relation to contemporary Chinese issues, and finished another book entitled *Political Confucianism* around 2000. The book eventually got published in mainland China (Jiang 2003). In 2004, his *Life Religion and Kingly Way* was published in Taiwan (Jiang 2004a). With the publishing of these three books, Jiang’s basic ideas of Political Confucianism have been expounded. These ideas have been discussed intensively in Chinese academia in recent years.

According to Jiang, Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism constitute two Confucian perspectives that have ramifications within the Confucian tradition. Mencius’ view influences the mind and spiritual aspects of the tradition, holding that self-cultivation is the natural means of uncovering the innate

good nature of human beings. Mencius contributes an understanding of the effective process of self-cultivation to Mind Confucianism by identifying the four seeds of virtue invested by Heaven into every human mind. In contrast, Political Confucianism founded on the *Gongyang* tradition contributes a strong sense of the establishment of proper rituals, as well as political institutions for human flourishing. The *Gongyang* tradition notes that human desires (for food and housing, for example) need to be satisfied and human emotions (such as joy and sorrow) need to be expressed in appropriate ways. Proper rituals provide the form for such expressions in daily human exchanges, as well as in the critical moments of life events, such as marriage and death. Hence, proper rituals and systems must be designed to follow the mandate of Heaven, harmonize with the cosmic changes, and assist the process of personal cultivation, transformation, and development. Through proper rituals, individuals are linked to various communities, beginning with the natural bonding within their own families and stretching out to include various social-political orders and to embrace the symbolic community of Heaven and Earth. Human individuals achieve their fullest identity by being members of the great triad with Heaven and Earth. Within this triad Heaven is a guiding moral presence, Earth is a vital moral force, and human is a co-creator of a humane and moral socio-political order.

The moral imperative of Confucianism is then to make appropriate ethical, ritual, and institutional choices linked to the creative power of Heaven and thus contribute to the betterment of social and political order. This is to deny that social and political changes come primarily from the edification or transformation of the ruler's mind, as neo-Confucianism suggests. Consequently, Jiang stresses that only through research on the political Confucianism grounded in the *Gongyang* tradition can we succeed in realizing a Confucian outward kingliness and thus in accomplishing reformation. However, it is important to note that the resources rooted in the *Gongyang* tradition are not the only resources on which Jiang's Political Confucianism draws. Jiang also aims to achieve a modern Confucian outward kingliness by taking into account Western resources that he deems valuable in light of the political realities in the West and East.

Through his interpretation of the *Gongyang* tradition, Jiang seeks to reconstruct a legitimate Chinese politics. From his view, it is reasonable to reform Chinese politics by reconfirming the ideal of emperorship, revitalizing the fundamental ethical principles of the Confucian tradition, and reconstituting a religious basis for rulership that would have a lasting impact on China. Jiang's interpretation of the *Gongyang* tradition is endowed with novel modes of authority in the realm of law, ritual, and cosmology, resulting in his particular doctrine of Political Confucianism.

Central to his interpretation is Confucius himself, portrayed in the *Gongyang* tradition not only as an idealistic teacher, but also as a realistic politician with specific ideas about political institutions. Generally, the *Gongyang* scholars believed that Confucius authored the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to catalogue and condemn the ills of his day, but he left his message hidden in an esoteric

language invisible to any untrained or uninitiated persons. Indeed, these memorials constitute one of the most moving and powerful arguments in the history of the tradition for adopting the Confucian Way as the defining spiritual vision for the Chinese empire. This work constitutes a blueprint for reform that was to sit idle until the coming of a future sage who would decode Confucius's message and institute a new state envisioned therein.

Jiang's reconstruction of a legitimate Confucian political vision begins with his description of the "Kingly Way Politics" (*wangdao zhengzhi*) in relation to the mandate of Heaven. Specifically, Jiang argues that there are three types of legitimacy for political power (Jiang 2004d). One type of legitimacy is "heavenly" and it represents the legitimacy that comes from the sacred source, Heaven. The second type is "earthly" and it represents the legitimacy that comes from historical and cultural continuity. The third type is "human", which refers to the legitimacy that comes from people's endorsement that makes them willing to obey their rulers. From Jiang's view, a political system should be advocated if and only if all these three types of legitimacy are satisfied and properly balanced, with none of them being superior to the others. He argues that the three types of legitimacy should take the form of a tricameral legislature, with each house of government representing one type of legitimacy. He proposes that the legitimacies of the sacred source, historical and cultural legacy, and common people should be represented by the "House of Exemplary Persons", "House of Cultural Continuity" and "People's House" respectively (Jiang 2004a).

Jiang also proposes the ways by which the leaders and representatives of each house should be chosen. The members of the House of Exemplary Persons should be nominated by Confucian organizations in civil society as well as official Confucian institutions' members, who in turn should be chosen according to their political experiences as well as their knowledge and training in the Confucian classics. The members of the House of Cultural Continuity should be representatives of religions (including Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, and Christianity) and the descendants of great sages and historical figures, including the descendants of Confucius himself. Finally, the members of the People's House should be chosen by elections and functional constituencies (Jiang 2004a).

Among other things, a high point of this kingly way Confucian politics is that political transitions must draw on already existing cultural resources if they aim to achieve a political legitimacy (Jiang 2004b). Jiang has devoted himself to finding out that China does have its own political wisdom, ideas, and resources, which are different from what modern neo-Confucians have to offer. As Jiang sees it, the main source of Chinese political legitimacy must come from Chinese traditional cultural resources. Jiang reaffirms the ancient usage of the term "Kindly Way" (*wangdao*) in its most politicized sense: it is based on the authority of Heaven that the ruler is selected and rules according to the mandate of Heaven. Bestowal of the mandate involves a purposeful intervention by Heaven in the realm of human affairs. In reformulating the institution of emperorship, Jiang articulates the idea of a ruler whose authority and power are both



legitimized and limited by the higher authority of Heaven's moral principles, as embodied in the Confucian scriptures and interpreted by Confucian scholars. This thought has made Jiang an extremely cultural conservative in the eyes of some individuals. But he does have authentic Confucian ideas, evidence, and arguments to back up his thought. From his view, the ideal of the executive of a healthy political system must strive to enlighten his people through moral instruction to cultivate, improve, and perfect their nature. Leaders should rectify various laws and measures, and maintain social distinctions to constrain their desires. And the authority must use rituals and music as a means to create grace and beauty, and to cultivate virtues of the people. When the rulers have attended to these matters, the root of good governance is established.

In closing this section, it is necessary to emphasize that the Political Confucianism Jiang has proposed since late 1989 has obvious differences from the Mind Confucianism developed by the 20th-century overseas neo-Confucians. Among the differences is the one regarding their views concerning the relation between self-cultivation and outward kingliness. Although neo-Confucians do not reduce political issues simply to a matter of mind issues, they hold that they are inherently related to each other. This is reflected in Mou Zongshan's famous thesis of the "self-negation of the innate knowledge of the good" in order to develop a democratic polity. Political issues, as a result, fall under the realm of mind and its related development. The substance of the way of Heaven seems not built in a political system, but in a mind. Moreover, Mou's thesis is a mere hypothesis developed to acknowledge and subsequently to unify empirical and moral worlds. While such endeavor is comprehensible, the thesis could be of no practical value even if it is theoretically satisfactory. Consequently, neo-Confucianism advocates a democratic political system that has very little to do with real Chinese history or Confucian culture. In this sense, neo-Confucianism does not have essential differences from other non-Confucian schools that advocate Western liberal democracy.

In contrast, Jiang's Political Confucianism draws crucial differences between political and mind issues, while it concedes that the Way of Heaven should govern all realms of human affairs. In particular, Jiang holds that political issues should be settled according to the Way of Heaven, such as what the Han Confucians called "arbitration and institutionization based on the Way of Heaven." Thus instead of a secular democratic political system, Jiang advances a Heaven-mandated political order that is characterized by Confucian ritual systems. He calls such systems the kingly way politics. Thus Jiang's Political Confucianism reveals a particular path of political development for contemporary China that is distinctive from not only socialism and liberalism, but is also from neo-Confucianism.



## 15.5 The Establishment of the Yangming Academy

While dedicating himself to the research on political Confucianism, Jiang did not fail to note the importance of education in Confucianism. Confucianism has traditionally paid great attention to education. Ever since Confucius who created private education, there have always been both official education and private education. The aim of official education was to train government officials. It was regulated by government and complemented by the civil services recruitment system. Students in official education have been critiqued as primarily seeking to secure an office in the government, not to cultivate oneself or exemplify the Way. Hence, while official education has its role and value, it does not serve well to educate and advance the Way, given that it is closely associated with power and profit. Private education, on the other hand, was founded by influential Confucian scholars to exemplify and pass on the Way. It was not governed by regulations or driven by desires for power and profit. Students were drawn to it by the teachings of Confucianism.

The tradition of private education can be dated back to Confucius. Since then, private education has experienced its ups and downs. It reached its peak during the Song and Ming Dynasties but hit its trough in the Qing Dynasty. Although there was a revival of private education towards the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of modern China, the movement did not last long due to various political and financial constraints. The situation became even worse after the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. Private education completely ceased, because Confucians had to flee the country or hide themselves to avoid being persecuted by the then-political authority.

As China's economic reforms deepened, Confucian private education resumed in the 1990s. However, another problem has loomed large. Commercialization has dominated every sector of Chinese society, and education is no exception. Self-cultivation and pursuit of knowledge have been given unprecedentedly low priority. Worse still, in the process of modernization, Chinese society has gradually locked itself up in what Weber calls the "iron cage" of rationality. Even universities and research institutions, where autonomy should be celebrated, have justified themselves in delivering education in a secular, utilitarian, and superficial way by emphasizing quantification, theorization, and speediness in research. The situation thus continues to be difficult for a revival of Confucianism that emphasizes virtue.

Jiang has deep regret for such intellectual and cultural decline. Back in the early 1980s, he was subject to a year of criticisms to re-educate him for writing his essay "Back to Marx". Then because of his paper "The Meaning and Problem of Revitalizing Confucianism in Mainland China", he was suppressed by Chinese academic authorities in the early 1990s. As he later devoted himself to the study of the *Gongyang* tradition in Shenzhen, he was interrupted by many people who tried every means to make a profit. As a teacher at a Shenzhen college, he was hampered by various constraints set by the official educational

system. Nonetheless, Jiang has seriously followed the Confucian Way in his conduct. He did not comply with practices that conflict with the Way or compromise his character as a Confucian gentleman. In order to pass on Confucian teaching and the Way, he eventually set up a private educational institution, the Yangming Academy, in the Yangming mountain village of his hometown.

Jiang overcome difficulties one after another in this endeavor to establish a private Confucian academy. Although he recognized that modern universities failed Confucian teaching and he aspired to set up private education as early as 1980s, he could not find any opportunities until 1992. Then a director of a company in Shenzhen offered Jiang the hope of building an East Asian Confucian College in the Huizhou of Guangdong province. After Jiang's year-long hard work, however, the director dropped out of the project. In 1995, Jiang tried setting up an "International Yangming Academy" in Guizhou by raising capital from a Japanese corporation. But he eventually had to give it up because China does not permit cultural enterprises to be funded with any foreign capital. Then in 1996, Jiang tried once again to set up the Academy with the support of the Dharmasthiti College of Cultural Studies in Hong Kong. Although this time he managed to sign a contract specifying the funding details with the county government, the project was still forced to be abandoned because of bureaucracy. These setbacks took away not only Jiang's time and resources, but also his hope of relying on corporations, government, and foreign capital to set up his Academy.

Finally, Jiang decided that he would found the Academy by his own means. In 1996, he purchased a hundred acres of land in Guizhou that Wang Yangming used to contemplate the Way. Yet, running the Academy required funding that Jiang could not possibly afford on his own. For the sake of Confucianism and the future of Chinese culture, Jiang started raising funds with friends, relatives and intellectuals who were sympathetic to his mission. Though not without difficulties, Jiang's aspiration did impress many to make the fund-raising possible, despite the cultural and intellectual decline of contemporary China. The inauguration of the Academy was marked by the completion of its Confucian-style teaching building in 2000. The Academy has since then become a symbolically important place for the reviving of Confucianism after the Cultural Revolution. Every year many students, intellectuals, and businessmen travel to the Academy to visit Jiang, pay their ritual worship to Confucius, and listen to Jiang's Confucian instruction. Many have benefited from such visits and spread to others Jiang's particular Confucian information, which is essentially different from what is taught in official educational institutions.

## 15.6 Concluding Remarks

Jiang has been recognized around the world as a leading, exemplary Confucian in the renaissance of Confucianism in contemporary China. In particular, he has developed his own Political Confucianism by incorporating what he has learned from classical Confucianism, neo-Confucianism as well as modern Western doctrines into a new interpretation of Confucianism inherited from the Chinese tradition. His endeavor is innovative, sophisticated, and well-structured. It is his belief that China's current political and social problems should be, and could be, solved by the revival of Confucianism in China. More than that, the future of China, from his view, will depend on how the authentic Confucian commitments will be maintained and brought to practice. He sees Confucianism as a religion that should gain a cultural consensus and spiritual belief in the whole nation. His call to revive Confucianism has come as an ever-increasing ratification of what has been practiced and advocated by many Chinese individuals committed to reviving Confucianism and Classical Chinese studies. In particular, Jiang argues that the Marxist curriculum in universities and government party schools should be replaced by Confucian materials. Indeed, Jiang's most important contribution as a Confucian thinker might be that the knowledge of Confucian scripture is indispensable to its political implications. Such implications must be worked out in the kingly way politics in contemporary society.

Jiang does not just preach Confucianism, he lives up to its principles and rituals and serves as a model for other scholars. In his own career, Jiang has devoted a lot of effort to actualize his Confucian ideal for the revitalization of Chinese culture and improvement of humanity. His strong commitment to Confucianism drove him to establish the Yangming Academy. While the Academy is primarily a place for intellectuals to study Confucianism, Jiang's effort to promote Confucianism is not confined to this level; he also writes intellectual papers and books. He compiled a 12-volume series of "Recital Books of Chinese Cultural Classics" that aims at educating children in the basic Confucian values (Jiang 2004e). These 12 volumes were published by the Higher Education Press in 2004, the first time that such a complete series of Classics for children was published in China since 1912, when the Chinese Republic abolished the classics recital classes in elementary schools. Jiang's devotion is welcomed by parents, teachers, and pupils. More and more of them have participated in classics recital rituals and turned to traditional-style private schools to learn traditional Chinese virtues and values. For example, on 30 July 2005, thousands of teachers and pupils attended a mass recital of Confucian classics on the Great Wall in Beijing to demonstrate their devotion to the Chinese tradition. A few other private Confucian academies, after the Yangming Academy was built, were established.

Jiang is true to his title of "*daru*" (a great Confucian) in today's China. With his insightful interpretation of the Confucian tradition as well as its

contemporary ethical, educational, and political implications expressly explicated, he stays in the center of the revival of Confucianism in contemporary China, which urges China to return to its home base and rediscover its own soul. This in turn will be beneficial to the future of the globe as a peaceful world. Jiang has followed Confucius' teaching by being non-confrontational and pursuing a peaceful approach of dialogue in international interactions between different civilizations. We are confident that he will continually develop and perfect his Political Confucianism, which will serve as a great cultural and intellectual resource for China's future.

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