

The Main Schools of Confucianism in Present-Day Mainland China

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Since the 1990s, Chinese scholarly thought has become increasingly diverse and has undergone significant reorganization. Confucian thought in particular has flourished and diversified. Confucian trends of note are the value Confucianism 价值儒学 of Chen Lai 陈来, the democratic Confucianism 民主儒学 of Wu Guang 吴光, the life Confucianism 生活儒学 of Huang Yushun 黄玉顺, and present-day political Confucianism 政治儒学, the most active and popular of these trends. Though there are other schools of Confucian thought, this paper will cover only these four schools to keep the analysis simple and provide a synoptic understanding.

The Value Confucianism of Chen Lai

Value Confucianism affirms the value theory of Confucianism, but not the commonly discussed social values of Confucianism. The foundation of Chen Lai's value Confucianism consists of the Confucian concept of value and its function in the theory. His recent interests and interpretations of Confucian values, including such values as responsibility, decorum 礼教, and the kingly way 王道, follow developments in the 1980s from the debate on modern culture to social-political thought. Here I present a few of his recent views to illustrate his philosophy.

Philosophical foundations The ontology of value Confucianism posits the existence of whatever is necessary for there to be benevolence 仁, which manifests itself in world ethics and interaction ethics. The sources of value Confucianism are classical benevolence studies 仁学 (stemming from *A Study of Benevolence* 仁學, by Tan Sitong 譚嗣同, 1865–1898), the philosophy of Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968), who called for a revival of Confucianism,

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and the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.¹

Chen Lai bases his methodology not on monistic universality, but on pluralistic universality, which explains why values in different cultural regions share some, but not all, universalities.

Value orientation He points out that the core of Confucianism is reasoning about values, not instrumental rationality. The social value of Confucianism is the social significance of moral reasoning. Confucian reasoning about values includes the influences of modernity, the market economy, and industrialization on people's ethical and moral lives, both in China and abroad. Hence, since Confucianism has its own ultimate concerns, the significance of Confucianism is both national and international.² The core Confucian values of Chinese culture are benevolence, protocol, responsibility, community, and the kingly way.³

The point of departure for value Confucianism Value Confucianism takes as its point of departure that Chinese thought and practice should be Sinicized, that Chinese thought is universal, and that rights do not enjoy priority. Related to this last principle is that responsibility comes before freedom, that obligations are more important than rights, that community values matter more than the individual, and that harmony takes precedence over conflict. Here we see a distinct contrast with the Western perspective on values. Chen Lai made the following judgment about the modern value of individual rights and its relation to Chinese culture:

If a central principle of Western political thought regards personal rights and personal freedom as having first priority and if requiring citizens to practice the common good violates personal freedom, Confucianism will never affirm this attitude of giving priority to rights.

China has never experienced religious persecution, nor has it fought colonial powers for national independence, nor have there been conflicts between citizens and the aristocracy in Chinese history. Chinese history, especially in the Confucian tradition, has never given priority to an individual's demands on the state or his personal rights. Confucianism requires rulers and the government to take responsibility and take care of

1 Du Weiming 杜维明 and Huang Chun-chieh 黄俊傑 have also discussed how the universe is interconnected.

2 Chen Lai 2013.

3 Chen Lai 2015.

the people, especially with regard to their economic and social well-being. Confucianism has been the core thinking of Chinese scholar-officials for thousands of years. As a result, Confucianism has internally come to regard social responsibility and concern for public affairs as its first priority. Confucianism requires Chinese scholar-officials to focus on people's livelihoods. Hence, "caring for the state while caring for the people" 忧国忧民 has become the spiritual tradition and inner concern of Confucian scholar-officials.⁴

Chen Lai also said that concern for the people may be stronger now because of the special historical conditions that the Chinese suffered under in the nineteenth century and the development that China is experiencing now. Thus, China today gives first priority to the people, not human rights.⁵ Confucianism places politics on a foundation of virtue. So there is no moral neutralism in politics, nor can politics be separated from morality. He believes that the West and the East each have their own universal concepts of value, founded on spiritual aspects and value aspects. Justice, freedom, rights, and rationality are universal, and at the same time benevolence, protocol, responsibility, community, and inner peace are also universal. In the Chinese outlook on values, since ancient times, freedom and democracy have never ranked first.⁶

Here I would like to make some brief comments on Chen Lai's value Confucianism. We might notice that between the value systems of the East and the West, there is some alignment and also some misalignment. The concerns of these two value systems might not be on the same level. Since the issues they raise are different, some parts are compatible. If there are different universalities, it is because they arise from different issues. But what if these different universalities arise from the same issue, prescribing different solutions for the same question? In this case, what kind of universality are we dealing with, and what is its *modus operandi*? Are such universalities different in nature, do they include different elements, or are their elements woven together in different ways? An equally important point is to take a realistic view of history into consideration, since history is related to the type of culture of a people. If the value systems of East and West refer to different levels or different domains, we can still discuss their universality, but it would be better to study them in the same issue domain.

4 Chen Lai 2016.

5 Chen Lai 2016.

6 Chen Lai 2013.

Features of value Confucianism Chen Lai does not thoroughly separate his value Confucianism from the trend toward greater Chinese and Western integration. But according to his notion of multiple universalities, Chinese values enjoy equal status with Western values, and Western modernity is not the first priority of value Confucianism. His value Confucianism supports socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Questions Chen Lai's value Confucianism raises several questions. First, his notion of multiple universalities is significant, but it may also cause methodological problems. In principle, universality is monistic. Arguing for values on the basis of universality relies not on dialectics, but on logic. I personally favor monistic universality; otherwise, there is a high chance of losing ourselves in cultural relativism. In the last two decades, the notion of multiple types of modernity has led to a number of interesting ideas, but such multiplicities may also lead us astray.

Second, is community an abstract conception? Is it a whole, a group, or a collection? Is a social group composed of individuals? Is it a whole? Or is it a body of related individuals, there being no absolutely independent individual? In the Chinese worldview, people regard themselves as nodes in a social network. Some Confucians, especially in the Song and Ming dynasties, promoted the idea that in benevolence, a man sees himself as being one with Heaven and Earth. However, this binary relationship with the universe is different from normal relations in a social network. In my view, this holistic unity with Heaven and Earth recognizes that the individual is connected to the universe and at the same time independent.⁷ Since the time of the new Confucians of the twentieth century until now, the relationship between individual and community has been a topic requiring clarification.

Third, in asserting that responsibility comes before freedom and obligations before rights, do we not need to clarify the level and domain in which we make this assumption? For the order and category of values in a specialized market society are different from those in a family, a social network, or the political field, because of different levels and domains.

The Democratic Confucianism of Wu Guang

Like Chen Lai, Wu Guang also participated in the discussion of new Confucianism in the 1980s and tried to modernize Confucianism. His thought is based primarily on Confucianism, but owing to his historical academic background, he also pays attention to such philosophies as the School of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi 黄老道学. In addition, he shows great interest in

7 Li Hongwei 2014.

democratic awareness in Chinese traditional philosophy. In particular, when he edited *The Complete Works of Huang Zongxi* 黄宗羲全集, he delighted in the budding awareness of the people and the promotion of their interests by Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲 (1610–1695). He holds that democratic Confucianism is supported both affectively and rationally. His basic positions are as follows:

The three periods of Confucianism Wu Guang's overview of Confucianism is based on the notion of body 体 versus function 用. He states that traditional Confucianism had its own body and function, namely a body of benevolence 仁 and a function of decorum 礼, and that the new Confucianism will develop its own body and function. With changes in content come changes in form. On this basis, he introduced three periods in the development of Confucianism. The first period was classical Confucianism. The second period extended from Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927) to the new Confucianism of the twentieth century. The third period is the democratic Confucianism now taking shape, with a new body and new function.⁸ According to Wu Guang, the new Confucianism of Kang Youwei and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) was limited to elite discussion among intellectuals and in academic forums. Their thought never exercised a strong spiritual power capable of guiding society and the public. Most important, they did not separate themselves from the idealistic theory of mind and human nature 心性学 of the Song (960–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties. Their new Confucianism lacked a new body and function capable of facing life, the public, and the contemporary age.⁹

I see no major problems with Wu Guang's first period of Confucianism. But the second period he sees as a reactive Confucianism. This view, I think, applies only to Kang Youwei's Confucianism, not to a fully developed Confucianism. Not all new Confucianism (for example, Mou Zongsan's philosophy) is reactive. New Confucianism is both constructive and systematic. Such construction and creative reconstruction are based on acknowledging basic values and responding to contemporary requirements. I do not think that new Confucianism is entangled in airy discussions of nature and mind. Indeed, new Confucianism has had to face the public and society. In the twentieth century it had to respond to challenges from scientism, materialism, and indiscriminate Westernization and has had to redefine the value of Chinese culture in the face of these challenges. These multiple tasks facing contemporary Confucianism are primarily intellectual in nature.

8 Wu Guang 2014.

9 Wu Guang 2014.

Contemporary Confucianism, in my view, needs to develop its roots by combining Confucius 孔子 (551–479 BCE), Mencius 孟子 (372–289 BCE), the study of mind and nature 心性学, and the study of innate knowledge of the good 良知学 with new Confucianism and a future democratic life for the Chinese people. So democratic Confucianism is feasible, although my approach differs somewhat from that of Wu Guang.

The basic idea of democratic Confucianism Wu Guang states that democracy is partially a metaphysical concept and not just a practical institutional form.¹⁰ Because democracy has metaphysical features, we can understand Wu Guang as regarding democracy as the Way 道, the metaphysical notion of Confucianism. He tells us that democracy has one way and five virtues 一道五德, that democracy has benevolence as body and science and law as function 仁爱为体, 科技法治为用. The way of benevolence consists of the five virtues, namely, righteousness 义, decorum 礼, trustworthiness 信, harmony 和, and respect 敬. This new theory of benevolence arose from Confucius's notion of benevolence and inherits the revisions of the later classical Confucian tradition. Yet it also learns from non-Confucian areas of culture, especially Western thought and intellectual resources (such as democracy, freedom, equality, love, human rights, law, etc.), while it criticizes and rejects antihumanistic thought and institutions (such as the supremacy of individual rights, the idea of conquest, and the notion of survival of the fittest). This moral humanistic philosophy emphasizes morality and cares about the meaning and value of life in seeking to support people's livelihoods. In practice, it does not follow the traditional path of sageliness within and kingliness without 内圣外王, that is, being a sage within and exercising the outward moral authority of a king. Rather, it seeks to unify a new sageliness within and a new kingliness without. It requires every individual to be a gentleman with a benevolent and democratic personality, to serve the community, and to build a moral society. It requires setting up community and national organizations that represent the will of the community, and that respect democratic and benevolent public morality, civilized decorum, and contemporary political and judicial institutions, in order to implement democratic and benevolent policies and to use scientific power to benefit the people.¹¹

In Wu Guang's opinion, many scholars misinterpret democracy as a practical political institution, or even as means of waging political battles. This is wrong. Rather, democracy has an institutional, spiritual, and concep-

¹⁰ I will detail my views on this issue in other essays.

¹¹ Wu Guang 2014, 2013.

tual nature, in which the spiritual and conceptual aspects matter more. Democracy is a reflection of the people's self-awareness and self-determination. Democratic institutions are established with a democratic spirit. So democracy is a manifestation of the Way, and the contemporary democratic spirit and traditional spirit of benevolence can be united. How to coordinate the relation between democracy and benevolence in a democratic, benevolent society is a focus of public attention. In Wu Guang's view, the union of democracy and benevolence is a union of Western and Eastern values. This manifestation of the Way is both democratic and benevolent.¹²

Features of democratic benevolence Moral reason orients theory. In this respect, Wu Guang's democratic Confucianism is similar to Chen Lai's value Confucianism. However, Wu Guang takes democracy as a body, wherein he parts company with Chen Lai's value Confucianism. Another feature of this theory is that it combines a new body and a new function in which Chinese culture and Western culture come together.

Problems Wu Guang has yet to give clear definitions of his notions of benevolence and democracy, and to specify the relations between them. His theory is richly suggestive, but is still vague about the nature of democracy as the embodiment of the Way, the significance of benevolence as an ontological given, and the implications of democracy and benevolence as a common ontological entity, namely, the body of the Way 道体. Hence, his exposition sometimes lapses into obscurity. For example, Gan Chunsong 干春松 wonders whether democracy is a metaphysical construct.¹³ This question must be answered, and it can be answered thus: Democracy is not merely individuals voting in an institutional arrangement. In this conceptual framework for democracy, the concept comes first, the lifestyle second, and the institutional arrangement third. This is the meaning behind the notion that democracy is the body of the Way.

The Life Confucianism of Huang Yushun

The life Confucianism of Huang Yushun is an eclectic mixture of a Confucian emotional theory of ethics 情感伦理学, the theory of Mencius, and the theory of Xunzi 荀子 (313–238 BCE), and also absorbs concepts from Western phenomenology. He holds negative attitude toward the Neo-Confucianism 理学 of the Song and Ming dynasties, which in his view is an abstract and transcendental theory. His aim is to make Confucianism

12 Wu Guang 2014.

13 Wu Guang, Pang Jinyuo, and Gan Chunsong 2014.

realistic. Although he criticizes other philosophers for their abstract, transcendental thinking, his phenomenology might have similar problems. This is a point where his life Confucianism needs to be further explained.

The basic ideas of life Confucianism Huang Yushun especially emphasizes that “Confucianism is a kind of belief 信仰.” “There is no new version of Confucianism, because after the Hundred Schools of Thought 诸子百家争鸣, so-called Confucianism was never a school but a belief. This kind of belief originates from the emotion of actual practical life concerns, the emotional experience of benevolence 仁爱情感. This kind of emotion has nothing to do with historical evolution. Thus I would like to say that humans are Confucian by nature.”¹⁴

This view of his, which comes from phenomenology, particularly emphasizes the notion of existence. He states, “What is life is existence.” In his view, in the preclassical and classical periods of Confucianism, if existence precedes the origin of any particular existent, then what is life is existence, and what is excluded from life is nonexistence. Everything originates in life and is attributed to life.¹⁵

Huang Yushun uses the word “affection” 情爱 to illustrate the origin and foundation of life existence. He is here referring to the emotional experience of benevolence, which is different from the ontology of emotions of Li Zehou 李泽厚. The emotional experience of benevolence is the origin of life, the presentation of life. It is the essence of emotion in the Confucianism of Confucius and Mencius. This stance contrasts with the view of emotion found in post-Qin Confucianism in such notions as “Human nature is the root and emotion the branches” 性本情末, “Human nature is the body and emotion the function” 性体情用, and “Human nature is good and emotion evil” 性善情恶.¹⁶

Point of departure, fundamentals, and features Huang Yushun’s special areas of expertise are phenomenology and Xunzi. His biggest concern for our life is the lack of the emotional experience of benevolence in contemporary society.¹⁷ This, I think, is the biggest problem facing China since the May 4th Movement (May 4, 1919). In his view, benevolence is based on natural emotion and is distinct from indiscriminate universal love 博爱. He speaks of the equality of everything before benevolence 万物一体之仁, a theory that

14 Huang Yushun 2008b.

15 Huang Yushun 2008a, 2005a, 2005b.

16 Huang Yushun 2008b.

17 Huang Yushun 2008b.

originated with Mencius, but he does not have a deep understanding of this theory, and this has affected his theory of emotion. Finally, his life Confucianism rejects liberalism on the one hand and Confucian fundamentalism on the other.

Value and problems Huang Yushun's life Confucianism follows an important line of thought in the Confucian tradition and for this reason is of great value. Yet there are also problems with his thought:

- His focus lies in the continuity of the Confucian tradition as a whole. He tries to connect the Confucianism of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi with the rationalism 理学 of Zhu Xi 朱熹, Cheng Hao 程颢, and Cheng Yi 程颐, and the idealism 心学 of Lu Jiuyuan 陆九渊 and Wang Yangming 王阳明. Obviously, there is some self-contradiction, such as no clear distinction of levels of application. Huang Yushun tries to cover both neo-Confucian rationalism and idealism, but ends up missing part of each.
- His speculative philosophical discussion is prolix and repetitive. He does not clarify Heidegger's concept of existence very well. It appears that his understanding of Heidegger's notion of existence is shallow, inaccurate, or misdirected.
- Huang Yushun's concept of life is confused. He accepts Husserl's phenomenology and notion of a lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and raises the Daoist theories of Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi 庄子 as support for life as a basic given. However, this contradicts his positing "an ontology of emotions" 情感本体 in Confucianism.
- Huang Yushun lacks sufficient understanding of Song and Ming neo-Confucianism and Confucian humanism to criticize Song neo-Confucianism. The biggest problem is that although his life Confucianism has a humanistic point of departure, it fails to connect humanism and an emotional theory of ethics and cannot carve out a logical space for itself in the area of spiritual humanism. Hence, his theory of benevolence is not soundly rooted in, have sufficient continuity with, or conform adequately to the logic of, Confucianism.
- Because he emphasizes an ontology of emotion, his Confucianism cannot efficiently absorb basic concepts from Song and Ming neo-Confucianism and the contemporary Western theory of justice.

The Confucian theories discussed above are centered on the theory of benevolence 仁学, while the following political Confucianism theories focus on decorum (protocol in a political context) 礼学 and the classical texts 经学.

Present-Day Political Confucianism

Political Confucianism is the largest area of Confucianism in contempo-

rary mainland China and boasts of many outstanding scholars. To extensively cover the field, I would need to present a huge amount of material. Because of limited space, I will just look at some representative figures and make a few brief comments.

Jiang Qing Because the thought of Jiang Qing 蒋庆 has received ample discussion in the literature, I will not explain his thought in detail here. I will limit my explanations to features common in political Confucianism and representative of the field.

Jiang Qing criticizes contemporary new Confucianism and advocates political Confucianism. He has a basic understanding of Wang Yangming idealism 阳明学 and the theory of innate knowledge of the good 良知学, but he lacks sufficient understanding to unify the spirit and humanism of political Confucianism. So he returns to the thought of Xunzi and Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE), who asserted that the Way of Heaven 天道 is external and transcendental to humans. Other scholars of political Confucianism, he argues, do not sufficiently understand either the spiritual humanism of Confucianism or the neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties.

He is firmly committed to extreme conservatism and cultural nationalism. For instance, he criticizes almost all Western concepts, such as human rights, democratic values, equality, etc. He insists that the Way of Heaven has the capacity to govern human societies, but that this requires that the political framework to respond to the Way of Heaven.¹⁸ He also proposes that Confucian scholars supervise the state's public affairs 太学监国. He advocates that government be divided into three branches, that scholars engage in politics, and the nation be ruled according to scholarly traditions. He promotes the spirit of decorum and recommends doing away with judicial litigation 无讼. Finally, he stresses the traditional kingly way and a distinction between China and other nations in domestic and international politics.¹⁹

Yao Zhongqiu The point of departure for Yao Zhongqiu 姚中秋 is to use China's own thought and logic, shaped over its long history, to explain present-day China. He thinks that after the enlightenments of the twentieth century, Chinese thought and the Chinese spirit need to undergo a renewal. China's current problem is neither survival nor self-defense, but to create a Chinese order of world significance. This requires Chinese scholars to trace back to the origins of the traditional Chinese order to explore its basic princi-

18 See Li Hongwei 2014, 2015.

19 Jiang Qing 2003, 2011.

ples.²⁰

Traditional Chinese society was massive in scale and was governed from multiple centers. Hence, Zhou rites, music, and feudal system were appropriate in the Zhou dynasty, he argues. China's huge size, which made it impossible to govern by simply dividing people into citizens and noncitizens, led to multiple levels and centers of public life and also defined different levels of citizen identification. For instance, Chinese governance included individual cultivation, family and clan management, as well as national governance.²¹ The primary focus of political Confucianism is politics guided by scholars trained in the Confucian tradition, but he also sees the extended family as civil society and the public arena in traditional Chinese society. In his view, rule 治道 is the administrative management 政道 of government. Political thought seeks to create norms and a social order in accord with his classical conservatism.²²

Yao Zhongqiu argues that the debate between Deng Xiaomang 邓晓芒 and Liu Xiaofeng 刘小枫 on China's direction and the interpretation of its philosophical tradition was actually a debate about the other in international relations. These two debaters regarded themselves as original thinkers, but they were merely conveying Western thinking. Their debate led in an ugly fashion to the end of parroting foreign thought in the twentieth century.²³

The value of Yao Zhongqiu's thought is that he proposes a personal understanding of governing a massive society such as China's and supplements the idea of Qian Mu 钱穆 (1895–1990) that Chinese politics be guided by scholars trained in the Confucian tradition. His thought is also important for his view that Chinese civilization sustains the story of China's contemporary rise, and that the Chinese way 中国之道 is a viable alternative to that of the West.

There are three problems with Yao Zhongqiu's thinking: First, saying that the advances of the last thirty years were inherent in Chinese civilization, he denies that the two enlightenments of the twentieth century had any beneficial effect on Chinese social values and practices. His explanations fall short of those of Deng Zhenglai 邓正来 and some economists. Second, his discussion barely covers the basic definitions of and divisions between public power and individual rights. Both Yao Zhongqiu and Jiang Qing accept Mou Zongsan's concept of "the three orthodoxies" 三统 (the three distinct lines of transmission of legitimate social authority, namely, transmission of the Way 道统,

20 Yao Zhongqiu 2014b.

21 Yao Zhongqiu 2014a.

22 Ren Feng et al. 2015; Yao Zhongqiu 2015.

23 Yao Zhongqiu 2014b.

transmission of Confucian knowledge 学统, and transmission of political power 政统) while trying completely to deny it. These differences within Confucianism are even larger than the differences between Confucianism and liberalism. Like Jiang Qing's seeking to do away with judicial litigation, Yao Zhongqiu's thought ignores the difference between personal cultivation and public life. Third, Yao Zhongqiu, from the perspectives of liberalism and socialism, makes no distinction between ruler and citizen. The universality of citizenship and the equality of citizens' rights disappear in his discussion.

Chen Ming According to Chen Ming 陈明, Confucian values are utilitarian. He says that pursuing truth is the goal of science, and putting knowledge to use is the first principle of culture. Calling a theory the truth is a rhetorical device that tries to make a proposition persuasive, lower its cost, and have it take root in society. Religion is a perfect example.²⁴

Thought and scholarship should respond to the needs of the living to survive. He writes, "If we understand present-day Confucianism in this framework, we need to adopt the following attitude: Reject a Confucian fundamentalism that makes core Confucian propositions pure theoretical or metaphysical, for this isolates Confucianism from the lived world. Also reject a Confucian liberalism that, by establishing a corpus of knowledge, cuts itself off from the main body of the Confucian enterprise. Our belief that the logic of life comes before culture distinguishes us from Confucian fundamentalists, and our belief that Confucianism best promotes the survival of the Chinese race distinguishes us from Confucian liberals."²⁵ "I have always believed that the revival of Confucianism depends on its accepting the mission of present-day culture. It cannot and should not set itself up as the final arbitrator of values."²⁶

In Chen Ming's view, the desire of a people to survive is the basis of nationalism. Everything else is optional or a matter of expression, even when it comes to liberalism or socialism.²⁷

His basic thrust is that he wants to make Confucianism into a civil religion. "Confucianism, as a civil religion, gives Chinese individuals, as members of the political community, a political and legal identity and a sense of the common good. These notions, which have internal connections with ethnic culture, need to accord with individual historical contexts and living spaces, and need us to foster and construct them."²⁸ There are three important points

24 Chen Ming 2008.

25 Chen Ming 2008.

26 Chen Ming 2008.

27 Chen Ming 2008.

28 Chen Ming 2012.

that we should gather from this passage. First, Confucianism as a civil religion is an expression of politics and legitimacy. Second, Confucianism includes common values, perceptions, and norms. Third, Confucianism requires human construction. “There are two functions of civil religion. The first function is to give politics a foundation of values, that is, to regulate and legitimize politics. In a sense, Dong Zhongshu carried out this project in the Han dynasty by making Confucianism a civil religion and using it to provide politics with a foundation of values. The second function is to provide a cultural understanding in order to strengthen a sense of nationalism.”²⁹

The value of Chen Ming’s thought is his proposals for reconstructing ethnic culture, but the strong political implications of his program make it less attractive. His theory has evident weaknesses. He does not judge Confucian values and is only concerned about Confucianism’s function. He does not comment on whether Confucianism is good and cares only about whether it is useful. For instance, he offers no analysis of different traditional schools of Confucianism, nor does he offer any judgments on the connection between Confucianism and an individual’s life. His only concern is about the impact Confucianism may have on national integration. His views have a strong nationalist component, but ignore the effects of Confucian values on individual survival and its potential impact on the reconstruction of community.

Synopsis of Present-Day Confucianism in Mainland China

The Confucian theories presented above all have some characteristics in common. First, they all affirm the universality of Confucianism. Second, they share a common attitude on putting Confucianism into practice. They all are dedicated to promoting Confucianism in the private sector, such as establishing academies, encouraging Confucian book clubs, promoting the reading of Confucian classics, etc. Though they share these general characteristics, the differences among these Confucian theories are huge.

Here I would like to point out three methodological problems. First, Chen Lai proposes the “re-Sinicization of the ruling party,” as opposed to various modes of Westernization. However, the term “re-Sinicization” needs to be reconsidered, since it has associations with evaluations of the two enlightenment movements in the twentieth century. We need a term that is more objective and politically neutral. Second, the notion in political Confucianism of “using China to explain China” is biased and unwarranted. China began modernizing after the world economic system had formed and developed. China’s modernization—including its initialization (the idea of modernization), launch (the social movement and political and economic reforms), and

29 Chen Ming 2012.

fruits (joining the World Trade Organization)—were all realized within a process of world modernization. So China's modernization is part of world modernization and cannot be considered independent self-development. We cannot explain China without considering the process of world modernization and Western cultural impacts. Third, we cannot deploy the idea of "using China to explain China" to define the direction of future Chinese development. The best we can do is to use the new-Confucian concept of the integration of Chinese and Western systems in the twentieth century to explain China's recent history and the direction of future development.

Political Confucianism in particular focuses on governance and order, instead of individual claims of human rights and restraints on public power. This characteristic of some mainland new-Confucian theories may also be a shortcoming. In the late twentieth century—amidst the rise of China and decline of America, the world economic crisis, European stagnation, and regression in the European Union—assessing efficiency and effects became increasingly popular. This led to such notions as technocracy, philosophocracy (government by Confucian scholars), and democracy as a simple response to the people's needs. Such thinking values purpose over motivation and results over process and easily led to the illusion of great Chinese progress, because it reviewed history from an abstract, bird's-eye perspective. Yao Zhongqiu's description of the Zhou and Song dynasties and some scholars' affirmation of well-ordered societies in European history also fell into this trap. In my view, in contrast, political progress requires specific methods instead of abstract historical judgments. Simple theses and antitheses easily lead to errors.

The three patterns in mainland new Confucianism involve a focus on benevolence (democratic Confucianism), on decorum (political Confucianism with its emphasis of study of the classics), or on a combination of the two (value Confucianism). I personally insist on assigning different roles to thought and culture. In the realm of thought, I recommend reading the great thinkers of the world, including Western Christian philosophers, and in the area of culture, I recommend Confucianism. These two realms are at different levels and should not be thought to be on the same level. Confucianism at the cultural and secular level should not reject Christianity or Buddhism. The future of Chinese society should be built on a healthy base of different religions thriving together, with Confucianism being but one religion in a multireligious society. It is unrealistic and also impossible to ban other philosophical trends and venerate only Confucianism.

Official promotion of Confucianism, while not as foundational as Dong Zhongshu's promotion of Confucianism in the Han dynasty, suggests viewing Confucianism as a "civil religion." Though the term is vague and hard to

define, I am referring to Robert Bellah's notion of civil religion, not Jean-Jacques Rousseau's.³⁰ It involves cultivating the mind and one's human nature and is a key ingredient in the formation of democracy—a notion that de Tocqueville would hardly agree with.

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