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Confucianism: Twentieth Century

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After having flourished as a ruling ideology for 2000 years of Chinese history, Confucianism suffered a fateful breakdown in the early twentieth century. Lingering in a state of self-assertion and self-transformation, it confronted a series of powerful, unprecedented challenges throughout the century. At the end of the century, although Confucianism had been relegated to the ashes of history as a political institution, it had, eventually, found its own peace and its own place in the world as a philosophy.

Despite its defeat, there was no concession or surrender by twentieth-century Confucianism; in fact, it has itself represented a challenge for those who rejected it. Levenson (1959) may not have been correct in saying that Liang Qichao, one of the last Confucian intellectuals at the turn of the century, had an intellectual commitment to value but an emotional attachment to tradition. By values, Levenson implied modernity and the west, whereas tradition implied the past and Confucianism. But the matter was not so simple, and the case is not closed. For a Confucian intellectual like Liang, the issue was not just a dualistic contrast, contradiction, or struggle between emotional and intellectual choices.

In Confucianism there has always been a system of values that is well understood and incorporated in practice. One has to be a Confucian with one's body and soul. Thus the sense of loss and perplexity experienced by Confucian intellectuals would be both intellectual and emotional. It involved self-doubt, produced

by a collapse of a faith and a series of unbelievable events; a search for identity; and engagement in a profound critique. What is important to note is that a series of challenges may not cohere with each other and thus may have multiple impacts and conflicting effects. Such challenges are not merely political or economic or intellectual—they are all three. In the twentieth century, their force made itself felt in a relatively short period of time. Confucianism, as a symbol of Chinese culture and civilization and of the Chinese people, faced western civilization—an encounter for which it was unprepared and to which it brought both strengths and weaknesses. With little exaggeration, that encounter can be described as a duel to the death.

Confucianism as an Organic System of Substance and Function

How can we now understand and evaluate twentieth-century Confucianism? One advantage of considering the fate of Confucianism in the twentieth century from the standpoint of the twenty-first century is that we can see the whole story: Confucianism in decline; Confucianism enduring, undergoing transformation, and feeling the stirrings of a new life and a new identity. Another advantage is that we can see it more objectively, from a safe distance, in light of new hopes and new comparisons.

Many scholars have tried to understand the modern predicament of Confucianism from a specific polit-

ical, social, or historical viewpoint, but there is no single perspective from which we can get an overview of Confucianism as a whole system, an organic structure, or a life form in a larger world of systems, structures, and life forms. We need to consider Confucianism as a fully established, entrenched cultural system, structure, or organic process in which political, economic, educational, moral, intellectual, and philosophical aspects are integrated and implemented. In short, we must see this system as a living organism with layers, levels, and shells. I will use the image of shells in order to stress the organic wholeness and solidarity of the Confucian system.

The outermost shell of this structure is political and economic; it represents the exercise of political power—control of actions, projects, and production, and the formation of substantive policies. This is a shell that we may identify as institutional; it has to do with the government, the official system of social organization and social control. Underneath the institutional shell are shells that we can call the moral and the social. The moral shell consists of standards of right and wrong or good and bad, and a model of an ideal person; society is formed and ordered in terms of these standards and ideals. The social shell has to do with the individual and community relationships and interconnections that make up the common life and common history of a people. The social shell sustains the community's morality or ethics and produces lifestyles, creativity, and patterns of thought, perception, and evaluation. We can see, in the social shell, how tradition and history nourish, encourage, and support the activities of life—and how those activities preserve the memory of cultural sources and maintain the sense of history.

Although I began with the “outer” shell, it is difficult to say which shell actually comes first, second, and so on. In terms of ontogeny, there is no doubt that a people or a community must have a social life before it can become fully aware of a need for normative moral standards to maintain order, and for ethical ideals to enable individuals and the group to aspire to something higher. One can also argue, though, that a community—a common culture and common values—can be generated and evolve only when a spirit of morality and an ethics of value and virtue have developed. However, the question of priority need not worry us here, because we easily see the shells as so closely interrelated in the course of historical evolution and development that it is not possible to order them, or even to separate them. For practical purposes, it is clear that a society has a communal life, and that morality and ethics, as an underlying system of values, support this community. Hence—as in the case of the

actual exercise of political power, control, and direction through organizational and institutional structures and norms—social life is conducted through a normative morality, ideals, and values.

The distinction between surface activities (form) and underlying structures (content) exemplifies the paradigm of “substance and function” (*ti-yong*) in the metaphysical aspect of Confucianism. The surface activities are “function,” suggesting action, operations, the application of a method, or the achievement of a purpose. The underlying institutions and standards are “substance,” giving rise to the surface activities and supporting and sustaining them. Thus in the processes of life, substance is realized in function and function in substance.

To put our understanding in focus, we can see that political and economic activities are functions of the institutions and productive forces of a society, which are the substance of these activities. Similarly, on the moral and social level or shell, the relationship between the social and the moral is one of substance and function.

There is, then, a core or kernel in the whole structure or complex of culture, society, and government: the philosophy and the spirit or religion of the people. Here, we can understand philosophy as comprising basic views of reality, truth, and life that shape the character of our existence and culture—our thinking about order, our will and choices, and our values. And we can understand religion or spirit as the basic beliefs and norms we acquire in our interactions with reality—with nature and with ourselves as members of a people or community. We embody our settled understanding of reality in living and implement it in our actions.

With this analysis, we can see that we cannot really separate philosophy as a way of thinking and knowing from religion as a way of believing and acting. In theory, these are two aspects of the same process of living, or of the human being as body, mind, and spirit. It is illuminating to apply the paradigm of substance and function here. Philosophy can be both substance and function relative to religion, just as religion can be both substance and function relative to philosophy. Like the “shells” I have just proposed, they are so closely related that, in the process of living, they are inseparable. Also, the human being is substance in function and function in substance, so that the paradigm of substance and function is a metaphor for the person. Indeed, it is the human being that fully illustrates and clarifies the paradigm. (It is interesting to contrast this organic paradigm or metaphor with its nonorganic counterpart in Greek and modern European philosophy: the paradigm or metaphor of a separation

of soul and body, or mind and body, that is referred to as a dualistic theory or a problem of dichotomy.)

With regard to philosophy and religion as I have defined them, we see that philosophy is substance relative to religion because knowledge and thinking define human consciousness and self-consciousness, which give rise to human identity (in terms of which we believe and act). Hence religion becomes the function of a philosophy. On the other hand, religion is the substance of philosophy because we position ourselves to think and to know in terms of our experience of actions and our habitual beliefs. To think, we must use our preconscious or unconscious beliefs; to know, we need to take “preknowledge” actions, because these provide a context for knowing—that is, knowing directed toward action or toward transformations of our own being. We can regard philosophy as a function of religion just as we can regard thinking as a function of believing and knowing as a function of action.

These arguments support the idea that philosophy is inseparable from the system of beliefs related to action that we call (in a broad sense) religion. We can, then, conclude that their aspects of substance and function are inseparable on the moral and social level or shell, or at the core of the human structure. In a deeper sense, there is always an ontohermeneutical “circle” in the substance and function relationship, so that substance gives rise to functions and functions enhance and substantiate substance; and, by the same token, functions substantiate substance so that substance can be activated as functions, thereby strengthening and enriching the functions. Our system of thinking and knowing and our system of believing and action have such a relationship: they interact; each is the foundation for the other; each nourishes the other; and they constitute an endless, unbroken process of initiation and return.

There is a similar relationship between morality and ethics on the one hand and society and community on the other. Morality substantiates society and community; society and community substantiate morality. Moreover, there is a substance-function relationship between the exercise of political power (control and direction) and social institutions or social organization. With regard to activities and enduring bodies, however, there is a greater distance between substance and function.

We can now consider substance and function with regard to Confucianism as an organic structure. As we have seen, political control and governmental institutions form a substance-function relationship with society and morality; and morality and society form a substance-function relationship with philosophy and religion. Perhaps we can, analogously, see society and

morality as substance, relative to politics and government as function (this is implied in Mencius’s philosophy of rulership and the people). In each case, the one draws its life force or vitality from the other. However, in light of the mutuality of substance and function, we can reverse this argument. In a well-founded society, the relationship of substance and function is an organic whole in which substance and the function are fused or are part of a dynamic circle, so that they cannot be separated or even distinguished.

All this suggests that a living culture or civilization has a three-level structure: individual, social entity, and society. Such a view can explain the nature of Confucianism as an organic complex consisting of the Confucian state, the Confucian society, and Confucian morality, philosophy, and religion. It can show how they are related, how they function and substantiate, and how, in a conflict with another system, they could suffer setbacks or even break down and disintegrate.

We will, then, regard Confucianism as a living organic structure—a complex of culture, society, and government. It has a core with two main “shells” that have a substance-function relationship, and each shell and the core also have internal substance-function relationships. The breakdown of Confucianism in the twentieth century started with the breakdown of its political and governmental shell; this was followed by a loss of faith in the social and moral shell; the process ended with challenges to the central core of Confucianism as a way of thinking, knowing, believing, and acting. In what follows, I shall discuss major events that symbolize what happened in each shell and the core.

Stages of Challenges: Return to and Discovery of the Core

After the Opium War of 1842, China struggled to renew itself, but this proved to be a tortuous and difficult process. It took some time before a self-critical spirit and efforts at self-strengthening had any effect, and in some respects inertia and systematic and personal obstacles were too formidable to overcome. In addition, although setbacks and defeats could create a sense of crisis and be an impetus for reform, in reality they tended to lead toward benighted conservatism. The defeat of China by Japan in 1894 was a crucial event for a few enlightened Confucian scholars, who intensified their attempts to institute reforms in the Confucian spirit of self-reformation and self-renewal. That is how the “reform of a hundred days” came about in 1898, by the order of Emperor Guangxu.

This reform was initiated, promoted, and headed by Kang Youwei (1858–1927), a devoted Confucian

who developed his philosophy in the reformist spirit of what was known as *gongyang* Confucianism. According to this theory, the time had arrived for China to enter a new era of better order and better government—an evolutionary point of view based on the *Gongyang Commentary on Chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals)* and *Yijing (Book of Changes)*, combined with Darwinism from the west. Much of the significance of the reform had to do with Kang's activities in its behalf. It symbolized not only that Confucianism was a living force but that it could change in the face of hardship. Its motivation came from the internal life of Confucianism, and its ideal or goal was defined in terms of the political philosophy of the *Chunqiu*. This was the first time a movement had arisen within Confucianism to speak out for reform and organize as political power.

However, the reform ended in total failure because conservatism fought back in the person of the dowager empress and because Kang exiled himself. The failure was as historically significant as the movement itself: Confucianism as a leading political force had faded, collapsed, and been drained of its vitality. In a deeper sense the failure signified that Confucianism as a political philosophy had lost its strength and relevance. This was because it was identified with political institutions that had been incapable of self-renewal and therefore had been unable to deal with threats and invasions by foreign powers. After 1842, China had continued to suffer inglorious defeats. Even though it had overcome the Taiping rebellion in the name of protecting the Confucian culture of *li* (propriety) and *dao*, it had not rallied itself quickly and decisively enough to adopt reform measures or to implement reforms efficiently—unlike Meiji Japan. There were personal factors in this failure, but the historical lesson to be drawn was that Confucianism as a political philosophy had not brought about a viable Confucian institution, government, ruler, or rule. On this basis, political revolution was considered not only justified but necessary. The old regime was dealt a last blow by the Boxer Rebellion and the consequent invasion of the “eight nations” in 1899, which ended Confucianism as a political entity in China.

The revolution of 1911 by Sun Yat-sen was the start of a new political system. Although this system had some Confucian elements, it was clear that Confucianism as a traditional political paradigm had been forsaken. The question whether explicit democratic principles could be derived from the political philosophy of Confucianism remained an abstract issue. As a matter of historical practice Confucianism as a political entity had not gone beyond feudalistic despotism. It can be concluded that by 1920 the political level or

“shell” of Confucianism as an organic political-social-moral complex or institution had dissolved both in form and in content, even though for decades afterward there was a residue of political Confucianism which from time to time managed or tried to reappear and insinuate itself in the name of democracy and law. This leads us to the dissolution of the social and moral shells of Confucianism.

China was on the winning side in World War I, but in 1919 it received the insult of losing its sovereign rights over its own territory to imperialist Japan. This led to the May Fourth movement, which was a combination of a patriotic campaign against Japan and the imperial powers of Europe and a deep critique of China's cultural values and mentality. It implied that Confucianism as a culture and a system of social and intellectual values displayed weaknesses and failings in comparison with western counterparts and was inadequate to protect the dignity of a people and a nation. This self-critique emphasized the failure of Confucianism to provide a modern democratic system of government that would educate the people to participate in controlling their own affairs, and its failure to develop science and technology because it had refused to seek knowledge of nature or to cultivate material benefits. In the critique we can see the birth of a new social and moral paradigm: implement democracy and practice science. “Mr. Science” and “Mr. Democracy”—these names were actually used—were called on to prevail over the outmoded Confucian morality and social ethics.

In the May Fourth movement of 1919 no special category was given to the spiritual and moral values of the west. The focus was on national strength, the ability to cope with a critical international situation, and the ability to protect basic dignity, equality, independence, and rights. Liang Qichao, as a Confucian scholar, wrote eloquently about the need to introduce and establish a new morality so that the Chinese would be a new people (*xinmin*). What he advocated with regard to morality and virtues was not really incompatible with Confucian morality. It was institutions of inequality, such as the Three Canons (*sankang*), that were repudiated. On the same grounds, Hu Shi as an anti-Confucian liberal and Chen Tuxiu and Li Dazhao as anti-Confucian socialists advocated and promoted a new morality and new social ethics. Presumably, Hu thought that a new morality would lead to democracy and technocracy, as in America, whereas Chen and Li thought that a new morality would lead to a socialist revolution which would wipe out all vestiges of feudalism and establish a truly free and equalitarian socialist state.

The struggle between these two implicit political ideologies would continue for many years. But the point here is that during the May Fourth movement and the subsequent debates (over materialist historicism, metaphysics, and science), with regard to founding a new morality Confucianism had lost its appeal for progressive intellectuals and the younger generation.

A result of the developing dialectics and ideological debates was that Confucianism broke down as a social and moral philosophy and as a system of social and moral values. This breakdown can also be understood as a consequence of the failure of political efforts after the revolution of 1911 to find a viable substitute for the old paradigm of the Confucian kingdom. Later, it coincided with a period of social instability (or chaos) and the invasion by Japan in 1938. The puppet regime under Japan was a strong indication of a betrayal of Confucian morality and the Confucian ethical code.

The period from the May Fourth movement of 1919 to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1950 was characterized by the slow demise of Confucian ethics and Confucian society. Again, this is not to say that there were no pockets of resistance, but as a social force and a moral persuasion Confucianism no longer held sway or exercised authority. Thus the moral and social shells of Confucianism were divested of vitality. The Confucian institution as a political-social-moral entity was reduced to its core of intellectual thinking, a thin thread of philosophical statements and articles of faith. If we could still speak of the Confucian institution as a living force, that force was to be found only in its core—Confucianism as a philosophy and a religious faith.

Here, it will be useful to recall how Confucianism as a philosophy and a religion is to be understood. As a philosophy, Confucianism transcends political and social reality and history and has lost its influence on them. It goes back to the philosophical teachings of Confucius and other Confucians and exists as a philosophy of life and of ultimate reality, as faith in human nature, and as an approach to basic human relationships. The loss of political and social relevance is said to heighten the meaningfulness of Confucian wisdom—which is to define what humans should be and how they can become what they should be. In this sense Confucianism has returned or has been restored to its pristine state of intellectual and moral understanding. It is as this understanding that Confucianism is to compete with other forms of wisdom and philosophical paradigms. And perhaps it is as a quest for wisdom and for the essential values of life that Confucianism has received new life and new significance. To hold to this moral and intellectual understanding

requires faith and conviction, which must be reflected in making decisions and taking action. This is the respect in which Confucianism as a philosophy of life involves Confucianism as an ultimate faith and a religion.

However, Confucianism as a philosophy and as a faith was originally at the core of the Confucian organism, and it was adopted by and incorporated into an existing political power, the Western Han, for its usefulness and meaningfulness. Confucianism was made a political ideology—and acquired what I have called its “outer” political shell—because it served the purpose of the state. And a political power could adopt a philosophy in this way because the core philosophy had existed long enough to become a social and moral force.

This seemed to happen to Confucianism as a body of philosophical doctrines after the death of Confucius. During his lifetime, Confucian thought had already become a distinct learning (*xianxue*), and this *xianxue* continued to flourish and to be spread by generations of Confucian disciples. With Mencius, Confucianism as a set of philosophical doctrines was brought to a second culmination. After Mencius, Xunzi took the teaching of Confucius in a different direction, which was essential for the combination and union of Confucianism and legalism. Thus Xunzi paved the way for the rise of Confucianism as an ideology, which in plain language meant the strategic incorporation of Confucianism into a political system.

The important point here is that when Confucianism was reduced or restored to its original state, it had in a sense recovered its original, primordial strength and vision. It was no longer hampered by political self-interest or historical social conventions. It became a pure, ideal system of thoughts that could become a subject of argumentation and an inspiration, and could rise to a position that commanded attention. It showed that it could appeal directly to humans and that they could respond to it as humans.

Rise of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism as a Metaphysical Philosophy

In contending with other systems of ideas, Confucianism as a philosophy and as a faith can develop by absorbing what is best from others and by enriching others. It has to stand on its own ground, not on political, social, or even conventional moral grounds. It has to survive and grow in terms of its own potential creativity based on a deep understanding of the human being and a reflection of the aspirations of humans and human society.

It was in this sense that the core of Confucianism as a philosophy and as a faith became prominent and spoke out as a new force in the 1930s, as exemplified in the formulations of Xiong Shili, Liang Shuming, and others. This was the rise of “new Confucianism” in modern and contemporary China. Without an understanding of the background—the collapse of Confucianism as a political and social force—we could not appreciate the source of its inspiration and strength. And without an understanding of its roots in classical Confucianism and Song-Ming neo-Confucianism we could not appreciate its creative strength and vision.

In retrospect, the rise of contemporary neo-Confucianism as a philosophy was not a historical accident. It was, rather, the way Confucian philosophy, deprived of political and social backing, responded to a challenging situation. This way of understanding contemporary neo-Confucianism helps us see how it was related to basic cultural, ethical, and metaphysical concepts in classical Confucianism and Song-Ming neo-Confucianism. The crucial question is how Xiong Shili (1885–1968) and Liang Shuming (1893–1988) came to formulate the Confucian philosophy and the Confucian faith against the historical background of the 1920s and 1930s after the May Fourth movement.

One factor we need to take into account is that no western philosopher known at the time—neither Darwin, Huxley, Bergson, Russell, nor Dewey—had provided ethics or metaphysics that could satisfy the minds of Chinese Confucian intellectuals, who tended to look for deeper truths in Chinese Buddhism. That both Xiong and Liang studied Buddhism before they turned back and formulated their philosophies of Confucianism shows that they searched for spiritual truth beyond political and social reality. Nevertheless, their return to Confucian philosophy needs an explanation. They were concerned with the actual state of society and the practical issues of cultural life, as they had demonstrated in their early engagement in social, political, and cultural matters. Hence, it was natural for them to go back to Confucian philosophy, and in this regard they were typical of many others.

Of these two, Liang, who was younger than Xiong, represents a retrieval of the Confucian faith. He identified three types of cultural spirit: the western, which took at its principle simply moving forward; the Indian, which took looking backward as its guiding principle; and the Chinese, whose guiding principle was harmony and a centralized balance. This theory provided a justification of Chinese culture but also suggested a way for the necessary development of the culture. What accounted for these types of culture? For an answer, we must look into human nature and the human mind. Liang held that our desires made us seek

external material satisfaction, our moral intuition (*lian-gzhi*) made us feel a need to act morally toward others, and our intellectual wisdom or intuition enabled us to see into life and recognize the ultimate truth—which was to be achieved only through Buddhist learning. In this sense Liang came to regard Confucian philosophy as a stepping-stone to an ultimate understanding of reality.

In contrast, Xiong’s approach directly confronted the original human mind or human nature and the ultimate reality of the universe. Xiong sought the metaphysical meanings of fundamental Confucian concepts and recognized what they stood for in terms of his own reflection and thinking. He spoke of the original substance (*benti*) of life and nature and argued for their unity in his insightful understanding of own his mind and self. Like Wang Yangming, Xiong saw the oneness of personal life, the universe, and things in the universe and spoke of how the profound sense of care and concern (*renxin*) in our own nature would enable us to realize that nature as well as the nature of others and things. This was how we would discover morality in the reality of human mind and nature and how morality would enable us to fulfill and complete our understanding of the ultimate reality of the world. Xiong cited the *Zhou Yi* (or *Yijing, Book of Changes*) to explain the ceaseless creativity of ultimate reality (*benti*) as experienced in one mind and the world, and he expounded the inseparability of substance and function (*tiyong bu'er*).

In an important sense, Xiong reconstructed the metaphysics of change in terms of his theory of *tiyong*: change was possible because of the closing (*xi* or *yin*) and opening (*pi* or *yang*) functions of ultimate reality, which is presented or disclosed by these functions in turn. Equally important was his explicit insistence that the oneness of ultimate reality could be found in all its functions: *qi* (vital force), *li* (principle, pattern, reason), *zhi* (knowledge), *xing* (nature), etc. He held that this ultimate oneness could be realized in a single original mind, that we could disclose our original mind (*benxin*) if we could remove our selfish desires and ignorance, and that we could thereby renovate our world. He believed in the absolute creativity of the original mind as the ultimate reality. He stressed the efforts (*gonfu*) involved in reflecting on one *benxin*, which entailed both thinking and cultivation, both deepening awareness and transcending consciousness. To reach this *benxin* as the ultimate reality was to have evidence and confirmation of the one original mind. In reaching the *benxin* one dissolved concepts and achieved enlightenment transcending knowledge and language. This state was the state of unity of heaven and the human being—a state that had both moral and ontolog-

ical significance—and hence could be described as the unity of the *dao* and the *de* (power).

We can see that Xiong started by developing Confucianism as an ontology and cosmology of ultimate reality which had its unity in ontology and cosmology, but he ended by describing the state of discovery of the *benxin* as the ultimate reality in oneself. In this sense he formulated a Confucian philosophy that reflected his own deep faith in the truth of Confucianism, and he was not opposed to treating Confucianism as a living faith. Thus in certain ways he was even more deeply imbued with the Confucian faith than Liang was.

Both Liang and Xiong developed Confucianism as a philosophy and a faith, giving it new life. However, there was a difference between them. For Liang, Confucianism as a philosophy could be transcended but could also be enriched; therefore, we could absorb science and democracy from the west. But for Xiong, Confucianism as an ontology and cosmology was self-sufficient; we needed to reach ultimate reality in ourselves so that we could develop science and democracy. For Liang, Confucianism needed to be related to cultural matters and practical actions of the community; for Xiong, Confucian philosophy could be directly manifested in life when it was cultivated in seeking oneness with all things in the *dao*.

The Second Generation: A Cultural-Spiritual Declaration

After the rise of Marxism in the 1930s, Confucianism, whether as a philosophy or a faith, had to confront it. Marxist ideology had become the core of a new political and social structure in China after 1950. Its paradigms—historical materialism and dialectical materialism—became dominant politically, socially, and philosophically. Mao Zedong (1893–1976) represented and led the Marxist critique of and movement against Confucianism, which were both ideological and practical and culminated in the Anti-Confucius Campaign of 1972, during the height of the Great Cultural Revolution. It is noteworthy that although both Liang and Xiong were adversely affected by this campaign, they maintained their integrity and independence of mind, providing inspiration for the promotion and development of Confucianism in the postreform period after 1978.

We may regard Liang and Xiong as having established two prototypes of contemporary neo-Confucianism as it developed later, particularly among the second generation of neo-Confucians who lived in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Liang represented Confucianism as a practical and cultural philosophy (“practical-cultural”

Confucianism); Xiong represented Confucianism as a moral and metaphysical philosophy (“moral-metaphysical” Confucianism). In the second generation of contemporary neo-Confucianism, Xu Fuguan (1903–1982) belonged to practical-cultural Confucianism and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) to moral-metaphysical Confucianism. Tang Junyi (1909–1978) combined the two types, though in his later works he inclined toward the latter. Notably, all three acknowledged the influence of Xiong and regarded him as their personal teacher.

Xu started by affirming cultural values as the center of human life. He saw the human being as a cultural entity who fulfilled cultural values—including art, morality, and religion—in conjunction with seeking scientific knowledge. But fulfilling one’s cultural values was more important. In the modern world, Xu held, people had lost their understanding of their nature and their visions of value by seeking modernization and scientific knowledge. This distinction also explained the difference between Chinese and western culture. The future of the world depended on the organic integration of these two cultures, which were complementary and needed each other. With regard to the modernization of Chinese culture Xu advocated reflection on and renovation of the Chinese tradition; Confucius had provided the moral standards and ideal values of culture for such reflection and renovation. Xu described Chinese culture as embodying reverence for virtues (*jingde*) derived from the ancient worship of heaven.

Xu saw Confucius as representing a crucial point in the transformation of ancient religious reverence into human reverence for culture and morality. In this sense Confucianism could be called oral humanism of the *dao*, where the *dao* suggested the self-awakening of humanity as derived from heaven. It was Confucius who had paved the way for Chinese cultural development in terms of human practice of the virtues, and it was in practicing the virtues that humans could develop and become settled in life. Xu also stressed the importance of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, regarding them as having provided two different ways of fulfilling or perfecting the human world, the horizontal and the vertical. For Xu, Chinese culture and humanism had two main modes of expression: morality and art. The mode of morality was developed primarily by Confucianism and the mode of art by philosophical Daoism. Both drew on human nature and the human mind; they represented, respectively, how human values could be realized by realizing the creativity of human nature and the human mind. Xu was opposed to seeking metaphysical foundation or support for the Chinese humanistic spirit, because such an effort

would not be stable and would have no practical use in realizing moral and artistic values.

In contrast with Xu Fuguan's moral humanism is Mou Zongsan's moral metaphysics. Mou sought to build an ontological world of ultimate reality based on moral understanding and moral practice. In a sense, he inherited Xiong Shili's metaphysical spirit and developed it more extensively and more systematically. He could do this because he found a model in Kant, whom he saw as the apex of western philosophy and from whom he drew inspiration for a philosophical critique of Chinese tradition. At the same time, Mou wanted to show how Chinese philosophy could be said to differ from Kant's in transcending the Kantian system. For this purpose, he needed to conduct a systematic re-examination of Chinese philosophy in its historical development so that he could bring out its distinctive way of understanding and realizing the ultimate reality of the self and the world.

Mou attempted to evaluate later Confucian philosophers in light of the Confucian paradigm of unity of the internal and the external, heaven and man, and theory and practice. In this regard he saw Mencius as representing subjectivity or subjective intuition and Xunzi as representing objective reason. Both have importance for an understanding of Confucianism. But when he came to distinctions in neo-Confucianism he disparaged Zhu Xi, because he regarded Zhu Xi and Cheng Yi as deviating from the mainstream of Confucianism represented by Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming, and because Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi failed to recognize dynamism and activity in *li* (principle, pattern, reason) separately from *qi* (vital force)

Mou identified three periods in the development of Confucianism from classical times to Song-Ming, and then on to the future. The possibility of such a future stage depended on whether we would be able to create a better philosophy of history and culture, which would inspire people to embrace Confucianism. This is indubitably a Confucian insight—for what is culturally possible always requires the creative development of our nature (*xing*) and our mind (*xin*). If we have not attained our values, it is up to us to continue our efforts.

In developing his moral metaphysics Mou distinguished two levels of ontology: the ontology free from clinging (*wuzhi*) and the ontology of clinging (*zhi*). This distinction was based on Kant's distinction between noumenon and phenomenon. Kant insisted that humans were finite and thus incapable of seeing ultimate reality. But for Mou, humans can open their minds to the infinite so that they can realize and intuit the *dao*, the infinite and ultimate reality. For him it was important to integrate Kantian and Chinese (neo-

Confucian) insights in order to reach a great substance (*ti*) of the philosophy of great function. Mou clearly believed that the essential value of Confucianism was that it offered a possibility of intellectual intuition leading from moral practice to ontological understanding.

Chinese philosophy provided metaphysics free from obstructions or clinging so that we could see ultimate reality, but it could not produce science, because it could not see things as objects of investigation. In order to develop science, Mou held, the infinite mind with its moral and intellectual intuition had to "abnegate" (*kanxian*) itself so that it could develop objective knowledge and scientific understanding. In this abnegation of the absolute self, reason would come into being and science would become a result of objective inquiry. In this regard we can see the ontology of *wuzhi* as the substance of the ontology of *zhi*, which is the ontology of function to the ontology of substance in *wu* (emptiness). With this understanding Confucian philosophy would reach its highest form of development.

Mou tried to meet the challenge of introducing science and democracy into China. He suggested an abnegation of moral reasoning in favor of theoretical reasoning so that we could realize the objective and value-neutral mentality of science and democracy, making science and democracy tools designed by theoretical reason. But the question remained how science and democracy, so produced, could sustain themselves once theoretical reason was transformed back into moral reason. Mou spoke of developing a tradition of learning (*xuetong*) to complement the tradition of the *dao* (*daotong*) and of developing standards of government to complement the skills of rulership. In this way he developed a comprehensive Confucian philosophy as an ideal system of metaphysical truth, moral goodness, and scientific reason in terms of which human society could embody both sageliness within and kingliness without (*neisheng waiwang*).

In contrast with Xu and Mou, Tang developed a basic philosophy of moral reasoning and moral self that had elements of both practical-cultural and moral-metaphysical Confucianism. Tang took the human mind as the original reality from which various systems of philosophy could be built. In this sense he regarded the human mind as having an absolute spirit (in both a Hegelian sense and the sense of Lu-Wang philosophy of mind) which was capable of presenting three modes of reality: objective, subjective, and trans-subjective-and-objective. These three modes multiplied to form nine realms or horizons (*jiujing*) of reality, which could be considered the functions of the mind as substance and thus could be unified in one "thought moment" (*nian*) of the mind. These nine

realms of reality exhausted all the positions of human knowledge and beliefs, including science and religion, with Confucian ethics and metaphysics as the highest realm in the sense of achieving perfect harmony. This can be regarded as a variation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* presented in a *Yijing*-Daoistic dialectic of differentiation, unification, and transcendence.

With Tang's phenomenology of "mind-substance" (which he formed later in life) we can see that almost all his earlier positions regarding epistemology, moral philosophy, theory of religion, philosophy of life, and political philosophy are easily explained. In his epistemology he uses his notion of mind-substance to transform knowledge into wisdom and transform wisdom into virtue or moral reason. This would then justify the theses of unity of mind and body, unity of object and subject, and unity of knowledge and action. In essence Tang argued on the basis of Kant and Lu-Wang. Similarly, on the basis of the autonomy and freedom of moral reason he argued for the realization of the moral self in the actual life of a person and thus supported the Mencian theory of the goodness of human nature and the Confucian and neo-Confucian theory of virtues and distinctions between right and utility, principle and desires, regard for others and self-interest. This is his moral philosophy.

Tang also formulated a philosophy of life based on the mind-substance that consisted of describing and explaining the meaning of life and death and the meaning of happiness, love, and hardship. He specifically discussed the Confucian approach to life's issues and how the cultivation of one's life and mind was important for resolving these issues. With regard to religion, he took the human desire to be liberated from life as the starting point of all major religions. In this regard he considered Confucianism higher than Christianity and Buddhism because it affirmed the value of life without any escape. He spoke of developing a Confucian religion as a basis for harmonizing all the world's religions.

Finally, in his political philosophy Tang held to the ideal of a Confucian moral government characterized by virtue and care for the people, regarding this as compatible with western democracy.

Although Tang's philosophy is highly spiritualistic, his main concern was to see how an idealistic mind-substance could be realized in human culture and human morality. In fact, he wanted to develop a comparative theory of Chinese and western cultures. He rejected the westernization of Chinese culture and tried to argue for the high spiritual values of Chinese culture and tradition. But he was no conservative. He saw a fusion and integration of Chinese and western culture

as the most creative path for the future development of Chinese culture.

We may call Tang's philosophy spiritual humanism or moral humanism. His notion of moral reason is no doubt the mind of benevolence (*renxin*) in Confucian philosophy. But he also interpreted this moral mind as a spiritual metaphysical entity by transcending the classical Confucian framework in order to provide a base for all human cultural activities and give them a moral meaning. It is in this sense that Tang combined practical-cultural Confucianism with moral-metaphysical Confucianism.

We have considered in some detail how the second generation of neo-Confucians built large systems or discourses around Confucianism as a philosophy and a spiritual faith. In 1957 Tang Junyi visited the United States, and in coordination with Chang Chunmai (Carson Chang, 1887–1965), Mou Zongsan, and Xu Fuguan drafted, signed, and made public a "Declaration on Chinese Culture to People in the World." This was a momentous declaration of the Confucian faith in Chinese culture, and it indicates that Confucianism had by then regained momentum and aspirations.

Other Developments

The philosophical and speculative development of Confucianism by the neo-Confucian philosophers can also be found in other well-known Chinese philosophers of the same period. Notable figures on the Chinese mainland include Feng Youlan (Fung Yu-lan, 1895–1990), who developed a new neo-Confucian system in *New Learning of Li (Xin Lixue)*, which reconstructed Zhu Xi's notion of *li* in terms of contemporary western realism with analytic and logical methods. Feng's philosophy of *li* was applicable to all areas of life, including knowledge, society, and politics. This is the Confucian spirit at work—no philosophical notion is devoid of practical meaning.

He Lin (1902–1992) was a neo-Confucian philosopher who interpreted the Lu-Wang philosophy of "heart-mind" (*xin*) by way of Hegelian idealism. The logician-metaphysician Jin Yuelin (1895–1990) took a logical-constructive approach to the problem of knowledge and reality that also reveals neo-Confucian thinking apart from Daoism.

In Taiwan, besides Xu Fuguan (discussed above) there was Fang Dongmei (Thomé H. Fang, 1899–1977), the best-known philosopher of the 1950s and 1960s. Fang interpreted Confucianism in a highly metaphysical and spiritual way. He spoke of formulating primordial Confucian philosophy (*yuanshi Rujia*) together with primordial Daoist philosophy (*yuanshi Daojia*) in terms of the Confucian understanding of

life, the cosmos, and ultimate reality, and the formation of the human mind and nature. He described the discovery and realization of a sense of beauty (*meigan*). In his *Chinese View of Life* (1962) Fang argued that a genuine understanding of Chinese philosophy (including Confucianism) would lead to insights on ideal government and an ideal society.

It must be noted that all major contemporary neo-Confucian philosophical systems were developed outside mainland China from 1950 to 1980. They may be regarded as a response and a challenge to the prevailing Marxism in communist China, and they indicate that although Confucianism as a cultural organism lost its political and social shells, its spiritual core as a philosophy and faith was able to stay alive, prosper, and grow in Chinese communities where there were no doctrinaire and ideological restraints or official restrictions and where traditional Chinese culture still thrived. Hence Taiwan and Hong Kong became the natural places for second-generation contemporary Chinese philosophy and contemporary neo-Confucianism. Philosophers such as Fang Dongmei, Xu Fuguan, Mou Zongsan, and Tang Junyi were scholars who taught philosophy at universities or at institutes they founded after the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in China in 1949. In this way they were able to transmit and spread their words, ideas, and visions, sowing seeds in young minds of the next generation and going far beyond the traditional domain of Chinese culture. Thus when we come to the mid-century we see a transplanting of Chinese philosophy and Confucianism to the “land of the new continent,” the United States—where Confucianism and other branches of Chinese philosophy took root and started to grow overseas amid mainstream contemporary western philosophy.

The overseas development of Confucianism and other Chinese philosophies might be said to be linked to the convening of the East-West Philosophers’ Conferences at the University of Hawaii (at Manoa in Honolulu) in 1965 and 1971. In those conferences and other, small conferences during the 1970s, Chinese scholars from Taiwan and Hong Kong such as Fang Dongmei, Xie Youwei (1901–1976), Tang Junyi, and Mou Zongsan presented their mature views on different aspects of Chinese philosophy and Confucianism and shared panel discussions with philosophers from the west and India. Confucianism as a philosophy and a cultural tradition was stressed. At the East-West conferences Chinese philosophers from Taiwan and Hong Kong were able, for the first time, to meet the few Chinese scholars who were then teaching Chinese philosophy in the United States. The meetings also inspired younger Chinese to organize in order to develop

Chinese philosophy and Confucianism as a philosophy.

Wing-tsit Chan (1901–1995) played an important role in cofounding the East-West conference and in promoting Confucian thought in his public lectures. Chan immigrated to Hawaii in 1936 and taught Chinese philosophy at the University of Hawaii until 1942, when he moved to Dartmouth College.

Chung-ying Cheng (the present author) was born in China in 1935, graduated from college in Taiwan, and got his Ph.D. in philosophy at Harvard in 1972. He analytically reconstructs Chinese philosophy, including Confucianism and neo-Confucianism, and has contributed to the development of Confucian philosophy in the west. As a young faculty member in the department of philosophy at the University of Hawaii (Manoa) he founded and edited the English quarterly *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* with its publishers in the Netherlands. Later, he was able to get the journal printed in Taiwan; eventually it was published and printed in Boston and London by Blackwell. It had dawned on him that without a publishing forum in the west it would be difficult to establish the concept of Chinese philosophy as a living tradition there. Although Chinese philosophy including Confucianism had been studied in the west since the early modern era, it was treated initially as an exotic learning and later as a museum piece—something to be analyzed and assessed from an archaeological point of view. Cheng wanted to correct this image and bring Chinese philosophy into the mainstream of western philosophy. Also, influenced by his teacher Fang Dongmei and contemporary neo-Confucians such as Xiong Shili and Liang Shuming, he was convinced that Chinese philosophy could be developed creatively and could contribute to a genuine world philosophy and world culture. Hence the founding of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*—a milestone in the development of Chinese philosophy and Confucianism in the west following the second-generation philosophers living in Taiwan and Hong Kong. As of this writing the journal had been issued for twenty-seven years and had published more than 300 essays on every aspect of Confucianism.

In 1973, to further much the same goals as the journal, Chung-ying Cheng founded the International Society for Chinese Philosophy (originally the Society for Chinese Philosophy; at the suggestion of Lik Kuen Tong, its name was officially changed in 1975). This society planned to convene an international conference every two years in different parts of the world, and to meet annually and offer panels and papers in affiliation with annual meetings of the American Philosophical Association. In its first twenty-five years it held twelve international conferences in eleven places (Fairfield,

Charleston, New York, San Diego, Hawaii, Toronto, Munich, Beijing, Boston, Seoul, and Taipei).

The development of Chinese philosophy and Confucianism as a philosophy and a faith overseas, and perhaps especially in the west, has been a significant phenomenon from the 1960s to the present. Indeed, it is reasonable to regard this as the most significant aspect of the development of Confucianism in the late twentieth century. Besides the present author, many other Chinese scholars came to take Confucianism and neo-Confucianism seriously. Here, it will suffice to mention just a few.

Shu-hsien Liu (b. 1935), formerly at Southern Illinois University and at this writing a professor emeritus, was trained in both Taiwan and the United States. He became deeply involved with Mou Zongsan's moral metaphysics and advocated, basically, a neo-Confucian point of view. Antonio S. Cua (Ke Xiongwen, b. 1932, the editor of this encyclopedia), at this writing a professor emeritus at the Catholic University of America, came from the Philippines, received a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley with a concentration in ethics, took a great interest in developing the Confucian ethical theory of paradigmatic individuals and Xunzi's theory of ethical argumentation, and has served as a coeditor of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Wei-ming Tu (b. 1940), as of this writing at Harvard University, graduated from Donghai University in Taiwan and came to Harvard to study in the department of Far East languages and civilizations; he dedicated himself to promoting Confucianism as a religious tradition and became the scholar perhaps best known in the east and west. Julia Ching (1935–2001), who was a professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, first studied and wrote on a religious comparison of Confucianism and Christianity.

The development of Confucianism overseas was by no means an attempt by only a handful of Chinese scholars. Several westerners also took part in developing and articulating Confucian philosophy as a historical tradition with contemporary significance. Once again, just a few examples will be noted.

The late Benjamin Schwartz of Harvard University showed an appreciation of Confucian views in his works. William Theodore de Bary, a professor emeritus at Columbia University (his and the following affiliations are as of this writing), studied the work of Huang Zongxi and promoted Song-Ming neo-Confucianism; he also ventured into topics such as Confucianism and human rights. Herbert Fingarette, a professor emeritus at the University of California at Santa Barbara, published a brief but influential book, *Confucius: The Sacred as the Secular*. Roger Ames at the University of Hawaii (Manoa) and David Hall at the

University of Texas (El Paso) collaborated on, and published, stimulating studies of Confucius and Han culture from a postmodern point of view. Robert Neville at Boston University began as a Daoist-minded theologian-philosopher and then came to appreciate the ritualistic (*lijiao*) tradition of Confucius and Xunzi. Neville promoted what he called the "Boston school" of Confucianism on the basis of his work with Weiming Tu and Chung-ying Cheng.

In mainland China itself, since the early 1980s there has been great interest among scholars in Confucianism as a historical tradition and as a philosophy. In 1981 a conference on Song-Ming neo-Confucianism was held in Hangzhou—the first such conference since the beginning of the period of openness and reform in 1978. In 1985 the International Conference on Xiong Shili, convened by Peking University and Wuhan University, was held in Hubei Province. This—and a conference on Confucius held in 1986 in Shandong Province—signified a "defreezing" of the study of contemporary neo-Confucianism.

In 1987 Chung-ying Cheng proposed to the authorities in Beijing that an international federation of Confucian studies be founded there, to promote and coordinate Confucian studies worldwide. The proposal was not responded to until October 1989, when the International Conference in Commemoration of the 2,545th Birthday of Confucius was held in Beijing. It took five years before Cheng's proposed federation was officially founded, with the blessing of the Chinese government. It is now called the International Confucian Association (in English)—Guoji Ruxue Lianhehui in Chinese. In addition to Chung-ying Cheng, Weiming Tu and other overseas Chinese and non-Chinese scholars of Confucianism (including representatives from Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong) played important roles in the formation of this association.

It should be noted that the founding of this association indicated a return to Confucianism not as a political-social entity but as an academic-cultural institution in China. It was a recognition that Confucianism as a philosophy and a living faith had retained and regained a place in China, and it suggested that the intellectual, philosophical, moral, and spiritual aspects of Confucianism could develop independently of the "shells" of government and society. Through the efforts of many Confucians and neo-Confucians, the disembodied Confucian philosophy, together with its metaphysics and ethics, purified itself to express the free spirit of humanity in seeking truth and meaning

Conclusion

After its decline as a political and social institution and organism in the first half of the twentieth century,

Confucianism as a philosophy and a spiritual faith rose like the phoenix. We must be careful not to see it as having renewed its shells of government and society: the time when it dominated government and society was gone. But the development of Confucianism as a philosophy and a spiritual faith does not depend on the political or the social. Its vitality and force come from human self-understanding and the pursuit of value and truth, and its ultimate meaning lies in human reason and the human sentiments of love and justice. Confucianism originated with a human being, Confucius, seeking the realization of human potential. Confucianism as a philosophy has its own substance and function, which are inseparable from humanity and the diverse activities of human life.

The new birth and growth of Confucianism as a philosophy and a faith in the twentieth century was nourished by the development of Confucian metaphysics. This metaphysical system was not abstract and was not detached from life or from human spirit. Rather, it extended the human spirit to obtain an overview of life and reality, and so it demanded application and practice. Without such developments, Confucianism would not have been enriched and would not have had the freedom to respond to the changes of the past and present.

Confucian metaphysics must be true to the paradigm of the unity of substance and function. The development of metaphysics (“above form,” *xingshang xue*) is substance, but its application to life and society is function (“within form,” *xinxia xue*)—which must interact with substance in order to have vitality and take on new meanings. In this sense what is most metaphysical is also most practical, and metaphysics functions like knowledge, giving depth and scope to human actions and practices.

In the development of Confucian metaphysics in the twentieth century, resources from other traditions in the Confucian framework were assimilated. This was useful—indeed, necessary—because any development must be sustained by incentives and lessons from outside it. Neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming, for example, integrated insights from Daoism and Buddhism. In the formation of contemporary neo-Confucianism, Xiong Shili, Liang Shuming, Mou Zongsan, and Tang Junyi used Buddhist insights and pronouncements. And as they encountered new views from western philosophy, they were often able to integrate and absorb these, further enriching their own systems.

In the future, this kind of integration must continue, as Confucian thinking faces new situations and newly developed philosophies and religious ideas from the west and elsewhere. Dialogue between the Confucian tradition and the other traditions and between

Confucian philosophers and other philosophers is likely to be the most important channel for the sustainable development of Confucian philosophy.

In this regard, it has often been asked how Confucian philosophy could adopt science and democracy, since it was regarded as antidemocratic and antiscientific, or at best indifferent. In the twentieth century, eminent neo-Confucians tried to resolve this issue. Mou Zongsan, for instance, proposed his famous theory of the abnegation of moral reason (the *kanxian* thesis). Such efforts made it clear that a creative development of Confucian metaphysics and philosophical anthropology or Confucian ethics had to take science and democracy into account, and there is no real reason why Confucian philosophy cannot be strongly prodemocratic and proscientific. A Confucian or neo-Confucian can explore the moral limitations of the paradigms of science and democracy without regarding them as isolated or dominating paradigms of individual and community development. Science and democracy must be seen as requisites for the moral development of human beings and the human community, just as moral reasoning and moral understanding are required for the sound intellectual growth of science and democracy.

With today’s pervasive globalization, it is becoming increasingly clear that Confucianism as a philosophy may be essential to a sustainable ecology and to a global community—human and interspecies—and thus to the possibility that humanity will be able to endure, prosper, and live in dignity and peace. One task for Confucianism is to develop as a global ethics and as an anthropological-ecological philosophy of the human being, the community, and nature. Another task is to learn how to nourish and cultivate a meaningful human life in a scientific-technological world and how to make humanity fully relevant to everything we do. For both tasks, the experience of Confucianism in the twentieth century offers encouraging lessons.

See also Fang Dongmei; Hu Shih; Kang Youwei; Liang Qichao; Liang Shuming; Mao Zedong; Mou Zongsan; Philosophy: Recent Trends in China since Mao; Philosophy: Recent Trends Overseas; Tang Junyi; Xiong Shili; Xu Fuguan.

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