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The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China

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

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Chapter 1
Introduction: The Rise of Authentic Confucianism

Ruiping Fan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Part I
The Renaissance of Confucianism

Chapter 2
From Mind Confucianism to Political Confucianism

Jiang Qing

2.1 Introduction

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

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

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

2.2 The Major Problems of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism

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

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

2.2.1 The Extreme Tendency of Individualizing Confucianism

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

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

2.2.2 Overemphasis of Abstract Metaphysics

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

2.2.3 The Extreme Tendency of Internalization

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