



Reflections on “Political Ruism¹” in Modern China

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Abstract

This paper reflects mainly on three ideas of “political Ruism” in modern China. We first review Mou Zongsan’s idea of “self-negation of innate moral consciousness良知坎陷,” which embraces universal values and tries to bridge them with Chinese culture. We then re-examine Jiang Qing’s “political Confucianism,” which, while criticizing universal values, attempts to establish a political system based on the Kingly Way. Finally, we discuss the “Kang Youwei-ism康有为主义”, which calls on us to return to Kang Youwei’s idea of state construction and national construction. The three ideas offer some new perspectives into Confucianism, but all turn out unrealistic and unpragmatic. We believe that Confucianism in modern China can still work in both the private sphere and the public sphere, and examine politics from a human, cultural or moral perspective.

Keywords: Political Confucianism; Mainland new Confucianism; Kang Youwei-ism; Self-negation of innate moral Consciousness

Ever since it’s coming into being, Confucianism has never been far from politics, and for quite a long time. Especially after the Han dynasty, it had been a dominant power in Chinese politics. The situation did not change until the end of the Qing dynasty when China was forced to open its door to the outside world. Ever since then, Chinese people have been thinking about how we should look at Confucianism, how we should deal with the relationship between Confucianism and science and democracy, and what role it should play in Chinese politics.

To answer these questions, many ideas have been put forward, of which three are representative, namely, the idea of “self-negation of innate moral consciousness良知坎陷” by Mou Zongsan牟宗三, the idea of “political Confucianism” mainly by Jiang Qing蒋庆, and the idea of “Kang Youwei-ism康有为主义” in more recent years mainly by Chen Ming陈明,

Zeng Yi曾亦, Tang Wenming唐文明 and Gan Chunsong干春松. This paper, therefore, will discuss these ideas of modern Confucianism. Hopefully, by reviewing these ideas, we can find out how these ideas are interconnected and how we should view Confucianism and its role in modern China and in China’s politics.

Mou’s Idea of “Self-negation of Innate Moral Consciousness”

As a representative of the modern Neo-Confucians, Mou Zongsan attempted to absorb into Chinese civilization the values of modern civilizations. He devoted all his life to the study of Chinese traditional culture, trying to find ways for Chinese culture, science and democracy to adapt to and contribute to each other.

¹We use “political Ruism” to distinguish it from Jiang Qing’s “political Confucianism,” and to be the cover term to refer to all the Confucian ideas about politics.

In terms of academic genealogy, the idea of modern Neo-Confucians to combine Chinese culture and democracy originated with Liang Qichao 梁启超. Liang, together with Zhang Junmai 张君迈, led the Research Faction 研究系, while Mou was a member of the China National Socialist Party 中国国家社会党 founded by Zhang Junmai and Zhang Dongsun 张东荪 and was in charge of compiling the party magazine *Revitalization* 再生. Liang, Zhang Junmai and Mou, not only knew each other well but also influenced each other in their views and thoughts, and in particular they shared views about democratic constitutionalism.

Zhang Junmai said that his relationship with Liang was sort of both a friend and student and that he had been much influenced by him (p. 831) [1]. For example, Liang claimed that Chinese people had no idea of what a state is. "Many people have in mind the idea of the world but not that of China, the rest have in mind the idea of themselves but not that of China" (p. 21) [2]. Not coincidentally, Zhang also said: "Our forefathers only attached importance to culture, but they did not distinguish China from the world. They viewed people's identity just in terms of their culture. As long as people accepted our Chinese culture, they would be considered Chinese. That amounted to no distinction between China and the world and underlay why among the hundred schools of thought the idea of the world was very popular" (p. 10) [3].

Mou admitted that he had been greatly influenced by Zhang Junmai. "Mr. Zhang once told me that there was no politics but the governance of officials in China's history. This had a great impact on me, and then I began to realize the impractical nature of absolute monarchy and the advanced nature of democracy" (p. 39) [4]. Later he accepted this view of Zhang and began to elaborate on his idea of "way of politics and way of governing 政道与治道". He argued that there is no way of politics but the way of governance in the history of China, and that "the way of governance reached an acme and was extremely delicate and artful" (*Complete Works of Mou Zongsan*, vol. 10, p. 27) [5]. "Either aristocracy or the absolute monarchy has not even bordered on the way of politics, because neither can truly represent the nature of an administration...and the way of politics only exists in national politics," he continued. (Ibid., p. 23) However, he believed it to be the historical responsibility of Confucianism to develop the idea of democracy and establish the way of politics. As to what is Western modernization, Mou held that Modernization is more about values than about fashion, and it cannot be defined by science (vol. 9, p. 459). He complained that those who talked much about modernization did not know the essence of "modernization", and worse still, their ideas exerted a terribly negative influence in China. Mou once said to Tang Junyi: "My knowledge of modernization was not informed by the views of the common people but

by the views of Hegel and Zhang Junmai who were much criticized at the time" (Ibid., p. 460).

According to Yao Zhongqiu 姚中秋, the modern Neo-Confucians like Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi 唐君毅 and Xu Fuguan 徐复观 are defined by three qualifications: the theory of mind and nature of Song and Ming dynasties, the philosophy of Kant, and the ideal of democracy. And Zhang Junmai was such a modern Neo-Confucian. As a student of the German philosopher Rudolf Christoph Eucken, Zhang actively participated in the introduction of classical German philosophy. Besides, he was also the co-founder of the National Socialist Party and one of the drafters of *The Constitution of the Republic of China*. So Zhang was a man with all these three qualifications which formed an integrated system within him. This was what Xiong Shili 熊十力, teacher of Mou, Tang and Xu, did not have, nor did scholars like Ma Yifu 马一浮 and Liang Suming. In this sense, "the modern Neo-Confucians like Mou are in line with Zhang in their school of thought" [6]. It is on this basis that Yao went on to claim that there has been a tradition of political philosophy from Liang to Zhang and then to the modern Neo-Confucians like Mou, i.e., the tradition of the conservative constitutionalism in modern China. This tradition is "a kind of thought and political power that is, based on Confucianism, used to establish a modern state" [7].

In fact, this genealogy in the school of thought was made quite clear by Mou himself in his essay to celebrate Zhang's birthday. At the very start of this essay, he mentioned the three political ideas¹ in modern China and maintained that only the idea of democratic constitutionalism is the best and only a country set up upon this idea is a modern national state. "The Western idea of democracy has come into being after a long time of deliberation. It has in itself a set of values and ideas, and follows a certain route of development. And this is what modernity means" (p. 36) [4]. "For decades, the main problem facing China has been the establishment of democracy. So, any political idea that is not in line with this is unacceptable, while one that is in line with this is applaudable" (p. 21) [8].

Through the discussions above, we can safely conclude that Liang, Zhang and Mou are all of the same school of thought which seeks to combine effectively Chinese traditional culture with science and democracy. Generally, Liang was the founder of this school, but Mou was the one who contributed most to modern Neo-Confucianism. Mou strongly argued that China's modernization should be combined with Chinese traditional

1 The three ideas are: the traditional consciousness of revolution, the consciousness of socialism, and the consciousness of democratic constitution. See Mou, 2005, p. 36.

culture so that a new path of China's own can be carved out. "The development of Chinese culture is mainly decided by its mainstream Confucianism, so when we are talking of The Chinese culture, we are actually talking of the modern significance and mission of Confucianism" (*Complete Works of Mou Zongsan*, vol. 10, p. 21) [5]. According to Mou, Chinese philosophy and culture, with Confucianism as their main component, require themselves to work with, contribute to and help realize China's modernization and make the modernization adaptable to the future needs. This is not only the responsibility and mission of The Chinese culture, but also the built-in requirement and purpose of itself.

In Mou's view, the modern significance of Chinese culture is to realize modernization, new outer kingliness and democracy. Modernization and democracy, as universal truths and values, should be applied anywhere. Any culture that rejects truths and universal values cannot survive, and this explains why Chinese culture is still alive and is still developing, because it has always been open to truths and universal values. (Ibid., pp. 23-24.) When it comes to the relationship between Chinese culture and Western culture, he maintained that China should try to selectively absorb the Western culture and make it compatible with the Chinese culture. In this way, Chinese culture will develop into a new phase and be reinterpreted. He said: "Modernization does not entail abandonment of the traditions; rather it requires them to be compatible with the Western culture" (vol. 23, p. 21).

According to Mou, the reason why Confucianism intrinsically entails the necessity of realizing democracy is that only in democratic politics can we look squarely at and finally realize all the successes and accomplishments. To Mou, the mission of Confucianism in the modern times is to develop the "new outer kingliness": science and democracy. This "new outer kingliness" falls into the category of "political Ruism". Though the "new outer kingliness" is of great importance in Mou's eyes, he believed that the discussions of it and of political Ruism must be done in the context of Chinese culture and in the context where Chinese culture can be intrinsically compatible with science and democracy (vol. 28, p. 137).

Then how can the new outer kingliness come out of Chinese culture or out of the common ground shared by Chinese culture and science and democracy? Mou started by exploring the core and nature of Chinese culture and modern civilization and then went on to discuss the new outer kingliness that is called for today. After careful study of the modern Western civilization, Mou came to believe that there is a common spirit among the modern Western values, that is, "coordination". As the expression of theoretical reason, coordination is the most essential meaning of modernization. Only in coordination can we put into practice and

successfully accomplish democracy and science. Compared with Western culture, the defining feature of Chinese culture is the realization of rationality, that is, the direct expression of morality (i.e. moral consciousness 良知), either taking things into morality or projecting morality onto the things. (vol. 10, pp. 52-55). This is to get rid of opposition and turn the subject-object relationship into one of subordination. This sort of rationality, the practical reason, is the morality in personality, which finds expression in the moral personality of a saint, in the Confucian way of governance, and in the wise use of morality.

Mou argued that the reason why Chinese culture cannot lead to science and democracy is that it only stresses morality but lacks a framework for the realization of rationality. So the key to science and democracy in China lies in how to transform the realization of rationality into a framework. This is why he put forward the idea of "self-negation of innate moral consciousness." According to Mou, science and democracy, as the realization of the new outer kingliness, cannot be developed directly out of the inner sageliness; rather, they must go through a process of self-denial or self-negation so that the realization of rationality can be transformed into the framework of rationality, the intuitive form into the understanding form, and opposition into contradiction. Only after this process of tortuous development can science and democracy be developed out of the new outer kingliness.

Science and democracy cannot come naturally as a result of our moral consciousness, but they are required by the moral rationality of moral consciousness. They call for something that is contrary to them in nature. This is a contradiction that is contradictory in itself. If the contradiction is to be dissolved and got through, knowledge of dialectics is necessary. This is what is called "being both opposite and complementary to each other", or "unity in opposites" in dialectics. If moral rationality is to meet the need of moral consciousness for science and democracy, it cannot always be consistent with moral consciousness and manifests itself as application only, it also needs to be in line with the nature of science and democracy and manifests itself as a framework. If it is to meet this need and manifest itself as a framework, we have to, for the moment, negate our moral consciousness and turn to understanding and coordination... That is, they need to go against or negate themselves, but not to be always consistent...so today we have to develop the framework into political institutions and laws of our country and into sciences like logic and math so that the moral rationality can be best manifested (vol. 28, pp. 140-141).

The idea of "self-negation of innate moral consciousness" within the framework of "inner sageliness and outer kingliness" distinguishes, on the one hand, morality, knowledge and politics so that they are placed on different

levels and within different borders, and affirms, on the other hand, the significance and necessity of knowledge and politics. "Way of politics, achievements and science must also be affirmed and realized but not go against morality which is the root" (Ibid.). In a sense, Mou's idea of "self-negation of moral consciousness" is a tentative attempt to combine Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, with modernity.

Jiang's "Political Confucianism"

Xu Jilin 许纪霖 divided the history of Chinese thoughts after the reform and opening up of China into three phases: 1980s, 1990s, and post-2000 years, with the 1980s being the enlightenment period, the 1990s the later enlightenment period, and the post-2000 years the post-enlightenment period (pp. 16-27) [9].

In Xu's view, the 1980s witnessed an enlightenment movement, whose objectives were identical with those of the New Culture Movement, holding high the banner of rationality and liberation of human nature, slashing ferociously Chinese traditional culture, and embracing the universal values; the 1990s saw an emergence of market economy in China, so the enlightenment camp split into different groups, such as cultural conservatives, neo-classical liberalists, and new leftists, but on the whole this period was the continuation of the enlightenment; after the arrival of the 21st century, however, an utterly new post-enlightenment period started, and scholars came to believe that enlightenment was over and they began to deconstruct enlightenment from three perspectives: nationalistic approach, classicistic approach, and multi-modernistic approach. This underlies why nationalism, classicism and multi-modernism have now been so popular in China. These three schools of thoughts differ, though, they are also interconnected in that they all hold that the universal values and objectives the enlightenment pursued are outdated and ridiculous because these values and objectives all reject the dominance of The Chinese culture, and they all take the rejuvenation of China as their core objective, advocating and stressing the characteristics, dominance and modernity of China. It is in this sense that all these schools of thoughts have switched from being defensive to being offensive, from cultural nationalism to political nationalism, from focusing on the internal relationships of China to focusing on the external relationships with other countries. The representative of the three schools of thoughts is the "mainland new Confucianism", whose voice has been heard much these years. The outstanding representative of the "mainland new Confucians" is Jiang Qing. So we will look at mainland new Confucianism by focusing on Jiang's "political Confucianism."

Jiang classified Confucianism into two categories: "spiritual Confucianism" and "political Confucianism". In

his view, while the modern Neo-Confucians focus more on spiritual Confucianism that focuses on mind and nature, we should focus more on political Confucianism. He claimed that the modern Neo-Confucians cannot create their system of new outer kingliness, and even if they could, the outer kingliness could only take the form of science and democracy which are highly recommended by the West. In that case, their idea of outer kingliness is in effect sort of covert Westernization and hence will become dependent on Western culture. According to Jiang, "modern Confucianism must veer from 'spiritual Confucianism' to 'political Confucianism'", because only "political Confucianism" can best represent "outer kingliness Confucianism", "system Confucianism", "practice Confucianism" and "hope Confucianism" ... "Chinese political and ritual systems should be constructed via 'political Confucianism', not via 'spiritual Confucianism'" (p. 2) [10].

What then led Jiang to believe that the science and democracy proposed by the Modern Neo-Confucians are covert Westernization? According to Jiang, the Westernization of politics is the core of Westernization. Politics differs from economics, law, education and many others in that politics is directly related to religious beliefs, values, morals and cultural identities, which means it is closely connected with the deeper values of a culture. If politics changes, the deeper values of its culture will also change accordingly, and the change in the deeper values means the death of the culture. So, we might well say that "the death of a political system means the death of its culture" (Ibid.). In Jiang's eyes, "the new Confucianism originated from the "May Fourth" movement and has inherited completely the spirit of the "May Fourth" movement". "It is also in this sense," Jiang said, "that we can claim that the new Confucianism is not essentially different from liberalism and Marxism for they all resort to a Western standard (science and democracy) as a way to tell how China should develop." This is what Jiang meant by 'the covert Westernization'. The idea that "Confucianism leads to science and democracy" by Mou is, in Jiang's view, "typical of such 'covert Westernization'" (Ibid., p. 286).

In this context, Jiang proposed that "the task of modern Confucianism is not to integrate with Western culture but to break away from it" (Ibid., p. 285). In other words, Jiang's political Confucianism is to transcend Western modernity and reconstruct The Chinese culture, claiming that the reconstruction of Chinese political culture is not a problem of overall Westernization, but one of revitalization and regeneration. He held that we should use the Confucian wisdom and principles to guide the transformation of Chinese political system so as to establish a legitimate political system that stems from God's will (*tian dao* 天道), nature (*xing* 性), and principles (*li* 理), so that Chinese political culture can be re-established on the basis of Chinese culture and traditions and is not to be deconstructed by Western political culture,

which will cause Chinese political culture to lose itself. The only way to do this is, in Jiang's view, through political Confucianism. (Ibid., pp. 39-40). In fact, what he meant was establishing Confucianism as the national religion and on that basis establishing a "tricameral" legislature that represents respectively "Heaven天, Earth地and Man人."

Based on the Gongyang公羊 Scholars' idea that "he who understands the true relationships between Heaven, Earth, and Man becomes the king" and Dong Zhongshu's idea proposed in the chapter Understanding the Three Relationships Leads to the Kingly Way王道通三 in *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals春秋繁露*, Jiang held that the political power that has the triadic legitimacy in itself is then legitimate. According to Jiang, Heaven represents the legitimacy that derives from the supernatural power, Earth the legitimacy from history and culture, and Man the legitimacy from the will of the people. His tricameral legislature is also based on the triadic legitimacy of Heaven, Earth, and Man, so the House of Confucians represents the legitimacy that derives from the supernatural power, the House of People the legitimacy from history and culture, and the House of Polity the legitimacy from the will of the people. The representatives of the House of Confucians are elected or designated, and its speaker should be a respected Confucian; the speaker and representatives of the House of People are elected as Western democracy does. The speaker of the House of Polity should be hereditary and the post should be taken by the Duke of Yansheng衍圣公 (a descendant of Confucius that represents the whole lineage of Confucius), and the representatives of the House should consist of two groups of people: a group of the descendants of those sage-kings, saints, kings, celebrities, and national martyrs and heroes in history; a group of professors of Chinese history, retired high-rank officials, judges, diplomats, community leaders, and representatives from Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Lamaism, and Christianity. Each House has its own real power, the bills can only be promulgated when they have been passed by all the three Houses, and the chief executive officer can be elected only when all the Houses reach a consensus. Jiang maintained that only the above mentioned Chinese Kingly Way politics are the real quality universal values, while the modern Western ideas of freedom, democracy and human rights are all low-quality universal values (pp. 23-26) [11].

Kang Youwei-ism

Over recent years, with the rapid development of Chinese economy and the growth of Chinese national strength, the call for the rise of China, or the modernization of China with Chinese characteristics, has been louder and louder. However, the rise of China and its growth in comprehensive national strength have not been transformed into the centripetal and cohesive forces of the nation, nor have they been transformed

into trust and respect in the international community. Both the internal order and the external order of China have been confronted with tough challenges. It is, therefore, against this background that the mainland new Confucianism has been further developed from Jiang's political Confucianism to Kang Youwei-ism, the representatives of which include Chen Ming, Zeng Yi, Tang Wenming and Gan Chunsong.

As representatives of Kang Youwei-ists, Chen, Zeng, Tang, and Gan shared similar awareness of the problems with China, but they have not come up with a systematic theory and solution. This underlies why they returned to Kang Youwei for a solution.

Chen Ming held that "returning to Kang Youwei" means returning to his problem, way of thinking, and stance that is, returning to the problem of state construction and national construction (SCNC). In other words, it means returning to the problem of "how to reshape the national awareness of the Chinese people and how to reestablish Chinese political system" (p. 150) [12]. Chen claimed that the arguments of both the leftists and the rightists are vulnerable with regard to how to transform China into a modern country without changing its territory and racial structure (p. 24) [13]. From Chen's perspective, either the narrative of revolution or the vision of enlightenment is the product of the "May Fourth Movement", both adopting the populist methodology of the West-centered theory, and, therefore, we must dump the leftist idea of building China on the basis of class division and the rightist idea of building China on the basis of individualism, and return to the problem and pursuit of Kang Youwei.

According to Chen, the so-called problem and pursuit of Kang Youwei was to look for and re-establish a modern political system in the upheaval of the later Qing dynasty without changing its territory and racial structure, and to effectively deal with the external challenges and respond to the rightful commands of Chinese people. The shared political identity and cultural identity called for a just and efficient system, and a unified and harmonious culture. This, to Chen, is what Kang was pursuing, and it still remains unchanged for today's China (pp. 17-18) [14]. To put it simply, that is to "safeguard the country, the race, and the religion (Confucianism)" (p. 25) [13]. Chen said that what he meant by state construction is "to establish a modern political system that turns into a harmonious and powerful shared political community China" whose territory came into shape in Qing dynasty. And "national construction means creating out of various ethnic groups a nation that share the same political identity and the same moral standards, that is, Chinese nation [15]." From this we can see that, in Chen's eyes, the SCNC is the first priority in modern China; therefore, in order to sustain the integrity of the state

and the nation, the prosperity and rise of China should go before any other things, such as fairness, justice, freedom, democracy, and constitutional monarchy. He even goes on to claim that “individualism and procedure-based decision are unacceptable” (p. 25) [13]. This shows that, to Chen, in front of SCNC, those modern universal values are unimportant at all.

Comments

Mou’s idea of “self-negation of innate moral consciousness” has inflicted upon himself much criticism. Jiang Qing argued that it is “covert Westernization” to resort to Western science and democracy as the only way to realize the new outer kingliness and that it will make Chinese culture dependent on Western culture (pp. 1-2) [10]. Besides, Jiang also accused Mou of equating Confucianism to Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming dynasties and of interpreting the new “outer kingliness” as Western science and democracy [16]. Yu Yingshi 余英时 was also critical of the idea, saying that it is a response from the “arrogance of moral consciousness” to the stimulus of modern “intellectual arrogance” (p. 568) [17]. Fu Weixun 傅伟勋 argued that Mou tried to interpret the Confucian ideal of moral governance in the Western context of democracy and rule of law and hence suspicious of pan-moralism (pp. 446, 491) [18]. Lin Anwu 林安梧 criticized the self-negation of moral consciousness for being “misplaced Tao” that originates in essentialism [19].

To such criticism, Xiao Xiong 肖雄 argued that some criticism is grounded on a misunderstanding of Mou’s idea and can be dispelled through clarification and explanation, while some criticism arises due to the vagueness in Mou’s wording or to the imperfection in the idea of self-negation of moral consciousness. Only the latter kind of criticism should be dealt with seriously [20]. Stephen C. Angle said that he is persuaded by Mou that self-restriction is critical to a fruitful contemporary Confucian development of political philosophy (p. 25) [21]. Later he added that Mou’s idea of self-negation may not have been perfectly explained as we have expected, but it is still a pretty sound and complete theory, and is critical to the development of Confucianism in the future [22].

To be fair, the idea of “self-negation of moral consciousness” has, at the very least, provided us with a new perspective as to how to combine Chinese culture with Western culture, and it may, as Stephen C. Angles put it, be a kind of development of contemporary Confucianism. For sure, due to the limitations in time and space, this idea may be impractical or unrealistic and it may never be put into practice, but the real problem is that he equates China’s modernization or modernity with science and democracy. First of all, Chinese culture for a long time lived in harmony

with science, and China contributed most to the development of science and technology in the world. According to Joseph Needham, China maintained, between the 3rd and the 13th centuries, a level of scientific knowledge unapproached in the West, and its technological discoveries and inventions were often far in advance of contemporary Europe, especially up to the 15th century (p. 3-4) [23]. It is only in the recent several centuries that China began to lag behind the West in its development of science and technology. Which means that it is not Chinese culture, especially Confucianism that prevented science and technology from developing in the recent several hundred years; rather it might be some other inhibiting factors that prevented the development of modern science in China. In other words, Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, should not take the responsibility for the failure in the further and quicker development of science in China.

As for democracy, the idea surely originated in the West, but ever since the disappearance of city states in Greece, it had not been applied anywhere in the world for quite a long time and it only started to come into being quite recently. Now, the problem with democracy has been more and more discussed, for example, its shortsightedness in policy-making. In this context, should we still take it as the universal truth or value? Should we still take it as “the end of history,” as Francis Fukuyama put it? [24] Maybe only time can tell.

So Mou’s idea of “self-negation of moral consciousness” may sound impractical and untenable, and hence unfit for the current political reality in China.

As for Jiang, his dichotomy of Confucianism and his idea of the threefold legitimacy and his imagination of a tricameral legislature have attracted wide criticism and many of his ideas have been dismissed as impractical.

Joseph Chan believed that Jiang intends to establish a “Confucian constitutional order” which he considers to be an instance of promotion of Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine to design and regulate the constitutional order. He argued that “it is undesirable to promote and enforce Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine in the political sphere, while the way of moderate perfectionism is the best we can do given the pluralistic nature of modern society” (p. 101) [25]. He said that “promoting Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine is undesirable in the main because it damages civility” and “Jiang’s proposal is undoubtedly a kind of ideological politics, aiming at providing Confucianism with a hegemonic ruling position” (p. 103). To Joseph Chan, “not all Confucian values and rituals are attractive and suitable for our time; therefore, we should not promote it as a comprehensive doctrine” (p. 105).

Bai Tongdong also disagreed with Jiang. He argued that Jiang's idea "has no realistic basis or no potential to be actualized" and Jiang, therefore, is no more than a "daydreamer" (pp. 115-116). He said: "Jiang seems to take a contextual expression of Confucianism as the fundamental teaching of Confucianism, making it a dogma and a sacred teaching and imposing it on today's world. This is to impose an 'old mandate' on a 'new state'" (p. 117). He believed that "a danger of this kind of idealism is that it tends to lead its advocates to neglect political reality" (p. 123).

Chenyang Li, while considering Jiang's work to be "serious, rigorous and systematic" despite the fact that his position is often taken as radical and out of sync with time, also differed from Jiang and held that "the Confucian notion of heaven should be the heaven of the 'heaven-earth-humanity' triad" rather than the transcendent heaven that Jiang promotes. He argued that Jiang's notion of heaven is vacuous and unnecessary, and hence "cannot serve as a solid foundation for Confucian political philosophy as he purports" (p. 129).

What's more, Wang Shaoguang also doubted Jiang's idea that the way of humane authority can "resolve China's problem of legitimacy" because "it is the best possible choice that should be accepted both in China and the West as the direction in which politics develops" (pp. 139, 143). Wang pointed out, while admitting that "China's political system does not match the criteria for electoral democracy", that "scholars familiar with the field have virtually all arrived at a consensus: the degree of legitimacy of the Chinese political system is very high." And he went on to argue that Chinese socialist democracy is a much better choice than Jiang's Way of the Humane Authority for the Chinese people, because "it lays institutional foundations for everyone to become equal to Yaos 尧 and Shuns 舜" (p. 158).

However, in a context where quite many scholars look admiringly at Western democracy for solutions at the end of the 20th century, Jiang is certainly different. He reflected on Western democracy and started to focus on the study of political Confucianism. Is democracy the best political system? Is it the end of the human history? Or is it what can be applied anywhere in the world? All these questions drove him to return to Confucianism, especially the ideas of the Gongyang Scholars for answers. Earlier, those modern Neo-Confucians like Mou Zongsan in Hongkong and Taiwan welcomed and embraced science and democracy that originated in the West. But Jiang dismissed their attitude as unacceptable. To him, science is what is shared by the whole world. It has nothing to do with history and culture, nor does it make a distinction between China and the West. This means we can accept a Western standard in science, but

democracy is not universal, nor can it be applied anywhere in the world, because it has much to do with history and culture and hence there should be a clear difference between China and the West in their attitudes towards democracy. According to Jiang, a good political order cannot come out of nothing; rather, it must be closely connected with its history and culture. Not coincidentally, we have the idea of outer kingliness in Confucianism, which means we must come back to Confucian traditions if we want to establish a quality political order. That is, we would better make use of the resources in the old traditions rather than graft the idea of democracy onto China's political system. Jiang thought highly of Chinese traditional political ideas and thoughts, which has broken people's faith in the West. In this context, the Confucian idea of the outer kingliness has been revitalized and it may serve as the starting point for the modern Chinese political theory. From a cultural perspective, Jiang has done better than those modern Neo-Confucians in Hongkong and Taiwan because he has inherited Chinese traditional culture in a broader sense.

Also, Jiang deserves our respect because he has realized that the will of the people cannot be taken as the only source of legitimacy so that he tries to introduce more factors to develop a more applaudable theory of legitimacy. His attempt is understandable, because the world itself is complicated, and the making of a political order also involves many factors. If one factor is far superior, it will contain or do harm to the other factors. Meanwhile, if all the factors are equal, they will be reduced to relativism in value. So Jiang rejected the supreme status of the will of the people in the theories about democracy, and put up the idea of the "threefold legitimacy". He acknowledged the differences in their importance and put the transcendent legitimacy at the top. In this way, he attempted to contain the harm done by secularization to the value and meaning of life.

In this sense, the meaning of Jiang's ideas has transcended his thoughts. He was the man who looked squarely at the idea of the outer kingliness and tried to reflect on the weaknesses of Western democracy. He did not have blind faith in Western culture, nor did he reject them completely. It seems he was trying to resist Western culture, but he in effect learned a lot from Western political theories in the course of developing his own system of political Confucianism. From the perspective of the history of thoughts, this means that we Chinese have attempted to build our own political theories rather than just blindly accept Western thoughts. To some extent, Jiang rejuvenated China's old tradition of political Confucianism, which used to undergo criticism and scrutiny of Western thoughts and now starts to be treated as an equal. It is in this sense that Yao Zhongqiu considered Jiang to be the only thinker in recent few decades in China's mainland.

As for Kang Youwei-ism, there has been so far little discussion on it, and it is often discussed as part of the so-called “mainland new Confucianism”. As representatives of the “mainland new Confucians,” the ideas of Jiang Qing, Chen Ming, Gan Chunsong, Tang Wenming etc. are generally not accepted in the academic circles, and have from the very start been continuously attacked by various scholars.

Huang Yushun argued that what the “mainland new Confucians” are doing can be categorized into two: “to found a new religion” and “to interfere in politics” (p. 500) [26], that is, to transform the traditional Confucianism into China’s “national religion”, and to construct what they believe to be the absolute truth—political Confucianism. Huang maintained that the “founding of the new religion” and the “interference in politics” by the “mainland new Confucians” constitute a worrying political tendency, because they reject and even oppose the fundamental values of modern political civilization like freedom, equality, and democracy. In fact, what they are doing is to obscure the “historical development” by resorting to the conflict between China and the West, to oppose modernity in the name of “opposing the West”, and to replace “civilization” with the so-called “culture”. This is going against the historical development of the civilization of mankind and even turn out to encourage autocracy and totalitarianism.

Ge Zhaoguang even depicted the political pursuit of the “mainland new Confucians” as “a bark at the moon.” In his eyes, the essence of the views of the “mainland new Confucians” is, first, to take as a slogan “opposing the West and fighting the abnormal” by disguising themselves as nationalists and statistes so as to attack the universal values as perilous and humiliating; and, second, to be impatient to “sit and discuss politics”, but rather to “interfere in politics”, that is, to “roll up their sleeves” to interfere in politics, design institutions, and transform the society so as to create a “Confucian state” that is orderly, hierarchical and theocratic in nature. According to Ge, ever since the start of modern history in China and in the context where great changes have taken place in China’s social structure, political system, and life style, the “mainland new Confucians” are working together with the nationalists and statistes to pursue political power and praise ideology, completely rejecting any other views other than Confucianism. They refuse to accept such modern values as freedom, democracy, and equality, and try to go back to the traditional family, society and state, and to return to the traditional structure, order, and customs, that is, monarchy and imperial examination system in politics, academies in education, and clans and families in society. This is absolutely “a bark at the moon,” “an attempt to revive in a new guise,” “bending academics to cater for the world” or “a crazy talk on an ill-timed occasion [27].”

Another scholar, Sun Tieji, also sharply pointed out that

“Jiang Qing’s ‘political Confucianism’ and the ‘Kang Youwei-ism’ of ‘Kang Youwei-ists’ both manifest a strong desire to participate in politics, but the way they take to participate in politics is to follow Kang Youwei by reforming and setting up a new religion” (p. 38) [28]. According to Sun, the Kang Youwei-ists “are not to ‘participate in politics’ by learning from Confucius way of bettering oneself, obeying parents, and respecting friends so as to influence positively the society.” (Ibid.) Clearly, Sun argued that the political view of Jiang Qing and other “Kang Youwei-ists” is going against the true Confucianism and is inconsistent with Confucius’ ideas, and their fundamental objective is, in the name of “Kang Youwei-ism”, to interfere in politics. This undoubtedly has revealed the true nature of “Kang Youwei-ism.”

In fact, we should put a big question mark on whether the so-called “mainland new Confucians” with Jiang Qing and Chen Ming as their prominent representatives can speak for the development of “Mainland Confucianism.” According to Guo Qiyong, “the so-called ‘mainland new Confucianism (Confucianists)’ or ‘China’s mainland new Confucianism in the New Era’ is a school of thought influenced by the trend of the modern philosophy, especially the trend of the modern Neo-Confucianism, that is to deal with the real problems facing China ever since the reform and opening-up, try to, against a background of active interplay between Marxist philosophy, Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy and on the basis of the academic research on Confucian philosophy, make use of all the best Chinese cultural resources with Confucianism at the core to help adapt Confucianism to the development of modern society, interpret creatively the essence of Confucianism and promote modernization and globalization of Confucianism [29].” This is a good case in point that shows that both Jiang’s “political Confucianism” and the “Kang Youwei-ism” that completely reject such universal values of modern civilization as freedom, democracy and equality are not the mainstream of the new Confucianism in China’s mainland and can never represent the orientation of development of the new Confucianism in China’s mainland.

Possible Prospects for Confucianism

Ever since its coming into being, Confucianism has always been concerned with politics and, for a long time in history, especially after Emperor Wu of Western Han, Liu Che (156 BC-87 BC), dismissed the hundred schools of thought and established Confucianism as the only officially recognized school of thought, it played an unparalleled role in China’s politics. It is only after the “1911 Revolution” that Confucianism began to stay away from the center of the political arena. However, no matter how important it was in China’s politics in history, Confucianism has never been only about politics or governance; rather, it has always been also about many more things, like human nature, rites,

interpersonal relationships, ethics, social roles, and moral cultivation. In other words, it has never been equal to and we should never reduce it to “political Ruism” only.

The political ideas of modern Confucianists like Mou’s idea of “self-negation of innate moral consciousness, Jiang’s “political Confucianism”, and the “Kang Youwei-ism”, have all turned out to be more or less impractical and unrealistic. Then does that mean that Confucianism should be absolutely kicked out of politics? What role should Confucianism play in today’s China? And what are the prospects of Confucianism?

In fact, as an integral part of Chinese culture, Confucianism cannot be completely kept out of China’s politics and social life. But in today’s China, it cannot possibly play its role as it did in history because the political system on which it was based has now been forever gone. This underlies why we believe that those ideas of modern “political Ruism” are all untenable and impractical, and cannot possibly be put into practice in modern China. But Confucianism can still work in both the private sphere and the public sphere.

First of all, in the private sphere, Confucianism, as it has always been caring about human nature and morality, can still help with people’s cultivation of morality. As a matter of fact, the majority of the Chinese people have been under the influence of Confucianism, consciously or unconsciously, even if they sometimes believe that Confucian thought has been outdated and should be kept away from their life. For example, most Chinese people know that one should not impose on others what he himself does not want, and that one should try hard to learn and practice. In a sense, Confucianism has been flowing in our blood ever since we were born.

In the public sphere, Confucianism, though impossible to work as it did in the past, can still play some important roles. For example, as a branch of Chinese philosophy, it is often offered as a course in universities and colleges and serves to educate the students on how to look at the world from a Confucian perspective. Besides, rather than directly engaging itself in politics, Confucianism can also play an invisible but not unimportant part in Chinese politics, because Confucianism has been blessed with many wonderful political ideas, like the idea of “the Kingly Way”, the “people-oriented thought”, and the idea about “harmony between human and nature”, though these ideas have to be moderated and reinterpreted in the modern context. In this sense, Confucianism can always serve as a rich source of political ideas. What’s more, Confucianism can also play its role as a moral checker by examining politics from a moral perspective, checking whether rulers and their governance are in line with those Confucian ideas. In this way, Confucianism becomes true “political Ruism” and enables us to look at politics from a

human, cultural or moral perspective.

For sure, we should not confine ourselves within the limits set by ourselves when we are looking at Confucianism. For example, Henry Rosemont and Roger Ames took Confucianism as the “role ethics” [30]. But no matter what, we should bear one thing in mind: Never equate Confucianism with “political Ruism”, and always keep it from politics at a discreet distance, because politics is always more complicated than people imagine and it has its own logic. Just as Li Minghui pointed out, “In Kant’s political ethics, politics is kept at a discreet distance from morality. Now that Kant admits that there is a distinction between the political principle and the moral principle, he should also admit that politics is an independent realm and has its own operating logic” (p.124) [31,32].

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