The Horizon of Modernity: Observations on New Confucian Philosophy in History and Thought

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Voor Shannah... “loin des gens qui meurent sur les saisons”

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Abbreviations

Works by Mou Zongsan

DY = *Moral Idealism* (*Daode de lixiangzhuyi 道德的理想主義*), [1959] vol.9 of MJ.


SS = *Impressions of the Times* (*Shidai yu ganshou 時代與感受*), [1984] vol.23 of MJ.

SSXB = *Supplements to 'Impressions of the Times'* (*Shidai yu ganshou xubian 時代與感受續編*), vol.24 of MJ.


WW = *Late Essays* (*Wanqi wenji 晚期文集*), vol.27 of MJ.

ZW1 = *Early Essays 1* (*Zaoqi wenji 早期文集 一 上*), vol.25 of MJ.

ZW2 = *Early Essays 2* (*Zaoqi wenji 早期文集 一 下*), vol.26 of MJ.

Works by Tang Junyi


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Introduction

For every problem one can always find a solution. My only fear is that we do not take problems to be problematic at all. It is the same with illnesses that make us feel pain, which can always be treated, whereas chronic afflictions which do not cause any suffering are really impossible to cure.1

一切的問題總可以設法解決。只怕我們根本上不把一問題當作問題。猶如痛癢的病總可醫，不知痛癢的病，才真是不可救藥的痼疾。

Tang Junyi

1. Aims and approach of the present study

It is usually assumed that generalizations are dangerous, and this sentence too is probably no exception. In academic works, prefaces and introductions, as well as conclusions, are the places where one is most likely to encounter these treacherous entities, or at least where they are usually reflected on in a more self-conscious manner than throughout the main body of the text, perhaps because the writer desires to get over with offering a general justification for what he or she has still to write, or has just finished writing, and move on to more pressing matters. At the same time, they can provide the author with the space and the opportunity to reflect on certain difficulties which have beset his specific study or which inhabit his entire field of research. A high degree of academic authority enables an author to present problems encountered in or stemming from his own inquiries as relevant for his colleagues or, depending on the degree of specialization, even a whole discipline; an advantage I obviously do not have as a doctoral candidate. Nevertheless, I hope this dissertation will be of interest to a broader public than those already familiar with some of the more esoteric topics treated in the following pages. Terms such as “the self-negation of moral reason” (daode de ziwo kanxian 道德的自坎陷) and “the horizons of the mind” (xinling jingjie 心靈境界) tend to scare readers away.

To get to the point: I have the impression that research into Chinese, or non-Western philosophy in general, is for the most part highly sensitive to precisely these two entwined issues of generalization and justification. An average monograph on the thought of canonical Western thinkers such as Kant or

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1 “Attitudes towards Culture which Our Compatriots Should Change” (Guoren dui wenhua ying gaibian zhi taidu 國人對文化應改變之態度), [1936] in ZB, p. 41.
Hegel for example can more easily get away with diving straight into the thing itself (e.g. “isn't Hegel ultimately more Kantian than Kant himself?”) without having to provide a sometimes almost apologetic string of explanations and reasons why one has deemed it necessary to devote a whole study to these philosophers and why it is important for us to commence or continue engaging with them. Additionally, one does not need to spend quite as much time explaining what is specifically “Western” about them, let alone specifying how they differ from their Chinese counterparts. This only becomes a real issue in the context of comparative approaches. It is hard not to notice that things stand rather differently in the case of a book on figures such as Mou Zongsan (1909-1995), Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1900-1978), or Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968), who will be the three thinkers most often referred to and drawn upon in the course of my study. Usually, one is already forced to come up with elaborate strategies of justification before even being able to begin a research project, that is to say (to put things in a positive light), one is forced to reflect on the relevance and the use of presenting and commenting on their ideas. Because they are approached, presented, marketed, and perceived as quintessentially Chinese philosophers, and not just as philosophers tout court, their cultural particularity immediately imposes itself as a problem to be addressed and accounted for. Their overall relevance needs to be clarified, and above all, justified, without a question-begging recourse to the fetish of culture, and with an audience in mind that does not necessarily put great stock in the paramount importance of transcultural dialog. What do these philosophers, who point towards the – or rather, a very specific and largely constructed – past almost every time they are confronted with a specific (conceptual and/or social) problem or a problematic state of affairs in the modern world, still have to say to us today? Not everyone will automatically be swayed by the standard argument that China's economic rise has made it exceptionally pertinent and urgent for us to gain a better understanding of Chinese culture, even through the unwieldy medium of intricate and sophisticated philosophical theories if necessary. Even when one assumes that it is China's economic and geopolitical rise which has contributed a great deal

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2 As Rey Chow acutely observes: “[W]hereas it would be acceptable for authors dealing with specific cultures, such as those of Britain, France, the United States, or the ancient Greco-Roman world, to use generic titles such as Women Writers and the Problem of Aesthetics, Gender Trouble, Otherness and Literary Language, The Force of Law, The Logic of Sense, This Sex Which Is Not One, Tales of Love, and so on, authors dealing with non-Western cultures are often expected to mark their subject matter with words such as Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and the like. While the former are thought to deal with intellectual or theoretical issues, the latter, even when they are dealing with intellectual or theoretical issues, are compulsorily required to characterize such issues with geopolitical realism, to stabilize and fix their intellectual and theoretical content by way of a national, ethnic, or cultural location. Once such a location is named, however, the work associated with it is usually considered too narrow or specialized to warrant general interest.” Rey Chow, “Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem”, in Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field, edited by Rey Chow, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000, p.3.
to the renewed surge of interest in (the reinterpretation of) traditional ideas, it is not immediately obvious what the latter have to offer in return. Of course, such demands are not specific to research in the field of Chinese studies, and in their absence as firmly institutionalized requirements, questions of relevance and pertinence would crop up anyhow. This is hardly surprising, seeing how these are among the major questions thinkers such as Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi themselves constantly posed and answered in a variety of ways. What one encounters in the work of these authors, and in that of many other intellectuals belonging to the first generations of modern Chinese intellectuals, is precisely a whole spectrum of generalizations, often embedded in philosophized cultural typologies, employed to provide justifications for the reinvention and the revival of what, to use this outdated Marxist term, “the progressive forces of history” had judged to be superfluous impediments to modernization.

This dissertation is intended as a contribution to the study of modern Chinese, more specifically Confucian, philosophy; a field of research which has already generated an enormous, even bewildering, amount of literature in both the People's Republic of China and in the Republic of Taiwan, but is still in the process of slowly but steadily expanding in Western academia. I have been fortunate enough to profit from the publication of an increasing number of studies in Western languages during the last few years which address the general topic of “New Confucianism” (xin ruxue 新儒学), deal with the resurgence of Confucian themes in contemporary Chinese society and politics, or provide much-needed studies of individual thinkers classified under the category or on the margins of “Modern New Confucian philosophy” (xiandai xin rujia zhexue 现代新儒家哲学). This is a most welcome trend which goes against the tendency unfortunately still prevalent in continental philosophy to continue to employ “China”, “Chinese”, or “(East) Asian” in general, as mere floating signifiers, either as examples and corroborations, or, more often, as exceptions and limit concepts, instead of as possible systems of meaning with a certain autonomy and legitimacy of their own.³ Philosophers with universalist aspirations can use the non-Western world as a testing ground for the validity of their ideas, or better still, wait for the emergence of a global following to creatively adopt their theories to a variety of different cultural contexts, and consider the matter closed.⁴ This general indifference has not remained

³ For a thought-provoking study drawing on the Marxist thinker Alfred Sohn-Rethel, see Daniel Vukovich, “China in Theory: the Orientalist Production of Knowledge in the Global Economy”, Cultural Critique, 76, 2010, pp.148-172. Vukovich claims that “it is as if the knowledge about China that is produced in the West has to be as abstract and, in short, as commodified as the other products of labor circulating between China and its business partners.” (p.149). He refers to the work of Agamben, Hardt and Negri, and Žižek amongst others.

⁴ Fortunately, there are fruitful exceptions, such as the fascinating work on dialetheic logic carried out with reference to Buddhist thought by the analytic philosopher Graham Priest.
without consequences of its own, and fuels the already strongly felt need for self-justification on the part of those active in the fields of non-Western culture and thought.

It will be evident to anyone who does a quick Internet search on the topic of modern or contemporary Chinese and Confucian philosophy that there is already a staggering number of articles and books dealing with the issue of Confucianism and modernity. The relation between Confucianism and modernity is beyond doubt one of the most hotly debated issues within the whole discipline of modern Chinese intellectual history and cultural studies. This has made it both possible and necessary to construct “topographies” of modern Confucian discourse. Still, my own investigation departs from the impression, which grew from the reading of an obviously partial and incomplete corpus of texts, that precisely this particular topic has not been sufficiently and adequately investigated and problematized. Again, this observation comes with a certain, probably inevitable, degree of generalization. It seems to me that in many studies, the focus is placed on either the compatibility or the contradictions between Confucianism and modernity, in both cases taken as two phenomena which can be clarified separately on their own terms and afterwards recombined with varying results. In caricatural terms, this can come down to throwing Confucius into the ring with modernity in order to observe who will come out bruised and beaten, and who will emerge victorious with teeth shining and gloves raised. Scholars who are sympathetic or even devoted to the cause of revitalizing the Confucian tradition or adopting certain Confucianist ideas, practices, and concepts on the other hand, tend to draw on their subject matter as a reserve of solutions to problems supposedly stemming from the planetary dominance of a Western rationality characterized by dichotomous dualisms. The idea that a traditional Chinese perspective on the fundamental interdependence and harmony between human beings and nature can point a way out of our current materialistic anthropocentrism (for which Daoism would probably be a better candidate than Confucianism) and the ecological catastrophe assumed to have resulted from this outlook is one of the most often encountered instances of such a line of reasoning. An initial problem to be signaled is


6 See for example Tu Weiming, “The Ecological Turn in New Confucian Humanism: Implications for China and the World”, *Daedalus*, vol.130, no.4, 2001, pp.243-264. Several things are left out of the picture in this way. I will only make a few tentative remarks here. One has to clearly distinguish between anthropocentrism as a normative perspective (“Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it”, *Genesis* 1:28), and the neutral observation that the human race is the only species which theoretically disposes over the means to practically remedy or neutralize the effects of its own vanity. Even when one insists on approaching the environmental crisis as an essentially moral problem, one can argue, as Tang Junyi did repeatedly, that only human beings are able to effectively extend their ethical concerns to other species and thereby overcome their own “speciesism” (Peter Singer). See Tang's *The Spiritual Values of Chinese Culture (Zhongguo wenhua zhi jingshen jiazhi 中國文化之精神價值)*, Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, [1953b] 2005, pp.145-146,
that solutions of this kind would seem to predate the situations they are meant to solve, functioning as preadaptive reactions to what are actually historically specific problems and novel forms of historical discontinuity. I would like to opt for a different approach by turning to the reformulations and reinventions of Chinese philosophy by some of its most well-known modern representatives not in search of *solutions* that await discovery and need only to be pointed at, but in order to look for *problems*. The problems I have in mind are those encountered in studying the solutions these thinkers elaborated through comparative exercises in philosophical thought, solutions which I assume to have been conditioned by their confrontation with modernity. In short, my intention is to trace some of the conceptual consequences of modernity in the context of twentieth-century Chinese intellectual history, without exclusively focusing on the impact the introduction of Western philosophies had on modern conservative intellectuals in China. I believe more has to be taken into account than the fruitful transmission and reinterpretation of Western ideas on their way east (*dongjian* 东渐).

Following the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1927-1998), I do not conceive of modernity primarily as a normative set of identifiable ideas or beliefs (usually captured by the slogan of “science and democracy”) which Confucianism should adapt itself to or incorporate in order to emancipate or

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pp.213-215. That we are already living in the so-called *Anthropocene* era is a fact that cannot be covered over by a nostalgic celebration of some antediluvian state of harmony supposedly attested in traditional Chinese thought. The latter in my opinion has very little to do with what we nowadays call environmental awareness. The notion of “Heaven” (*tian* 天) in the famous catchphrase “Heaven and Man are united” (*tian ren heyi* 天人合一) cannot be considered apart from its political dimension and taken to denote a natural environment devoid of and uncontaminated by human and social determinations. This is even the case for the conceptualization of the workings of the human body in traditional Chinese medicine, which is all too often simplistically explained as being based on a “correlative holism” between human beings and nature. However, in this context too “nature” is fundamentally a socially conditioned category. According to the historian of Chinese medicine Paul Unschuld, the fundamental “anatomical” or rather functional distinction made in Chinese medical texts between two types of organs - *zang* 脏 (“reserves”, organs of production) and *fu* 腑 (“palaces”, organs of consumption) - came about under the influence of the important socio-economic changes accompanying the unification of China as an empire under the Qin dynasty, such as a growing difference between centers of production and centers of consumption. See *Medicine in China: a History of Ideas*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp.79-83. That chaos and entropy are just as important as “balance” and “harmony” for the continuation of biological life is also something to be taken into account. Crucially, the factual and already accomplished destruction and disappearance of enormous areas of the natural environment can make it hard to determine what the “natural” state of a certain ecosystem actually refers to, and what the effects of trying to forcibly recover this state would in turn have on an environment which “naturally” evolved in response to human intervention. As a concept, the modern idea of “nature” came into existence precisely in response to growing industrialization and urbanization, and thus referred to something no longer present that would have to be recovered from its very inception. The distinction between merely influencing and negatively destabilizing the environment cannot simply be “intuited”, but can only be drawn in scientific research, which operates within an environment of its own, i.e. modern society. The knowledge science produces, even when incontestably “true”, does not thereby automatically endow it with power. It is possible for truth, even when conceived of in an anti-relativist manner as singular, unchangeable, and absolute, to remain without consequences, since it cannot determine its own conditions. The same obviously applies to ideals such as a harmonious relation between human beings and nature. The shift in perspective deemed necessary to put a stop to the ongoing destruction of the natural environment can neither be simply transferred from human subjects to systems, nor straightforwardly “applied” by the latter.
“enlighten” itself, but as denoting a fundamentally novel constellation of functionally differentiated social structures characterized by a radical degree of operational autonomy and independence from the individual human beings and communities subject to them. From a Marxist point of view, which is not directly compatible with, but also not necessarily diametrically opposed to a Luhmannian one, the emergence of such structural autonomy is historically closely linked to the rise of the capitalist world economy and the dominance of the capitalist mode of production. The assumption that the global spread of these social structures had corresponding effects on a semantic level in societies with very different cultural backgrounds need not be taken as presupposing the existence of neat, symmetrical correspondences between a “material base” and a “spiritual superstructure”. It would be meaningless to characterize social systems such as politics, the legal system, the mass media, or the economy as somehow exclusively “material”. It is obvious that the financial system for example currently operates in a completely “otherworldly” fashion, and behaves more like a consequent Platonist contemplating the starry heavens of mathematical entities and complex algorithms than an obdurate materialist poking around for celestial secrets in the dirt. Instead of concrete and tangible commodities, one finds subliminal entities such as “credit default swaps” and “futures” on the stock markets. Besides, there are enough indications that Marx himself was the first to grasp the performative force of abstraction at work in the logic of capital, which already in its “superficial” form of appearance as interest-bearing capital (money generating more money: M-M') learns how to free itself considerably from the constraints of the real world where it still needs to materialize into a particular commodity (C) in the generation of surplus value (M-C-M'). Additionally, as Luhmann notes at the beginning of his Observations on Modernity, the distinction between structure and semantics “is self-contained […] It is itself a semantic distinction”. Translated into traditional Marxist terms: the distinction between base and superstructure is drawn on the level of the latter, even when granting that the superstructure neither floats around in nor comes out of thin air, but is determined by the base. Still, in an elementary sense, I subscribe to the basic historical materialist conviction that “social being determines thought”, although what this formula entails precisely stands in need of further clarification. I will try to do this in the context of the more specific analyses which make up my study rather than in the form of preemptive formulaic statements of my own. I must confess that I do not have a fully worked-out concept of modernity at my disposal. The only thing I can offer the reader instead for the time being is, embarrassingly enough, a metaphor; namely of modernity as a “horizon”. I do have my reasons, or at

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least excuses, for this methodological incompleteness, which to some extent stems from the nature of the problem of modernity itself. In my own defense, this arguably has the advantage that I cannot be accused of having “applied” a closed conception of modernity to modern Chinese philosophy as a passive receptacle. My assumptions were to a considerable extent arrived at immanently and resulted from an attempt to engage with the texts on which my study is based. Obviously, the following remarks are only meant as preliminarily considerations which still require further substantial elaboration.

As a more or less technical term, the notion of “horizon” (Horizont) derives from the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), appears in Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900-2002) work on hermeneutics, and is repeatedly employed by Luhmann within the framework of his systems theory as well. In all three cases, the notion of a horizon denotes both a limit to observation, as a line beyond which nothing can be identified or discerned, as well as a determinate perspective which enables observations and interpretations to take place through limiting and making selections from a potentially endless and indiscriminate totality of information. In the language of the philosophy of transcendental subjectivity: a horizon mediates between the perceiving “subject” and the perceived “object” and allows the former to perceive something specific and contextualized instead of remaining faced with the inaccessible “whole” of a reality devoid of discriminations. For Tang Junyi too, there could be no object without a simultaneously restrictive and enabling horizon (jingjie 境界) intrinsically linked to the subject, even when the horizon in question is one in which individual subjects do not distinguish themselves from the “scatteredness of the myriad things” (wanwu shusan 萬物殊散), are completely caught up as one “thing” amongst others in what they observe, and do not yet realize that the category of “thingliness” is but one (in Tang’s view the lowest) mode of perception contingent and dependent on the subject's involvement. The “object” made accessible through a determinate horizon of observation

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12 “The possibilities of a meaningful grasp of the world are themselves attuned to – and then require – the necessity of a purely momentary grasp of the world at any time. Only very little can form the actual focus of attention or be treated as an actual theme of communication. Everything else, including the world as a whole, is […] accessible only sequentially and selectively […] This is what Husserl meant when he described the world as the “horizon” of actual intentions. It is actual as a horizon, never as a universitas rerum [totality of things].” Niklas Luhmann, Ecological Communication, London: Polity Press, 1989, p.17.
however, is not necessarily an external reality incapable of drawing distinctions of its own, but can come in the form of another subject, as well as in that of observations of other subjects. The latter can in turn constitute interpretative horizons in their own right, applicable to different “objects” in the aforementioned sense. When understood as a horizon, modernity refers to the (a prior inaccessible) totality of semantic transcriptions of the structural features of modernity, which obviously cannot be straightforwardly given as a predetermined and circumscribed whole. Tang Junyi himself already described the present age as the “communal horizon” (gongtong zhi jing 共同之境) of his own philosophical work.14 For Luhmann, it is in a sense social systems, not individual human beings, which dispose over their own operational horizons, meaning that radically different socially performative distinctions are made depending on whether, say an individual human being (and this is already a specific determination), is approached as a physical body, a taxpayer, a customer, a defendant, a transcendental subject, or the sinful pinnacle of creation. Luhmann does not assume that “human beings, understood as self-grounding subjects, can choose the distinctions with which they dissect the world and designate what is to be observed”. On the contrary, he thinks that “human beings are socialized through participation in social communication to such a degree that they can choose only from within the framework of possibilities that have been made accessible for this choice.”15 Modern societal complexity thus enters into the in itself already enormously complicated epistemological question of the overall conditions of knowledge. This means that, to paraphrase Kant, the question concerning the conditions of the possibility of knowledge in general has to be related to the conditions of the possibility of the “objects” of knowledge, insofar as the latter are taken to refer to structural formations which determine which and the way in which semantic accounts of their functioning and effects are given and reformulated. This should not be interpreted as implying that the “purely philosophical” question which asks how knowledge in general or accurate and true knowledge in particular is possible has to be discarded as illegitimate, let alone pointless. But an inquiry into what is at stake in different versions of this “perennial” question at a particular moment in time and within a specific socio-historical setting has important consequences for our understanding of what it means to pose this question in the first place and can indicate what is included and excluded by the way in which it is posed.16 From this perspective, it is modernity as a dynamic ensemble of social structures which

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14 Tang, [1977], p.661.
16 “To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete. All self-knowledge arises from what is historically pregiven, what with Hegel we call “substance,” because it underlies all subjective intentions and actions, and
ultimately conditions how philosophical theories such as the New Confucian one observe the environment of modern society through the lens of other (philosophical, political, economical) observations received and produced there. This is also the underlying reason why I think it is necessary to problematize the conceptual solutions encountered in modern Chinese philosophy. My intention is not to “debunk” or “expose”, but to understand them, even if this involves occasionally resorting to what Gilles Deleuze famously described as his method of interpretative “enculage”. Heidegger once complained, full of pathos, and somewhat pathetically, about the tragic spectacle of great philosophers having to put up with being “refuted” by doctoral candidates. But perhaps one does a greater disservice to them by nodding at their ideas in reverent bewilderment. Conversations only tend to go on so long after people find themselves in perfect agreement.

Before presenting a short overview of the content of my study, I would like to go on to provide a further idea of my overall take on the phenomenon of New Confucianism. My approach is in a way close to, yet also miles apart from, the one articulated by Jesús Solé-Farràs in a recent monograph. Solé-Farràs sets out to grasp the resurgence of interest in Confucianism in twenty and twenty-first century China by analyzing New Confucianism as a specific form of discourse, constructed from the early twentieth century onwards, without thereby restricting himself to the “speculative endeavors” of its most philosophically-minded representatives. I have already indicated that it is precisely these particular endeavors in which I am personally most interested. As he states at the beginning of his study: “Since current Chinese society is in no way an institutionally Confucianist society, therefore, at this time it is especially pertinent to speak essentially of a discourse when we talk about Confucianism, because, indeed, we may not be able to talk about anything else.” Joël Thoraval makes the following apposite remarks:

What has disappeared are the material and symbolic conditions of this form of thought, both in the case of ritual as well as bodily practices. What we today call Confucian philosophy is the result of a dramatic

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19 Solé-Farràs, 2014, p.1
effort to preserve valuable teachings which have been severed from their conditions of possibility in a new language.\(^{21}\)

However, it seems to me that Solé-Farràs's attempt to approach the appearance of New Confucianism as essentially a discursive or semantic phenomenon is marred from the onset by his self-professed but dogmatically presented acceptance of Confucianism as “the core and preferential vehicle of Chinese culture”, of which he assumes that the fundamental ethics “as a syncretic evolution, and presumably uninterruptedly, has survived into the twenty-first century”.\(^{22}\) The author's methodologically unmotivated overidentification with his subject matter is, in my view, detrimental to what he sets out to accomplish. He runs the risk of remaining on a purely descriptive level, reiterating a selective number of self-identifications of the “object” of study and thereby remaining in an uncritical agreement with what he describes. One thus gets the impression of reading a manual for assembling a home appliance, which never questions the reason why let alone contests the fact that the commodity in question needs to be produced, bought, and used in the first place. It comes as no surprise then that at the end of his book, Solé-Farràs's descriptive approach culminates in a categorized list summarizing the “philosophical and ideological principles of New Confucianism” with regards to anything ranging from ontology, cosmology, ethics and religion, to science and technology, politics, education, the economy and so on\(^{23}\), without considering how this distinctly modern disciplinary division of knowledge already affects, reorders, and possibly distorts those aspects of the Confucian tradition which are categorized under one of these rubrics.\(^{24}\) One cannot help but wonder how generalizing assumptions such as the one


\(^{22}\) Solé-Farràs, 2014, p.2. Cf. p.229: “We have tried, by theorising its construction, to explain the importance of the discourse, and have already done so without distancing ourselves from the discourse of New Confucianism as a concrete example, because we believe in its future projection”. My italics.

\(^{23}\) Solé-Farràs, 2014, pp.217-220. Solé-Farràs's “discourse analysis” of the 1958 New Confucian Manifesto (see chapter 1 of this study) reads like a bare summary of the content of this text. See Solé-Farràs, 2014, pp.171-213.

just quoted (Confucianism as the “core” and “preferential vehicle” of Chinese culture) can be squared with the theoretical logic behind Solé-Farràs's rather sketchy presentation of his idea of discourse. For Solé-Farràs, “discourses are dynamic concretions [...] singularizations constantly being refined which, by virtue of the association of ideological elements [...] occur within complex, heterogeneous and permeable structures called discursive spaces.”

He rightly stresses the importance of these “discursive spaces”, which, at least as I understand it, should be viewed as susceptible to influences from the non-discursive in the broadest sense of the word, that is to say, from the historical and the social environment of a given discourse. As Foucault put it succinctly: “One cannot just talk about anything in any age”. This remains the case even when one assumes the environmental impact on discursive phenomena to necessarily occur only mediately (within discourse), i.e. only after the discourse in question has formed a specific representation of the historical environment in which it is embedded, an environment which is never so much “given” as it is constructed, on the basis and within the constraints of conditions set by this environment.

In this specific sense, indeed, “il n'y a pas de hors-texte”. This constructivist assumption also implies that a certain discourse can constitute an environment for another discourse and is able to use the semantics of different discursive formations in representing and making the (non-discursive) social reality by which it is conditioned accessible. Bearing this in mind, I do not think it is quite so easy to distinguish, as Cheng Zhizhong does in the introduction to his comprehensive study of the thought of Mou Zongsan, between a form of “internal interpretation” (neizai quanshi 内在诠释) which traces the inner logic and immanent goals of philosophical ideas and theories on the one hand, and a mode of “external interpretation” (waizai quanshi 外在诠释) inquiring into the embeddedness of philosophical discourse in history and social reality on the other.

Rather, the externality of the environmental context to the inner workings of discourse is something which first of all has to be established “internally”, but no matter what degree of freedom from external determinations a certain type of discourse grants itself (and philosophy often goes very far in its pursuit of liberty), the fact that even this internally established immunity to the “outside” is conditioned by the

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25 Solé-Farràs, 2014, p.3.
socio-historical environment goes to show that discursive closure can only be assumed to go so far. It is only within specific situations and circumstances that it becomes a problem to stress the dependence of semantics on structure. That Cheng Zhihua identifies the “internal” form of interpretation with an outlook which “discusses essence through itself” (即本质以论本质), whereas the external interpretative approach “discusses essence with reference to existence” (即存在以论本质) entails an ontological distinction that is not straightforwardly reconcilable with a philosophical perspective which protests against the separation of essence and existence, such as is found in the works of Mou Zongsan.

I think it is precisely the problematic relation between essence and existence which can be effectively clarified (though of course not explained away or let alone “solved”) through the adoption of what Cheng calls an “external” approach. In any case, the complexity of what Solé-Farràs terms the “consubstantial interdependence” between a (semantic) discourse and the (structural) discursive space in which the former is embedded, should not be passed over in silence, but reflexively applied in his own (highly metaphorical) treatment of discourse. Doing so could help to cast some light on Solé-Farràs's approach of discourses as merely functional operators, largely dependent on a seamless “inner coherence”, and seemingly endowed with the sole purpose of simultaneously preserving themselves and maintaining what they describe, a purpose manifesting itself in the “need to adapt to the changing circumstances of external reality”.

He takes it to be self-evident that “the very concepts of this [Confucian] culture are not just conjectural, but rather, through constant adaptation wherever necessary to the requirements of reality, have even survived the demise of the Chinese empire”. It seems doubtful to me that “its transformation into a philosophical discourse, in the Western sense of the term, must be seen merely as one of the multiple manifestations of Confucianism”, insofar as this is meant to imply that such a manifestation does not involve a considerable degree of mediation, if not distortion. All of this makes the author's first announcement in the introduction that “this is a book on discourse” rather doubtful, suggesting instead that his work is part and parcel of the very same discourse it sets out to analyze. Solé-Farràs's Confucianism, which strangely enough is supposed to

30 I do not think Cheng is justified in leaving Mou Zongsan's earliest articles on socio-political issues out of consideration and consequently arguing that Mou's philosophical career only really takes off with his researches into the Book of Changes as a source of cosmological knowledge. See Cheng, 2009, pp.86-87. I draw on some of these in my opinion crucial texts in chapter 2 and 3 of my dissertation.

31 Solé-Farràs, 2014, p.3.

32 It is a pity that Solé-Farràs relegates the Foucauldian concept of discourse to a mere footnote (p.8) and simply notes that he has no desire to enter into a discussion with it nor to contradict it (p.5).

33 Solé-Farràs, 2014, p.4.


both originate with and predate the figure of Confucius, seems to have the miraculous ability to manifest itself in a variety of ways without ever losing its self-identity or becoming truly subject to and conditioned by the discursive spaces in which it has always managed to find and recognize itself throughout the ages. I must confess to being largely agnostic concerning the question of what Confucianism is or is not. But I fundamentally disagree with Solé-Farràs's statement that “the Confucianist discourse of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is only intelligible to us if we can understand the basic concepts of its philosophical tradition.”

I am inclined to take the opposite hermeneutic approach. I think this particular discourse can only be understood if its present discursive space is taken into account, and if one understands something about the historical juncture at which something like “tradition” and “philosophy” comes to be constructed and renegotiated in the first place. This does not mean that I dismiss the question of what certain Confucian ideas originally meant (e.g. what does ren 仁 (“humaneness”) mean in the text of the Lunyu 論語, and how was this notion interpreted in subsequent commentaries?), in their own historical context, as irrelevant. I simply mean that the present time, which unavoidably forms the horizon of any observation aimed at “unearthing” or reconstructing such a meaning, cannot but influence a theory about, say, the meaning of ren, since the question of what ren means for us today (and “we”, as Satan says about himself to Jesus in the Gospels, “are many”) is always, so to speak, the question behind this question. Perhaps one can argue that asking what ren means is already a false start, and that one should instead inquire into what it does, or try to find out how one can do it. If on the other hand, our object of inquiry, such as in the case of New Confucianism, is a modern form of discourse, which describes itself constantly with reference to a past that can only be accessed and represented through the present, it seems logical not to shift all our attention to the “formative era” (the Zhou 周 dynasty, the Warring States period, Song-Ming 宋明 Neo-Confucianism) identified by this discourse, but instead, to look at how the past it describes can be grasped in the context of the present day.
and of how these mechanisms influence philosophical and popular argumentation and opinion. To do so would imply embarking on the complex and difficult endeavor of theorizing the impact ideas have on the realities they attempt to describe, and in many cases purport to be able to transform. Karl Mannheim rightly called this relation between thought and experience an “inexhaustible theme”\textsuperscript{40}, with the same sense of pioneering enthusiasm Husserl displayed when describing his “discovery” of the phenomenological method. Such an undertaking would be complicated by the simple fact that discourse not only influences and mediates (e.g. political) power, but at the same time offers a description of its own real or intended discursive power and social performativity. Such a description allows a given discourse to reflect on its own observed, anticipated or imagined societal impact and is part and parcel of how it articulates this concrete functioning within the world it distinguishes from itself on and in its own terms. The self-description of a certain discourse is not simply a supplementary dimension, but determines how it is observed by other social agents (often with a discursive framework of their own) and how it attempts, succeeds, or fails to influence them. The problem of ideology clearly imposes itself here. One would have to go on to provide a theorization of ideology with enough explanatory force to account for the position from which one can observe what ideology is and is not and what does and does not qualify as ideological. As the philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin stresses by invoking the work of David Bloor\textsuperscript{41}, it is naive to think that “only error is the prisoner of its social or cultural conditions of formation” and to consider truth “as the meta-social emergence of adequation to reality”\textsuperscript{42}. If I were to attempt a very general and formal definition of ideology here, I would propose the following provisional formula: an ensemble of representations primarily intended not to influence a certain state of affairs (which it represents 'directly' as well as mediately through a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Karl Mannheim, \textit{Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge}, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, p.72.
\end{itemize}

As Bloor writes: “Thus the sociology of knowledge is confined to the sociology of error.” Bloor, 1976, p.12. Morin believes that this leads to the following paradox: “En vertu même des principes qui l'autorisent à réduire la connaissance scientifique à ses conditions sociales et historiques de formation, une telle sociologie de la connaissance devient elle-même un produit historique propre à un certain type de société et elle détruit le trône souverain où elle croit s'installer.” Morin, 1991, p.17. I think Morin is a bit too quick to dismiss the determinism he takes to be inherent in the approach which does not exclude (scientific and logical) truth from external conditioning as the source of this paradox, which can be otherwise accounted for by a recourse to the self-referential nature of systems of meaning (Luhmann), though of course not explained away. Morin's grounding of the autonomy of (individual) thought from its (biological, cultural and social) conditions in the possibility of deviance as individual creativity (p.26, pp.111-133) is in itself distinctly modern, and thus equally conditioned by that which it seeks to emancipate itself from. See section 2.4 of the second chapter of my study. Morin also fails to address Bloor's own arguments against critics who claim that his "strong program", extending the sociological study of knowledge to the hard sciences (without supposing that something is necessarily "false" simply by virtue of being causally conditioned by external factors) is self-refuting. See Bloor, 1976, pp.17-18.
description of its own putative efficacy in changing this state of affairs), but rather to influence the position of its own representation of this state of affairs itself within the real state of affairs behind this very same representation. An ideological representation would then be one which is not so much set up to effect a change in the represented state of affairs, but one which is bent on increasing its own discursive power within the real state of affairs, distorting the latter as much as is needed to accomplish this covert goal. The focus thus shifts from the (social, political) problem itself to magnifying the ability of the representation in question to intervene in and change the state of affairs put forward as in some sense problematic. In simpler terms: the solution comes to override the problem, mystifying the latter in the process, while acting as a semantics unimpeded by structure. As Althusser wrote, inspired by Marx, but perhaps equally indebted to Kant: “[I]t is in the question itself, that is, in the way it reflects that object (and not in the object itself) that ideological mystification […] should be sought.”

Additionally, one could qualify as ideological any representation of a state of affairs which presents itself as being able to intervene in the problem it addresses without becoming part of, or at least tangled up in, the very same problem, like a god for whom the divine economy governing the world is a matter of perfect indifference, who invests and risks nothing through his mysterious expenditure and observes the perdition and anticipates the final salvation of all things while pairing his nails, without realizing the clippings will bring disaster to some and become a new source of revenue for others. In any case, ideology is not only a quality we as observers of a certain discourse may or may not attribute to a particular socially performative statement, but also provides a criterion for some discourses to distinguish themselves from others. This leads one to the entirely unsurprising but nonetheless crucial observation that descriptions of ideology can themselves be ideological. This self-referential or “autological” quality of discourse cannot be simply reasoned away. We can thus exclude a priori the possibility of a neutral and “objective” viewpoint from nowhere, which would really leave us with nothing to look at and nothing to see through. I will not dwell on these questions concerning what philosophers would call the relation between thought and being any further for now. They were merely raised in order to point beyond what can be treated here and indicate them as the horizon against which the following observations take place, a horizon which the latter can hopefully help to outline in the process. They are questions in which, as Heidegger used to say, “we ourselves, the questioners, are also included in the question, placed in the question”.

2. Chapter outline

(1) In the first chapter, I provide a critical overview of some prominent examples of discourse on the revival and reinvention of Confucianism and the Chinese tradition in contemporary China. I start out by discussing the position of the Chinese Communist Party vis-à-vis the return of Confucius to the post-revolutionary mainland and analyze the duplicitous attitude both the Party as well as intellectuals and academics who call for a modernized and selective restoration of Confucianism display towards cultural tradition, which they approach as both a self-sufficient source of (transcendental) “values” and a functional resource of (empirical) “interests”. I indicate that the apparent rebirth of historical and cultural consciousness following the de facto exorcism of the specters of Marx and Mao from the People's Republic is primarily run through with nationalist intentions and pragmatic motivations, and is predicated on an active forgetfulness towards the recent past, as well as on a tactical bracketing of the problem of modernity and the Communist Party's unprecedented embrace of capitalist strategies of development. As a result, the problematic relation between the difference represented by a culturally specific semantics and the identity of a fundamentally “wordless” societal structure is disavowed and repressed in a piecemeal and ideological remembrance of the past. Zhang Xianglong's Utopian proposal to establish “conservation areas for Confucian culture” is used as an illustration of the conceptual and practical difficulty of insulating cultural conservatism from the logic of development. I then go on to introduce Jiang Qing's much-debated, controversial project of “political Confucianism” and analyze the unstable distinction he draws between a “spiritual Confucianism” represented by Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan, and his own vision of an institutionalized and authoritarian Confucian order. I argue that Tang's and Mou's categorical rejection of Marxism and communism and their initial attempts to establish an educational framework for the transmission of Confucian learning and Chinese culture at large through the Hong Kong New Asia College in the context of the Cold War, belie Jiang's sectarian classification of these thinkers as aloof, apolitical “metaphysicians”. In this way, I try to show that their appropriation of the dialectical philosophy of Hegel had an irreducibly historical dimension and cannot be explained away as a regrettable instance of traditionalist intellectuals being “epistemologically colonized” by Western thought. In the remaining portion of the chapter, I explore the implications of the fact that Jiang shares an explicitly anti-communist and largely Hegelian idea of Chinese culture as a simultaneously substantial and subjective Spirit in common with Mou and Tang, and trace the continuing impact of the paradigm of culture as Spirit in contemporary Chinese political
philosophy, specifically in relation to culturalist rejections of democracy. In doing so, I try to demonstrate that a closer study of the thought of “spiritual” Confucianists can provide a critical perspective on the historical rootedness of current discourse on historical and cultural consciousness, and can clarify some of the conceptual contradictions which have accompanied attempts to ground the specificity and validity of Chinese philosophy for the modern world in a comparative manner.

(2) The intention of the second chapter is to further historically situate the genesis of New Confucian philosophy as well as to retroactively contextualize recent narratives surrounding the so-called “Confucian revival”. The focus throughout this chapter lies on the problem of discontinuity, that is to say of time, or rather of a time specific to our present day and age. After the introductory section in which I reflect on the issue of tradition and (dis)continuity, I proceed by first sketching the broader historical background of the emergence of New Confucian (philosophical) discourse, something that was not yet adequately done in the first chapter, which had a more contemporary focus. I single out the period of May Fourth/the New Culture Movement and the way it has been remembered and interpreted by traditionalist thinkers such as the New Confucians in order to do so. Next, I approach the phenomenon of New Confucianism in the context of the modern reclassification of knowledge. Firstly, I reflect on the transformation of Confucianism into a form of philosophy and the structurally conditioned abstraction from history involved in this process. Secondly, I analyze the position of New Confucian philosophy towards science developed in the wake of the 1923 debate on science and metaphysics and outline what the intellectual historian Wang Hui has described as the “turn towards the subject” occurring in the aftermath of this epochal debate. Throughout, I refer to Tang Junyi's and Mou Zongsan's dialectical criticism of Marx, Marxism and communism, and give some indications of their indebtedness to German Idealist philosophy (specifically Hegel) as a resource of socio-political ideas and a vehicle for reversing what they took to be the disastrous course of the materialist dialectic. In their recurring and trenchant criticisms, as I try to demonstrate via a brief discussion of Feng Youlan's social philosophy in the light of the work of the Marxist theorist Moishe Postone, “Marx” and “Marxism” can be taken as signifiers for modernity in general. Since Tang's and Mou's relation to Marxism and communism has generally been glossed over in the existing secondary literature, this will require the introduction of a significant amount of textual material, for which I ask the reader's indulgence. The specific problem of the historical discontinuity resulting from modernization, which for Tang and Mou was symbolized by revolutionary Chinese communism, is put forward as revealing
the inner tension in their work between the theoretical presuppositions they comparatively ascribed to the Chinese tradition on the one hand, and the ontological baseline stemming from their critique of modernity on the other.

(3) In the third and final chapter, I further elaborate on the philosophical consequences of the above-mentioned contradictory tension with reference to Tang Junyi's, Mou Zongsan's, as well as Xiong Shili's "purely philosophical" works, in which their historical and socio-political concerns have been to a large extent sublimated into conceptual tensions and notional fault lines. In the process I try to connect and merge the two main aspects of my object of research and thus of my own dissertation, namely the historical dimension captured by the question concerning the structural and semantic impact of modernity and novel forms of discourse on neoconservative intellectuals in twentieth-century and contemporary China on the one hand, and the philosophical dimension focused on delineating the conceptual repercussions of the specific conception of modernity articulated in the work of the modern Confucian philosophers I have studied on the other. In the first section of this chapter, I investigate the fluctuating boundaries drawn by Xiong Shili and Tang Junyi between science and philosophy and try to think through the significance of the residual category of "wisdom" as a form of knowledge by contrastively invoking the work of the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. I then proceed by addressing some of the crucial paradoxes and aporias which have beset their attempts to establish various ontological and epistemological unities in the context of their own endeavors to both accommodate and keep a certain distance from the scientific worldview and endow Confucian philosophy with a comparatively established identity distinct from both Western philosophy and Buddhist thought. In the case of Xiong, I mainly focus on his magnum opus, the *New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness* from 1932, while at the same time drawing attention to his somewhat understudied socio-political writings. Tang's work on the other hand is presented through the medium of a relatively little-known essay from 1943 entitled *Introduction to the World of Sense*. The second and largest part of this chapter is devoted to studying and situating the thought of Mou Zongsan philosophically as well as historically. I outline the trajectory from his earlier works on logic and epistemology to his mature "double-leveled" ontology inspired by Kant, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, and try to establish the socio-political background of his philosophical undertaking with reference to his concept of the "self-negation of moral reason" and his lifelong mission to overcome Communist ideology through philosophy.
Chapter 1: History and Historical Consciousness in Contemporary China:  
Political Confucianism, Spiritual Confucianism, and the Politics of Spirit

They are to be rescued as a bit of unconscious transcription of history. For they must be helped to procure self-consciousness against what they explicitly mean.
Adorno

In fact, I do understand history: it is just that I do not remember it.
Mou Zongsan

1.1 Introduction: enter the ghost of Confucius

The renewed interest in and discursive prominence of Confucianism in contemporary China is a remarkable and complex phenomenon. Once vilified as the main obstacle standing in the way of modernization and progress and condemned as the supreme symbol and idol of a backwards, feudal ideology destined for the infamous “dustbins of history”, Confucius seems to have made a surprising comeback on the Chinese scene. During most of the twentieth century, his name was most often heard on the mainland in the ominous rallying cry to “smash the Confucian shop” (dadao kongjiadian 打倒孔家店), a slogan first formulated by Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962) in 1921, one of the leading figures of the iconoclast New Culture Movement (Xin wenhua yundong 新文化运动) which saw radical socio-political and cultural change as a prerequisite for “saving the nation” (jiuguo 救国). Decades later, towards the end of the Cultural Revolution, Confucius came to be identified with Mao Zedong's 毛泽东 heir apparent turned traitor Lin Biao 林彪 as the enemy of the people par excellence during the Criticize Lin, Criticize Confucius Campaign (Pi Kong pi Lin yundong 批孔批林运动) which lasted from 1973 to 1976. Nowadays, following the reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping 邓小平 from 1978 onwards and China's subsequent rise as an economic superpower on the international stage, the tide

seems to have turned, making it possible for Confucius to open up shop on the mainland once again. The dustbins are now looked upon as treasuries, the garbage men and the gravediggers have taken to recycling and effecting miraculous resurrections. There is much talk nowadays of a revival of Confucianism, but it is not always clear precisely what is being revived and who stands to gain in the process. As befitting such a dramatic comeback, a prize had to be paid for being brought back from the dead. Confucius can now be made to say and mean virtually anything, and can be presented as anything ranging from a proto-anarchist, a communitarian or a personal improvement guru, to a provider of wisdoms to smooth over business negotiations.⁴ The dual trends of commodification and depoliticization have perhaps been the dominant features of the Confucian comeback to contemporary Chinese society.⁵ In a sense, the transformation of the proper name “Confucius” into an infinitely malleable signifier was already to a considerable extent accomplished in the above-mentioned campaign against general Lin Biao, who was rather randomly associated with Confucius, simply because the latter had come to mean “counterrevolutionary” and not much else besides. This makes the current rectification of the name of Confucius all the more remarkable. Even earlier, during the “New Life Movement” (xin shenghuo yundong 新生活運動) launched by Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 in February 1934, one could already witness a radical reduction of traditional cardinal virtues such as li 禮 (“ritual propriety”) to standards of “public morality” (gongde 公德). This movement aimed at a complete transformation of society (and ultimately at “national salvation”) through a revitalization of “traditional” morality by mobilizing the populace in mass campaigns for “hygienic and behavioral reform”, in order to root out “decadent” habits such as spitting, littering, gambling, disorderly queuing and so on. Needless to say, popular mobilization was conducted under strict supervision of the army and the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 國民黨, GMD).⁶ From Chiang Kai-shek's Outline of the New

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Life Movement (Xin shenghuo yundong gangyao 新生活运动纲要), it becomes apparent that the tradition the movement wanted to restore was a very peculiar and specific one, since the behavior of the Western bourgeoisie, “including the way they dress, eat and walk”, as well as their “love for the state and loyalty to the nation” was presented in this text as being “in total accordance with li [禮, ritual], yi [義, righteousness], lian [廉, honesty] and chi [恥, a sense of shame]”. It would not be such a stretch of the imagination to compare the Guomindang's movement for “orderliness and cleanliness” to the education campaign spearheaded by the Central Commission for Guiding Cultural and Educational Progress of the Chinese Communist Party (Zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang jingshen wenming jianshe zhidao weiyuanhui 中国共产党中央精神文明建设指导委员会) in the months leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, in which a similar rhetoric appealing to “traditional morality” was employed to discourage (perhaps equally traditional?) habits and customs considered to be uncivilized and offensive in the eyes of the Western world imagined to be observing the Olympic games.8

Of course, the ambiguity of the signifiers “Confucius” or “Confucian” need not stand in the way of their meaningfulness and social relevance, nor should it lead us to overlook the symbolic significance of their reappearance and reappraisal. That being said, the risk of over-inflating the magnitude and significance of the return of Confucius to mainland China is perhaps much greater. This is undoubtedly mainly because the gradual and partial reemergence of Confucianism has also manifested itself in an often discussed adoption of Confucianist or at least Confucian-sounding terms by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP).9 The current president of the People's Republic (PRC), Xi Jinping 习近平, has made statements which directly put forward the idea that writings such as the Analects are a fountainhead of wisdom that could benefit both China in its search for sustainable growth, as well as Western countries in their struggle against the economic crisis.10 The establishment of academic

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7 Quoted in Dirlik, 1975, p.960. Transcription amended from Wade-Giles to pinyin.
The global proliferation of the contested “Confucius Institutes” (Kongzi xueyuan 孔子学院), hundreds of which have already been established in countries all over the world, is another notable example of how China uses Confucianism as a form of symbolic capital capable of metonomously representing the whole nation. That the PRC's alternative to the Nobel Peace Prize bears the name “Confucius Peace Price” (kongzi hepingjiang 孔子和平奖), awarded to Vladimir Putin in 2011, is also telling. However, as the widely reported incident of a huge bronze statue of Confucius being installed in January 2011 in front of the National Museum on Tiananmen square, only to be removed a few months later indicates, it is safe to say that we are far from witnessing a full-scale conversion to Confucianism on the part of CCP and its over eighty million members, even on the highly malleable level of (nationalist) symbolism. Many still believe that Confucius belongs in and not in front of a museum. According to most sources, the removal of the statue of the Sage came about under the pressure of the Party's left-wing fraction, which remains very much opposed to anything even remotely smelling of “Confucian feudalism”. Indeed, some observers see indications that Maoism is also in the process of being revived alongside its historical nemesis, especially as an

overcome the evils of capitalist “greed” and to apply Confucian ethical principles in business management as a way of turning capitalism into a force beneficial to the world's population can also be found in philosophical discourse. See for example Cheng Zhongying 成中英, “Creating the Fate of Humanity in the Twenty-First Century: Globalized Economic Development and the Position of Confucianism and Confucian Merchants” (Chuangzao ershiyi shiji de renlei mingyun: quanqiu hua jingji fazhan yu ruxue ji rushang de dingwei 创造二十一世纪的人类命运: 全球化经济发展与儒学及儒商的定位), Kongzi yanjiu 孔子研究, 2, 2000, pp.4-10.

http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/01/04/debate-over-chinese-funded-institutes-american-universities


ideological tool in the inter-party struggle for political power. The recent spectacular downfall of Chongqing Party secretary Bo Xilai 薄熙来 would seem to corroborate this suggestion. Moreover, as Sébastien Billioud cautions, “[t]he frequently encountered expression of a “Confucian revival” is indeed very problematic: not only does it point today to very different social phenomena, but it also artificially gives the impression of a community of worldviews among Confucian activists and sympathizers.”  

On the level of philosophical discourse, such an undue homogenization is also the immediate side effect of incautiously using the catch-all term “New Confucianism” (xin ruxue 新儒学) to (often retrospectively) denote and group a variety of thinkers together into a consistent “movement”, divided into different “generations”. This homogenization obscures a different common ground which cuts through the sometimes rather sectarian boundaries between Confucian and non-Confucian modern Chinese intellectuals. One of the main ambitions of this study is to try to show more precisely how the New Confucian movement can be contextualized as a crucial yet essentially “unexceptional” part of recent Chinese intellectual history, unexceptional in the sense that unlike the often highly idiosyncratic semantics of their (conceptual) solutions, the conditions and the problems New Confucians were and are still facing are not, so to speak, their own.

In the next section (1.2), I will start by further briefly considering (perceptions of) the Communist Party’s changed attitude towards Confucianism before turning to the main subject of this chapter, which will be devoted to situating a few representative examples of academic discourse on the revival of

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15 For a very detailed, well-documented and engaging discussion, see Willy Lam, “The Maoist Revival and the Conservative Turn in Chinese Politics”, China Perspectives, 2, 2012 pp.5-15.


Confucianism and traditional culture in contemporary China (Kang Xiaoguang, Zhang Xianglong, Jiang Qing, Fan Ruiping, Zhao Tingyang and Tu Weiming amongst others) within the general context of the problem of modernity and in relation to the work of what is known as the “second generation” of New Confucian thinkers (1.3 and 1.4). I will argue that the revival of Confucian discourse in contemporary China, which given recent historical events such as the Cultural Revolution, could be seen as a historical transformation of considerable significance, is conditioned by an anterior transformation in the conception of history and historical consciousness within this discourse. In doing so, the idea of *history as Spirit* and the notion of historical consciousness as *the consciousness of this history* will emerge as a common interpretative framework behind a whole range of varied, diverse and sometimes even conflicting approaches of the relation between Confucianism (and traditional culture in general) and the modern world. My guiding assumption is that the communality of this semantic framework is in turn grounded in the basic structural unity of modernity, which has been and is still reproducing itself throughout societies across the globe.
1.2 Confucianism in contemporary China: between historical value and present interest

From a historical point of view, it is hard to miss the irony of the current situation: a revolutionary party which continued to champion campaigns against Confucianism when the latter had already lost most of its self-evidence and firm standing as a political force and framework for the organization of social life now routinely pays lip-service to the Sage from Qufu (in the present province of Shandong) as a venerable representative of, to use the official catchphrase, “China's outstanding traditional culture” (Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua 中华优秀传统文化). A telling example of how the attitude of China's leadership towards its own tradition at large has changed is the government-funded “National Qing History Project” (Guojia Qingshi Gongcheng 国家清史工程), which was launched in 2002 and employs over 1600 scholars from academic institutions all over the country in the compilation of a new official history of the last imperial dynasty, the Qing 清, which ruled from 1644 to 1912. This new history would serve to supplant the Draft of the History of the Qing dynasty (Qingshi gao 清史稿), compiled under the patronage of the Republican government in 1928 by officials who had more or less retained their allegiance to the Manchu empire, or at least strove to establish a form of historical and political continuity between the old empire and the new nation-state. The draft is now generally considered to provide more insight into the historical outlook of its compilers than into the actual history of the dynasty in question. It is not altogether impossible that the same will prove to be the case in a more indirect and complex way for the outcome of the current project. Meanwhile, government investments in the project have already risen to 75 million US dollars and are estimated to result in a massive multi-volume work of over 30 million Chinese characters. In an article discussing the project, Norman Ho notes that the government's involvement reveals that the CCP has drastically changed its course since the Cultural Revolution. He also makes the following important observation:

Throughout Chinese history, one of the most important jobs of a new dynasty was to write the history of the dynasty that preceded it. These official histories, or zhengshi [正史], written under state patronage and direction, served as a legitimizing force for the new dynasty in question since they placed the new

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emperors within the long timeline of China’s dynastic history. Through the act of writing and publishing the zhengshi, the new dynasty would in essence establish itself as the valid successor to the preceding dynasty.20

The direct and substantial support for the Qing History Project would thus seem to suggest that instead of defining itself in contradistinction to the past, as was once and for a long time the case, the Communist Party is beginning to present itself as a legitimate successor to and inheritor of China's imperial history. In a speech delivered in the hallowed environment of the Great Hall of the People at a prestigious international conference organized in September 2014 on the occasion of commemorating the 2565th birthday of Confucius, president Xi Jinping took care to point out that although the CCP still adheres to Marxism as its guiding ideology, its members should not be taken for either “historical nihilists” (lishi xuwuzhuyizhe 历史虚无主义者) or “cultural nihilists” (wenhua xuwuzhuyizhe 文化虚无主义者).21 Put differently: tradition is no longer considered to be something that, in the words of Karl Marx, “weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living”22, but rather as a continuum stable and enduring enough to accommodate even the most violent outburst of a once so iconoclastic Chinese communism. When Jiang Zemin 江泽民, president of the PRC from 1993 to 2003, spoke of the “self-perfection of socialism” (社会主义的自我完善) over and against the Party's former “Stalinist economics”23, he obviously assumed the existence of such a continuum, allowing the economic reforms to be seen as an internal correction, rather than as an abandonment, of socialism. Nevertheless, Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879-1942), one of the founding members of the CCP, would undoubtedly be surprised

20 Norman Ho, “Unlikely Bedfellows?”, Harvard International Review, 2009. http://hir.harvard.edu/agriculture/unlikely-bedfellows. Zhao Ma discusses the government's involvement in the project in Zhao, 2008, pp.123-126. He is however clearly less interested in how the compilation of a new history of the Qing possibly reflects the altered self-understanding of China's political elite and is wary of interpreting the project as a primarily ideologically motivated undertaking. Zhao writes: “if we look at the project as nothing but a mere government-sponsored showcase in the field of humanities and social sciences, we might risk reducing, and even neglecting, the project’s potential academic value and its contemporary relevance, particularly for scholarly communication both within China and beyond.” (p.124).


22 Karl Marx, [1852], “The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm

to see the “idols” which he incited his countrymen to destroy now resurrected and reinstated. The Party’s former anti-traditionalism is thereby reduced to superficial ripples in a deep-level cultural continuity. In doing so, there is an increasing shift from revolutionary politics to cultural nationalism as a source of political legitimacy for a party and a state presenting itself as quintessentially identical to the nation. After all, the idea is still that the downfall of the Party (wangdang 亡党) would equal the end of the country (wangguo 亡国). As Bart Dessein convincingly demonstrates, Confucianism thus comes to serve as a nationalist “civil religion” legitimizing CCP rule.

According to Adrian Chan's research on Chinese Marxism, there were already signs in the early 80s that such a shift was underway. At that time, party theoreticians were beginning to argue for a pragmatic adaptation of Marxism-Leninism to the new historical circumstances in response to Deng's reforms. The gradual de facto abandonment of socialism was justified by such theoreticians through a sly and somewhat sophistic appeal to the Marxist and Maoist stress on the primordial importance of praxis, that is to say by appealing to the supposed principles of those political ideologies in order to justify the practical abandonment of precisely these very same ideologies. Such a logic of “the negation of negation”, according to which the full prior deployment of all the contradictions inherent in capitalist society is the condition of the possibility for the strategically deferred realization of socialism, is of course not foreign to the Marxist tradition at large, specifically in the pseudo-Hegelian variant initiated by Engels and later gratefully adopted by states intent on realizing “socialism in one country”. One need only think of the Communist Manifesto, which, as has been often pointed out, heaps lavish praise on the bourgeoisie's revolutionary achievements, and does so “more powerfully and profoundly than its members have ever known to”.

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28 Tom Rockmore insists on upholding a strict distinction between Marx and (Engelsian) Marxism. See Tom Rockmore, Marx after Marxism. The Philosophy of Karl Marx, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. Also see the next chapter of this study, section 2.3.2.

the form of a renewed appraisal of Confucianism thus presented itself as an ideal means for the alignment of Chinese socialism with what can only be described as full-fledged capitalist strategies of development under strict supervision of the state. David Harvey wryly speaks of “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics”, instead of what has become known as “socialism with Chinese characteristics” (Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi 中国特色社会主义), a phrase in which “Chinese characteristics” would seem to function merely as an indeterminate negation rather than as denoting any positively identifiable attributes.30

Unsurprisingly, the Chinese leadership's unprecedented turn to cultural nationalism has not failed to attract the attention of both scholars and governments worldwide. In July 2011, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission published a report entitled “The Confucian Revival in the Propaganda Narratives of the Chinese Government”.31 The report considers the adaptation of Confucian terms and concepts such as “harmonious society” (hexie shehui 和谐社会)32 and “moderately prosperous society” (xiaokang shehui 小康社会)33 by the Chinese government to be what it calls a “logical choice” in an attempt to legitimize its rule, now that the government's policies have increasingly come to contradict the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, to which it continues to voice its adherence. Of course one could question just how new and significant


33 See Sheldon H. Lu, Chinese Modernity and Global Biopolitics: Studies in Literature and Visual Culture, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007, pp.200-203 for an interesting discussion of this term in comparison to the related notion of “Great Unity” (datong 大同), which Lu claims was developed into a concept of “noncapitalist globalization” by the reformer Kang Youwei 康有為. In an analysis building on the work of Arif Dirlik, Lu notes: “Interestingly, the word datong is not heard any more in contemporary China; it is as if it had disappeared from the Chinese lexicon. The agenda of Chinese communism has changed its nature as well: it means building a society of moderate affluence amid global capitalism.”
such rhetorical maneuvers are, since Mao himself had already invoked the notion of “Great Unity” (datong 大同) to describe future communist society in On the People's Democratic Dictatorship and could not resist the temptation to quote Confucius and Mencius in denouncing the “reactionary ideas” of Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893-1988), often seen as one of the first New Confucians. Another famous case in point is Liu Shaoqi’s 刘少奇 use of Confucian rhetoric in his On the Self-Cultivation of Members of the Communist Party (Lun gongchandangyuan de xiuyang 论共产党员的修养). Still, it is difficult if not entirely impossible to continue taking the idea that the Party is the dutiful representative of the “universal class” of the proletariat seriously, especially since the introduction of Jiang Zemin's “important thought” (重要思想) of the “three representations” (san ge daibiao 三个代表) in 2002, i.e. the idea that the CCP represents, in an order that is most certainly not arbitrary, 1) the “advanced productive forces”, 2) China's “advanced culture” and 3) the “fundamental interests of the Chinese people”. According to Yingjie Guo, this theory marked a definitive step away from any class-based idea of “the people” (renmin 人民). Indeed, over the years, it has become harder and harder to see what is specifically communist about the Chinese Communist Party or what is particularly socialist about the so-called “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. Jiawen Ai describes the latter term as “vacuous and plastic”, harshly judging that it “derives its importance from the fact that the CCP, a historically revolutionary party, decided to use it to maintain its authoritarian regime, rather than being in any way the authentic wellspring of a political spirit.”

Thierry Pairault muses “whether China's prospective identity is symbolized by Marx wearing the rags of Confucius”. The Review Commission

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document further claims that the selective emphasis put on values such as social stability and order in government rhetoric are instrumental in discrediting the idea and the possibility of installing a representative democracy in China. This, the report states, is done by portraying the democratic form of governance as fundamentally unsuitable to Chinese culture, which supposedly privileges collective stability and intersubjective harmony over the caprice and volatility of subjective opinion and individual rights.\textsuperscript{40}

It is probably true that there is a strong ideological and centrally enforced dimension to the resurgence of Confucianism in contemporary China. One sometimes has the impression that we are simply dealing with the promotion of ideas that come close to prescribing a form of voluntary submission to authority, cunningly redefined as a culturally specific form of freedom. “Harmony” (\textit{he 和}) in this respect comes to designate an accomplished but precarious state arrived at through repressive pacification instead of an attitude integrated in a broader practice of self-cultivation open to the other and to the world at large.\textsuperscript{41} Even the virulently anti-communist Kang Xiaoguang 康晓光 (b. 1963), who is most well-known for his controversial proposal to “Confucianize” (\textit{ruhua 儒化}) the CCP and to establish Confucianism as a state religion (\textit{guojiao 国教}),\textsuperscript{42} seems to believe that the existing political structures can basically be preserved as they are; all one really needs to do is endow them with a Confucian content. The Party schools for example, would remain in place, but would have to change their curriculum from the obligatory fundamentals of historical materialism and the theories of former and present leaders of the CCP to the teaching of Confucian classics. In the process, communist party cadres turned Confucian scholars would not lose a modicum of power. “In plain words”, Kang writes,

\textsuperscript{41} In a recent work, Li Chenyang 李晨阳 makes an elaborate attempt to save the Confucian ideal of harmony from being misinterpreted and abused as an instrument of repression. See \textit{The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony}, London and New York: Routledge, 2014.
“benevolent government is a dictatorship by the community of Confucian scholars”. Apart from reproducing the dubious logic of a “function” (yong 用) ontologically indifferent to and detached from its “substance” (ti 體), made famous by Zhang Zhidong's 張之洞 (1837-1909) motto of “China as substance, the West as function (zhongti xiyong 中體西用)”\(^4\), the treatment of existing political structures as neutral instruments which can simply be “filled” with a different content and other values also implies a problematic naturalization of the existing state of affairs as inherently rational, unquestionable and necessary. The invisible hand of government-enforced tradition is assumed to take care of business, its internal telos is put forward as the only possible measure for social rationality. Kang Xiaoguang claims that “the government’s action is rational because its agencies and officials are rational. In fact, as long as the institutions and their members are pursuing their own best interests, the action of the government is bound to follow and reflect a rational logic.”\(^5\) The boundaries between rationality, reality, and normativity are thus completely effaced. I think it is highly questionable to what extent such ideas can pose a challenge to “mainstream values” as Kang claims at one point. Kang's plea for an authoritarian Confucianism cannot help but remind one of the endorsement of Yuan Shikai's 袁

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\(^4\) Kang, 2006, p.95.

\(^5\) See Sor-Hoon Tan, “Modernizing Confucianism and ‘new Confucianism’”, in The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture, edited by Kam Louie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.136-137: “Philosophically, the formula distorts the neo-Confucian notion of tiyong, which implies an intrinsic organic relation between the ti and yong of all things, into one of external relation involving no more than a superficial juxtaposition of arbitrarily separated elements of different cultures. It obscures rather than clarifies the relationship between Western thought and practice representing modern cultures on the one hand, and Confucianism as an entire culture or way of life on the other, because it fails to appreciate that in any culture, substance and use are intrinsically and organically related. Modernizing Confucianism requires transformation of both substance and use.” Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968) had already criticized Zhang Zhidong's formula on very much the same grounds in his Essential Instructions on the Reading of the Classics (Dujing shiyao 讀經示要), see the recent reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, [1945] 2009, pp.4-6. To be fair, for Zhang Zhidong, yong (function) already had a political dimension, and was no longer limited to purely technical aspects of technology and machinery. See Li Zehou 李澤厚, Historical Essays on Chinese Modern Thought (Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shilun 中国现代思想史论), Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1987, pp.312-315. It is worth noting that distinctions similar to the one between ti and yong also appeared in other countries and regions of the world around the same period in world history. See Guy Alitto, The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, pp.9-10. In Japan, for example, Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山 (1811-1864) had already formulated the idea of “Eastern morality, Western learning” (tōyō dōtoku, seiyō gakugei 東洋道德, 西洋學芸) during the Edo period before Zhang Zhidong. It later reappeared in the Meiji period in the form of the slogan “Japanese Spirit, Western techniques” (wakon yōsai 和魂洋才). According to He Shaoming 何晓明, the ti-yong paradigm, as one of the first and most important semantic strategies designed to cope with the divide between tradition and modernity, continued to exert a strong influence on conservative intellectuals such as the New Confucians. See He Shaoming 何晓明 “A General Overview of Modern Chinese Cultural Conservatism” (Jindai Zhongguo wenhua baoshouzhuyi zongshu 近代中国文化保守主义综述), Jindai shi yanjiu 近代史研究, 5, 1998, pp.40-66.

世凯 usurpation of the newly founded Republic in 1915 by the “Society for the Religion of Confucius” (kongzi jiaohui 孔子教会), a society presided over by the reformer Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858-1927), who was the first to advocate turning Confucianism into a modern state religion. This endorsement had a catastrophically damaging effect on the reputation of Confucianism, reverberating through the following decades. Kang Xiaoguang's argument for the existence of broad popular support for a revival of Confucianism, which he wants to effect in a strongly hierarchical manner, relies on the idea that this hierarchy is already firmly entrenched in those who would become formally subject to its power. In obeying the laws of a state-sponsored Confucianism, the people would be obeying a culturally inscribed potential quasi-genetically preserved within themselves. Consider the following passage from a recent article by Kang:

Because the essence of Confucian culture is harmony, participants [in the Confucian revival] are unlikely to adopt confrontational strategies [...] most participants hope for the government's assistance, support, and even leadership. They have never treated the government as their enemy, and naturally they would not intentionally oppose the government.

On a related note, Stephen C. Angle has called into question Kang's argument that the “Confucian practice of succession”, in which the “Heavenly Mandate” (tianming 天命) is bestowed on a legitimate successor, “is already being practiced in contemporary China”. Angle rightly speaks of a “grotesque distortion of recent history” regarding Kang's suggestion that the transitions from one CCP leader to another have been “abdications”, and furthermore that – just as we read in Mencius – only abdications that are accepted by the masses are truly legitimate. Mao Zedong's abdication in favor of Hua Guofeng failed because the masses did not support him. Deng Xiaoping's abdication eventually succeeded (with Jiang Zemin), despite the masses' rejection of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang.

47 Kang, 2012, p.61. Second emphasis added. Cf. p.59: “[T]here is no doubt that consensus is not enough, a mature movement also needs a dominant framework.”
48 Stephen C. Angle, Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy. Towards Progressive Confucianism, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012, p.43. Angle also notes the ambiguity in Kang's position on the question of popular legitimacy: “He wants the min [民, the people] to be agents, capable of forming judgments, the holders of rights, and appropriately requiring free access to information and extensive (if still limited) forms of democratic participation. At the same time though, he is still committed to his “authoritarian” premise and its clear distinction between the elite rulers and the “mass” who are ruled.” Ibid., p.46.
This being said, I believe one should not be overhasty in concluding that the renewed interest in Confucianism is exclusively the result of top-down efforts by the Chinese government to legitimize its rule with the help of a few obliging intellectuals. Even if one were to dismiss the invocation of Confucianism as “superficial” or as a case of “mere ideology”, it would be necessary to add the critical rejoinder that since it has a performative effect as an institutionalized speech act, ideology is never superficial and is something worthy of serious consideration and discussion. At any rate, John Makeham's meticulous research has made it abundantly clear that we are not dealing with a rhetorical shift in discourse orchestrated by the party-state and seamlessly and unquestionably reproduced on all levels of Chinese society.\(^{49}\) In the latter point of view, there is a clear danger of implicitly adopting the spurious notion of a passive and docile “Oriental psychology” that is often either implicitly or explicitly put forward as a core idea in the very discourse one wishes to expose as nothing but ideology. To begin with, there is the obvious fact that self-descriptions of Chinese society as either already or ideally Confucian are often strongly contested and criticized, by leftist, liberal as well as other conservative thinkers. Furthermore, all kinds of hybrid forms have already come into existence, such as projects that attempt to develop a form of “Marxist Confucianism” or “Confucian Marxism”.\(^{50}\) There is an even larger body of work concerning the compatibility of Confucianism with liberal democracy, human rights, gender equality, sustainable development and so on, which is often if not always bent on finding “traces” of these in various forms of ancient Chinese thought. The seemingly endless stream of articles and books exploring both traditional and modern Confucian philosophy and its supposed relevance for understanding and possibly improving the modern world is in itself remarkable enough, and cannot be explained away as the complicit academic equivalent of “propaganda narratives”. Moreover, Confucianism is no longer the exclusive interest of “conservative”, “traditionalist” or “reactionary” thinkers in the strict sense of the word\(^{51}\), but has come into a complex and ambiguous


\(^{50}\) I am thinking in particular of the work of Li Zehou 李泽厚 and Chen Weigang 陈维纲. I should add that Marxism itself is far from dead and gone as an intellectual current in contemporary China and is no longer constrained by the doctrinal discipline previously enforced by the Party. The CCP generally does not meddle with theoretical disputes concerning, say, the relation of the Grundrisse to Das Kapital. See Robert Ware, “Reflections on Chinese Marxism”, Socialism and Democracy, 2013, vol.27, no.1, pp.136-160.

\(^{51}\) Stephen C. Angle (2012, pp.11-17) distinguishes at least six types of Confucian-inspired thinkers active in today's China: 1) philosophical historians, 2) Confucian revivalists, 3) Kantian New Confucians, 4) Critical New Confucians, 5) Neo-classical Confucians and 6) Synthetic Confucians. To this list Angle proposes to add his own brand of “progressive Confucianism”, which he locates “in between the Kantian and Critical New Confucianisms” (p.17) and summarizes in the idea “that ethical insight leads to progressive political change, which in turn leads to greater realization of our potential for virtue”, while “social structures that set barriers to the realization of virtue need to be critiqued and changed” (p.16).
alignment with modernization and development, simply because the latter have already changed the meaning and status of tradition itself. Indeed, the very idea of “tradition”, “culture” and “traditional culture” can only be understood against this background. As Chris Jenks notes: “[T]he idea of 'culture' can be witnessed emerging in the late eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth century as part of, and largely as a reaction to, the massive changes that were occurring in the structure and quality of social life.”

According to the sociologist Niklas Luhmann, the notion of culture as a counterconcept to nature was invented “to bring under conceptual control the immense horizon of comparison of modern society, which was expanding from a regional and historical point of view”. Gan Yang is I think right to stress that the questions which have been so often posed concerning whether or not Chinese culture in general or Confucianism in particular can still be of use in various aspects of modern life already betray a distinctively modern approach, namely of what he considers to be (a quite un-Confucian) concern for utility and applicability. Gan wants to put an end to the endless debates revolving around how Confucianism can be instrumentalized for the sake of modernization, a form of “rational adjustment” (Max Weber's description of Confucianism) which he thinks must be overcome. Instead, he proposes to introduce another question, namely how the resources of Confucian practices and thought can be employed for formulating a critique of modernity in developing a form of “critical cultural conservatism” (批判的文化保守主义). Gan Yang is no doubt aware that this critical attitude is just as modern as a utilitarian one. He seems to waver between the desire to formulate an emancipatory critique of the present society and the idea that the “rationality” and operative logic of modern society cannot be (not: must not be!) overcome. I must admit that I recognize my own position somewhere in this predicament. Turning away from ideological attempts to smooth over the overinflated tension between Confucianism and a modernity which is not so much straightforwardly normative as it is problematic would involve actively revisiting and positively appreciating certain incompatibilities between Confucian ideals and the pathologies prevalent in modern society. Still, one would have to confront the fact that incompatibility in itself is hardly sufficient as a criterion for a social normativity which has the ambition of going beyond mere protest, subversion, denunciation, or worse, simply the bare assertion of difference. That being said, I wholeheartedly agree with Gan's

54 See Gan Yang 甘阳, The Struggle between Present and Past and between China and the West (Gujin zhongxi zhi zheng 古今中西之争), Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2012, pp.113-135.
55 Otherwise one ends up calling Hamas and Hezbollah “social movements that are progressive, that are on the Left, that are part of a global Left” like Judith Butler. See Michael J. Totten, “The Anti-Imperialism of Fools”, World Affairs, 28
lucid observation that “actually, modern industrial culture is something completely new for the whole of humanity, which means that there is fundamentally no need to expect any traditional culture to contain the basic seeds of modern society.”

As things now stand, I think it is safe to say that there is a direct though by no means transparent relation between China's economic conversion to a universalizing regime of production and exchange on the one hand and its desire to become what it calls a “cultural superpower” (wenhua qiangguo 文化强国) on the other. Everything “cultural”, “historical” and “traditional” would seem to be intended to symbolically secure China's particularity and uniqueness within the relatively homogeneous and culturally anonymous world of commodity exchange, prize fluctuations, technological innovation, calculated investments and growth rates. Commodity are after all, as Marx already wrote in Capital, “citizens of the world”. The anthropologist Marc Augé has analyzed the concrete effects of this abstract equivalence as leading to an increasing proliferation of “non-places” (non-lieux), such as railway stations, supermarkets, airports, hotel lounges, fast-food chains and coffee-shops, in the globalized life-world. Capital is thus the archetypal cynic, who, in Oscar Wilde's eloquent phrasing, “knows the price of everything and the value of nothing”. It should be borne in mind that the very habit of speaking of the particularity of socio-cultural life in terms of “value” is peculiar to the modern era.

What Tu Weiming (Du Weiming 杜维明 b. 1940) calls “the transvaluation of Confucian values as a creative response to the hegemonic discourses of Western Europe and North America” was thus preceded by an anterior transformation of discourse by the idea of value itself. To paraphrase the less often quoted second part of Wilde's celebrated aphorism, sentimentalists are those who disregard the market prize which tends to accompany everything of value. The symbolic doubling of value into a

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56 事实上，现代工业文明对于整个人类都是一种全新的事物，根本没有必要要求某一传统文化必须具备现代社会的基本因子。Gan, 2012, p.120.


“colorblind”, universal exchange value on the one hand, and a culturally specific set of values with an irreducible particularity on the other, entails an identification of the latter with history, historical consciousness and memory. It is thus the idea of “value” itself which can serve as means of overcoming the so-called “tension between history and value”. According to Andreas Huyssen, this can be seen as representing an “attempt to slow down information processing, slow down the dissolution of time in the synchronicity of the archive”. Prasenjit Duara notes that “[t]he problem of identity, so characteristic of modern societies, is most fundamentally a problem of time. It is a quest to retain a sense of self when everything around is perceived to be in flux.” The relation between culturally specific values and a fundamentally “cosmopolitan” (or “wordless”) exchange value is not so much one of a seamless dialectic as it is one of tension, contradiction and ambiguity. On the one hand, insisting on the cultural specificity of certain values can be instrumental in defining a nation's stance towards other nation-states, but the adaptation of this stance is not so much motivated “purely” or “autonomously”, in the Kantian sense of being exclusively determined through the normative rationality of the maxims prescribed by these values themselves, but will rather only be emphasized “pathologically”, that is to say when the adherence to cultural value serves to increase a nation's interests in more mundane terms of cold hard cash value, at which moment the empirical drive reveals itself as having dominion over


65 In an article discussing the 2011 London riots Slavoj Žižek writes: “Alain Badiou has argued that we live in a social space which is increasingly experienced as ‘worldless’ [...] although by virtue of being global it encompasses the whole world, it sustains a ‘worldless’ ideological constellation in which people are deprived of their ways of locating meaning. The fundamental lesson of globalisation is that capitalism can accommodate itself to all civilisations, from Christian to Hindu or Buddhist, from West to East: there is no global ‘capitalist worldview’, no ‘capitalist civilisation’ proper. The global dimension of capitalism represents truth without meaning.” Slavoj Žižek, “Shoplifters of the World Unite”, London Review of Books, 19 August 2011 http://www.lrb.co.uk/2011/08/19/slavoj-zizek/shoplifters-of-the-world-unite.


the powerless axiological component. The “new Axial Age” Tang Yijie 汤一介 saw emerging with the renaissance of traditional culture remains caught in the gyrations of the abstract general equivalence of political economy. This implies that an occasional and well-timed stress on the importance of culturally grounded values can go hand in hand or alternate with a more “realist” approach which rejects the encroachment of cultural value on the normal flow of investment and expenditure. This is the only way to understand why ideologically opposed nation-states can continue doing business with each other under the table while staring angrily into each other's eyes, keeping their arms stubbornly crossed and occasionally striking the top surface in barely muted fury. An article first published in the pro-government Global Times (Huanqiu shibao 环球时报) and later taken over in the English edition of the People's Daily (Renmin ribao 人民日报) in March 2012, bearing the headline “Benefits, Not Values, Define BRICS Unity”, is interesting in this respect:

The mission of the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] is not directly related to values. After all values are not central to today's world. Too much preaching on values today is as absurd as class struggle was in China in the 50s and 60s. Human rights tend to be centered on values, but the issue never really dominates world politics.

Such a pragmatic-realistic standpoint downplays the importance of culturally specific values in international relations and replaces the idea of “values” by that of “benefits” or “interests” (liyi 利益), a term familiar from (Chinese) diplomatic jargon, where it appears in such locutions as the “fundamental interests” (基本利益) of a country or a people. What is further interesting about this passage is that it defines the attitude of so-called developed countries or “the West” as centered around a discourse on values, whereas the emerging economies are urged to pursue a more realist course. This would then enable them to bypass the ideologically infused level of value in order to engage in a form of political

however in not letting the abuse suffered by classical texts in such forms of managerial exegesis reflect negatively on these texts themselves, as if they were written for ideological purposes in the first place. This seems to be an implicit assumption behind Žižek's argument concerning the “speculative identity” between what he calls “Western Buddhism” and the ideology of global capitalism. See Slavoj Žižek, On Belief, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp.12-15. Cf. Mario Wenning, “Daoism as Critical Theory”, Comparative Philosophy, vol.2, no.2, 2011, p.54. Ironically, even Marxism has hardly proven immune to managerial appropriation, as is obvious from the existence of articles such as the following: Xiaohe Lu, “Business Ethics and Karl Marx’s Theory of Capital – Reflections on Making Use of Capital for Developing China’s Socialist Market Economy”, Journal of Business Ethics, 91, 2009, pp.95–111.

“direct action” by starting out from a nation's economic and political “interests”, which are apparently seen as a form of empirically given data untainted by any external bias, rather than as already the result of structurally conditioned and socially constructed observations. An idealism of values is thereby traded in for a bleary-eyed positivism of interests. This is intriguing, because it is precisely in developing nations such as China where there is perhaps the most talk about the revival and reinvention of traditional values and ideas. The contradiction between prescribing a value-centered culturalist approach on a national level and a value-free universalist stance when it comes to relations between nations already suggests that there might be a dialectical relation between both forms of discourse. We could also note that the post factum condemnation of the class struggle in this article raises the suspicion that the most dangerous form of “traditionalism” in contemporary China would perhaps not consist in the reinvention of ancient Chinese politico-religious ideas, but in the rediscovery of a much more recent tradition, i.e. that of militant Maoism. This tradition would find itself squarely at odds with a Communist Party which has graciously allowed “capitalist roaders” (zouzipai 走资派) – a term which incidentally was used by Mao in his political purge of Deng Xiaoping during the Cultural Revolution70 – and “bourgeois reactionaries” of all kinds into its ranks. According to Kang Xiaoguang, “there has been no trouble between the capitalists and the CCP ever since the beginning of reform. On the contrary, they have been living in harmony, even in collusion with each other.”71 He also believes “[t]hat peasants and workers are at the bottom of Chinese society is an indisputable fact.”72 This reveals that there is a whole different side to Kang's thought than what we encountered in the above: behind his misguided authoritarian solutions lurks an irreducible recognition of fundamental social problems. Even Kang's purebred cultural conservatism needs to be understood against the background of a critique of the present. Consider the unabashed militancy in this passage from one of his earlier articles:

Now, the elite are plundering the masses to an extreme degree. Sweatshops no longer satisfy their progressiveness. The elite even leave the sweat and toil wages of the migrant workers in arrears and repudiate the payment. This is no longer a question of sweatshops, but a matter of open robbery and fraud. Such violence includes both nongovernment violence bought off by the capitalists, the underworld, and governmental violence – the police and the armed police. In addition, not only the capitalists are engaged in this type of fraud and robbery, but also the government at all levels. More

71 Kang, 2006, p.80.
72 Kang, 2006, p.79.
often, it is done by the government and private business people in collusion. *I have often said that equity is a wild wish in China today, and what we can expect is only "sustainable pillage and controlled extortion." This is the highest ideal that I can dream of!*\(^7^3\)

An internal memo that began to circulate in April 2013 following the ascendancy of Xi Jinping to the height of political power, entitled “Report Concerning the Current State of Affairs in the Field of Ideology” (Guanyu dangqian yishixingtai qingkuang de tongbao 关于当前意识形态领域情况的通报, also known as “Document no. 9”) issued by the CCP's General Office (Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 中共中央办公厅)\(^7^4\), is an adamant expression of the Party's opposition to the spread of “Western values”, such as constitutionalism, democracy, civil society, free speech, journalistic freedom and grassroots political dissidence, all of which are presented in the memo as conspiring to undermine the CCP's authority and to challenge its “leadership of the masses” by “setting the Party against the masses”.\(^7^5\) The memo also bears witness to the Party's fear of the dissemination of what it delusionally calls the “mistaken” idea that the “reform and opening up” (gaige kaifang 改革开放) constituted a definitive abandonment of (or at least serious deviation from) socialism. The Quixotic attempts made in the document to draw a sharp distinction between a neoliberal West and a socialist China make for a painful read. I think it is clear that a Marxist critique of the Party's state-led capitalist modernization could be a lot more unsettling than liberal criticisms of its authoritarian grasp on political power and the undue “stifling” of the free market. The concerns voiced in the memo thus ultimately stem from doubts over the Party's ability to maintain what has now become its main, if not only, source of legitimacy: the ability to “steer” and “redistribute” the “fruits” of economic growth. Given the recent slowdown of the economy in a country where one third of all wealth is concentrated in the hands of one percent of the population\(^7^6\), these fruits could well turn into grapes of wrath in the not too distant future.

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\(^7^3\) Kang, 2006, pp.82-83. Emphasis added. As Monika Gänßbauer remarks: “On the one hand, he [Kang] is an active member of the academic establishment of the People's Republic of China and of various “think-tanks” sponsored and organized by the Chinese government; on the other, he often denounces, in an uncompromising manner, social injustices and abuses of power and exercises a harsh critique of the existing system.” Gänßbauer, 2011a, p.12.


\(^7^5\) For an English translation of the leaked text, go to [http://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation](http://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation). The original Chinese text of this document seems to have been successfully expunged from the Internet.

1.3 Excursus on Zhang Xianglong

I think it can be argued that the ambiguous stance towards tradition in the case of the Chinese political elite, discernible in the dialectical tension between “value” and “interest”, is not solely the result of the ideological dimension intrinsic to the political rhetorics of a party which is increasingly shifting the source of its legitimacy from recent history to ancient culture. A good example of how difficult it is to disentangle the reappropriation of traditional culture from the pre-given functional structures of modern society can be found in the work of Zhang Xianglong 张祥龙 (b. 1949), a professor of Chinese and comparative philosophy at Beijing University. In what follows, I base myself on his 2007 book entitled *The Refuge of Thought: Ancient Chinese Wisdom in the Age of Globalization* (Sixiang binan: quanqiushidai zhong de Zhongguo gudai zheli 思想避难：全球时代中的中国古代哲理), where Zhang discusses his proposal to establish “conservation areas for Confucian culture” (rujia wenhua baohu qu 儒家文化保护区).  

Zhang's Utopian vision grew out of a critical reflection on the problematic reduction of the traditional “arts of the Way” (daoshu 道术) to the academic discipline of “philosophy” within the established institutional structures of the modern university, which are “designed both to produce new knowledge and to reproduce the producers of knowledge”79. One scholar has amusingly compared the modern institutionalization and compartmentalization of traditional forms of knowledge and their resulting fragmentation to the well-known story in the *Zhuangzi 莫子* of Hundun 混沌 (“Chaos”), who dies from being “tidied up” (given apertures which he lacks) by his more orderly guests.80 Readers of the

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Zhuangzi have long since been warned that “the art of the Way in time comes to be rent and torn apart by the world” (道術將為天下裂).\textsuperscript{81} In general, it should not be forgotten that the establishment of the first university in China (the Imperial Peking University, Jingshi daxue tang 京師大學堂), directly resulted from the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895\textsuperscript{82}, meaning that the development of an institutional framework for the modern order of knowledge was an immediate consequence of the position of China as a state subject to imperialism in the expansive world-system. The conservation areas Zhang Xianglong seeks to establish outside of the confines of the university are conceived of in analogy with natural reserves, where endangered species are preserved in their original habitat, and with communities which attempt to uphold their own way of life within and largely outside of modern society, such as the Amish in the US. At the beginning of his exposition, Zhang claims that in the near future, conservation will become more important than development, both on an ecological as on a cultural level. Referring to the degradation of Confucianism in revolutionary China and its subsequent reappraisal in the post-revolutionary constellation, Zhang notes that “since the dustbins of history have no permanent members, there is also no preestablished order [in which things are dumped there]”.\textsuperscript{83} However, he does acknowledge that the Confucian tradition is still in a precarious situation, cannot survive on its own without an “ark” (方舟) and needs, so to speak, help from above. Zhang further makes the following dramatic prediction: “When a forest is cut down, this can lead to sandstorms. If Confucian culture were to completely vanish, then it is very likely to lead to a sandstorm in the very way of life of the Chinese people.”\textsuperscript{84} The establishment of “conservation areas for Confucian culture” is meant to prevent such an apocalyptic scenario from coming true. Zhang goes on to provide a relatively detailed outline of what life in such conservation areas would be like. I will only cite a few of the elements he lists: in contrast to what he considers to be typical of Western liberalism, not the private individual, but family life would serve as the basis for the organization of society, ranging from economic activity, the educational system and care for the elderly, to the settlement of conflicts between members of the community. The people living in a Confucian conservation area would use traditional, environmentally friendly technology in agriculture and manufacturing and would mainly rely on Chinese medicine for their health care. A modified version of the agricultural calendar would be

\textsuperscript{83} 历史的垃圾箱中既没有固定的成员，也没有固定的次序。Zhang, 2007, p.11.
\textsuperscript{84} 森林砍了，会有沙尘暴；儒家文化全死透了，很可能会有中国人生存形态中的沙尘暴的。Zhang, 2007, p.14.
used, calculating the start of the Common Era from the birth of Confucius instead of that of Christ. A linear form of history is thus given a different reference point, without reviving the cyclical conception of time prevalent in premodern China.\textsuperscript{85} Clothes, music and customs would follow Confucian patterns, and something similar to the imperial examination system would be used for appointing government officials to institutions which embody the balance between $yin$ and $yang$ and the principle of “harmony without uniformity” ($he$ $er$ $bu$ tong 和而不同)\textsuperscript{86}. Establishing these conservation areas in poorer regions of the country would also make it possible to combine the reconstruction of Confucianism with the improvement of socio-economic conditions. The ideal type of economic activity that Zhang describes is reminiscent of small-scale cooperatives where the fruits of labor are communally and fairly distributed and enjoyed, not unlike the Jewish kibbutzim. There would seem to be a hint of nostalgia for communism in this Confucianist Utopia. The areas would also be internally divided into various zones, ranging from the central areas where the traditional Confucian way of life has been restored to the highest possible extent, to “buffer zones” (暖区) where more contact with the outside world is possible. After an initial stage in which relations with the outside world would be severely restricted in order to make cultural restoration possible in a controlled environment, the intention is to gradually attain what Zhang calls a state of “non-conflict” (与世无争) with society at large, allowing the preservation area to “gradually flow over” (潜润) into the world outside its boundaries, and thus provide a secure basis for Confucianism to flourish within the whole of China. According to Zhang, the question will then be asked “whether we protected Confucian culture or are [still] being guarded by it”\textsuperscript{87}.

It is quite possible that a casual observer will be inclined to discard the idea of conservation areas for Confucianism out of hand as nothing but a far-fetched phantasm, blind to the ineluctable laws of the modern world. It is equally possible that one feels rather queasy and uncomfortable with the idea of a revival of Confucianism affecting so many of the basic aspects and details of everyday life. If that is the case, then this is probably because one suspects that ideas in general, however abstract and fanciful they may appear at first sight, are not completely detached from nor indifferent to the reality that continues to operate behind their back even in their deepest dreams. It will come as no surprise that

\textsuperscript{85} Certain academics, such as Jiang Qing 蒋庆, occasionally use the expression 孔元 (kongyuan, “Confucian Era”), instead of the standard 公元 (gongyuan, common era) when dating their writings.

\textsuperscript{86} The reference is to the \textit{Analects} 13.23: 君子和而不同, 小人同而不合 (“The exemplary person harmonizes without equalizing, whereas lesser people equalize without harmonizing”).

\textsuperscript{87} Zhang, 2007, p.18: “是我们保护了她，还是她护卫着我们?”
Zhang Xianglong's proposal has met with severe criticism and various contestations. Objections range from the question as to who would finance the establishment of the conservation areas to that of the overall relevance of conserving a tradition which critics consider to have already irrevocably died out. The main target in such criticisms has been the undeniable utopianism of the project and its questionable practical feasibility.\textsuperscript{88} However, I think another dimension of the problem has been neglected and obscured in the process. What is in my opinion most striking about Zhang's project is that, in spite of the fact that it is overtly aimed at conservation, he ends up reproducing the very same developmental logic that, from a broader historical perspective, necessitated the construction of conservation areas in the first place. Stating that conservation is more important than development does not automatically do away with this logic, nor with its paradoxical entanglement with conservation. This is most obvious from his description of the various stages running up to the final goal he envisages. At one point, Zhang himself makes the comparison between his cultural conservation areas and the well-known special economic zones (SEZs, \textit{jingji tequ 经济特区}), and links them to the CCP policy formulated under Deng Xiaoping of “one country, two systems” (\textit{yi guo liang zhi 一国两制}), the constitutional principal which allows a unified China to selectively adopt different administrative and economic approaches within a single territorial unity.\textsuperscript{89} One finds the same analogy in a similar, though less far-reaching, proposal to establish a “special zone for Chinese culture” (\textit{Zhongguo wenhua tequ 中国文化特区}) in Qufu put forward in 2011 by Zeng Zhenyu (b. 1962), a professor specializing in classical Chinese philosophy at Shandong University, who probably has a lot more political clout than Zhang as a member of the Shandong Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (\textit{Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Shandong sheng weiyuanhui 中国人民政治协商会议山东省委员会}).\textsuperscript{90} In both cases, the underlying logic is that of a state of exception gradually generalized to become the norm, ultimately intended to supplant the norm from which it derives its exceptionality.\textsuperscript{91} In formal terms, the exception ("difference") allows the norm to internalize that which


\textsuperscript{89} Zhang, 2007, p.15.


\textsuperscript{91} Cf. Tu Wei-ming, “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center”, \textit{Daedalus}, vol.120, no.2, 1991, pp.1-32.
is different from itself, while the right or the authority to determine what qualifies as being an exception (being different) remains firmly vested in the norm, which cannot ground its own normality and normativity without recourse to self-reference, and thus to tautology and paradox. The problem with the “state of exception” approach is that it does not really problematize or challenge the basic structures and conditions of the social environment in which the zones would be embedded and by which they would remain surrounded even if they were to be successfully established and developed one day. Such a complicit embrace of the developmental logic of modernization is paired uneasily with a clear nostalgia for an idealized socialism, evident from the economic dimension of Zhang Xianglong's Utopia. In general, it is not uncommon to find intellectuals inspired by Confucianism advocating or defending policy measures which are straightforwardly identifiable as “socialist” (insofar as one takes this to mean a support for a strong, interventionist state), which makes their almost exclusive focus on liberal political theories (mostly John Rawls) in drawing a distinction between Western and Chinese “moral paradigms” highly suspect. It betrays, I think, an unwillingness on the part of such thinkers to contextualize their arguments on and for the revival of Confucianism within the post-socialist constellation of contemporary mainland China, or an inability to at least think through the conceptual consequences of the general, global context in which their discourse is located. If this


94 A notable exception is Fan Ruiping's “reconstructionist Confucianism”. See Ruiping Fan, *Reconstructionist Confucianism. Rethinking Morality after the West*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2010. Fan is overtly hostile to (Chinese) socialism/communism and attempts to mount a “Confucian” defense of private property and free-market capitalism. He goes so far as to claim that one can find a “classical argument” for the moral and practical desirability of the free market in Mencius. See Fan, 2010, pp.64-67. His plea for Singapore's “Central Provident Fund” (gongjijin 公积金), a compulsory savings plan for individual citizens intended to provide for pension funds and health care (see p.61) hardly fits his celebration of the free market. Fan's understanding of capitalism and socialism would seem to be limited to the distinction between private property and common ownership/collectivization, which is both inadequate and anachronistic. This becomes farcical at the times, as when he writes: “Confucius clearly states that government should not tax people for more than 10% of their income” (p.110). Fan's position can, I think, simply be summarized as that of a cultural conservative with economically (neo)liberal inclinations. He clearly favors government intervention, but only of a kind which benefits the “free market”. Immanuel Wallerstein has already pointed out that this is a common feature of the capitalist economy, the primary beneficiaries of which only rhetorically favor a free market, while actually depending on the intervention of state power (from which they can then ideologically distance themselves) for the successful maximization of profit. See Wallerstein, 2004, pp.23-41. By saying that Fan is basically an ethically conservative neoliberal, I do not mean to disparagingly suggest that this would automatically render all of his arguments ideological and false. I do believe that his use of a neologistic and intentionally vague vocabulary of “Confucian” concepts simply obfuscates the fact that many of his position are standard conservative and/or neoliberal rhetoric for which he would undoubtedly find a receptive audience in entirely “non-Confucian” circles. More importantly, Fan does not in my view manage to clarify what is particularly Confucian about his stance on health care, economic policy, business ethics and other issues. He simply seems to “derive” them metaphorically from a self-serving formulation of some rigid Confucian “moral paradigm”, grounded in a misguided distinction between a homogeneously Confucian China and a liberal West, the latter apparently populated by self-centered individualists whose entire social and moral behavior has been hard-wired by a miraculous prenatal (and somewhat sketchy) reading of *A Theory of Justice.*
background is not taken for granted, then at least it is often left unthought, and therefore uncontested. As the “New Left” thinker Wang Hui (b. 1959) remarks:

In its rejection of Western values, Confucian capitalism enables exponents to embrace the capitalist mode of production and the global capitalist system […] while adding a layer of cultural nationalism on top. In this context, Confucian capitalism and the contemporary Chinese socialist reforms are simply two sides of the same coin.95

The implementation of a project such as Zhang Xianglong's would obviously have to depend on the existing structures of power and organization in order to become possible at all. Precisely how the development of preservation areas for traditional culture could in turn influence these structures remains very much unclear. In its current form, Zhang's proposal would condemn the conservation of cultural value to undiminished dependency on the unchecked expansion of exchange value and is overall more likely to lead to the construction of another theme park96 than to the genuine creation of an “authentic” cultural habitat. In South Korea, one can find a considerable number of “Folk Villages”, the inhabitants of which are often subsidized by the government to retain their traditional way of life. The considerable revenues such villages create through domestic and international tourism are an important clue to the logic behind government investment in the conservation and maintenance of (tourist-proof) tradition. The insulation of a certain community from the forces of modernization is thus bargained for with the latter's bountiful “fruits”, and already presupposes a prior containment of the exception within the rule. In any case, a project such as Zhang's is unlikely to be judged purely on its own terms, by an appeal to its intrinsic value. Any judgment of its value and merits will have to tolerate the intrusion of external interests, determined through the observations of an outside environment in which it must seek to embed itself as a, if not functional, than at least harmless and inconsequential, exception. It is highly improbable that the environment of modern society will relinquish the right to look in, to calculate and quantify, to ascertain costs and benefits, and interrupt or intervene where necessary. All of this will be done according to standards of necessity derived from its functionally differentiated subsystems and in keeping with norms which this society is no longer willing to, if at all capable of, adopting from anywhere else.97

96 What Arif Dirlik calls “the most recent location for history under global capitalism”. Dirlik, 1995, p.273.
1.4 Political Confucianism, spiritual Confucianism, and the politics of Spirit

1.4.1 Jiang Qing's constitutional reordering of Confucianism

In a recent edition of the influential journal *Confucius Studies* (*Kongzi yanjiu 孔子研究*)\(^98\), a short article authored by Lü Peng 吕鹏 examines the possibility of what he calls “introducing elements of Confucianism (儒学因子) into the system”. Lee Kuan-Yew's 李光耀 Singapore, the central point of reference during the debates on Asian Values in the 90s, is cited as a model for combining a Western-style free market economy supplemented with certain Confucian values. These values are taken to denote the dimension of morality, the importance of which must be reaffirmed against the perceived (Western) tendency to subordinate ethical judgments to the purely formal legal categories of right, supposedly lacking a properly “onto-ethical” foundation in a thick account of human existence.\(^99\)

According to Lü Peng, Confucian values could serve to counter what the author considers to be a number of pathologies of modernity; listing hedonism, excessive individualism, a decline in morality, drug abuse, violence and pornography as examples. Such an overburdening of Confucianism with what Chen Ming calls the “onerous task” of coming up with solutions to virtually all imaginable social problems (and pseudo-problems) is not uncommon in the discourse of Confucian political philosophy.\(^100\) These modern ills could, Lü claims, be remedied by a selective re-appropriation of what he calls the “core values of the Chinese nation and the Shandong spirit” (the latter referring to the province where Confucius was born). From the author's point of view, the introduction of Confucian elements into the existing political system is also necessary in order to prevent Confucianism from becoming a “wandering soul” (*youhun 遊魂*)\(^101\), confined to the windowless world of academia and the

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\(^98\) *Kongzi yanjiu* is published by the government-sponsored Confucius Foundation of China (*Zhongguo Kongzi jijinhui 中国孔子基金会*). See Farràs, 2014, pp.46-47, note 63. On its website, one can read that the aim of the foundation is “to raise funds, and actively organize and promote Confucius, Confucianism and Chinese traditional research work, for the purpose of strengthening socialist spiritual civilization and material civilization construction, and serve for international cultural exchanges and human peace in the world.” [http://confucius.uonbi.ac.ke/node/741](http://confucius.uonbi.ac.ke/node/741)


\(^100\) Chen Ming, “Modernity and Confucian Political Philosophy in a Globalized World”, in Dallmayr and Zhao, 2012, p.110.

misty regions of philosophical speculation, divorced from the everyday life of ordinary people and thus without any practical relevance for the problems of the real world. The institutionalization of Confucian teachings would thus be a positive thing for both the system into which it is introduced and for the practical application and realization of Confucianism itself. In short: Confucianizing modernity and modernizing Confucianism can be brought about through a largely unspecified form of institutionalization with overtly nationalist goals. Lü further proposes that a partial introduction of traditional elements into the system would not only be beneficial for internal social harmony in the People's Republic, but could also help “reunite the hearts and minds of the people across the two straits” and thus pave the way for a future return of Taiwan to the mainland.102

While Lü Peng limits himself to arguing for the adaptation of certain “elements” of Confucianism, there are intellectuals who go much further and provide a more detailed account of precisely which “elements” of Confucianism should be introduced into exactly what sort of “system”. In what follows, I will focus on the work of Jiang Qing 蒋庆 (b. 1953), who is probably the most controversial and most often mentioned and discussed example of such thinkers. Much like Kang Xiaoguang, Jiang will settle for nothing less than a full and far-reaching institutionalization of Confucianism. In doing so, he takes a firmly anti-universalist stance, while at the same time contending that “[t]he Way of Humane Authority [Renzheng 仁政] is the best possible form of government that human beings have ever invented”.103 The institutionalization he proposes would serve to replace a fundamentally un-Chinese communism, transcend the deficiencies of Western liberal democracy, and put an end to what he calls “a hundred years of cultural self-humiliation”.104 What Yingjie Guo remarks concerning cultural nationalism in general is supremely applicable to Jiang Qing in particular: “cultural nationalism […] seeks to 'renationalize' the current state formation, which is considered illegitimate, as it fails to fit with 'the nation' in terms of its aspirations, cultural traditions and moral values”.105


Jiang has a long list of what he expects from the revival of Confucianism in civil society and social life, including “universalizing the education of Confucian classics, promoting social morality […] disseminating good customs, prescribing daily rites, sponsoring ancestral worship and sacrifice”\(^{106}\), as well as the setting up of charitable institutions for orphans, the poor and needy. On the level of the state, he proposes a tricameral parliamentary system of government, consisting of 1) a more or less democratically elected “House of the Common People” (shumin yuan 庶民院), 2) a “House of Confucian Continuity” (tongru yuan 通儒院) populated by Confucian scholars schooled in the Four Books (sishu 四書) and the Five Classics (wujing 五經), and 3) a “House of National Essence” (guoti yuan 国体院) made up of descendants of the Confucius family and other representatives from various upper strata of society, including “descendants of great sages of the past, descendants of the rulers, descendants of famous people, of patriots, university professors of Chinese history, retired top officials, judges, and diplomats, worthy people from society, as well as representatives of Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Tibetan Buddhism, and Christianity.”\(^{107}\) These representatives are to be appointed by a symbolic monarch, a direct descendant from the Kong family bloodline, who would otherwise have a largely ceremonial function.\(^{108}\) The three houses correspond to Humanity (ren 人), Heaven (tian 天), and Earth (di 地) as the three sources (“popular”, “sacred” and “cultural”) of political legitimacy Jiang distinguishes. Notably, the “House of Confucian Continuity” would be given permanent veto power to block legislation, even when it has already been passed by the two other houses.\(^{109}\) On the “House of the Common People”, Jiang has not much more to say than that its members will be “chosen according to the norms and procedures of Western democratic parliaments.”\(^{110}\) The three Houses would be further supervised by an Academy composed of Confucian scholars, which would be endowed with the highest constitutional authority in order to ensure a limitation of executive power through morality (instead of through rights).\(^{111}\) The Academy would be responsible for organizing examinations aimed at the recruitment of top officials for both executive and judicial functions, preside over state religious ceremonies (as a gesture against the tide of modern “secularization”) and be given the power of

\(^{106}\)Chen, 2013, p.178.
\(^{107}\)Jiang, 2012, p.41.
\(^{108}\)See Jiang, 2012, pp.79-96.
\(^{109}\)See Jiang, 2012, pp.41-42: “The House of Ru enjoys a permanent power of veto. A bill, such as one permitting homosexuals to found a family, that passes the House of the People but is against the Way of heaven will be vetoed by the House of Ru.”
\(^{110}\)Jiang, 2012, p.41.
\(^{111}\)Jiang, 2012, pp.54-55.
impeachment and recall, which it can exercise directly without the mediation of any other state body.\footnote{See Jiang, 2012, pp.55-64.}

### 1.4.2 Jiang Qing on political vs. spiritual Confucianism

I will not go further into the details of Jiang Qing's plans for a Confucian constitutional order here, nor address their viability and desirability head-on, since this has already been repeatedly done in the existing secondary literature.\footnote{The reader can consult a recent volume (Jiang, 2012) which contains three chapters by Jiang in which he summarizes his ideas, as well as a number of responses by both critics and fellow travelers. A useful summary of Jiang's main ideas can be found in an appendix to Daniel A. Bell's \textit{China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society}, Princeton (New Jersey): Princeton University Press, 2008, pp.175-191. Reprinted in Fan, 2011, pp.139-152. Bell has played an important role in the rise to fame of Jiang Qing in Western sinology. Also see Ruichang Wang, “The Rise of Political Confucianism in Contemporary China”, in Fan, 2011, pp.33-45. David Elstein impatiently discusses Jiang's ideas in his \textit{Democracy in Contemporary Confucian Philosophy}, London and New York: Routledge, 2015, pp.144-166.}

I believe there are more important problems to be cleared away before one can begin to directly address the feasibility and practicality of Jiang Qing's proposed institutionalization of Confucianism as a political alternative to the status quo. I will proceed instead by focusing on the distinction between “political Confucianism” (\textit{zhengzhi ruxue} 政治儒学) and “spiritual Confucianism” (\textit{xinxing ruxue} 心性儒学).\footnote{I am aware that translating the term \textit{xinxing} by “spiritual” hardly does any justice to the conceptual content and scope of the classical Neo-Confucian concepts of \textit{xin} and \textit{xing}, but have decided to retain it for the purpose of contrast since it seems to function as the standard translation of the term in the context of discussions of Jiang's distinction.} Jiang is credited with having introduced. He considers “spiritual Confucianism” to be centered around individual self-cultivation (extended to include the network of direct social relations in which the self is formed and cultivated), whereas the “political” version is more practically oriented and deals with questions of governance, rulership and administration on the larger level of society and social life as a whole. It is important to stress from the onset that this distinction is not merely descriptive, let alone neutral. Jiang uses it both to distinguish his own attempt at revitalizing Confucianism from that of other traditionalist thinkers, and as a marker that can be retroactively applied to the entire Confucian tradition. He does not only utilize the contrast between political and spiritual Confucianism to set himself apart from his direct forebears, but also applies it to the history of Confucian thought in its entirety. Mencius 孟子, Zhu Xi 朱熹 and Wang Yangming 王陽明 are classified as belonging to a line of spiritual, speculative thinkers bogged down in problems of “metaphysics” and self-cultivation. Confucius himself, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 and Kang Youwei 康有为 are praised as authentic, political Confucians representing the Gongyang 公羊 school, concerned with the practical organization of social life and matters of political legitimacy, effective
institutions and benevolent governance. In order not to drag the whole historical trajectory of Confucianism into the discussion, I will restrict myself to considering the implications this distinction has when applied to its modern representatives. The fact that twentieth-century “spiritual” Confucianists disposed over their own historiographical schemes to divide, classify and regroup currents in Confucian thought would necessitate a careful comparative exposition of “political” and “spiritual” classifications of the tradition. Such an exposition cannot be provided here. Although the distinction between spiritual and political Confucianism is, as I will try to show, largely artificial, it can still serve as a good starting point for continuing our investigation into the relation between New Confucianist discourse and modernity. In what follows, I will basically argue that both approaches start out from claiming some sort of socio-political performativity. Neither would declare themselves satisfied with remaining a purely academic affair solely of interest to a handful of specialists. Jiang's distinction between political and spiritual Confucianism obscures this communality and obfuscates their shared discursive kernel, namely what could be called a politics of spirit.

In a crucial article entitled “From Spiritual to Political Confucianism: on Another Path of Development for Contemporary New Confucianism” from 1991, Jiang Qing proposes what he calls a self-criticism of the Confucian tradition, a criticism that comes to terms with certain deficiencies of Confucianism by employing the resources of this tradition itself, without adopting an external standpoint. He believes that the merit and value of Confucianist ideas can and should be judged on their own terms, and do not require a normative criterion, such as liberal democracy or revolutionary communism, foreign to the tradition. The distinction he draws between spiritual and political Confucianism serves in effect to initiate such an auto-critique. Jiang argues that the former current, best represented by thinkers such as Mou Zongsan

115 Interesting parallels could be drawn between Jiang Qing's approach, and that of Xiong Shili, who is generally considered to be the father of New Confucianism in its “spiritual” guise. See section 3.1.2 of the third chapter of my study. Suffice it so say here that although Jiang would not support Xiong's egalitarian reading of Confucian political ideals, he is just as concerned as Xiong is to distinguish a critical “political Confucianism” ( 政治儒学 ) from “politicized Confucianism” ( 政治化儒学 ), the latter referring to the dynastic political order in imperial China. See Jiang's Introduction to Gongyang Learning ( Gongyangxue yinlun 公羊学引论 ), Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1995, pp.9-26.

牟宗三 (1909-1995) and Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1900-1978) who fled the mainland for Taiwan and Hong Kong shortly before the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, has made Confucian ideals irrelevant to everyday life and to the socio-political structures by which human existence is determined and in which it is situated. The exaggerated focus he claims these philosophers laid on metaphysical and existential problems resulted in a forced withdrawal of Confucian philosophy into the safe but claustrophobic confines of individual human subjectivity. Jiang firmly objects to the tendencies towards “extreme individualization” (极端个人化), “extreme metaphysization” (极端形上化), “extreme interiorization” (极端内在化) and “extreme transcendentalization” (极端超越化) he finds rampant in their philosophies.\(^\text{117}\) Jiang argues that each of these tendencies can for a large part be attributed to the influence of German Idealism, specifically of Kant and Hegel, on Mou's and Tang's philosophical outlooks. This influence increased their alienation from the more pressing matters of socio-political reality. Generally speaking, it is not uncommon for scholars of New Confucianism to attribute perceived flaws in the philosophy of Tang and Mou to their adoption of a vocabulary and a corresponding set of concepts strongly influenced by Hegel and Kant. The implication seems to be that this outside, foreign influence had a considerably distorting effect on their otherwise faithful and unproblematic continuation of the Chinese tradition.\(^\text{118}\) For all his criticism of the spiritual Confucianists, Jiang does attribute a mediating role to them. Their attempts to reinvent Confucianism, flawed as they may have been in his eyes, did pave the way for a future return of Confucius to the mainland to someday reclaim his position as the “uncrowned king” (suwang 素王) of the whole of China, and thus constituted a laudable act of filial piety of “a child feeding its parents” (fanbu 反哺) towards Chinese culture.\(^\text{119}\) Jiang's own brand of political Confucianism departs from the idea that “the heavenly Way and the intrinsic principles” (tiandao xingli 天道性理) should be manifested within a concrete cultural framework of customs and norms, and must be embodied in a determinate political system if they are to be effectively realized. Otherwise, they are bound to remain vacuous floating signifiers whose function is restricted to embellishing the moral conscience of individual subjects powerless against the outside world. A restriction of this sort would in turn have disastrous

\(^\text{118}\)An important factor in Yu Yingshi's 余英时 attempt to rescue his teacher Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) from being classified, stored away and forgotten in the convenient category of New Confucianism is the putative absence of German Idealist influences in Qian's work. See “Qian Mu and the New Confucians” (Qian Mu yu xinrujia 錢穆与新儒家), in Yu Yingshi, Essays on Modern Confucianism (Xiandai ruxue lun 现代儒学论), Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1998, pp.170-228.
consequences for individual human beings. Jiang thinks that “if the Confucian ideals of Heaven and human values cannot be actualized in reality, human life may lose its meaning. Individuals’ empty minds may then become terribly vulnerable and easily swayed by the various forms of modern nihilism.”

According to Jiang, the spiritual new Confucians were unable to even theoretically effect the “generation of a new outer kingliness” (kaichu xin waiwang 开出新外王) and proved incapable of establishing a strong connection between “inner sageliness” (neisheng 内圣) and “outer kingliness”.

The “new outer kingliness” of the likes of Mou and Tang consisted in nothing but the unreflective and uncritical adaptation of Western democracy and a constitutional form of government, both of which they failed to successfully derive from the resources of the mainstay of the Chinese tradition. “Subjective” self-cultivation thus stayed without an “objective” basis and remained deprived of an institutional embodiment. Jiang further sees the irredeemable split between “inner sage” and “outer king” as overlapping with the cultural divide between China and the West. Tang's and Mou's positive appraisal of Western liberal democracy as something to be wholeheartedly adopted by China could not be reconciled with their shared insistence on grounding moral subjectivity in the quintessentially Chinese tradition of Confucianism. Jiang would undoubtedly agree with the staunchly iconoclast Bao Zunxin's 包遵信 summary judgment that their grounding of democracy, human rights and science in Confucianism resembles “a magician pulling rabbits from his pocket”.

Jiang's criticism would have to be extended to Tu Weiming, for whom “Confucian personality ideals (the authentic person, the worthy, or the sage) can be realized more fully in a liberal democratic society than in either a traditional imperial dictatorship or a modern authoritarian regime.”

It is true that one sometimes gets the impression that in accommodationist approaches, such as Stephen C. Angle's “progressive Confucianism”, modern political institutions and practices are assumed to be already in themselves (an sich) adequate realizations of Confucian values, the only remaining step to the “for itself” (für sich) then being to retroactively acknowledge their Confucian nature and to spell out how and to what avail,

121The terms neisheng and waiwang can be traced back to the Tianxia 天下 chapter of the Zhuangzi. See Watson (trans.), 2013, pp.287-289.
123Tu, 2002, p.211.
124Angle, 2012, p.9: “[C]ritical modern innovations like broad political participation, the rule of law, and the active rooting out of social oppression, actually better enable one to be a good Confucian.”
say, a democratization of Confucianism and a Confucianization of democracy can be brought about. Still, Angle is right in raising the obvious yet devastating objection that “the institutions that Jiang proposes have virtually no precedents in Chinese history and Jiang acknowledges borrowing them from Western democratic thought”\textsuperscript{125}. The same could be said about Jiang's and Kang Xiaoguang's idea of installing Confucianism as a state religion. Jiang is well aware that religion is a “Western” (modern) concept, which he thinks can be used as an “expedient means” (\textit{fangbian quanfa} 方便权法) for the full restoration of the Confucian Way. Once fully restored, the latter will no longer need to cloak itself in borrowed, foreign categories.\textsuperscript{126}

1.4.3 The institutional dimension of spiritual Confucianism

There are several remarks to be made concerning Jiang Qing's objections to “spiritual Confucianism”, objections which are, to be clear, not new or unique.\textsuperscript{127} First of all, even a casual glance at the works of Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan would suffice to make it clear that they were consistently concerned with criticizing and overcoming the very idea of individuation and individual subjectivity Jiang ascribes to them. Their writings abound in arguments against the notion of the individual as a self-sufficient atom detached from the intersubjective relations in which they believe something as an individual human being first becomes possible to begin with.\textsuperscript{128} In a way, it was precisely this philosophical presupposition that forced them to recognize the importance of an institutional grounding of Confucianism, connected with, but larger than, the sphere of the individual subject and his or her immediate relationships. Their adoption of a strongly dialectical mode of thought, according to which (in the words of Hegel) “essence must appear”\textsuperscript{129}, led them to describe the institutionalization of the Confucian “spirit” as the latter's objectification into a “concrete universal”. Much like Jiang Qing, they grounded the reciprocal interdependence between the individual (concrete/particular) and its cultural

\textsuperscript{125}Angle, 2012, p.53.
\textsuperscript{126}See Chen, 2013, p.3 and p.68.
tradition (abstract/universal) in socio-political institutionalization. The self-styled “post-New Confucian” philosopher Lin Anwu 林安悟 refers to the intellectualist approach of the Confucian tradition by philosophers such as Mou Zongsan as a “misplacement of the Way” (道的错置), a Way which should in the first place be concerned with concrete praxis.\(^{130}\) Of course, the objection could be raised that there is a considerable mismatch between the modern concepts of “theory” as opposed to “praxis” on the one hand, and the paired ideas of “inner sageliness” (neisheng) and “outer kingliness” (waiwang) on the other. “Inner sageliness” is already in itself fundamentally a “practical” matter of self-cultivation. It is true that at times, Mou seems to succumb to the temptation to blur the difference between these two distinctions. But from passages such as the following, it is evident that he saw the same necessity as Jiang to provide Confucianism with an institutional dimension beyond the level of individual morality in order to realize its own ideal of “the unity of human beings and heaven” (tianren heyi 天人合一):

Confucians realize humaneness through practice and observe the Heavenly Way through the manifestation of humaneness. They have never engaged in empty talk about the Heavenly Way being such and such apart from the practice of humaneness. Humaneness is manifested through the practice of humaneness; it is both the Way of Humanity and the Way of Heaven. That is why humaneness is a universal rationality. When humaneness is made into the Way, then the Way will necessarily manifest itself as Spirit.\(^{131}\)

儒者由實踐而踐仁，由仁之呈現而見天道。未有離開仁之實踐而空言天道為如何如何也。由仁之實踐而表現仁，仁為人道，亦為天道。故仁為普遍之理性。以仁為道，道顯然必為精神也。

In the past, Confucianism held an extremely lofty position, but was insufficiently equipped to successfully implement itself, precisely because the study of logic and mathematics were not established. Therefore it could only ascend upwards and could not connect with the lower, it could equal

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\(^{131}\)“The Development of Confucian Learning and its Mission” (Ruxue xueshu zhi fazhan ji qi shiming 儒學學術之發展及其使命), [1949d] in DY, p.12. Cf. p.4: “Establishing a state-system is that through which absolute spirit can be realized and sustained, it is also that through which the individual spirit can be enriched and fulfilled” (故國家政制之建立，即所以充實而支撐絕對精神者，亦即所以豐富而完備個人精神者).
heaven but could not match humanity. [As such,] its ability to equal heaven could not but gradually become detached and set adrift without being able to take root in the earth.\textsuperscript{132}

儒學在以往有極高之境地，而無足以貫澈之者，正因名數之學之不立。故能上升而不能下貫，能侔於天而不能侔於人。其侔於天者，亦必馴至遠遠漂蕩而不能植根於大地。

The accusation Jiang levels at Mou and Tang of having completely capitulated to Western concepts of democracy and governance is unjustified and oversimplified to say the least. One can of course argue about the tenability of their arguments for a Confucian form of democracy or a democratic form of Confucianism, but that their work contains clear attempts to come to terms with the perceived defects of actually existing Euro-American democracies can hardly be denied. Apart from arguing for the intrinsic compatibility of Chinese culture with democracy, they also strongly opposed the idea of a direct emulation of Western democracy unmediated by Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{133} Although they can undoubtedly be charged with having read a lot of modern concepts into classical texts, this can hardly be said to be a practice specific to them. The first task for a discourse which has lost all its institutional standing, as in the case of Confucianism, was to account for the loss of its “object”, that is to say for the loss of a world, which it can perhaps only in retrospect imagine to have formerly been made in its own image. The external environment of a discourse in such a position comes to weigh heavier on what it says and how it says it than on one of which the utterances are if not faithfully realized, then at least relatively continuously echoed and repeated. Given the fact that for the moment, Jiang's ambitious auto-critique of the Confucian tradition has only led to the establishment of a Confucian academy (called Yangming jingshe 阳明精舍) in the remote Guizhou province in 1997\textsuperscript{134}, it is fair to say that until now, he has not been more successful than his “spiritual” counterparts in institutionalizing

\textsuperscript{132}Mou, [1949d], p.4.

\textsuperscript{133}See for example Tang's “Cultural Problems in Today's World” (Dangqian shijie wenhua wenti 當前世界文化問題), [1961b] in ZJ, pp.409-415. Also see Li Minghui 李明輝, “The Shift from the 'Inner Sage' towards the 'Outer King' – the Political Confucianism of Modern New Confucians” (Cong 'neisheng' xiang 'waiwang' de zhuanzhe – xiandai xin rujia de zhengzhi ruoxue 從「內聖」向「外王」的轉折——現代新儒家的政治儒學), Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu jikan 中國文哲研究集刊, 23, 2003, pp.337-350; David Elstein, “Mou Zongsan’s New Confucian democracy”, 

Confucianism. Jiang evidently wants to protect his privately funded non-profit academy against political co-optation in order to keep this “embodiment of the Way” from becoming an “ideological mouthpiece”. In this sense, the conspicuously modest outcome of his rather grandiose scheme for the future of Chinese politics is a result of the same historical constraints to which Mou and Tang were subject in their attempt to in some way restore Confucianism to its rightful place. As far as I am aware, apart from the establishment of the Yangming hermitage, up to this day the only tangible result of Jiang's efforts has been his supervision of the publication of “A Reciting Text of Chinese Cultural Classics for Elementary Education” (Zhonghua wenhua jingdian jichu jiaoyu songben 中华文化经典基础教育诵本) which is meant to instill young children with the “Confucian” values of obedience and respect. Interestingly enough, the wider movement aiming at the recitation of Confucian classics (dujing yundong 读经运动) was initially moved from Taiwan to mainland China by Wang Caigui 王才貴 (b. 1949), a former pupil of Mou Zongsan. Such instances of educational institutionalization, as Jiang is well aware, have an important precedent in the activities of the first generations of New Confucians. There is the case of Ma Yifu 馬一浮 (1883-1967), perhaps the most traditional-minded of all traditionalist intellectuals in twentieth-century China, who established his Fuxing shuyuan 復性書院 in 1939 with the financial support of none other than Chiang Kai-shek. After the establishment of the People's Republic, Tang Junyi was directly involved in the founding of the New Asia College (Xinya shuyuan 新亞書院) together with the historian Qian Mu 钱穆 (1895-1990) in October 1949 in Hong Kong. He also devoted a considerable number of texts to both the theoretical and practical (curricular) aspects of education.

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135He has also supported a small center for Confucianism in Shenzhen 深圳, China's Silicon Valley. See Sun, 2013, p.xv.
137Published in 2004 by the Higher Education Press under the auspices of the Chinese Ministry of Education. Unsurprisingly, the “Chinese Cultural Classics” contain only Confucian material. Jiang's preface to this compilation is available online: [http://www.confucius2000.com/scholar/zhwhjdjcjysbqy.htm](http://www.confucius2000.com/scholar/zhwhjdjcjysbqy.htm).
For the sake of completeness, it is important to take into account the political dimension and the institutional heritage of the work of “spiritual” New Confucians such as Tang. The institutional history of the New Asia College, which has been painstakingly documented by Grace Ai-Ling Chou in a recent monograph, is in itself interesting enough in this regard. During its heyday, the New Asia College attracted the support of several American NGOs (such as the Yale-China Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Harvard-Yenching Institute), who provided generous funding as a part of a broader postwar (government-orchestrated) strategy to contain communism in East Asia. The British colonial government on its part attempted to use the College to its own advantage, hoping that influencing the daily running of the institution would allow it to “regulate the growth of Chinese cultural identity while forestalling any unwelcome cultural trends that might destabilize the colony and its position in a particular world of decolonization and Cold War tensions.” Specifically, the British wanted the institution to remain politically neutral, so as to avoid any diplomatic disputes with the communist mainland, which it formally recognized as a sovereign state. From the very beginning, the College was thus caught in a conflict between its own desire to uphold Chinese culture from a position of exile and the various interests which had lodged themselves onto the programs and activities of institution from its inception. The Taiwanese GMD also attempted to meddle in the affairs of the College, with Chiang Kai-shek offering to provide substantial financial aid from his “private” funds. Nevertheless, the College leaders strove to keep their distance from direct political involvement and interference. They were perhaps already aware and wary of the fact that the GMD government's promotion of traditional Chinese culture as an antidote to communism and as a pillar of Taiwanese identity in postwar Taiwan involved the active suppression of indigenous traditions, which were labeled as “superstitious” and “backwards” in the process. Academica Sinica (Zhongyang yanjiu yuan 中央研究院), the foremost intellectual center in Taiwan, which at the time generally subscribed to a scientific, empirically oriented and anti-philosophical approach, was not a logical ally for the College either.

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143Chou, 2011, p.4.
147Thomas A. Metzger, A Cloud Across the Pacific. Essays on the Clash between Chinese and Western Political Theories
When in 1959, the British authorities decided to create a new Chinese University of Hong Kong, in which they wanted to incorporate the New Asia College, they were met with considerable opposition and resistance on the part of the leaders of the College. That lively debates were occasionally waged over seemingly pedestrian yet highly charged issues, such as the College leaders' desire and self-proclaimed right to fly the Taiwanese (neither the British, nor the GMD) flag as a symbol of Chinese culture in reaction to the plans to incorporate the College into the new university, should not distract us from the overall importance of the College as what Grace Ai-Ling Chou calls “a site of contesting cultural representations”. One of the most interesting aspects of New Asia's institutional history is that both its American benefactors and the British government in Hong Kong went more or less directly against the whole purpose and the main intention of the College by trying to adjust its (almost exclusive) focus on the humanities in order to include more specialized knowledge and scientific training. Additionally, both sought to temper the importance the College curriculum attached to Confucianism, which most of the New Asia's leading figures considered to be the core of Chinese culture. For different reasons, both the colonial government and the NGOs intended to keep the traditional “Chinese culture” fostered and revitalized in the New Asia College as vague and malleable as possible. Of course I do not mean to argue that something like the (relatively short-lived, 1949 -1963) New Asia College constituted a “successful” (whatever that might mean) institutionalization of Confucianism, or that its ephemeral existence should lead us to celebrate its founders and members as radically political activists. However, the fact that both spiritual and political Confucians' efforts at reviving Confucianism have mostly come in the shape of cultural education, says something about their shared dilemma, which is how to relate a discourse without an object (that is to say an object of which this discourse itself acknowledges no longer to be in possession) to the extra-discursive conditions for the actualization of its object (as a full-fledged social system), conditions which it was not at liberty to set and which it cannot internally determine. The solution in both cases seems to come down to the

149Chou, 2011, p.5.
resolve to educate the educators. For Jiang Qing, the incorporation of the New Asia College into the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1963 signified a regrettable capitulation of what should have remained traditional Confucian learning to the modern education system, which he not wholly unreasonably considers to be tailor-made for feeding new recruits into the iron cage of modern bureaucracy and only fit for the pursuit of diplomas and jobs.\footnote{152See Hong, 2011, pp.189-191.} Jiang intends to avoid such a scenario by limiting the use of Confucian academies to the education of an elite of literati aspiring to the ideal of the \textit{junzi} 君子, “who have no need to worry about jobs”, instead of trying to instruct the “masses”, “who would not understand the profound philosophy and meaning of the Book of Songs, the Book of History, the Book of Rites, the Book of Changes and the Spring and Autumn Annuals”.\footnote{153Hong, 2011, p.191, p.198.} He thus seems to waver between the desire to propagate Confucianism and the fear of seeing it contaminated in the very process of being disseminated throughout society, for which there are already mechanisms in place (the educational system, the mass media), which neither Jiang, nor any one else for that matter, is able to directly steer, let alone control.

1.4.4 The politics of Spirit: Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan encounter Hegel and Marx

One can hardly pretend that Jiang's Confucian forebears were unaware of or unreflective about their predicament. In an article published in 1961, bearing the evocative title “The Dispersal of the Blossoms and Fruits of the Chinese People” \textit{(Zhonghua minzu zhi huaguo piaoling 中华民族之花果飘零)}\footnote{154Reprinted in \textit{ZJ}, pp.1-27.}, Tang Junyi reflects on the situation of exile he had then already been in for 12 years:

\begin{quote}
Chinese culture and the mind of the Chinese people [...] could be compared to a large tree that has collapsed in a garden, causing all the blossoms and fruits to drift away and scatter in the blowing wind, so that they can only find shelter in the shade of someone else's garden and hope to one day grow again.\footnote{155Tang, [1961d], p.2}
\end{quote}

中国文化與中國人之人心 [...] 如一園中大樹之崩倒,而花果飄零,遂隨風吹散；只有在他人園林之下,托蔭避日,以求苟全。

For Tang, exile (described in this tableau as a movement of dispersal sustained by the uncertainty of
ever being able to return) is not simply a personal problem. He sees exile as the condition of Chinese culture and the Chinese people at large. He deplores and criticizes the loss or abandonment of traditional culture which he considers to be endemic in overseas Chinese communities. An example he gives is the phenomenon of migrated Chinese in Hong Kong and other areas of the world trading their native language for English. He argues that on a subjective level, such an abandonment of one's mother tongue is predicated on a functionalist view of language as a neutral and exchangeable medium or tool. On another occasion, he criticized the adoption of simplified Chinese characters and the idea of replacing characters with a latinized system of transcription on very much the same grounds. According to Tang however, language, culture and history as well as the forms of social interaction transmitted within these domains, cannot be so easily discarded. Far from merely being things the individual can dispose of at will, they constitute “the place where our life must take root in order to exist and where our very nature and destiny is located” (我们生命之所依所根以存在者，即我们之性命之所在).

In one of the most pathos-driven pronouncements in his autobiography, we find Mou Zongsan making the following related exclamation: “My life is not based in reality. Everything has already completely vanished from reality. Where can I find my country or my home [out there]? What I base myself on is the cultural life of the Chinese people, the cultural ideals of Confucius and Mencius, and nothing else besides.” (吾之生命依據不在現實。現實一無所有矣。試看國在那裡，家在那裡？吾所依據者華族之文化生命，孔孟之文化理想耳).

Such a strong affirmation of the social and cultural rootedness of the individual allowed Tang and Mou to argue that Chinese people would not only cease being Chinese if they cast off their tradition and culture as if they were external implements that can be abandoned whenever circumstance requires it. In his text on exile, Tang goes even further by affirming that in this case, it would not even be possible for them to truly become individuals in any meaningful sense.

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“not forgetting where one began from” and “not losing one's origin” [...] are certainly not mere questions of habit; on the contrary, it is doing so which enables human beings to truly become human, they are the real and necessary principles that enable me to truly become myself. If one derides this attitude as conservatism, then conservatism is precisely that through which human beings preserve their humanity and that through which I preserve myself; it is a conservatism that the human race cannot but and indeed should have.\textsuperscript{160}

不\textsuperscript{160} 忘其初, 失其本之事 [...] 此決非只是習慣，此乃人所以得真成為人，我所以得真成為我之實然而又當然之理。如說此是保守，此即是人之所以保守其人，我所以保守其為我，而人類不能不有、亦當有之保守。

From this perspective, he sharply criticizes what he considers to be the empty and free-floating universalism of some of his compatriots in exile. He concedes that individuals could indeed be said not to belong to any particular culture or historical group, but quickly goes on to add that this is only true for their “abstract and potential existence”, and not for their “concrete, real and actual existence.”\textsuperscript{161}

Tang's view of human beings is relational in a double sense: firstly, he argues that individuals cannot be severed from the web of intersubjective connections into which they are born and in which they act and exist. Secondly, considering human beings apart from their relation to the larger historical and cultural community to which they belong requires an unjustifiable abstraction which is often dismissed in his texts. It is clear that Tang does not consider such an abstraction to be merely a case of erroneous reasoning. He also identifies it as a real tendency in modern society. To borrow a term from the Marxist tradition, his critique of “abstract” individuality is grounded in a recognition of the performative force of this abstraction, making it a “real abstraction”.\textsuperscript{162} Additionally, Tang's socio-political concerns also surfaced in more unlikely contexts, such as in this article from 1972, where a theoretical discussion of the contemporary relevance of Wang Yangming's 王陽明 (1472-1529) notion of liangzhi 良知 (innate moral knowledge) is remarkably interwoven with a philosophical analysis of Western imperialism:


\textsuperscript{161}Tang, [1961a], pp.10-12.

It is not innate knowledge/goodness which is the origin of evil. The fact that one forces other people to accept what one considers to be valuable through innate knowledge, that is the origin of all evil. However, this [form of] compulsion is not innate knowledge [itself], it comes down to not allowing other people the choice to develop their innate knowledge spontaneously out of themselves, so that by compelling others one hinders and blocks their innate knowledge [...] However if one were not first endowed with the ability of choosing certain things which one considers to be of value through innate knowledge, then one would also be unable to force others to choose what one has chosen and have this desire [to compel others to make the same choice]. Therefore [even] this desire remains dependent on the choice of innate goodness [...] Therefore, the nations that were invaded and repressed by the West in the twentieth century could not but consider imperialism to be something evil, which led to the appearance of Gandhi in India and Sun Yat-sen in China, to the will to establish a Greater East-Asian Co-prosperity Sphere in Japan, and to the desire for independence in all Asian and African nations. Each and every one of these things came forth as a manifestation of the resistance against nineteenth-century Western imperialism and from not being resigned to simply take over what Western people considered to be of value through their innate knowledge, but instead demanding to spontaneously and autonomously determine a value criterion through a choice manifesting their own innate knowledge. From this it is clear that all hindrances of human beings' innate goodness resulting from forceful compulsion are nothing but evil, and that they should be breached and negated by this very same goodness [...] The Christian myth we mentioned earlier on, according to which the devil was once the mightiest angel, is an extremely interesting one. The mightiest angel was originally God's greatest creation, but God created an angel who would later turn into the Devil. If we translate this myth into the language of our current text, this means that the manifestations of an everlasting innate knowledge can proceed together with the selfish desires, opinions and intentions of human beings [...] Can we not say there is a similar progression of both innate goodness and selfish desire in Western imperialism? I am not only saying that there is, but that it is precisely because of this [presence of both goodness and selfish desire] that the West could invade other countries without the slightest sense of guilt and could continuously occupy the entire world, leaving only China and Japan as exceptions. From this it is clear that if the Europeans had not first appointed themselves as angels, they could not have become to devils of imperialism.163

良知不是罪惡之源，但人將其良知所視為有價值者強迫他人接受，是一切罪惡之源。然此強迫不是良知，是不許他人有自發自取的良知之選擇，此強迫阻塞封閉了他人之良知[…] 然人若先無其良知之選擇若干其良知所視為有價值者，亦不會強迫他人選擇其所選擇，而有此貪欲，故此貪

欲仍依其良知之選擇為根而後有 [...] 故二十世紀被西方侵略壓迫的民族，必須以西方帝國主義為罪惡，由此而印出甘地，中國出孫中山，日本要建大東亞共榮圈，一切亞非之民族要獨立。這一切的切，都由於對十九世紀之西方帝國主義之反抗，甘以西方人之良知為有價值者為有價值，而要求皆有其自發自動的良知之選擇之表現，以自定價值標準。此即見一切對人之良知為阻塞封閉之“強迫”只是罪惡，只是人之良知所要加以衝破的，加以否定的 [...] 上文所提到之基督教的神話以魔王為最大之天使所變成，是一極有意義的神話。最大的天使本是上帝之一最大的創造，而上帝之最大的創造則是創造一個後化為魔王的天使。這翻譯為本文的語言，即是萬古不息的良知之表現亦可以與人之私欲、意見、意氣同流 [...] 我們能說此西方之帝國主義中即無他們之良知與貪欲共流麼？此不只說是有而亦正因其有而使其侵略之事得問心無愧，一直霸占了全世界，只留下中國與日本在例外。於此很顯然歐洲人不先自命為天使，亦不會成為帝國主義之魔王。

It is thus crucial to stress that Tang's and Mou's sometimes highly abstract and abstruse philosophical discussions are regularly embedded in or followed by an exposition of the more concrete problems towards which they are directed. The argument that they were only concerned with irrelevant, abstract philosophical speculations is not only plainly wrong, but also fails to see what was at stake for them in engaging with German Idealism, which they saw as close to Song-Ming Confucianism, in the first place. As Thomas Fröhlich notes: “[the] overall interest in their philosophical work was to reconstruct Confucianism in the context, and under the social conditions, of modernity. Therefore, it was precisely the social and political implications of a philosophical project of this kind that they wished to articulate.” The issue is more complicated than a simple dichotomy between political Confucianism and a supposedly a-political spiritual Confucianism losing itself in the nebulous regions of metaphysical inquiry. Even in texts that are not explicitly political or do not expressly deal with


social problems of the contemporary world, the critical dimension is never far away in their works. Jiang's claim that the thought of his forerunners constituted a withdrawal into an idle subjectivity disengaged from the real world is not only overstated and mistaken, but also cannot account for the persistent engagement of Tang and Mou with Hegel's dialectical philosophy. In fact, paradoxically enough, it is precisely in this engagement with the work of someone who is often considered to be one of the most abstruse and speculative thinkers in the history of Western philosophy, that the timeliness of their thought becomes most palpable and marked. 166 The paradox could be considerably diffused by calling into question the caricatural image of Hegel as the archetypal otherworldly philosopher, who, “with his nightcap and his night-shirt tatters […] botches up the loopholes in the structure of the world.” 167 In 1857, the critic Rudolf Haym had already voiced his dislike for what he considered to be the confusion of the transcendental and the historical in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which he called “a psychology brought to confusion and disorder by history, and a history brought to ruin by psychology”. 168

The creative “confusion” Hegel's historically grounded and oriented ideas brought to New Confucian philosophy can be grasped as the result of an attempt to think through the disorder of recent modern history. From a comparative perspective, it is remarkable that the surge of interest in Hegel in France after the Second World War also came about under “an acute sense of the burden of history” 169. He Lin

166The adoption of Hegelian elements, specifically a non-individualist and historized notion of subjectivity, and the reinterpretation of Marxism in the light of Kant after the Cultural Revolution by Li Zehou 李泽厚 in his immensely popular and influential *Critique of Critical Philosophy* (Pipan zhexue zhi pipan 批判哲学之批判) was equally motivated by historical concerns and should not be seen as a retreat into carefree theoretical speculation. See Lee Ming-huei, *Konfuzianischer Humanismus: transkulturelle Kontexte*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013, pp.53-76.


169Peter Button, “Negativity and Dialectical Materialism: Zhang Shiying's Reading of Hegel's Dialectical Logic”, *Philosophy East and West*, vol.57, no.1, 2007, p.67. Two crucial figures in the renewal of the French, and more generally continental, interest in Hegel were Alexandre Kojève (1902-1968), whose lectures (published in 1947 as *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*) on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* from a Marxist-Heideggerian perspective influenced a whole
A critical genealogical study of the reception of Hegel in modern China is yet to be made, and I will refrain for now from delving into this highly complex subject matter. There are clear indications that subsequent generation of thinkers (such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Wahl and Georges Bataille); and Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968), teacher to Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, whose *Genèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* from 1946 is still a standard reference work in Hegelian studies. Hyppolite's *Logique et existence. Essai sur la logique de Hegel* is seen as an important milestone in the genesis of postmodern ontology. See Deleuze's review of this work, available at [http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze6.htm](http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze6.htm). A wealth of material is collected in He's *Collection of Lectures on the Philosophy of Hegel* (*Heige'er zhexue jiangyan ji* 黑格爾哲學講演集), Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1986.

170A wealth of material is collected in He's *Collection of Lectures on the Philosophy of Hegel* (*Heige'er zhexue jiangyan ji* 黑格爾哲學講演集), Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1986.

171He Lin, *Fifty Years of Chinese Philosophy* (*Wushi nian lai de Zhongguo zhexue* 五十年來的中國哲學), Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2012 [1945], p.126. Concerning He Lin's relation to Hegel, Peter Button writes the following: “In the 1940s, when He Lin first began his Chinese translation of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* […] the global extent of those destructive forces [of the second World War] awakened a very similar sentiment in Asia concerning the nature of history and the human, and the possibility that a study of Hegel's dialectical logic might shed significant light on each.” Button, 2007, p.67.

in the case of Tang and Mou, their encounter with Hegel marked a turning-point in both of their intellectual itineraries. In a lengthy appendix to his 1955 Study of Logic (Lizexue 理則學), Mou Zongsan explains that he deemed it necessary to append a discussion of the dialectical method to this work (intended as a compendium of formal logic) because of the “exigencies of the age and of society” (時代的需要，社會上的需要). Since these exigencies point to a domain which lies beyond the reach of “pure logic”, (which he saw as restricted to elucidating the principles and laws of rational thought), they had to be tackled through dialectics, which deals with spirit in its entirety, including its concrete, temporal manifestations. The need to demarcate the applicability of the dialectic and prevent it from coming into conflict with and possibly contaminating formal logic which had occupied Mou in his previous publications on the dialectical method is still present here, but he no longer restricts himself to purely formal arguments abstracting from the social background of his discussion. Similarly, in the preface to the revised edition (1978) of Moral Idealism (Daode de lixiangzhuyi 道德的理想主義), Mou recalls the atmosphere and the circumstances that inspired him to write this work, which he groups together with his Philosophy of History (Lishi zhexue 歷史哲學) and his most important work on political philosophy, The Way of Authority and the Way of Governance (Zhengdao yu zhidao 政道與治道). These works are now collectively known as his “three books on new outer kingliness” (xin waiwang sanshu 新外王三書). Zhang Jianjie 張健捷 has rightly stressed the importance of these works...
and has convincingly shown how many of Mou's central concepts took root here. Mou describes the period in which these three works were conceived and written (from 1949 to 1959) as one in which “my cultural consciousness and concern for the age was at its most intense” (吾之文化意識及時代悲懸最為高昂之時). The work on formal logic with tentative forays into epistemology and Kant's critical philosophy which had occupied him during his time at Kunming 昆明 and later at Chongqing 重庆 (where he was in the company of both his teacher Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968) and his fellow student Tang Junyi), culminating in his colossal Standard of Logic (Luoji Dianfan 邏輯典範) from 1941, proved to be hard to reconcile with the problems of Chinese society and the “evil tides of the time” (時風之邪僻). This period also coincided with sustained scholarly activity on the part of Tang Junyi, who wrote a series of philosophical works with a strong focus on cultural and socio-political problems which are marked by the same sense of urgency and engagement. According to Mou, their shared concerns and common trajectory eventually led to the drafting of the 1958 Manifesto calling for the reappraisal of Chinese culture, which he describes as the summary of almost twenty years of work directed at the problems of the contemporaneous world. All the signatories of this now famous text (which went largely unnoticed at its time of publication) drafted by Tang were united in their


178Serina Chan provides an extensive discussion of Xiong's influence on Mou, and demonstrates how Xiong's cultural nationalism was passed on to Mou. See Chan, 2011, pp.25-94.

179The full title is A Manifesto to Scholars of the World on Chinese Culture: Our Common Understanding of Chinese Scholarly Research and of the Future of Chinese Culture and World Culture (Wei Zhongguo wenhua jinggao shijie renshi xuanyan: women dui Zhongguo xueshu yanjiu ji Zhongguo wenhua yu shijie wenhua qiantu zhi gongtong renshi 為中國文化敬告世界人土宣言：我們對中國學術研究及中國文化與世界文化前途之共同認識). It was published in January 1958 in two journals simultaneously: Democratic Review (Minzhu pinglun 民主評論) and Rebirth (Zaisheng 再生). The latter is described by Edmund Fung as a “party organ” of Zhang Junmai's “national socialist party”. See Edmund S.K. Fung, The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era, Cambridge (N.Y.): Cambridge University Press, 2010, p.234 and section 2.3.2.1 in the next chapter. The Manifesto was reprinted in ZJ, pp.865-929. Its four signatories were Tang (who made the first draft of the text), Mou, Zhang Junmai, and Xu Fuguan. From Tang's own account of the creation of the Manifesto, which he traces back to a meeting he had with Zhang Junmai during a research visit to the United States, it is clear that its initial purpose was rather limited in comparison to the final result, and was originally intended for the more narrow methodological purpose of correcting some fundamental misgivings of (American) sinologists, who Tang felt approached Chinese studies either as “missionaries” or as “diplomats”. See Tang, “Discussion of the Thought of Zhang Junmai from the Debate on Science and Metaphysics” (Cong kexue yu xuanchu lunzhan tan Zhang Junmai de sixiang 從科學與玄學論戰談君勉先生的思想), [1976] in ZB, p.991.
categorical denunciation of revolutionary communism, the gravedigger of Chinese culture as a “vital, living entity” (活的生命之存在). In nearly all the above-mentioned works by Mou and Tang, the influence of Hegel is palpable and often quite explicit. Most importantly, it was not merely an academic confrontation or a disinterested exercise in comparative philosophy, but an encounter with strong historical overtones. What was at stake for them in engaging with Hegel was wresting his philosophy from the abuse they felt it had suffered at the hands of Marxism in the development of the “iniquitous theories” (邪論) of dialectical materialism (weiwu bianzhengfa 唯物辯證法) and historical materialism (weiwushiguan 唯物史觀) forming the theoretical backbone of communism. Clearly aware of the historical link between Hegel and Marx, which played a significant role in the introduction of Marxism into China in general, they vigorously attempted to save the dialectic from various materialist “reversals” (顛倒). Tang for one did not mince words:

Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin have completely misunderstood Hegel's philosophy [...] They say they want to reverse Hegelian philosophy, but it never even occurred to them that his philosophy cannot be reversed on this particular point [...] [Dialectical materialism] is a philosophical theory that that wants to explain the emergence of spirit from the dialectical development of matter, [so that] spirit is derived and of secondary importance. But actually, Hegel's dialectics on the one hand and materialism on the other are two mutually exclusive terms. This is because if one assumes that matter will necessarily develop in such a way as to produce spirit, then matter is in fact in a process of self-transcendence through self-negation, and spirit is nothing else but the concept and the truth towards which it develops. From this it is clear that materialism will necessarily negate and transcend itself in order to become a philosophy of spirit. The contradiction internal to dialectical materialism cannot but cause this theory to negate itself.

181 Tang et al., [1958a], p.872.
182 The sheer amount of literature on the Hegel-Marx connection is staggering. One of the most interesting works on the subject (in spite of, or possibly precisely because of, its uncompromising approach) is still Lucio Colletti, Marxism and Hegel, London: NLB, 1971.
184 Tang’s manuscript The Philosophical Spirit of Modern Western Idealism (Xifang jindai lixiangzhuyi zhi zhexue jingshen 西方近代理想主義之哲學精神) written in 1951-1952, in Tang Junyi, Collected Philosophical Essays (Zhexue lunji 哲學論集), vol.18 of TJ, pp.601-752 is crucial in this regard.
On a similar note, Tang argued that

if the dialectical method is combined with materialism in order to argue that spirit came to be produced from matter, then one can only speak of a dialectical process when A produces a B distinct from itself, in which A = matter and spirit = B different from A. However, from a dialectical point of view, if A can give rise to a B different from itself, then one cannot say that A is only A, one would have to say [instead] that A is at the same time a B which is not identical to A […] If one says that matter, even though it could develop and evolve into spirit, is still just matter and nothing else, then this comes down to saying that although A can produce a B distinct from itself, it still remains only A, which is an undialectical line of reasoning. This is why I said that one cannot combine dialectics and materialism; if one talks of materialism, then one will necessarily go against the dialectical method. Materialist dialectics is in itself a self-contradictory form of thought. If people say that the whole miracle of the materialist dialectic lies in the fact that it contains self-contradictory elements within itself, then one should add that these elements too will have to be developed on the basis of the dialectical method, and that they themselves should equally submit to a dialectical development so as to develop into a non-materialist dialectic, or conversely, into a non-dialectical materialism.\(^{186}\)

如吾人於唯物論上，再加上辯證法，以論精神之由物質而生出，則吾人便只有視物質為 A 精神為非 A 之 B．並謂此由 A 以生出非 A 之 B 為一辯證法的歷程。但依辯證法，如 A 能生出非 A 之 B 則 A 不能只說是 A 而當說其兼為非 A 之 B […] 如說物質雖能發展進化出精神，然物質仍只是物質，則同於說 A 能變出非 A 之 B 而 A 仍只是 A 此便為非辯証法的思想形態。故我們說，講辯証法決不能同時講唯物論，講唯物論即必違悖了辯証法。唯物辯証法本身是一自相矛盾的名辭或思

\(^{186}\)”Types of Dialectics” (Bianzhengfa zhi leixing 辯証法之類型), [1961a] in Tang Junyi, Collected Philosophical Essays (Zhexue lunji 哲學論集), vol.18 of TJ, pp.422-423: Also see Mou Zongsan, “On Hegel's Dialectical Method” (Lun Heige'er de bianzhengfa 論黑格爾的辯証法) [1957b], in SW, pp.242-255 and Sun Daosheng 孫道昇, “Is the Dialectical Method Itself Dialectical?” (Bianzhengfa benshen shi bianzheng de ma? 辯証法本身是辯証的嗎?), [1934], in The Debate on Materialist Dialectics (Weiwu bianzhengfa lunzhan 唯物辯証法論戰), edited by Zhang Dongsun 張東 whence, Taipei: Pami'er shudian, [1934] 1980, pp.305-310. He Lin was a bit more nuanced: “The dialectical method cannot be reversed, because it is in itself a fixed totality. Marx uses it to investigate matter, Hegel employs it to study the mind, the one pays attention to economic life, the other to spiritual life, the two of them simply use [the dialectical method] in a different way, instead of there being a fundamental difference […] If we look at the dialectical method as a knife, then Hegel uses it to anatomize the internal organs, and Marx uses it to cut away external sores.” 辯証法是不能顛倒的，因為辯証法是整個的東西，其本身是一定的。馬克思以之研究物質，黑格爾以之研究心靈，一個注重經濟生活，一個注重精神生活 […] 若把辯証法看成一把刀，那麼黑格爾用之剖解髒腑，馬克思用之剖治外症. He, [1945] 2012, pp.79-80.
According to He Lin, the introduction of Hegelian philosophy into China in general was often accompanied and motivated by anti-Marxist sentiments. Mou's and Tang's critical appropriation of Hegel's dialectics also led them to focus on those aspects of Hegelian philosophy which they saw as lending themselves most easily to being abused and perverted into historical materialism. They thus downplayed the central role of contradiction as both a conceptually and socially mediating power, in order to discredit the applicability of the concept of class struggle to Chinese history. This is what caused Tang Junyi to claim that

[1]he historical development of Chinese culture comes down to a continuous broadening and externalization of a central spirit from the inside to the outside and is a development that takes places in peace [...] When Hegel looks at the history of the West he only sees that struggle and conflict can stimulate the subjective transcending spirit of man [...] thus taking contradiction to be the driving force of historical and cultural development [...] He was not aware that China has followed a wholly different path of development. 

Mou Zongsan for his part stated that

the dialectical method is the rich and vast upward path of life, it is not the path of destruction. If the forces and relations of production are only taken as a material concept, then it would be impossible for the reversal of opposition into unity to continue endlessly in a dialectical way. There are a great number of nations which are in a state of stagnation resulting in their destruction. What reason is

there to consider the contradictory opposition between the forces and relations of production from a material point of view and accordingly come to the conclusion that this opposition will continue to develop dialectically without ever ceasing? If from an economic point of view, all previous history really was a development from a primitive communism to a slave society, further developing to first a feudal and then a capitalist society, and if in the future the latter will transform into a rational socialist society (this cannot in any way be accomplished through communism, which is only capable of destruction) and assuming further that these transitions really are a form of upward progress which is a dialectical development that will continue infinitely, then social groups clearly cannot simply be classified as material and the human nature of the individuals that make up these groups are certainly not ruled by their selfish class interests. There is beyond doubt a “spiritual stimulus” [at work] behind their back.

189 “Refutation of the Communist Treatise on Contradiction” (Pi gongchanzhuyizhe de ‘Maodun lun’ 闢共產主義者的「矛盾論」), [1952b] in DY, pp.97-98.

190 Peng Guoxiang 彭国翔 is probably the first to have drawn attention to the crucial significance of Mou Zongsan's lifelong anti-communism, which has sometimes been wrongly explained in terms of biographical incidents alone. (One of Mou's uncles was executed during communist land reforms.) See Peng's “Mou Zongsan's Critique of Communism” (Mou Zongsan de gongchanzhuyi pipan 卦宗三的共產主義批判), Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu tongxun 中國文哲研究通
remarks that the first two generations of New Confucians were forced [...] to confront the issues of modernization and capitalism much earlier than their colleagues in mainland China [...] Thanks to the West's support of Hong Kong, due to its semi-colonial status, and Taiwan, because it was seen (especially by the Americans) as a democratic alternative to Chinese communism, both areas began to undergo an explosive process of Westernization as early as the 1950s.191

Remarkably enough, the staunchly anti-communist signatories of the 1958 Manifesto expressed their understanding of the reasons behind the appeal of Marxism and communism to Chinese intellectuals and politicians in Marxist terms, as stemming from the fact that the whole of Asia and Africa had been transformed into “one great proletarian class” (一大無產階級) by Western colonialism and from the unprecedented surge of nationalist sentiment triggered by the war with Japan.192 Their shared aversion to the consequences of communist modernization expressed itself in different ways and with varying degrees of polemical vehemence and intellectual commitment. To my knowledge, only Zhang Junmai (Carsun Chang) 张君劢 (1886-1969) went to the trouble of devoting a whole monograph to refuting dialectical materialism.193 Zhang saw a genuine similarity between the 19th-century split between Left
(Young) and Right (Old) Hegelians and the division between revolutionaries and conservatives in the New Culture Movement in China. In my opinion, not enough attention has been paid to the fact that the Hong Kong and Taiwan New Confucians' opposition to communism and Marxism is something they share in common with Jiang Qing. Jiang himself remains largely silent on this spiritual inheritance. He would no doubt agree with Tang that “forcing the Chinese people to read Marx's and Lenin's works can only be called a form of spiritual abuse” (強迫人民看馬列的書，只是在精神上加以虐待). Both spiritual and political Confucians identify communism as the harbinger of the discontinuity of modernity and as the antithesis of Confucianism and Chinese culture in general. Jiang's criticism of Marxism-Leninism is also interesting seeing how his denunciations of “spiritual Confucianism” often read like vulgar historical materialist diatribes against “bourgeois idealists”.

In what is perhaps his most famous and influential piece of writing, “The Contemporary Significance of the Revival of Confucianism in Mainland China and the Problems it Faces” (Zhongguo dalu fuxing ruxue de xianshi yiyi jiqi mianlin de wenti 中國大陸復興儒學的現實意義及其面臨的問題), Jiang launches a sustained assault on communism in articulating the predicament of “a Confucianism suffering on the cross” (十字架上受苦受難的儒學). He sees Marxism essentially as the foreign ideology of a “different race” (yizu 異族) which has managed to attain the position of a “state religion” through the political power of the CCP. He argues that the eradication of communism is a much more urgent matter than the democratization advocated by liberals, since the idea of communism is fundamentally opposed to the Chinese, i.e. Confucian, spirit, and has helped facilitate the introduction of “nihilist” Western doctrines such as existentialism, psychoanalysis and the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. It is precisely this idea of a unique, historically continuous and

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195In a text from 1999 entitled “Spiritual Confucianism and the Coming Century” (Xinxing ruxue yu weilai shiji 心性儒学与未来世纪), Jiang gives a much more positive appreciation of spiritual Confucianism, calling it “a Confucianism of hope” ( 希望儒学) which can foster environmental awareness and can be deployed against the prevalence of instrumental rationality and the “reification of human life” (人生物化) in modern society. Reprinted in The Epochal Values of Confucianism (Ruxue de shidai jiazhi 儒学的時代價值), Chengdu: Sichuang renmin chubanshe, 2009, pp.31-51.
197Published in the Taiwanese journal Ehu 鵝湖 in 1989, two parts; vol.15, no.2, pp.29-38 and vol.15, no.3, pp.22-37.
199Jiang, 1989, no.2, p.32.
200Jiang, 1989, no.2, p.36.
essentially Confucian Chinese spirit, to be defended and safeguarded against the historical violence of communism, which Jiang shares in common with Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan. Their criticisms of modernity share a common ground in the identification of virtually all negative and nefarious aspects of modernization with Marxism and communism. As Mou once put it in his typically uncompromising manner, China has to choose between Marx and Confucius. Both currents of modern Confucianism, insofar as one wishes to maintain the dubious distinction between political and spiritual Confucianism at all, are grounded in the idea that there is something like an essential “spirit” of Chinese culture, which must be incarnated in a culturally (over)determined political system. In this regard, the “historical consciousness” manifest in both forms of New Confucianism should be taken quite literally, namely as the substantial, supra-individual consciousness of a Spirit manifesting itself in history. Concomitantly, the role played by the concept of the state in their political and cultural philosophies is actually very similar. Jiang however seems to have magnified the Hegelian dimensions of the state as an organic being reproducing itself throughout history even further than Tang and Mou. Whereas Tang's political philosophy at least contained a clear criticism of Hegel's conception of the state in the form of a defense of the irreducible importance of direct intersubjective relations as they manifest themselves in family life and also put forward the ideal of “Al-under-Heaven” (tianxia 天下) as higher and more inclusive than that of the nation-state, Jiang does not seem to be troubled by such concerns at all. This is apparent from his descriptions of the state as a “transcendent, sacred existence” which is produced by the will of Heaven and is the presence of history and as the “spiritual, organic and living body that has a spiritual life through past, present and future and forever”. Such statements obviously

204Jiang, 2012, pp.74-75. Cf. p.36; “A state is an organic, living body. It continues through history. Politics may not break with the historical continuity of a state, or else the organic life of the state will be smothered and we will see historical nihilism in politics. The state is the state of the past, of the present, and of the future. The role of the state today is to transmit the life of the past state to that of the future. The state is not the result of a rational choice or the will of the people. It is the fruit of historical continuity and traditional inheritance.” Jiang Qing adheres to a notion of the state which does not seem to be particularly Confucian, but more indebted to a form of romantic nationalism and cultural conservatism. See Ding Yun's insightful comments on Jiang in Confucianism and Enlightenment. Current Chinese Thought in the Perspective of Philosophical Encounters (Ruxue yu qiming: zhexue huitong shiye xia de dangqian Zhongguo sixiang 儒学与启蒙：哲学会同视野下的当前中国思想), Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2011, p.61. Cf. Gan, 2012, p.125. Already in 1799, Novalis (1772-1801) wrote the following in his Notes for a Romantic Encyclopedia, exposing, at least performatively, the brutal logic behind the idea of the state: “The needs of of a State are the most pressing needs of man. In order to become and remain man, he requires a State. The State naturally has rights and duties, just like every individual. A man without a State is a savage. All culture arises from the relation of man to the State. The more developed, the more one is a member of a developed State. There are barbaric States – there are civilized States – moral and immoral States […] States educate themselves, or are educated by other States.” Novalis, Notes for a
reproduce some of the metaphysical presuppositions of the Hong Kong and Taiwan Confucians he criticized on the very same grounds. He has inherited all the problems that are tied up with this conception, and given his overt dislike for the mystifying force of dialectics, has no theoretical means to ground such a conception systematically. What is left are bare statements, put forward as commonsensical, which are overtly metaphysical in nature but have renounced either the will or the courage to say so.

1.4.5 The subject as Spirit, and its modern discontents

We are now ready to address an additional problem with Jiang Qing's version of Confucianism and explore how this problem reverberates in contemporary Confucian political philosophy. Unlike the “individualist” spiritual Confucians, he completely neglect the role individual citizens would play in a future Confucian society. He thus condemns what should be the ultimate beneficiaries of the envisaged Confucianization of China, namely the Chinese people, to a position of utter passivity. If they are called upon to do anything, then it would be to wait patiently for their imminent salvation. At one instance he directly echoes Heidegger's idea that “only a god can save us” put forward in the notorious Der Spiegel interview from 1966205: “Confucianism”, Jiang says, “puts its ultimate wager of human salvation on the reemergence of a sage king […] Only the reemergence of a sage king can rekindle human conscience.”206 Adorno seems to have been completely justified in writing that “the wailing about a world in which there is nothing to hold on to […] is followed by the proclamation of compulsory order as salvation.”207 Ralph Weber has rightly drawn attention to the fact that the notion of “community” is insufficiently developed in most available versions of Confucian political philosophy, since many scholars depart from “the counterfactual assumption that everyone is part of one's community by virtue of adherence to a Confucian worldview”.208 As John Makeham remarks, the concept of Confucianism


206Quoted in Chen, 2012, p.115. Cf. Jiang, 2012, p.75: “The spiritual life of the state will not be cut short or destroyed by the rational choices or deliberate decisions of a group of people at any given time […] The State […] is produced by the will of heaven and is the presence of history”.


often tends to become “all-consuming” in academic discourse. The mainland scholar Luo Yijun 罗义俊 for example presents it as an ordinary matter of fact that “Chinese culture and Confucianism are the genes which every Chinese possesses”. Cultural conservative criticisms of democracy and human rights as fundamentally unsuitable to China hinges on what Marina Svensson diagnoses as a form of “self-orientalization”, that is to say “a form of internal Orientalism” of the elite vis-à-vis the common people, who are assumed to be “unable to handle freedom” and “not mature enough for human rights and democracy”. Svensson notes that this attitude is also displayed by a considerable number of elitist Han Chinese towards “backward” and “uncivilized” ethnic minorities. Though there is certainly a lot to be said for the idea that human rights and democracy are often abused and instrumentalized for geopolitical purposes and can as such be justly suspected of being “pseudo-universals” serving unavowed particular purposes and interests, it remains to be seen whether the culturalist notions proposed by Confucian thinkers such as Jiang are capable of having an emancipatory potential comparable to the human rights discourse. I am inclined to think that a cynical, but perhaps rather accurate indication of the existence of such a potential would be the first case of a Confucian revivalist being incarcerated or placed under house arrest by the Chinese authorities. The Noble Prize committee would then feel morally obliged to award its imperialist Peace Prize to one of its ideological adversaries. It certainly seems as though Jiang Qing's and Kang Xiaoguang's notions are already inherently more subservient to power than the “Western” ideas they condemn. When a nation invokes the protection of democracy as an excuse for invading or bombing of another country, this is certainly cynicism of the highest level. But would it really be possible to speak of cynicism if the concept of “Confucian” social harmony developed by Jiang and Kang would be used for, say, the suppression of a strike or a demonstration? As things now stand, it would not have to be abused at all, but merely

faithfully applied. The questionable universality of human rights is not really overcome through the
generic notion of a necessary allegiance to some carefully crafted cultural core as the precondition for
positive social change. To put it in purely formal terms, such an empty generality is just as abrasive to
particularity as the former. Moreover, the universality of a certain concept is never a natural or intrinsic
property of the concept in question, but the result of being recognized and codified as such, even when
lacking a “real basis”, which one would, I think, be at loss to non-dogmatically provide. The
recognition through which the universality of an idea is constituted does not (and perhaps need not)
endow it with a fixed and unassailable rationality, but it is hard to see what other criterion than socially
constituted recognition one could adduce to distinguish “pseudo-universality” from “real universality”.
The problem would of course be how much free “subjectivity” such intersubjective recognition really
allows for in the face of the factual constraints on the social space were the validity of a certain idea
can be renegotiated. Additionally, it would remain to be seen how the normativity possibly resulting
from such renegotiation can influence the state of affairs against which it is developed. In any case, the
point is not that Western liberal democracy stands at the “end of history” proclaimed by Francis
Fukuyama after the fall of the Soviet Union as the final form of organization for all societies,
irrespective of their historical and cultural background. I basically agree with Chen Weigang 陈维纲
when he writes that “only the states of the First World in Europe and North America can afford to
harmonize their national interests with the norms that define the universalistic, cosmopolitan
aspirations of the United Nations” since globalization remains marked by “hierarchical
differentiation”. It is a rare and privileged position from which value and interest can be made to
coincide. As Immanuel Wallerstein convincingly argues, “the norm of universalism is an enormous
comfort to those who are benefiting from the system. It makes them feel they deserve what they
have.” But it would be I think hardly a step in the right direction to make social and political
emancipation contingent on the question of whether or not it conforms to the highly contestable
academically generated notion of some essentialistic cultural identity. As such, the justified concern
over opposing exclusion and oppression implicit in many narratives of cultural emancipation and pleas

“With hegemonic nationalism and developmental states as their only resource for survival in the capitalist system,
peripheral nations have already been dragged by processes of economic globalization into an almost impossible
situation. They are forced to move simultaneously in two completely opposite directions: to be nationalistic while
allowing themselves to be denationalized; to be radically multicultural or anti-Western while subjecting themselves to
supranational institutions governed by norms of Western liberalism.” Ibid.
p.40.
for “native” identity, remains largely epistemological and devoid of meaningful political engagement. More importantly, it should be noted that both the democratic ideal and say a Confucian notion of “Great Unity” (datong 大同) share the fate of being ideas and ideals, the realization of which is dependent on more than what can be determined through mere conceptual analysis and normative prescriptions. Who would judge in the end whether or not such an ideal has been realized? The realization of ideals is dependent on observations, which occur inside various strata of society, where not all perceptions carry the same weight or are brought forward in the same manner, and nowhere else. There is obviously a lot of room here for negotiation, and if all else fails, coercion. Perhaps an observer might put forward the idea that the Communist Party is already in essence Confucian, as has indeed been argued in narratives surrounding the so-called “sinicization” and “Confucianization” of Chinese Marxism.217 Maybe it was already suspicious of human rights as mere “petty bourgeois interests” because of its Confucian unconsciousness? But not Confucian enough perhaps, given the unwillingness to formally change its name? Every observation that an ideal has been (if only partly) realized leaves ample room for a reintroduction of the distinction between essence and appearance, ideal and reality. And this procedure is I think indifferent to the specific content of the ideal in question. Tang Junyi for one clearly saw how his precarious and somewhat hesitant argument that the appeal and success of communism in China should somehow still be attributed to the unconscious persistence of the basic structure of Chinese cultural consciousness could lead to the communist disaster being blamed on Confucianism. Still, he insisted on maintaining that “the spirit of Chinese culture is directly concentrated at the bottom of the heart, mind and consciousness of those who seek to negate the spirit of Chinese culture” (中國文化之精神，乃直接貫注於想否定中國文化精神者之生命心靈與意識之底)218. Tang’s approach already raises the question as to how and at what cost negativity can be introduced into the heart of the supremely self-identical.


In his critical and insightful analysis of Francis Fukuyama's heavily mediatized “noisy gospel” of liberal democracy and free-market capitalism as incarnating the political and economic “end of history” and forming the natural habitat for “the last man”, Jacques Derrida exposes Fukuyama's oscillation between what the deconstructivist identifies as “two irreconcilable discourses” at work in his “neo-evangelistic rhetoric”. On the one hand, Fukuyama refers to “empirical evidence” to support his case for Western liberal democracy, while on the other hand he resorts to the downgrading of empirical facts which belie his homogenized and idealized vision of the modern world to the level of a contingent facticity which can never do any real damage to democracy as a transcendental and regulative ideal. Needless to say that Marxism is not granted such a double source of validity, which is why Fukuyama shows no inhibition in declaring it to be dead and buried. It is indeed only from the standpoint of such a logic of ideality, which already transcendentially determines which occurrences are to count as factual, that a discourse can proclaim a deep sense of contentment with its creation, or conversely, find empirical reality severely wanting in the face of its injunctions. Is not the very same dubious logic to be found in many, superficially anti-Fukuyamaist, celebrations of Confucianism as the perfect political order (at least for China, conceived of as the latter's conceptual subsidiary)? Both empirical evidence as well as certain historical “tendencies” – possibly culled from the mass media, who have their own selection criteria for what qualifies as real – can be invoked whenever necessary or rhetorically useful, but seldom will there be a willingness to make the ideal itself contingent on that over which its dominion has already been established from the onset, namely socially and historically mediated contingency. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot, discourse cannot bear too much reality.

As Marine Svensson makes clear, arguments against democracy and human rights in China are often couched in a cynical form of “historical materialism” which claims that economic development has not advanced far enough for political liberties to be implemented in present-day China, and that the right to

221Derrida, 2006, p.78: “On the one hand, the gospel of politico-economic liberalism needs the event of the good news that consists in what has putatively actually happened […] however, since, on the other hand, actual history and so many other realities that have an empirical appearance contradict this advent of the perfect liberal democracy, one must at the same time pose this perfection as simply a regulating and trans-historical ideal.” Also see pp.107-108.
222“To borrow Dirlik's own words, the scholarly activity around New Confucianism is 'the foremost instance during the [1980s] of intellectual discourse creating its object.'” Makeham, 2003, p.28.
full democratic participation and freedom of speech must remain subordinate to the right to subsistence at this stage of development. In this argument a space is opened in which the surprising collusion of official Marxism and culturalism can reach its highest level as an ideology of oppression. Even in the case of Yu Keping 俞可平 (b. 1959), a liberal intellectual and member of the CCP who currently holds the post of deputy director at the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Central Committee of the CCP (Zhonggong zhongyang bianyi ju 中共中央编译局), for whom “[r]elatively speaking, democracy is the best political system for humankind”\textsuperscript{225} and who overcomes the usual pseudo-Marxist economism by adding that the development of democracy “must be related to the economic level of development of society, the regional politics, and the international environment, and it must also be intimately related to the national tradition of political culture, the quality of the politicians and the people, and the daily customs of the people”\textsuperscript{226}, the stress remains on the conditioned nature of political reform. Yu writes:

The unconditional promotion of democracy will bring disastrous consequences to the nation and its people. Political democracy is the trend of history, and it is the inevitable trend for all nations of the world to move toward democracy. But the timing and speed of the development of democracy and the choice of the form and system of democracy are conditional.\textsuperscript{227}

The problem is that the conditions one chooses to identify impinge on the supposed unconditional desirability of democracy. Once again, people are forced to sit back and wait for it to spontaneously come about, whereas one could argue that it is precisely the imposition of conditions on democracy that inhibits its emergence. For Yu Keping, “[t]he basic approach to developing democracy is not the forceful imposition of a democratic order by the government, but rather the emergence of such an order from among the people.”\textsuperscript{228} But the question as to who is competent to observe whether the various economic, political and cultural conditions (which must themselves also first be established and observed as parameters) have been met receives a predictable answer in Yu's argumentation: it is ultimately the Party which has the “historical responsibility”\textsuperscript{229} to decide whether or not the time is ripe.
for the conditions to be lifted from the conditional, and for the latter to be allowed to become an unconditional reality. The historical responsibility thus lies with those who are most able to influence the historical conditions which are determinative for deciding on the desirability, attainability and practicability of full-scale democracy. Both in Jiang Qing’s authoritarian and in Yu Keping’s more liberal reasoning, the subjectivity and subjective participation of Chinese citizens is subjected to larger anonymous forces which are the final yardstick of reason, be it in the form of some purported “essence” of Chinese culture or as an alignment with the “ceaseless march towards democracy” Yu claims to be able to discern in recent modern history.\textsuperscript{230} The transhistorical, supra-individual Subject always wins out over the historically situated individual subject. The distance between essence and appearance can thus be internalized as intrinsic to the Subject as Spirit, as a difference reducible to the identity of what is \textit{not yet} the same. What is required in both cases is not action or participation, but more or rather better observations, a task which the intellectuals who indulge in these theoretical musings are probably more than willing to take upon themselves. The constant call to consider the existing state of affairs from a perspective which is more suited to the cultural and/or economic specificity of this state of affairs goes hand in hand with a perfect assurance that things will simply remain the way they are, which, if this is taken as something regrettable, at least offers a comfortable and stable perspective allowing one to observe the whole affair and proclaim oneself competent to read off the rational tendency of history.

In this regard, it is interesting and, from my point of view, revealing, that Jiang refers to the post ’78 transformation of communist China into a “socialist market economy” to argue for the possibility of a new constitutional reversal of communism into its historical contender, namely Confucianism. The least one can infer from this is that he grounds the possibility of reestablishing tradition in the contingent, shifty and unpredictable dynamic of modernity itself, instead of seeing a return to tradition as the precondition for modernization.\textsuperscript{231} Of course, what is formally the very “same” historical logic can be invoked to justify the abandonment of Confucianism or traditional culture at large.\textsuperscript{232} Referring

\textsuperscript{230} Yu, 2013. I am reminded of what Chen Weigang writes about religion, which in his view “legitimates social institutions so effectively precisely because it relates the precarious normative structures of empirical societies to “ultimate reality”, which by definition is beyond the contingencies of the human will and activity.” Chen, 2013, pp.47-48.


\textsuperscript{232} See for example Chen Jiamming, “The National Studies Craze. The Phenomena, the Controversies, and Some Reflections”, \textit{China Perspectives}, 1, 2011, p.30: “The reason that Confucian fundamentalism cannot succeed is that it violates historical logic and does not realize that history cannot go backwards, and therefore is fated to be as short-lived

to the economic reforms and the revision of the Constitution under Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Qing writes:

Surely, this was a miraculous reversal of history! Now given that these principles – private property, market economy, and 'bourgeois' human rights, which are contrary to socialism – could yet enter the constitution, why could the way of Yao, Shun, Confucius, and Mencius that expresses the sacred values of Chinese culture not also enter the Chinese constitution? 

Chen Lai 陈来 (b. 1952) follows the exact same line of reasoning, while projecting it further into the distant future:

[O]nce China has realized modernization, the time for a new development of the Confucian tradition will have come. At that time a negative anti-traditionalism will have disappeared, and what will replace it is necessarily a cultural renaissance rooted in a deep national tradition. In this sense, the chief condition for [the] revival of traditional thought is modernisation.

In a remarkable footnote to the main text of his provocative 1989 article, Jiang even goes so far as to praise Marx's theoretical contributions (as distinct from the ideology that later came to bear his name) for having enabled capitalism to internally correct the errors which plagued it and the excesses it gave rise to at the early stage of its inception. In the second part of the same article he offers a moralistic condemnation of what he considers to be the extravagant, hedonist and decadent lifestyle of many capitalist entrepreneurs, with the surprisingly functionalist argument that such uncontrolled and unbridled expenditure (what Georges Bataille called the “general economy”) is detrimental to economic development and impedes the efficient accumulation and investment of capital. In an equally awkward twist, Kang Xiaoguang manages to completely defuse the critical import of Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony by presenting it as a normative idea which can be instrumentalized by the elites to ensure political stability (through the enforced cultural hegemony of Confucianism),

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236Guo, 2004, p.87: “[P]roblems that can hardly be thought of as moral are thrown in the same basket. To Confucians [...] the solution to a moral crisis can be nothing but a moral one.”
instead of as a concept developed to account for the continued domination of the ruling class and the naturalization of its norms into common sense in capitalist societies.  

Jiang's tendency to interpret the communist takeover (and the dismantling of tradition) as part of a larger historical movement that will result in the “negation of the negation” of Confucianism is apparent throughout, and is an approach he shares in common with his “spiritual” forerunners. The only difference is that he finds himself at a point in history where the most severely affected tradition is now Chinese socialism. In my view, Jiang's criticism is not able to, in the words of David Gross, “separate itself from what it repudiates”. Chinese culture, redefined as and totalized into an organic Spirit, thus takes on the dynamic of modernization, along with its procession of burials, excavations, condemnations and reinventions, through which it reproduces itself and on which it remains parasitic. The obvious but dangerous implication is that this Spirit might turn out to be just as accommodating and vacuous as the soulless waves of exchange value on which it rides along, or by which it is perhaps simply being carried away.

The vaguely Weberian approach adopted by the self-proclaimed “reconstructionist Confucianist” Fan Ruiping 范瑞平 goes even a step further in closing (or perhaps squaring) the culturalist circle by ascribing the “success” of the socio-economic reforms to the existence of “a strong Confucian substructure” and to a Confucian “operative morality of the economy”. This approach allows him to interpret any deficiencies in the existing system and injustices in the current state of affairs as resulting from the fact that China is only latently Confucian and has yet to fully realize the potential of its inherent Confucian nature. The Korean scholar Lee Seung-hwan makes a strong case against the whole idea, especially prominent at the height of the debate on Asian values and now echoed again in

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239See Kang, 2012, p.72.
240See Mou's Record of Lectures at the Humanist Society (Renwen jiangxi lu 人文講習録), [1954b] vol.28 of MJ, p.11, where the resistance against the “Demonic Way” (modao 魔道) and the generation of a “third period” for Confucianism is defined in terms of the “negation of the negation” (fouding zhi fouding 否定之否定).
241David Gross, The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, p.79. Gross adds that “if a forced restoration of tradition were to come about, the help of a powerful, centralized state would be essential […] But the contemporary bureaucratic state, itself a product of modernity, cannot be counted on to serve antimodern ends.”
243Fan is not clear on precisely what he means by the term “reconstructionist”, nor on what this position entails exactly. He clearly strives to distinguish his own approach from that of “Neo-Confucians” (New Confucians), who were, so he claims, epistemologically “colonized” by Western assumptions. See Fan, 2010, pp.XI-XII.
245Fan, 2010, p.XIX.
relation to the rise of China, that the (varying) economic successes of East Asian nations can be attributed to their shared Confucian background. Lee condemns it as a thoroughly “anti-Confucian” discourse leading, in the case of South Korea, to a “sullied self-portrait of modern Koreans” which “would have been more readily condemned as vice in the traditional period than today”. Lee argues that positing Confucianism as the cultural source of East Asian Capitalism would entail recognizing the nepotistic and corrupt business conglomerates (chaebol 재벌), such as Samsung and Hyundai, as incarnations of the Confucian stress on filial piety (xiao 孝). He also points out that the discourse on “Confucian capitalism” can just as easily be employed to “explain” economic recession or stagnation as the result of a “paternalistic” and “inflexible” business model which hinders entrepreneurial “creativity” once the stock markets start going south. According to Jun Sang-in, the culturalist approach (re)born during the discursive boom on Asian Values, which seeks to explain East Asian economic successes (but not of course downturns) on the basis of a purportedly shared Confucian culture consistently distorts the argument put forward by Max Weber in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1905), an argument which is constantly appealed to even in the replacement of “Protestant” by “Confucian”. Jun claims that Weber's standpoint is generally reduced to that of a defender of the idea that “ideas” and “values” are the final determinant in historical development, instead of (more modestly) examining the “elective affinity” Weber thought he was able to establish between the Protestant ethic and the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe at a particular point in time. Fan Ruiping does not take valid objections like these into consideration, which does not remain without consequence for his own argumentation. He condemns economic determinism as encouraging “ethical laziness and numbness”, but does he not force human beings into a very similar stance of passivity by claiming (Confucian) morality to be totally independent from its actual conditions? The “moral vacuum” which according to Fan characterizes the “post-Communist personality disorder”, causing


250 See Jun Sang-in, “No (Logical) Place for Asian Values in East Asia’s Economic Development”, Development and Society, vol.28, no.2, 1999, pp.191-204. Jun writes: “Culture often explains everything and nothing at the same time. In this context, it is no wonder that the same Confucianism which was once held responsible for the stagnation of the Asian economy, is now seen as enhancing its capitalist transformation.” (p.195).

251 Fan, 2010, p.73.

political corruption, hedonism, and the unbridled pursuit of profit, splits the (Chinese = Confucian) subject into its empirical insufficiency as an imperfect (i.e. not yet fully Confucian) human being and an autological and largely autonomous spiritual essence in which the individual subject can, it would seem, at best participate (in the Platonic sense of methexis). It is telling that the same Luo Yijun who sees Confucianism as a genetic code shared by all Chinese can write that “over a billion Chinese […] are deprived of spiritual guidance” and “wander aimlessly on the mainland”253. It is clearly no longer Confucianism which is a “wandering soul”, but the subjects divorced from their Subject. If there is something like an irreducible metaphysical kernel of modern Confucianist discourse, it is here that one should begin to look. Even Tu Weiming, who shares none of the fundamentalist fanaticism of the likes of Jiang Qing and Kang Xiaoguang, seems to be caught in this internal splitting of the subject into its putative essence and empirical appearance when he writes that “East Asian societies often exhibit totally un-Confucian behavior and attitudes, a clear case of the seemingly unbridgeable gap between ideation [sic] and reality.”254 The same problem imposes itself in the context of Jiang Qing's attack on the Western idea that the volonté générale is the most fundamental source of political legitimacy and in his railing against purely “formal” and “abstract” equality255, which reads much like a watered-down Hegelian critique of the putative “formalism” of Kant's ethics in favor of a purely culturalist notion of Sittlichkeit. In two crucial passages, Jiang claims that

> [e]ven if popular opinion is willing to concede recognition and support to democracy, yet because democracy lacks roots in the culture and has no source in that [i.e. the Confucian] tradition, it fails to win recognition and support from that people's cultural tradition and can never be wholly legitimate. The will of the people is simply endorsement by the current population of the state at a particular time and place [i.e. merely “empirical” and contingent], while the legitimacy of history and culture is the endorsement formed by many generations over hundreds and thousands of years [i.e. transhistorical and transcendent] […] If the majority of wills do not conform to morality, then what they want is illegitimate according to the Way of Humane Authority.256

The attempt to affirm a culturally specific form of political authority, and to overcome the social

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253Quoted in Guo, 2004, p.76. For Mou Zongsan too, very few mainland Chinese were still actually Chinese due to the influence of communist ideology. See *Fourteen Lectures on the Encounter between Chinese and Western Philosophy (Zhongxi zhexue zhi huitong shishi jiang* 中西哲學之會通十四講), [1990b] vol.30 of *MJ*, pp.28-29.
255See for example, Jiang, 2012, p.39 and p.73.
pathologies of the present through a recourse to a completely ahistorical notion of “history”, as a “sacred, mysterious, whole, awe-inspiring, and enduring” being manifesting itself in the state hinges on a properly metaphysical distinction between the transitory and the eternal. This distinction is then lodged onto the difference between individual subjects and the inner essence which is completely beyond their reach and control and is further normatively put forward as a political ideal which serves to keep the transcendent (the state) from being contaminated by the contingencies of empirical facticity (the people/the government). As Jiang stresses, “the state is one body with the nation and not with the people”. For Jiang, unlike the nation-state, the government “is not the product of an autonomous long evolution of history and culture” and is merely a kind of “this-worldly secular existence”. The distinction between (transcendent, supra-individual) “spirit” (jingshen 精神) and (empirical, individual) “consciousness” (yishi 意識), already found in the work of Liang Shuming, where it served as a means of refuting historical materialism, can be neatly matched onto Jiang's distinction between state and government. The resulting heteronomy can only be avoided if one agrees to accept the spurious innateness of these moral values as a given and further assumes them to be, in some way, more real than the participating subject itself. In the case of Fan Ruiping, the overtly metaphysical implications of this kind of discourse sit uneasily with his rejection of a supposedly uniquely Western “substantialist tradition”.

A similar cluster of problems teems in the work of the contemporary political philosopher Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳 (b. 1961), who quickly rose to academic fame thanks to his elaboration of the

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257Jiang, 2012, p.71. “Confucianism holds that the historical nature of the state is its essence”. Ibid.
261See Liang Shuming 梁漱溟, The Cultures of East and West and their Philosophies (Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue 東西文化及其哲學), Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, [1921] 2012, pp.57-61. Liang saw his project of “rural reconstruction” (農村建設) as a third way between capitalism and communism. Also see Thierry Meynard, The Religious Philosophy of Liang Shuming: the Hidden Buddhist, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010, pp.28-29 and pp.35-36; and Zhang, 2011, pp.2-3 and pp.101-102. In Tang Junyi's early work, roughly the same distinction is rendered as the difference between a strictly individual and internal “mind” (xinling 心靈) on the one hand, and spirit (jingshen) as characterized by objective externalization on the other. See Mind, Matter, and Human Existence (Xinwu yu rensheng 心物與人生), [1953a] vol.2 of TJ, pp.188-189.
262See Fan, 2010, p.74: “[T]he Reconstructionist Confucianism I am presenting consists of a set of moral principles that are not determined by productive forces, but are mandated by Heaven, rooted in the heart/mind of human beings, articulated by the Confucian sages, practiced within Chinese tradition, and possessing the eternal moral values transcending contemporary society in directing human lives and regulating economic institutions.”
paradigm of “All-under-Heaven” (tianxia 天下). Let us take care to note that in classical texts, this term more often denoted China as an empire, rather than the world as a whole. Zhao however wants to overcome the artificial limitations of the modern nation-state through this specific concept, by refusing to take the “false universality” of the state, which he sees as a cover for particular interests, as a point of departure and as a finality, proposing instead to, following Laozi 老子, “observe the world from the world” (以天下觀天下). The “perspective of tianxia” can thus be read both in the objective and in the subjective genitive. From a comparative point of view, Zhao Tingyang claims that “the modern Western political system could be described as consisting of individuals, communities, and nation-states, whereas the Chinese system is structured in terms of families, states, and all-under-heaven”.

The current dominance of an oppositional (对应的) system of nation-states is for Zhao the reason why attempts at cosmopolitan internationalism which do not go beyond the state have remained abortive. “The current world”, he writes, “still remains a “non-world”, it is merely a geographical and not a political entity. The most important political problem today is how a world in the political sense can be created.” For Zhao, the appeal Marxism had for twentieth-century Chinese activists and intellectuals was the result of a pre-established harmony between the embracive idea of “All-under-
Heaven” where “the four seas are one family” (sihai yijia 四海一家) and the Marxist notion of a universal class of proletarians, united in a joint struggle transcending all national boundaries and ultimately poised towards the future abolishment of the state as an instrument of oppression. In the presentation of his ideas, Zhao stresses the methodological importance of adopting an analytical and normative standpoint adequate to the Chinese context. As he writes in a very interesting yet also somewhat disturbing sentence: “truth is certainly not the highest [form of] judgment, the truth must be good and the truth must be responsible (真理并不是一个最高的判断，真理必须是好的，真理必须是责任的). He grounds his political vision in a familiar-sounding “relational rationality” (guanxi lixing 关系理性), developed into an “ontology of coexistence, instead of a philosophy of existence”, in which “coexistence is prior to existence” and where one can “let beings be ([shengsheng] 生生)”. The influence of Levinas and Habermas shines through here, in a form of thought where alterity has taken the place of transcendence. He is not far removed from most New Confucians on this point. Half a century before Zhao, Tang Junyi had already analyzed the fact that imperial China had fallen prey to Western imperialism during the two Opium Wars as a historical consequence of the age-long dominance of “the concept of All-under-Heaven, which had concealed the concept of the state” (天下观念，即掩盖了国家观念) and the preponderance of a political view based on the conviction that “one who is humane is not in opposition to things” (仁者與物無對). However, Zhao does not see himself as a Confucianist thinker, since he rejects the all-too-often found identification of Confucianism with the Chinese cultural tradition at large and faults modern New Confucianism with being unable to think through the “totality/integrity” (wanzhengxing 完整性) of Chinese thought, since it unduly elevates what is a mere (albeit important) part above the whole. His point is precisely that China as a consistent totality defies any external and abstract division into “parts”. He insists that this

270Zhao, 2005, p.98.
271See Zhao, 2005, pp.6-7, p.12.
272Zhao, 2005, pp.5-6, emphasis added.
275See Tang, [1950c], pp.258-260.
276See Zhao, 2005, p.8. Zhao calls the exclusive focus on Confucianism 独尊儒术, adopting an expression of the anarchist revolutionary Yi Baisha 易白沙 (1886-1921).
277Tang Junyi had already claimed that “the world of the Eastern people is a world without limits/ an unlimited world” (东方人世界是无限的世界), both ontologically and politically. See “Reflections from a Journey to Korea” (You Han lü 游韩旅思), [1967] in ZB, p.763.
(ontological) assumption must at the same time form the (epistemological) standpoint from which China as an entirety is to be observed and reflected on. One must approach what is whole as a whole. And of course it is Chinese thought which is uniquely able to “think with no outside/without exclusion” (思考无外) and thereby ethically and politically capable of “not excluding the other” (不拒绝他者). 278 “The world”, Zhao writes poignantly, “is absent because of our refusal to see it from its own perspective.” 279 There are reasons however to find this beatific vision doubtful for epistemological (and of course also “practical”) reasons. How, one might ask, can one attain a position suited to observe a totality that is not already in a way posited within a determinate horizon and thus distinguished from something else (i.e. a particular totality), as in the case of the Aristotelian distinction, which Zhao seems to implicitly uphold, between the irreducible wholeness of substance (ousia) and the contingent unity of a temporary aggregate. This distinction, which Zhao would no doubt reject as a typical form of Western dualism, nevertheless returns with a vengeance in his own differentiation between “universalization” (pubianhua 普遍化) and “standardization” (biaozhunhua 标准化) 280, where the latter is assumed to lead to a harmonious instead of a conflictual form of unity, in which difference is not subsumed under or overrun by the (self-)identity of the resulting whole. 281 Furthermore, it might be asked how one can at the same time view such a self-enclosed totality “totally”, that is to say, without excluding oneself from what is seen. The ineluctable involvement of the subject in what it can (or perhaps only chooses or refuses to) see, implies that it is, so to speak, always standing in its own line of sight. If one does not leave such a “blind spot”, every act of cognition comes to incarnate the mystical self-transparency of what Fichte called “a self-seeing eye” 282, in which the possibility that it is perhaps seeing nothing but its own self-observations is, as Kant would have said, dogmatically excluded. In this way, it does not see “that it cannot see what it cannot see” 283, and can only claim to have access to the world it observes by believing and yet at the same time denying itself to be identical with it. In a passage where he attacks the Western bifurcation of self/other and immanent/transcendent, Zhao writes

278 Zhao, 2005, pp.13-16.
279 Zhao, 2009, p.7.
280 Zhao, 2005, pp.87-88. For some reason which eludes me, Zhao takes the “standard script, uniform cart axles” (書同文, 車同軌) measures taken by Qin shi huangdi 秦始皇帝 as a laudable example of “standardization”.
the following with reference to Kant:

In the Western frame of thought, a human being (the subject) “observes” the world; in this epistemological framework, everything which cannot be internally “changed” [化] by the subject is an absolutely external transcendent entity [...] China\textsuperscript{284} on the other hand does not recognize an absolutely external transcendent [form of] existence, which is why it opened up a wholly different scope. What Chinese thought presupposes is that for every single “other”, there is always a way to transform him into a harmonious entity; or in other words, that any non-harmonious relationship can be changed into a harmonious one, and that any external entity is an object which can be “transformed” [化] instead of being an object that has to be conquered.\textsuperscript{285}

Thus, what is taken to be a pathological distance between self/subject and other/object is bridged in an by collapsing the object (ratio essendi) into the subject (ratio cognoscendi), without any check on the ambitions of reason (Vernunft) such as Kant's limit-concept of the thing-in-itself (Ding-an-sich). I will touch upon this issue later in the third chapter, where we will have more space to discuss this problem in the context of Mou Zongsan's much more sustained and sophisticated interpretation of Kant. Let us for now instead take up the obvious paradox in Zhao Tingyang's claim that, “only Chinese thought is capable of thinking harmony” (只有中国思想才能够思考和谐).\textsuperscript{286} Bearing the above in mind, one could reformulate this claim into the idea that only the whole can think the whole, or, to again invoke Aristotle, that only the supreme being is capable of thinking his own thinking (noēsis noēseōs noēsis). This culturalist restriction seems to be highly damaging to Zhao's undertaking, and raises the suspicion that even in the idea of tianxia, we are really dealing with what Adorno would have called an “antagonistic entirety”\textsuperscript{287}. William Callahan observes that “even though Zhao is very critical of how Western thought employs absolute binaries, he uses the same analytical framework of China/West to construct and exclude “the West” as the Other. In this sense, Zhao's Pax Sinica mission is quite similar to that of the Western imperialist scholars whom he criticizes.”\textsuperscript{288} Indeed, it is not hard to see that Zhao

\textsuperscript{284}Note that the grammatical subject (and philosophically speaking the Subject) here in the Chinese text is literally China.

\textsuperscript{285}西方思想框架是人（主体）在“看”世界，在这个知识论框架中，凡是主观性所“化”不进来的东西就是绝对在外的超越存在 [...] 中国不承认绝对在外的超越存在，所以开拓了思想的另天地，中国的思想假定的是，对于任何他者，都存在着某种方法能够将他化为和谐的存在；或者说，任何不和的关系都可以化为和谐的关系，任何在外的存在都是可以‘化’的对象而决不是要征服的对象。Zhao, 2005, pp.14-15.

\textsuperscript{286}Zhao, 2005, p.15.


Tingyang is caught in the same tension between a programmatic rejection of metaphysical bifurcations and a back-door politics of spirit which keeps political Confucianists such as Jiang Qing enthralled. His main object of criticism in the comparative parts of his texts, is, not unexpectedly, “Western democracy”, which he condemns in a similar vein, faulting the democratic mode of governance as ignoring the real “qualitative” differences between people, who are abstracted and reified into identical units quantifiable in the form of a vote, ultimately hindering the active transcendence of the state towards an actual political unity of the world as “All-under-Heaven”. Oddly enough, given his ontological proclivities, the latter constitutes for Zhao, the “pure theory” of “an a priori political unit” (先天的政治单位) of “an a priori political unit” ( 先天的政治单位), which forms “the metaphysics of any possible world system” ( 任何可能的世界制度的形而上学). One cannot but feel that Zhao's tianxia presupposes what it purports to supplant. How else but through a strong interventionist super-state would the following be conceivable on a global scale?: “An efficient political system must have the universal efficacy to be able to fill the entire possible political space and must have the ability to be completely disseminated throughout all possible political levels.” Finally, the distinction Zhao makes between a democratic “rule of the majority of the people” (minzhu 民主) and the real “heart of the people” (minxin 民心) brings the specter of an exorcised transcendence back in after a refreshing slumber in the netherworld: the former is a merely “psychological”, ephemeral, and empirical “form” (形态); the latter is the substantial “essential mind” (benxin 本心), equipped with a “spiritual meaning” (精神含义).

In the absence of Tang's and Mou's paraconsistent, dialectical style of reasoning, the contradiction between non-dualist and/or anti-substantialist ontological presuppositions on the one hand, and a restoration of such presuppositions in cultural, political and social conceptions on the other, becomes

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289 Zhao, 2005, p.27.
290 Zhao, 2005, p.51.
293 Zhao, 2005, pp.28-29, p.33. In arguing against the “quantitative” perversions of Western democratic voting and opinion polls, Zhao's contends, in a gesture of confused empiricism, that “the will of the people always expresses itself as a social atmosphere that can be intuited or directly felt, furthermore, it would seem that people's intuitions of the popular sentiment and their impressions of the social atmosphere can never be mistaken.”
294 Zhao, 2005, p.19. I think Chong Jianxin 徐建新 is quite justified in considering this to be one of the most problematic aspects of Zhao's theory of tianxia. See Chong, 2007, pp.131-134.

harder to smooth over or cover up. Tu Weiming, probably the most well-known spokesman for a reinvented Confucianism in Europe and Northern America, is known for his universalist stance and embrace vis-à-vis other “world religions”, which he tries to bring into a constructive dialog with Confucianism in its “third epoch”. For Tu, Confucianism transcends both time and culture, in the sense that it may have started out as the “regional culture of Qufu” at a specific historical juncture and was later manipulated as an oppressive ideology by imperial rule, but still succeeded in becoming a constitutive part of “East Asian civilization”, and will remain of enduring value for global society at large. It is fairly obvious however, that this transcendence of time, history and culture can only be accomplished precisely by first conceiving of Confucianism as Culture, that is to say, as Spirit. In Tu's argument for the value of Confucianism in the contemporary globalized world, the aforementioned contradiction comes to the surface in all its bareness:

The modern West's dichotomous world view (spirit/ matter, mind/body, physical/mental, sacred/profane, creator/creature, God/man, subject/object) is diametrically opposed to the Chinese holistic mode of thinking [...] the Enlightenment mentality is so radically different from any style of thought familiar to the Chinese mind that it challenges all dimensions of the Sinic world.

What is striking about this passage is that any critical force its rather commonplace rejection of purportedly typically “Western” dichotomies might have, is immediately neutralized by the fact that it simultaneously reinstates precisely such a binary opposition in the form of a dichotomous distinction between the “West” and the “Sinic world”. Chenshan Tian's book *Chinese Dialectics. From Yijing to Marxism* offers another such, perhaps even more glaring, example with reference to the problem of time. Tian identifies a strand of thought he calls tongbian 通變, or “continuity throughout change”,

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298I therefore agree with Arif Dirlik when he observes that “for all its purported constructivism, the very urge in postcolonial criticism to overcome a dichotomous modernity/tradition distinction invites by the back door reified notions of culture.” Dirlik, 2007, p.75.
which was first developed in the “cosmology” of the Book of Changes. The Yijing’s “ontology of events” was “not one of substance,” always remained devoid of any dualistic “sense of transcendence” and continued to operate in what it unfailingly managed to transform into a distinctively Chinese form of thought with its Midas touch, right up to Chinese Marxists such as Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935), Ai Siqi 艾思奇 (1910-1966) and even Mao Zedong himself. The dialectical paradigm of tongbian, “in which the complementary and contradictory interactions of the two basic elements of the polarity of yin and yang produce change” could in Tian's view help to “overcome some of the difficulties that have attended Western Marxisms.” At one point, this approach leads Tian to a forced and awkward attempt to prove that “dialectics” (bianzheng 辯證) was not, as is generally assumed, a neologism invented by Japanese translators of Western concepts, which he does by poetically exploiting the richness of the semantic fields covered by the individual characters of the compound bianzheng in a manner reminiscent of Heidegger's most obscure writings. As Karatani Kōjin observes, “the problem with etymological retrospection is that it tends to occlude origins of the recent past, the actual historical formation.” The resulting occlusion allows Tian to paint Mao Zedong as a faithful adherent to the specifically Chinese style of dialectics and as yet another sentinel of “continuity throughout change”, as if the Cultural Revolution never happened. Tian's exposition becomes even more problematic when he applies his notion of tongbian to recent modern history and approvingly quotes a certain Liu Rong 刘荣, for whom the transition from socialism to “market socialism” embodies the “wisdom” of Deng Xiaoping in effectively bringing the “unity of opposites” (对立的统一) into practice. It seems to me that in this way, any considerable historical discontinuity can be explained away as just another expression of the same old change. The

300See Tian, 2005, pp.21-46.
305Tian refers to the expression bianzheng in the context of traditional Chinese medicine (actually the term bianzheng is mostly written as 辨证, not as 辨证 in medical texts), where it simply means “distinguishing symptoms” or “diagnosing”, and uses the “correlative holism” of Chinese medicine as “proof” for his contention that bianzheng (as signifying “dialectics”) was a “classical Chinese expression”. See Tian, 2005, pp.71-74.
paradox in the idea, already known since Heraclitus of course, that there is “nothing continuous but change”, can be dissolved through the inherent sovereignty of continuity over change, and is thus diluted into the wearisome wisdom of Solomon that “there is nothing new under the sun”. This line of reasoning seems to come down to a culturalist appropriation of the Medieval theological doctrine of occasionalism, a doctrine according to which nothing ever really happens in the world out of itself (that the collision of one object with another for example cannot be understood in terms of cause and effect), but only constitutes an occasion for God to intervene in the (dis)order of the world, since nothing is assumed to be able to happen without Him. Culture waits patiently backstage for History to give the cue. As such, the idea of Spirit is really only absent in name.

1.4.6 Concluding remarks

Contradictions between basic philosophical positions and political stances (derived, or quite simply detached from them) are of course not unique to modern Confucianist discourse. But in the work of the second generation of New Confucians, the paradoxical coexistence of anti-substantialism as a way of distinguishing Chinese from Western philosophy on the one hand and the propagation of culture as a living transhistorical substance on the other is staring the reader in the face as a contradiction begging to be accounted for. The ontologically staunchly anti-substantialist Tang Junyi for example has no problem writing that

the Spirit of Chinese culture has an incomparable strength, it is directly linked to the depths of the life and Spirit of all Chinese. But one must understand that this Spirit can only exist objectively in the society, history and culture of the entire people and exist in the present through its presence in the minds of all Chinese. It absolutely does not belong to any individual or political party. It is nothing but a vast flowing river searching for its own path completing its own development, soundlessly and ceaselessly following its necessary direction in accordance with is own nature. “Those who act in accordance with Heaven will persist, those who go against Heaven will perish.”

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culture] is nothing but the God of the Chinese people\(^{310}\) [...] All your efforts should be devoted to this Spirit. It is nothing but your innermost self.\(^{311}\)

Chinese culture has its own power, which is directly related to the concept of the metaphysical Spirit, which is “not only substance, but also subject” (not merely to serve ulterior ends in a transitional sense). It is not merely to serve a universal which merely uses the former as a means. Instrumentalization of the particular in service of a universal which merely uses the former as a means is not merely to serve ulterior ends.\(^{313}\) The “Ruse of Reason” (\textit{List der Vernunft}) is simply replaced by the “Ruse of Culture”: “Cultural life is our goal, [whereas] existence is merely our means [to achieve this goal]” (文化生命是我们的目的, 生存只是我们的手段)\(^{314}\). In this regard, it is all very well to stress that the concept of a metaphysical Spirit, which is “not only substance, but also subject”\(^{315}\), is ...

\(^{310}\)Cf. Mou, “Introspections after a Great Disaster” (\textit{Da nan hou de fansheng 大難後的反省}), [1947] in \textit{ZW}, p.970, p.972: “Adam was God's first son. The lure of the snake at his side, he could see his father when looking back. But only by trembling in fear before his sinful side could he begin to repent and turn back. It has been over sixty years since Japan invaded China, and only now [after the World War II] has this sin been lifted [from us]. But now we are caught again in a new source of sin [i.e. Chinese communism]. Taking advantage of this juncture in time, our whole people should experience a deep sense of repentance, and realize that we have to turn back to look around as soon as possible. Behind us stands our father. We must search for our father, and only after we have found him will we be at peace and be able to establish ourselves. [...] Our whole people should repent before the history our ancestors laid out for us and express their repentance before the great cultural continuity forged by Confucius and Mencius.” (亞當是上帝的第一個兒子，蛇惑在旁。回頭是父。唯有戰栗於罪惡之側者，始能懺悔，始能回頭。日本侵略中國六十余年，直到今日才解除這個罪惡。然而現在又陷於一個新的罪惡之淵。際此時機，全民族都應當有深深的懺悔，都應當急急猛醒回頭。回頭是父。我們應當找我們的父。惟有找得了自己的父，才得有安頓，才得建立自己 [...] 我必首先要求全民族向著我們的祖先所締造的歷史懺悔，向著孔、孟所造的文化大統懺悔).


incompatible with or even contradictory to traditional forms of Chinese thought, which indeed generally never showed a proclivity for such ontological distinctions. However, one cannot thereby bypass the question as to why philosophers such as Tang and Mou, despite their unceasing efforts to philosophically combat and transcend categorical ontological and epistemological bifurcations, were unwilling to abandon the idea of a substantial Spirit (and a clear distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal) for what David Hall and Roger Ames take to be the “radical immanence” characteristic of Chinese (Confucian) thought.\textsuperscript{316} Perhaps one could say that what is philosophically most disagreeable about their work is at the same time what is historically most interesting. As Fabian Heubel points out, insisting on the pervasiveness of complete immanence is often linked to the idea that Chinese thought is characterized by a sense of passive conformity and a lack of critical distance from the world.\textsuperscript{317} The theme of transcendence in both Tang's and Mou's work can in my view be interpreted as a space for critical reflection on the historical condition in which comparatively established cultural generalizations, such as the one based on the distinction between transcendence and immanence, are established. In any case, as we have seen in the last section, the metaphysics of Spirit is apparently perfectly able to endure a rhetorical dismissal of metaphysical distinctions, which can be reinstated in the very act of dismissing them as alien to Spirit. As Hegel already knew, the latter “contains a \textit{becoming-other}”, its life not being one which “shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather […] endures it and maintains itself in it”, so that it “wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself”.\textsuperscript{318} In the next chapter, we will begin to tease out some of the philosophical consequences of the paradoxical coexistence of a philosophical revolt against “substantialism” and the idea of a godlike spiritual-cultural substance (along largely right-Hegelian lines) in modern Confucian discourse, and attempt to further analyze this paradox against the background of the historically and socially specific condition of modernity. As I have tried to show in the above, this contradictory conception cuts through the (self-drawn) boundaries between spiritual and political Confucians. The philosophical ramifications of and problems stemming from such contradictions or paradoxes were in my opinion more conceptually refined, and left considerably more traces, in the work of spiritual Confucians such as Tang and Mou than in that of most of the

\textsuperscript{318}Hegel, 1977, p.19.
contemporary representatives of Confucian discourse, which often reads like a philosophically watered-down or at least metaphysically neutered version of debates and discussions which had already been both systematically and incidentally broached in the work of these thinkers. That a propagation of the idea of a Spirit of Chinese culture can be combined with almost postmodern concerns over the ontological model of substantialism is remarkable, and mostly not reflected on by those who see the influence of Hegel (and German Idealism in general) on Tang's and Mou's thought as fundamentally detrimental to their renewal of the Confucian tradition. For this and other reasons which will hopefully become clearer in what follows, it is they who will be at the center of the rest of my study.
Chapter 2: New Confucian Philosophy in the Context of Twentieth-Century Chinese Intellectual History and the Modern Recategorization of Knowledge

Man only exists insofar as he changes, [but] he only exists as himself insofar as he remains unchanged (Nur indem er sich verändert, existiert er; nur indem er unveränderlich bleibt, existiert er)
Friedrich Schiller¹

It is as a movement from the past to the future that there is time […] Time, therefore, must be conceived as a continuity of rupture.
Nishida Kitarō²

How could a cultured Chinaman not be reactionary?
Count Hermann Keyserling³

2.1 Introduction: the historical form of identity and difference as continuity and discontinuity

On the first pages of his *Introduction to Philosophy*, the professor of philosophy and Hegel specialist Zhang Shiyi程世英 (b. 1921) makes a case for the continuing relevance and irreducible significance of philosophical thought in the modern world, which he concludes with the following evocative passage:

In today's age of burgeoning markets and the daily increasing development of science and technology, people are on the one hand focused on pursuing their [own] interests and striving for the possession of concrete things, while on the other hand they cannot but continue to inquire into the ultimate meaning of life and pursue some of the greatest problems of universal importance. Here we find an incredibly wealthy person sighing over his personal sense of spiritual emptiness, as if he didn't have a thing in the world. There we find an entrepreneur standing on the top floor of the Jin Mao Tower in Shanghai still reciting verses by the Tang dynasty poet Chen Zi'ang [661-702]: *The past offers no glimpse of the ancients / The future shows no sign of those still to come / When I contemplate the infinity of the world/ I

shed mournful tears in solitude. All of this goes to show that most people living in today's world also engage in philosophical reflections.⁴

As is clear from this excerpt and the context in which it figures, Zhang Shiying is making a general argument for the importance and the value of philosophy in the modern age, an argument not particularly uncommon or original at a time when austerity policies are increasingly forcing the most ostensibly “useless” field in the human sciences and the humanities in general into a defensive position of self-justification.⁵ Zhang seems to claim that philosophical reflection should not be seen as completely detached from the daily routines of people in their everyday comings and goings, but continues to have its place next to, and in a sense also inside of, the more pedestrian and utilitarian considerations dominating modern life. Still, one can easily imagine this extract being invoked in support of claims of cultural continuity, more specifically a form of deep-level continuity obscured by an only apparent homogenization of the human and non-human life-world brought on by globalization. The idea that China does not (and will not, or more categorically, will never) become less Chinese in becoming modern and the notion that Chinese people continue to stay in touch with their tradition in spite of rapid modernization and the rise of China as an economic and geopolitical power within the global system of nation states, is very widespread and need not in itself necessarily be problematized. From a liberal point of view, it is enough to acknowledge that individuals have the right to describe themselves in whatever way they please, which would logically at least imply accepting the possibility of non-liberal, communitarian or culturalist forms of self-description that do not ultimately call upon


⁵ I am thinking of Martha Nussbaum’s recent book, Not for Profit! Why Democracy Needs the Humanities, Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 2010. There is a certain danger of getting caught in such a game of self-justification. Very broadly speaking, one can either attempt to prove that human and social sciences really are “useful” in a very performative, yet mediated and not directly obvious way. In doing so, one already gives in to a conception of usefulness (or meaningfulness) that is completely extrinsic to what one tries to defend. Or, conversely, one can respond by romantically rejecting the very notion of utility itself and celebrating “uselessness”. Both options are already inscribed in the form of the question, which they thus neither answer nor problematize in turn. If one chooses, following Nussbaum, to present education and democracy as bulwarks against the logic of profit, then one does not stop to ask how representational democracy and the modern education system are supposed to inhibit the accumulation of surplus value in which they are already fully caught up. In practical terms, the solution will perhaps often consist in a joined effort of the resignation of, say a professor in the humanities, to lie about the professed usefulness of his particular discipline, and the willingness of an administrator responsible for allocating research funding to be lied to. I am echoing, hopefully somewhat accurately, some remarks on this subject made by Hans-Georg Moeller in his lecture “Rambling without Destination!: On Daoist ‘Youing’ in the World”, delivered at the 19th Symposium of the Académie du Midi, 29 May 2012, Alet-les-Bains.
the individual subject to describe himself. It is not always easy, and this can be learned through introspection or psychoanalytic counseling as well, to determine who is talking on behalf of whom, nor in what capacity and for what particular purpose, given the fact that not everyone is in a position to unreservedly “give an account of oneself” (Judith Butler) and seeing how many people do not speak or feel no need to speak (and why should they?), but are only spoken for. In any case, there are many anthropological and ethnographic studies that try to attest the survival and active reinvention of certain aspects of cultural and religious traditions in the daily practices of ordinary people. Sébastien Billioud and Joël Thoraval cite the case of a woman in contemporary mainland China who managed to integrate the notoriously obscure and cumbersome philosophical works of Mou Zongsan into her personal life and everyday interactions with other people by participating in the “reciting classics movement”, without being primarily academically interested in the Confucian philosopher's merits and defects. The fact that the global spread of modernity does not automatically result in cultural and social homogeneity is not disputed here. If anything, globalization is probably one of the main factors contributing to the appearance of various self-conscious affirmations of cultural and religious identity, affirmations which can in turn become crucial elements of the discourse on globalization. As Marshall Berman writes at the beginning of his study on modernity:

Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish.

At the risk of unfairly overburdening the short and fairly simple passage from Zhang Shiying I just quoted with an exegetical diligence it was not designed to withstand, I would like to try and take it as a starting point for considering the broader problematic of cultural continuity and historical discontinuity and the relation between tradition and modernity in the case of New Confucianism. My impression that Zhang's text can be read in this way is reinforced by the image it presents of an accomplished businessman standing on the top floor (a clear indication of his success) of what is at the time of writing (though probably not for long) the seventh largest building in mainland China, while reciting a

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well-known 1300-year-old poem. By reciting these celebrated Tang 唐 dynasty (618-907) verses that describe a sense of historical isolation from both past and future generations, the poetically minded entrepreneur in Zhang's example is paradoxically presented as becoming enabled to connect with the past through a sense of connectedness with a certain tradition of disconnectedness. Despite the historical distance between the author of the poem *On Climbing Youzhou Tower (Deng Youzhou tai ge 登幽州台歌)* and the businessman on top of the 88-story “Tower of Golden Prosperity” reciting these verses, the textual parallelism between the two towers in Zhang's text suggests that the feeling of being cut off from the past is implicitly assumed to be the same in both cases, so that we could speak of a “continuity of discontinuity” manifesting itself in a shared sense of historical isolation. Both the setting and the material features of the tower may have changed, but the time permeating it would appear to be part of the same historical continuum, close to an eternal present which is forever equidistant to both past and future. Furthermore, Zhang's contrastive juxtaposition of a focus on “concrete things” and considerations of “problems of a general nature” has a clear temporal dimension: in our day-to-day activities, we function as pragmatic agents governed by a purposive rationality in which the immediate interests of the present are most relevant and imposing. In contrast to this calculative-rational level, the meaningful dimension of life is marked by the possibility of relating to questions of a more durable and recurring nature, the “eternal” questions of a *philosophia perennis*. The underlying idea seems to be that it is the latter dimension of an eternal recurrence which constitutes a veritable repository of meaning, as opposed to inescapable, but ultimately empty concerns about immediate usefulness. Moreover, the “eternal” would seem to have a privileged relation with the past: it is by connecting with the past that the eternal becomes accessible and tangible as something outlasting and surpassing the constraints of the fleeting time in which it can be experienced by a particular individual. Within this line of reasoning, it is in a sense the nature of the past itself which, through its inherent meaningfulness, guarantees a minimum of continuity between the past on the one hand and the present which is its

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8 Incidentally, the Jin Mao (金茂 jinmao: literally, “golden prosperity”) building is itself an architectural expression of a quest for continuity. The American architect Adrian D. Smith (the man behind the Burj Khalifa in Dubai) who was commissioned to design the building modeled it after the iconic East-Asian pagoda. See Thomas J. Campanella, *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What it Means for the World*, Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008, pp.84-86.

9 A classic case of what Durkheim called *homo duplex*, which Weigang Chen describes in the following way: “[...] the bourgeois as the privatized individual is actually two things in once: *bourgeois* and *homme*. One the one hand, the bourgeois as the owner of goods is profoundly caught up in the requirements of the market and thus subjected to empirical inclinations. On the other hand, however, the bourgeois as a human being is the subject of pure interiority that follows its own laws and not external purpose. This peculiar human subjectivity promises liberation from the constraints of what exists, whether it refers to the prescription of culture or the necessity of life.” *Confucian Marxism: a Reflection on Religion and Global Justice*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013, p.9.
continuation on the other. In this way, the present is saved from becoming an atomized instance condemned to forever remain confined to itself in a state of detached suspension, precisely because it is part of a history and a tradition of such a suspension.

In a much more explicit fashion than Zhang Shiyong, the contemporary political philosopher Bai Tongdong 白彤东 (b.1970) has argued for such a paradoxical “continuity of rupture”, a contradictory continuity grounded in the assumption of a culturally formative period, which in effect annuls the very notion of the modern age being in many respects fundamentally discontinuous with tradition on a global scale. In his *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom*, Bai attempts to defend the contemporary relevance of traditional Chinese political conceptions by putting forward the idea that the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu 春秋) (770-476 BCE) and Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國) (475-221 BCE) periods constituted a “modernity before its time”, or a “modernity before modernity”. He claims that these two crucial periods in ancient Chinese history already exhibited many of the characteristics of modern societies. Bai lists the collapse of a “feudal structure”, important agricultural innovations, the preponderance of military conflicts, the “marketization of land”, and the emergence of a “plurality of beliefs” as some of the structural features which made the corresponding semantics of what is generally called “classical” Chinese (political) thought modern through and through. For Bai, “China had already experienced its own modernization of sorts, a few hundred years before the onset of the Common Era – that is, two thousand years before the West! […] Chinese thinkers during the SAWS [Spring and Autumn and Warring States] were already dealing with issues of modernity.” It seems to me that Bai Tondong’s perspective is severely plagued by an intentional methodological anachronism and a form of historical consciousness that forgets itself in running back too far in time. If we were to take it as our starting point, there would not be much left to inquire into and it would become unnecessary to speak of “modern problems” or “the problem of modernity”: the past becomes both the object and the horizon of observation, so that the present can be bracketed out, only to be allowed back into the equation when the damage has already been done and the present has long been forgotten. But is such self-exclusion possible in the first place? One is reminded of what Husserl wrote concerning his phenomenological procedure of “bracketing”: “I, the ego carrying out the epochê, am not included in

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the realm of objects [which are bracketed out] [...] I am necessarily the one carrying it out.”

Perhaps it is not so easy to escape this Cartesian certainty. And why, one might ask, this highly strategic procedure of putting the present out of play in the first place? Can one really overcome a break by projecting it back in time? Why is Bai Tongdong only one of the many and certainly not the first in a long line of thinkers who opted for such a conception? In this regard, I fully agree with Ding Yun when he quips: “Shouldn't we say that precisely the fact that modernity itself is constantly problematized is one of the clearest features of modernity?”

Of course, in a sense, change and discontinuity and the concomitant acts of adaptation and transformation are integral parts of any cultural tradition. As Niklas Luhmann once put it formulaically: “What is not utilized is stable and, by contrast, what is utilized is not stable.” A perceived necessity to ward off the possibility of oblivion might well be perceived as intrinsic to historical consciousness as such. Perhaps it is even difficult to conceive of time itself without appealing to the notion of the discontinuous. After we have finished asking what time is, we are already no longer the same. Since it is hard to make a portrait of a subject that cannot stay put, we might be better off trying to capture its movements. In some instances, it might be very tricky to distinguish between a “traditional” and a “modern” sense of discontinuity, especially when traditional and culturally transmitted expressions of a sense of rupture are invoked by present day writers to express the “same” feeling of dislocation in time. Perhaps it is not very meaningful to do so. It would almost certainly remain impossible without placing a given semantics of temporal change in the context of its social and historical structure. That the mental states and neurological processes accompanying the emotional experience of historical isolation might possibly be transhistorically identical for all members of the species Homo Sapiens is of secondary importance in this regard, or at least from this point of view. When departing from the Luhmannian distinction between semantics and structure, it could be argued that two statements of an equally dramatic tone and stature drawing on a common cultural vocabulary can be the expressions of

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13 现代性本身不断地成为问题，这难道不是现代性最清楚的特征之一吗？Ding Yun, *Confucianism and Enlightenment. Current Chinese Thought in the Perspective of Philosophical Encounters* (Ruxue yu qiming: zhexue huitong shiye xia de dangqian zhongguo sixiang 儒学与启蒙：哲学会同视野下的当前中国思想), Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2011, p.77, footnote no.3.


15 Recall the famous opening lines of Herodotus's *Histories*: “These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done”. Herodotus, *Histories*, translated by George Rawlinson, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1996, p.3.
two significantly different kinds of continuity or discontinuity. This would apply to the words Mou Zongsan is reported to have uttered on his deathbed as well: “There is no duality between past and present” (古今無兩). What I mean is that a continuity of representations does not suffice to assume a similar continuity on the level of what is represented. If modernity is conceptualized as marking a relative but qualitatively significant structural break with the premodern past, this implies that it is possible to establish an (at least heuristically) meaningful distinction between the change and discontinuity internal to any tradition and the dynamic underlying and driving transformations effectuated in the face of modernity. This would mean that the traditional dynamic of change conditioning such transformative acts has itself undergone a change significant enough to speak of something like a “traditional discontinuity” and a “modern discontinuity”. One would thus have to recognize a minimal but important difference between the state described by Hamlet's observation that “the time is out of joint”, a condition which is in a sense intrinsic to any time and to time as such, and the being “out of joint” of this “out-of-jointness” itself.

Anyone even remotely familiar with classical Chinese texts knows how many of them (not only “philosophical” works, but also for example medical treatises) start with a dramatic observation of the decline of the Way (dao 道) and of a rupture in the succession of the Way (daotong 道統) that should serve to keep All-under-Heaven from falling into a seemingly ever-imminent disorder. In a famous text entitled On the Original Way (Yuandao 原道) by the Tang-dynasty poet and scholar Han Yu 韩愈 (768-824), we find Han bemoaning the degeneration of the Way of Confucius in the following memorable manner:

16 Quoted in Wang Xingguo 王兴国, “Alone, yet not Alone: Mou Zongsan and Three Famous Universities: Peking University, National Southwestern Associated University, and Taiwan University” (Luomo er bu luomo – Mou Zongsan yu san suo zhuming daxue: Beijing daxue, Xinan lianhe daxue, Taiwan daxue 落寞而不落寞——牟宗三与三所著名大学: 北京大学、西南联合大学、台湾大学), Huanan shifan daxue xuebao 华南师范大学学报, 1, 2011, p.23.

17 David Gross writes that “for at least as long as there have been written records there have been complaints that tradition has not been given due respect. Some of the most ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern texts indicate a concern that the 'old ways' were not being sufficiently honoured, or that ancestral values were not being treated with the piety they deserve. Charges like these continue to echo through the centuries, but one has to wait until relatively recent times to hear another, very different charge: that tradition itself is disappearing”. David Gross, The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity, Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, p.3.

18 The theme of “out-of-jointness” will be familiar to readers of Heidegger and Derrida. See Jacques Derrida, Spectres of Marx. The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International, New York: Routledge, 2006. Derrida speaks of the “non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present” (p.xviii) and “the disjointure in the very presence of the present” (p.29) in his attempt to arrive at an idea of justice which is not limited to the present (and to “presence”). I do not feel competent to judge Derrida's ideas at this instance. I do wonder whether his approach does not stop short at ascribing “out-of-jointness” to time and/or history as a permanent structure (again paradoxically of impermanence), without considering the possibility of a historically conditioned (qualitative) change in this ontologized impermanence.
The Zhou dynasty declined and Confucius passed away. In the period that followed, there was the burning of the books in the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.E.), Daoism in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.), and Buddhism in the Jin (265–420 C.E.), Wei (386–549), Liang (502–57), and Sui (589–617) dynasties; those who talked about the Way, Virtue, benevolence, and righteousness either followed the teachings of Yang Zhu or Mozi or accepted the doctrines of Laozi or the Buddha. Those who accepted these teachings had to reject Confucianism. They regarded the leaders of these schools as their lords and Confucius as a slave; they adhered to the new and vilified the old. Is it not sad! Those living in later ages who want to learn about the Way, Virtue, benevolence, and righteousness—from whom can they hear such things?19

周道衰，孔子没。火于秦，黄老于漢，佛于晋、魏、梁、隋之間。其言道德仁義者，不入于楊，則入于墨。不入于老，則入于佛。入于彼，必出于此。入者主之，出者奴之；入者附之，出者汙之。噫！後之人欲聞仁義道德之說，孰從而聽之？

The twentieth century Confucian philosopher Mou Zongsan enumerates roughly the same foes of Confucianism we already encountered in the above excerpt to describe the disastrous fate he considers the Confucian tradition to have suffered at the hands of communist iconoclasm in a text from 1951, bearing the somewhat bewildering yet at the same time revealing title “Buddha, Laozi, Shen [Buhai], Han [Feizi] and the Communist Party” (Fo Lao Shen Han yu gongdang 佛老申韓與共黨). From the title of Mou's essay alone, it would appear that the communists are nothing but a combined modern day version of the Legalist, Daoists and Buddhists already condemned by Han Yu in his Yuandao. The communist takeover of China would thus seem to be on a par with and of essentially the same nature as the influence exerted by these traditional non-Confucian currents of thought in imperial China, which Han saw as leading to a disastrous corruption of the Confucian order, this order being understood as the necessary condition for a benevolent and righteous governance of the empire. The inclusion of Daoism may appear a bit puzzling at first, especially seeing how Mou would later present the Daoist perspective of “non-being” (wu 無) as an effective countermeasure against the introduction of oppositional and distorting distinctions (particularly of class) into an essentially holistic social and ontological reality by communist ideology.20 “Utilitarianist” Mohism and the “hedonist” doctrines of

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20 See “The Wisdom of Daoist 'Non-Being' and Their Perspectival Metaphysics” (Daojia de 'wu' de zhihui yu jingjie xingtai de xing'ershangxue 道家的「無」底智慧與境界形態的形而上學), [1975a] in WW, pp.223-234; Nineteen
Yang Zhu 楊朱 (440–360 BCE), which Mou often added to his list of premodern communists on other occasions, are not explicitly mentioned or discussed in this essay. His usual suspect was the Legalist Qin 秦 dynasty, which he at one point put on a par with the CCP by modifying a quote attributed to Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE) in the Hanshu 漢書, claiming that “never since ancient times has there been anything as damaging to the people of the whole world as the Communist Party” (自古以来，大敗天下之民，未有如共黨者也). This is perhaps not so surprising seeing how Mao Zedong liked to compare himself with the first Chinese emperor, the latter having already been described by Bertrand Russell after his visit to China as “something of a Bolshevik”.

Nowadays, the idea that there has always been a tradition of anti-traditionalism and even a radical form of iconoclasm in China has become fairly standard in contemporary Confucian discourse. However, a short look at an excerpt from the opening of Mou's text will suffice to make it clear that there are important differences between such rhetorically unifiable discontinuities:


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See for example Luo, Yijun 羅義俊, Living Existence and Cultural Consciousness: Historical Essays on Modern Confucianism (Shengming cunzai yu wenhua yishi 生命存在与文化意識：當代新儒家史論), Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2009, p.28 and Tang Yijie 湯一介, general preface (zongxu 总序) to the History of Chinese Confucianism (Zhongguo ruxue shi 中国儒学史), Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011, pp.16-17.
The appearance of the Communist Party in China was certainly not the result of economic problems. Even the appearance of that sinister and malicious thought of Marx in Europe was in no way the result of economic issues [...] Its appearance was purely a problem of thought, a problem of culture and a problem of the spirit of the age. Other external conditions – political and economical ones – all served as a pretext. [But] this pretext certainly cannot hide what its [true] substance is. I claim that communism is a great demon that is evidently not easy to oppose. I further claim that it is a universal heterodoxy, a heresy of “pure negation”. What I mean by “universal” is the following: it comes forth from the darkest side of the human temperament. This side is in no way limited to a certain nation, but is universally present in the entire human race. Therefore, its appearance constitutes a universal heterodoxy within [the whole of] humanity. What I mean by “pure negation” is the following: all negations of human nature, individuality, the level of values, the world, the human personality and cultural ideals are pure negations. In China, the old heterodox schools were those of Buddhism, Daoism and [the Legalists] Shen [Buhai] and Han [Feizi]; nowadays we have the Communist Party.  

Several things should be noted here. What is probably most striking about this text is the universalist thrust behind Mou's rejection of what he on another occasion called the “catastrophe of ideas” (觀念的災害). For him, communism is a “universal heterodoxy” that not only goes against the essence of Chinese civilization (in his view, of course, Confucianism), but also runs counter to the very notion of civilization and culture as such. As is already evident from the first sentence of this passage, his criticism of communism entails an uncompromising rejection of its main theoretical “heresy”, namely the historical materialist belief that it is (ultimately) the material, economic conditions of existence as a
“base” which determines the “superstructure” of a society's ideas and beliefs. Mou degrades the base to the status of “external conditions” (see below) of secondary importance and goes on to ascribe a self-sufficiency and a performative capacity to the level of ideas and values comparable to that of the forces and relations of production in orthodox Marxism. He shared the belief with many of his fellow Confucian philosophers that the ordeal of modern China had its origin in a profound cultural crisis, and that only cultural renewal could provide a way out. His emphasis on the “pure negativity” of the communist idea is developed further on in the text in order to distinguish communism from the “negating” aspects of Buddhism and Daoism, which were according to Mou still integrated in a broader spiritual practice, and as such did not constitute a form of “positive destruction” that affects the totality of the subjective and objective world. He made the important qualification that the difference between Buddhist and communist negation is one of a relative negation functioning in a broader spiritual project of self-cultivation aimed at a laudable detachment from the world on the one hand, and an absolute, pure and senseless negation that cannot be integrated into any overarching goal on the other. In other words, detachment from external or social reality in Buddhist and Daoist practice did not entail a complete negation of all values as was the case in communism. Mou's negative attitude towards Daoism and Buddhism expressed in this rhetoric of “guilt by association” was probably mainly inspired by polemical intentions. In any case, it is clear that his primary targets were communism and

27 Mou called the Marxian formula according to which “being determines thought” Marx's “idol of [the] cave” (洞窟之蔽). (English included in the original), referring to Francis Bacon's theory of the idols inhibiting correct knowledge in his Novum Organum (1620), but using a term from Xunzi 荀子 instead of the usual 像偶. See “The Meaning of the Practice of Idealism” (Lixiangzhuyi de shijian zhi hanyi 理想主義的實踐之含義), [1949c] in DY, p.70.


29 Tang Junyi distinguished Epicurean and Stoic materialism from modern scientific and historical materialism on very much the same grounds, arguing that the former still had a spiritual and moral dimension in serving to cultivate a sense of humility by enabling the subject to observe itself as a mere thing (自視如物). See “Evaluation of the Cultural Effects of Materialism as a World-View” (Yuzhouguan weiwulun zhi wenhua xiaoyong pinglun 宇宙觀唯物論之文化效用評論), Minzhu pinglun 民主評論, vol.1, no.8, [1949c].

the historical materialism of Karl Marx, and not the teachings of Laozi or the Buddha. In his
“Refutation of the Communist Treatise on Contradiction” (Pi gongchanzhouzhe de ‘Maodun lun’ 闢共産主義者的「矛盾論」)\(^\text{31}\), he further identifies the communist revolution as a complete negation of anything outside of the inconstant flux of discrete material things, which are only negatively united through their shared fate of being ephemeral, unsubstantial, and not meaningfully existent. He adds that such a form of negation cannot even be wielded and put to good use as a political strategy of domination, because it must necessarily end up affecting the communists themselves: “Actually, the communist revolution itself is nothing but a nihilist process of destruction and self-destruction based on their complete nihilism. Their self-preservation is really nothing but the preservation of their own self-destruction.” (實則共產黨的革命亦只是本其徹底的虛無主義而自毀毀人的虛無過程。其堅持守住其自己實亦只是堅持自毁其自己)\(^\text{32}\) For Mou, the fundamental mistake of communist materialism consists in its fatal disregard for the permanent element that conditions change and is outside of and immune to change: it only knows the “changing Way” (biandao 變道), but cannot grasp the “constant Way” (hengdao 恒道).\(^\text{33}\) Still, the crucial differences Mou discerns between Buddhist or Daoist and communist strategies of negation do not cause him to abandon the idea that Chinese communism is part of a historically continuous challenge to Confucianism, and that the discontinuity with tradition constituted by communism can be placed in a more ancient and permanent historical continuum.

However, Mou's arguments for a continuity which can only be described in the form of a paradox (to paraphrase him, time as a “self-preservation of destruction” or “destruction of self-preservation”), already involve the implicit acknowledgment of a series of arguably very modern ideas concerning the nature of historical time that differ considerably from traditional conceptions. The philosophical procedure of abstraction from historical specificity which allows him to equate the Qin dynasty and the People's Republic (as states opposed to the nation) will have to be accounted for in relation to the distinctiveness of the modern age instead of being left standing in a glaring and I think false self-

\(^{33}\) See Mou, [1952b], pp.100-110. Mou insisted that Confucianism was always the “constant way” (常道) in China, in the double sense of being omnipresent in all aspects of Chinese culture and of having been continuously (even if sometimes unconsciously) transmitted, everything else constituting “aberrant phenomena” (不正常的現象). See Mou, [1961], pp.3-5.
It is worth noting that Mou's discursive strategy also has clear precedents in European philosophical discourse from an earlier period of modernity, specifically in the works of Hegel, who wrote at a time when the structural features of modern societies were still in the process of being violently exported through the colonialist expansion of the capitalist world-system.\(^\text{34}\) In this regard, it is interesting that Mou's series of associations between “absolute negation”, nihilism, communism and Buddhism is reminiscent of the connection Hegel often made between the reign of Terror following the French Revolution on the one hand, and Hinduism or Buddhism (or India and the “Oriental world” in general) on the other.\(^\text{35}\) In the *Philosophy of Right* (§ 5) for example, commenting on his description of the “pure indeterminacy” of the individual will before it starts “willing some positive state of affairs” and only displays the “absolute possibility of abstraction from every determination”, Hegel writes:

This negative freedom, or freedom as the understanding [Verstand] conceives it, is one-sided [...] In history, this form of freedom is a frequent phenomenon. Amongst the Hindus, for instance, the highest life is held to entail persisting in the bare knowledge of one's simple identity with oneself, remaining in this empty space of one's inner life, as light remains colourless in pure vision, and sacrificing every activity in life, every aim, and every idea. In this way the human being becomes the Brahman; there is no longer any distinction between the finite human being and Brahman. In fact in this universality, every difference has disappeared. This form of freedom appears more concretely in the active fanaticism of both political and religious life. For instance, during the Terror in the French Revolution all differences of talent and authority were supposed to have been superseded. Since fanaticism wills an abstraction only, nothing articulated, it follows that, when distinctions appear, it finds them antagonistic to its own indeterminacy and annihilates them. For this reason, the people during the French Revolution destroyed once more the institutions which they had made themselves, since any institution whatever is antagonistic to the abstract self-consciousness of equality.\(^\text{36}\)

The “negative freedom” and “abstract equality” of which Hegel speaks became standard figures of speech for Mou in denouncing communist policies and ideas and in defending his own vision of an

\(^{34}\) According to Susan Buck-Morss, Hegel was inspired by the Haitian slave revolt in what was then the French colony of Saint-Domingue from 1794 to 1800 in writing the celebrated section on the dialectic of lordship and bondage in the *Phenomenology*. See her enthralling *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. Hegel's description of civil society (bürgerliche Gesellschaft) as a “system of needs” in his *Philosophy of Right* (§189-208), revealing his acquaintance with Adam Smith and David Ricardo's work on political economy, also clearly attest to his preoccupation with “comprehending time in thought". Buck-Morss writes that in these passages, “Hegel is in fact describing the deterritorialized world market of the European colonial system, and he is the first philosopher to do so.” (pp.7-8).


ideal political order, which involved actively combating the Marxist-Leninist notion of the state as an instrument of class oppression that would eventually “wither away”. That is why he spoke of “building the nation by opposing communism” (fangong jianguo 反共建國)\(^{37}\). With Hegel, Mou regarded the state as a necessary means for the realization of the good life, both on the level of the community as on that of the individual.\(^{38}\) Hegel's familiar railing against the “one-sided” universality in which all “difference has disappeared” (calling to mind his criticism of what he took to be Schelling's unmediated concept of the “Absolute” in the preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit as “the night in which all cows are black”\(^{39}\)), is also one of the constantly recurring ontological baselines in both Mou's and Tang Junyi's philosophy. Remarkably enough, they often turned this very same criticism on Hegel himself, for example in arguing against the subsumption of natural family life under the category of the state. All of this implies that we will have to look at what categories such as universality and particularity, difference and identity, concreteness and abstraction, and continuity and discontinuity meant for thinkers like Mou and Tang, something which can only be done by situating their work in the broader context of the tense transition from tradition to modernity in modern China.

A useful clue can be found in the research of Zhang Qing 章清, who proposes to grasp the epistemological dimension of the break of modernity as a transformation of traditional “sources of knowledge” (zhishi ziyuan 知识资源) into “academic resources” (xueshu ziyuan 学术资源).\(^{40}\) This transition entails amongst others that traditional texts cease being self-sufficient sources of legitimacy, and are no longer assumed to immanently provide normative criteria, nor to furnish the criteria necessary to determine what has and does not have normative validity. Instead, they come to be weighed in a different set of scales which is not automatically inclined to their advantage. Zhang stresses that this is even the case when traditional sources are invoked in support of the socio-political

\(^{37}\) Quoted in Chan, 2011, p.80.

\(^{38}\) See Chan, 2011, pp.73-74, p.81. For a discussion of Mou's conception of freedom within the framework of Isaiah Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty, see Tang Zhonggang 汤忠钢, Morality and Politics: an Investigation into Mou Zongsan's New Confucian Political Philosophy (Dexing yu zhengzhi: Mou Zongsan xinrujia zhengzhi zhexue yanjiu 德性与政治：牟宗三新儒家政治哲学研究), Beijing: Zhongguo yanshi chubanshe, 2007, pp.146-152.


\(^{40}\) Zhang Qing, “Tradition: from 'Sources of Knowledge' to 'Academic Resources' – A Short Analysis of the Loss of Chinese Cultural Tradition in the Twentieth Century and its Causes” (Chuantong: you 'zhishi ziyuan' dao 'xueshu ziyuan' – jianxi ershi shijie zhongguo wenhua chuantong de shiluo ji qi chengyin 德性与政治：牟宗三新儒家政治哲学研究), Beijing: Zhongguo yanshi chubanshe, 2007, pp.146-152. Zhang bases his argument on the study of a corpus of articles published in the journal New Youth during the New Culture Movement (see below).
legitimacy of a modern concept (say popular sovereignty) supposedly attested in classical and previously authoritative texts. The putative occurrence of democratic ideas or the “germs” of democracy in the *Mengzi* 孟子 for example, does not suffice to validate democracy, but precisely the other way around. Classical texts thus become a source of circumstantial instead of direct evidence. Perhaps even the underlying conception of tradition as a resource, as a standing reserve of endlessly adaptable ideas, is already a distinctly modern approach and points to its changed status. As tradition increasingly becomes the object of what David Gross has aptly called various “rescue operations,” it is still constantly revisited and reinvented, perhaps even more than before, but always with the question as to what it can still contribute and what it has to offer in the present day in the back of the interpreter's mind, if not already on the tip of his tongue. The relative break between tradition and modernity remained apparent in the constant efforts common to many modern Chinese intellectuals to reformulate and translate traditional concepts which have lost their self-evidence and direct communicability. These efforts had already begun in the late Qing period, as is clear from the famous case of Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854-1921), who had managed to find or rather establish correspondences between the Darwinian and Spencerian concepts of evolution and certain hexagrams in the *Yijing*. Moreover, such endeavors were common to both traditionalist and iconoclast intellectuals alike, even if they appeared to serve completely opposite goals. The continuity New Confucian thinkers desired to establish with tradition is evident from the countless, often heavily annotated, quotations from classical texts in their works. They may not hesitate to invoke the *Book of Changes* or the *Analects* to comment on a variety of modern day problems, but on the other hand it is rare for them to assume concepts such as *yi* 易 and *ren* 仁 to have maintained a self-evidence and self-sufficiency that would allow them to directly bypass or disregard translation and reformulation. The work of Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968), often considered to be the


42 As Herbert Marcuse wrote, the transformation of canonical texts into “classics” makes them “come to life as other than themselves; they are deprived of the estrangement which was the very dimension of their truth.” *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, New York: Routledge, 2002, p.67. Also see Gan Yang's comments quoted in the previous chapter.

43 Gross, 1992, p.78.

first New Confucian philosopher in the strict sense of the word, is telling in this regard, if only from a “superficial” stylistic point of view. Even though Xiong continued writing in a style often virtually indistinguishable from classical Chinese, he developed the habit of adding in-text commentary set in a smaller font to the main body of the text, which, aside from providing the reader with commentary, digressions, and additional information, often included (bisyllabic) modern and more commonly used equivalents to the (monosyllabic) classical terms used in his main text.\footnote{See Xiong’s own comments on this procedure in his \textit{New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness} (\textit{Xin weishi lun 新唯識論}), Changsha: Yuelu shushe, [1932] 2010, p.5 (preface).} In a sense, the distance between tradition and modernity is thereby reconfirmed at the same time that it is being denied or smoothened out.

Emblematic of the transition from, with a negotiable distinction I adopt from Zhang Qing, sources to resources, is the case of an idea advocated by reformers during the Self-Strengthening (\textit{ziqiang 自强}) or Yangwu 洋务 Movement (1861-1895) following China’s crushing defeat in the two Opium Wars, a movement which abruptly came to an end through the intervention of Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧. According to this “curious thesis”\footnote{Leigh K. Jenco, “Histories of Thought and Comparative Political Theory: The Curious Thesis of ‘Chinese Origins of Western Knowledge’, 1860-1895”, \textit{Political Theory}, 2014, pp.1-24.}, the Western learning which had given the European colonial invaders their military and technology supremacy originally stemmed from China. It was applied to “everything from the alarm clock to parliamentary political systems.”\footnote{Jenco, 2014, p.4.} As Wang Fansen 王汎森 remarks, the idea that “Western learning originated in China” (\textit{xixue zhongyuan 西學中源}) could be seen as both conservative, since it entailed the idea that the empire could modernize through a renewal of the established traditions and sources of knowledge, as well as progressive, since it allowed modern technology and science to be adopted instead of being dismissed as “lesser learning” (\textit{xiaoxue 小學}).\footnote{Wang Fansen 王汎森, \textit{A Genealogy of Chinese Modern Thought and Knowledge} (\textit{Zhongguo jindai sixiang yu xueshu xipu 国近代思想与学术系谱}), Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001, p.92.} According to Leigh Jenco, the Chinese origin hypothesis should not be read “as a historical claim about actual origins, but as a political claim intended to endow foreign knowledge with recognized ‘membership’ in some existing practice”.\footnote{Jenco, 2014, p.2.} For Jenco then, the Yangwu reforms were not really all that concerned about actually proving the Chinese origins of Western ideas, but rather with making it possible to use foreign knowledge politically by undercutting their perceived cultural difference from
China. Although this may be a valid interpretation, it is questionable whether claims concerning Chinese origins would have still carried the same political weight without the underlying assumption of historical validity (e.g. there really is proof for the validity of constitutional government in the *Mengzi*, or for the development of the principles of algebra and formal logic in the *Mozi* 墨子). The related procedure through which such validity is established already presupposes a different attitude towards canonical texts and often, not coincidentally, an increased attention to their neglected or “repressed” aspects, or what the historian Luo Zhitian 罗志田 has described as the “canonization of heterodoxies” (异端的正统化)50. As Iwo Amelung notes,

50 See Luo Zhitian 罗志田, *Inheriting within Rupture. Chinese Culture and Scholarship at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Liebian zhong de chuancheng – ershi shiji qiangi de Zhongguo wenhua yu xueshu 裂变中的传承——20 世纪前期的中国文化与学术), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003, pp.1-32. According to Michael Lackner, “If the classics could only serve as spurious sources to legitimize the introduction of railroads, parliamentary constitutions, and chemistry, then we have here the beginning of a history of loss that characterizes the modern phase, and perhaps the entire twentieth century in China.” Michael Lackner, “Ex Oriente Scientia? Reconsidering the Ideology of a Chinese Origin of Western Knowledge”, *Asia Major*, vol.21, no.1, 2006, p.196.

Leigh Jenco further claims that the Chinese-origins hypothesis entailed both a destabilization of “Sino-centric claims to knowledge”52 as well as a simultaneous further increase in an inherited sense of cultural self-sufficiency, allowing reformers to pursue the task of “self-strengthening” by presenting Western science and technology as “always-already part of the Chinese past”.53 Remarkably enough, Jenco sees the predicament of the reformers who propagated this hypothesis as somehow akin to the position of contemporary political theorists who seek to integrate non-Western, marginalized forms of knowledges into the dominant discourse. She writes that political theorists today should equally “act as

if such knowledge is part of our own heritage”, instead of merely including it in their work as a reassuring signal of “difference” to ward off accusations of Eurocentrism or hollow universalism. The condescending tolerance of difference, Jenco claims, never allows non-Western knowledge to disrupt established “self/foreign binaries” and thus precludes the possibility of being “disciplined by the standards of a differently sited conversation”. In a sense, the procedure of assimilating what is “other” by reinterpreting it as “always-already” part of the “self” is not new or specific to the modern age. One need only think of the amusing but equally outlandish legend of “Laozi converting the barbarians” (Laozi huahu), a story which goes back at least to the second century CE, according to which Buddhism was actually of Daoist origin and thus a Chinese invention. This already raises the suspicion that the self/other paradigm which has gained so much currency in postmodern and postcolonialist studies is perhaps not the most adequate framework for what Jenco herself calls the important task of “attending to the historically situated discourse” of non-Western or premodern forms of knowledge.

What is different then, and it is a temporal form of difference we are after, is not so much the strategically motivated dialectic between self (identity) and other (difference), but what is at stake in the operation of finding the (present) other in the (past) self as such, and the extent to which the (present) self comes to be affected and transformed through this recognition of otherness in its (past) alter ego. The question thus arises whether one can really compare the situation of Yangwu reformers “destabilizing” the otherness of Western knowledge by inscribing it into their own heritage to that of a contemporary academic pursuing a career in comparative political philosophy, for whom, if he or she is postmodernly inclined enough, the recognition of the other as other in his fundamental otherness (without any covert Eurocentrism) is a supplementary yet substantial concern in its own right. The least one can say is that this was probably the least of the Yangwu reformers' concerns. Their theories primarily served political and not epistemological ends. Epistemological “destabilization” and “displacement” can at present serve as the desired outcome of a research project, instead of being a quality we are now in a position to recognize as the residual discursive effect of undertakings such as

54 Jenco, 2014, p.3.
56 Jenco, 2014, p.3.
58 Jenco, 2014, p.3.
those pursued during the Self-Strengthening Movement, a movement for which the desire to “enable future knowledge production” was hardly an end in itself. Purely within the confines of an ahistorical self/other paradigm, it would also be hard to understand why later reformers and revolutionaries such as Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929), Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1868-1936) and Liu Shipei 劉師培 (1884-1919), motivated by strong anti-Manchu sentiment and inspired by myths of an Aryan invasion of Europe en vogue in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, argued that the Chinese “race” had originally come from the West and had been led to the Yellow River basin by the Yellow Emperor.\footnote{See Fa-ti Fan, “How Did the Chinese Become Native? Science and the Search for National Origins in the May Fourth Era”, in Beyond the May Fourth Paradigm: in Search of Chinese Modernity, edited by Kai-wing Chow, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008, pp.183-199.} According to Tze-ki Hon, the popularity of the so-called “Sino-Babylonian hypothesis” can be understood from its function in the creation of racial nationalist narratives, which were instrumental in criticizing the existing political system and promoting the adoption of a parliamentary system governance, based on the “historical” kinship between China and the West.\footnote{See Tze-ki Hon, Revolution as Restoration: Guocui xuebao and China’s Path to Modernity, 1905-1911, Leiden: Brill, 2013, pp.47-68.} What would be the benefit in pointing out that these attempts at rewriting racial history also involved a radical “blurring” of self/other distinctions? I think Jenco misses the point when she writes in the beginning of her essay that “Chinese reformers pose Chinese origins for Western knowledge not because they assume that historically situated difference is more easily or naturally negotiated than culturally situated difference”\footnote{Jenco, 2014, p.2.}. What is needed is a clearer account of the import of history and culture as entangled distinctions through which difference and identity are negotiated to begin with. The problem is not the dialectical and highly unstable (deconstructable) distinction between self and other (which has only recently become a sociological tool) in general, but the difference and identity at stake in time at a specific point in history. In other words, the underlying and recurring problem is always that of historical continuity and discontinuity, and not so much of identity and alterity in general. What Jenco calls a “‘continuity of difference’ that relies on disjunctures with the past to drive innovation in the future”\footnote{Jenco, 2014, p.10.} is a highly specific way of reconciling this distinction. As I tried to show in the previous chapter, one of the most frequently encountered solutions today is still to overcome historical difference through culture as Spirit, the emergence of which I will attempt to further document indirectly in this chapter with reference to the complex case of New Confucianism.

\footnote{Jenco, 2014, p.20.}
Similar observations could be made concerning the paradigm of “multiple modernities”, put forward by
the sociologist S.N. Eisenstadt\textsuperscript{64}, which attempts to defy what it takes to be the prevalent identification
of modernization and westernization. Eisenstadt sees the latter identification (West=modernity) as the
logical consequence of all unified accounts of modernity, in which cultural differences are understood
as secondary to the basic structural unity underlying “superficially” diverse modernization processes.
From the perspective of such a unified account of modernity however, it is highly ironic that discourses
on (cultural or “civilizational”) difference owe much of their success to precisely this structural unity,
allowing societies which have been dragged or which have jumped into the modern maelstrom to
retroactively attribute their own (e.g. economic) “success” to these differences, instead of to the identity
which conditions their mass mobilization. What is missing in Eisenstadt's account of modernity, which
he views as a “distinct civilization”\textsuperscript{65}, is a theoretical inquiry into the relation between unity and
multiplicity, or to put it in Hegelian terms, between identity and difference\textsuperscript{66}, a relation which, again
from a Hegelian point of view, can be speculatively, but from a sociological point of view rather
realistically, grasped as one of the “identity of identity and difference” (or even the “identity of the
identity and non-identity of identity and difference”. Further variations are of course possible). The less
confusing Neo-Confucian dictum that “the principle is one, the manifestations are many” (\textit{li yi fen shu
理一分殊}) could equally serve as a source of inspiration here. Of course, there is an urgent need to
think through the multiple manifestations of modernity. I have no real problems with Eisenstadt's
assertion that “the appropriation by non-Western societies of specific themes and institutional patterns
of the original Western modern civilization societies [sic] entailed the continuous selection,
reinterpretation, and reformulation of these imported ideas.”\textsuperscript{67} The undue neglect of and indifference to
alternative historical trajectories of regions of the world which have economically and politically
emancipated themselves from Western dominance in the recent past is what gave rise to paradigms
such as multiple modernities in the first place. But the potentially emancipatory call to take cultural
specificity into account ignores the fact that culture itself is already a specific (and specifically modern)
interpretative paradigm.

\textsuperscript{64} See S.N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities”, \textit{Daedalus}, vol.129, no.1, 2000, pp.1-29 and S.N. Eisenstadt, “Some
Observations on Multiple Modernities”, in \textit{Reflections on Multiple Modernities. European, Chinese and Other
\textsuperscript{65} Eisenstadt, 2002, p.28.
\textsuperscript{66} See Christian Uhl, “Translation and Time: A Memento of the Curvature of the Poststructuralist Plane”, \textit{Frontiers of
\textsuperscript{67} Eisenstadt, 2000, p.15.
In this regard, I think it is evident that the equation of Westernization and modernization can only be presented as the logical and inevitable consequence of a unified approach to modernity when this unity is understood as cultural or civilizational in the first place. Dominic Sachsenmaier, who adheres to the paradigm of multiple modernities, is thus quite right to state that “even though the West has been at the epicenter of these revolutions and evolutions for a long time, it was equally transformed by them, which is why it is not too convincing to see these processes simply as Westernization”\textsuperscript{68}, but does not make a very strong case for his view that this unconvincing assumption – or worse, the self-congratulating prophesies preached by the likes of Francis Fukuyama (“the end of history”) and Milton Friedman (“the world is flat”) – is inherent to, say certain Marxist or Luhmannian, unified theories of modernity. Additionally, but just as importantly, one should also ask where the “proof” for the existence and persistence of culturally grounded multiple modernities comes from, and exactly how and precisely which facts are selected in the process. Especially when culture is viewed as a kind of “collective unconsciousness”, one must be able to rely on more than what is explicitly avowed by the agents of the culture in question, who may very well not (be able to) live up to or even (not willing to) accept the standards their culture sets them through the intermediary of those who claim to be its proponents and representatives, be they intellectuals, clerics, or a combination of both. If the multiplicity of modernity is understood as essentially cultural, as being determined by a historically evolving interpretative framework which is reconstructed through creative adaption in response to the problems and issues on which it is made to bear, the question also becomes: who is doing what here, who is the principal agent of historical change and “self-transformation”? I have the impression that priority is often given to what is in reality structurally confined to a very specific and restricted domain of human activity, that is to say, of professional salaried intellectuals and academics, whose importance is then rather naively overinflated.\textsuperscript{69} There is the additional risk that even through an empiricist (“fact-based”) reference to “popular opinion” in testing the validity of cultural self-descriptions (e.g. how Confucian does the average Chinese feel?), one ends up reading off nothing but the success and the appeal of certain (often educationally enforced or highly mediatized) representations which already leave out a host of other determinations influencing perceptions of personal or group identity. Everybody knows that the very

\textsuperscript{68} Dominic Sachsenmaier, “Multiple Modernities: the Concept and its Potential”, in Sachsenmaier and Riedel, 2002, p.43.

\textsuperscript{69} Dominic Sachsenmaier writes: “Much of the future of the world order will depend on the gaps of power and living standards in the world and the way the privileged deal with them. For the purpose of setting a common agenda, the existence of a global elite is a prime requirement: not an identityless elite defining itself through privileges, but an elite driven by a spirit of responsibility that is rooted in divergent cultural and sociopolitical frameworks. Much will depend on intellectuals across the world developing a shared vision that may in turn trickle down to other circles. Their theories are theories, but they have an influence on reality.” Sachsenmaier, 2002, pp.63-64. Emphasis added.
way questions are posed in opinion polls already narrows the range of possible answers down to the barest minimum. Luckily, those who have a problem with the question itself or with the manner in which it is formulated can usually opt for expressing the fact that they have no opinion on that particular matter. Questionnaires, very much like elections, live off the indifference of those they address. If one does not have an opinion on a certain matter, or does not feel obligated to cast a vote of confidence in one of the political parties currently available on the market, one “chooses” (because one cannot not choose) to join the unrepresentable majority whose silence is interpreted as a forfeiture of the right to participate or to complain. Epistemologically speaking, the impossibility of knowing what other people “really think” comes down to the familiar Kantian conundrum of being unable to empirically access the object of inquiry as it is in itself, without constantly encountering what one has already put into the object beforehand and without, so to speak, standing in one's own light. As Hegel once put it jokingly, one cannot simply sneak up on the object from behind. Of course, the other also often acts and speaks in a way which takes the fact that he or she is being observed into account. Thus, the (empirical) insufficiency of the species in face of the (ideal) genus, the fact that one does not often bump into cultural archetypes on the street, practically forces observers of a multiplicity paradoxically grounded in the unity of different cultures into a transcendental account of cultural specificity. Again, are indications of cultural difference not often arrived at through a very specific procedure, that is to say, by trying to salvage the past through questioning its very being past, by smoothing over if not wiping out the difference between past and present through a recourse to culture as *Spirit*? As Prasenjit Duara explains in his contribution to a volume dedicated to multiple modernities: “The subject enables history to be the living essence of the past, but also simultaneously to be free from the hold of the past: that which evolves is that which remains, even as it changes.”

It is hard to miss the fact that the notion of cultural continuity is often mobilized against the teleological claims sometimes considered to be inherent deficiencies in many narratives of modernization. In his bestselling *When China Rules the World* (which was especially well-received in the PRC), Martin Jacques goes to great lengths to counter the snug, Eurocentric assumption that China will become more and more Westernized (economically and politically liberal) as a result of its economic growth. Jacques's antipathy towards such unilinear assumptions is certainly justified and shared by a great

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72 It would be interesting to consider the reactions this book elicited in Taiwan.
number of scholars without and within Chinese studies. However, in his idea that it is the essence of the Chinese “civilization state” and the corresponding “Middle Kingdom mentality” which logically and in an a priori manner preclude the Westernization of China, there is a considerable tendency to formally reproduce what is structurally speaking an equally teleological argument, in which culture instead of “the West” takes the position of the telos. Instead of presenting a typical Western-style liberal democracy with a free-market economy as the inevitable end-point of all previous historical development, Jacques adheres to a highly problematic view of an autotelic culture, reducible to a few “essential characteristics” that constitute the core of a dynamic, but essentially eternal and unchangeable “spirit of Chinese culture”.73 Liang Shuming's 梁漱溟 (1893-1988) subversive appropriation of Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) “law” of the three stages of human progress (religious/theological, metaphysical, scientific) is a direct precursor to Jacques's approach. According to Thierry Meynard, Liang Shuming, who was once described as the “last Confucian”74, but is nowadays more often portrayed as one of the father figures of New Confucianism75, “fully accepted the idea of evolution, which he applied to the realm of culture […] Liang even accepted Comte's three stages, but he completely reversed their order”76, by positing religion (specifically, Yogācāra Buddhism) instead of positivist science as the highest stage of human evolution. Liang formulated a typology of what he took to be the three main cultural patterns in the world (Chinese, Indian, and Western) in his highly influential The Cultures of East and West and their Philosophies (Dongxi wenhua jiqi zhexue 東西文化及其哲學) from 1921. In this work (originally a series lectures held at Peking University), he combined Schopenhauer and Bergson in defining cultural differences as the result of three different orientations of the human will (yiyu 意欲), the latter in turn being an expression of life (sheng 生) itself. In doing so, Liang characterized China (Confucianism) as accommodationist, oriented towards balance, stability and harmony; India (Buddhism) as escapist, favoring detachment and renunciation; and the Christian West as dynamic, striving for an active conquest and transformation of the world. He further assumed, echoing Oswald Spengler77, that “the three cultures would have

76 Thierry Meynard, The Religious Philosophy of Liang Shuming: the Hidden Buddhist, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010, p.41. For Meynard, “Liang's theory seems more advanced than what we see today in a Chinese academic discourse dominated by a dualistic vision consisting only of China and the West.” (p.35).
77 On the global impact of Spengler's Untergang des Abendlandes [1918], see Duara, 2002, pp.82-88.
followed their own specific path indefinitely” would they not have (accidentally) encountered one another in recent history. In his opposition to Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism and Marx's historical materialism, Liang employed a distinction (derived from Buddhist terminology) between *neiyin* ("root-causes") and *waiyuan* ("external conditions") in a quasi-transcendental manner in order to distinguish cultural sufficient causes from the secondary contingencies of natural and social history. The distinction between “spirit” (*jingshen* 精神) and “consciousness” (*yishi* 意識), which we already encountered in the previous chapter, came to be matched onto that between *neiyin* and *waiyuan*. Liang viewed consciousness as susceptible to the influence of conditioning by the external environment, thereby imprisoned in the strict necessity of natural causal relationships, while reserving the capacity to actively overcome such constraints and indeed in a sense create a world in its own image for spirit. Kant's antinomy between freedom and necessity was thus resolved through another opposition, perhaps equally in need of reconciliation. For Liang Shuming, as for Martin Jacques, cultures, as veritable *causa sui*, have fixed trajectories, leading to an organic development predetermined by their own essence.

There are sufficient indications in the intellectual history of twentieth century China that such a conception has not only been used by traditionalists such as Liang, but also by intellectuals who stood for a wholesale rejection of the Chinese tradition as an “organism” of which they argued the natural-cultural life-cycle had ended for good, since the moral or social “principle” from which it had developed had lost its viability and validity. Both revolutionaries and conservatives shared this basic organicist outlook on cultural development, even when the fundamental principles which were supposed to have governed a society in its “formative period” were arrived at in an empirical fashion, that is to say, by referring to geographical factors, the importance of agriculture and close family relations and so on. The resulting “spirit”, once out of the formative period, becomes detached from such empirically approachable conditions and can no longer be constrained by them or explained in

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78 Meynard, 2010, p.37. Also see Alitto, 1976, pp.82-85.  
80 See Meynard, 2010, pp.28-29.  
81 I therefore find Meynard's contention that “Liang's evolutionary scheme should not be considered to be deterministic” (Meynard, 2010, p.37) rather puzzling.  
terms of them alone.³³ A linear conception of historical evolution often accompanied the analysis of societies in terms of their purported spiritual principles.³⁴ “Progressiveness” and “conservatism” certainly did not overlap with the categories of “materialism” and “idealism” respectively, as is routinely suggested in the more vulgar examples of intellectual historiography in the PRC. As Benjamin Schwartz emphasizes, “the problem of the relationship of modern articulate Chinese to the total cultural heritage cannot simply be equated with the conservatism/radicalism problem […], one cannot predict whether traditional or antitraditional views will necessarily have radical or conservative consequences within a given historic context.”³⁵ Of course, the fact that Jacques's ideas are part of a specific discourse with historical vicissitudes of its own, does not automatically invalidate his ideas as such. But it puts them into a context he is either not aware of or unwilling to acknowledge. There is nothing new or remarkable about such ideas, suggesting that they could benefit from being infused with a healthy dose of historical self-consciousness by placing them in the broader context of Chinese intellectual history. In this way, the origin and the implications of the idea of Spirit, which sees the whole world only as a reflection of itself, can be contextualized and clarified more effectively.


2.2 New Confucianism and May Fourth: Spirit against discontinuity

2.2.1 The May Fourth/New Culture Movement: events and ideas in change

In the intellectual history of modern China, the irreversible but complexly mediated break between tradition and modernity is commonly identified with the New Culture Movement (xin wenhua yundong 新文化运动). This term is generally used interchangeably with the more often invoked name of the May Fourth Movement (wusi yundong 五四运动), and I will stick to this convention in what follows.

In the more restricted sense of the word however, the latter was mainly a political movement, which started on the fourth of May 1919 with student protests in Beijing against highly charged decisions reached at the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War. The Versailles Treaty, agreed upon here by the allied victors, did not return German colonial areas (in Shandong 山东 86) back to China as was generally expected. Given China's substantial support for the war effort (which involved sending over 200,000 Chinese laborers to Europe to provide material assistance, e.g. in digging trenches), this expectation was far from unfounded. Instead, the treaty ceded them to Japan on the basis of a prior agreement secretly made with the Japanese by the Allied Forces in order to gain their support against Germany in the Pacific. The jubilant enthusiasm with which the end of the war had been greeted in China quickly turned sour. 87

The Chinese delegation at the Peace Conference refused to sign the Treaty, but the outcome strengthened the impression both within and outside of China that the Republican government was unable to properly defend the nation's interests. The news from Versailles reached China in no time through newspapers and telegraphs which were increasingly connecting the whole globe. Soon, the tidings from Versailles led to demonstrations and strikes uniting students, workers, merchants and clerks which the Chinese government proved incapable to suppress, and calls for the boycotting of Japanese goods. These events first started in Beijing and swiftly spread to all of China's major cities throughout the following days. 88

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86 “The 'Holy Land' of China, where Confucius and Mencius were born, taught, and died”, Chow Tse-tsung, The May Fourth Movement. Intellectual Revolution in Modern China, Stanford (Cal.): Stanford University Press, 1960, p.84.
Some historians insist on clearly distinguishing May Fourth from the New Culture Movement, pointing out that the latter had begun much earlier (mid 1910s) and was broader in scope than the patriotic and anti-imperialist calls to political action which characterized the post-May Fourth student protests and mass mobilizations. For communist historians in pre-Deng China on the other hand, the transition from New Culture to May Fourth marked a broadening of revolutionary aspirations and demands to include larger parts of the population besides the rising urban bourgeoisie.\(^89\) The New Culture Movement, when taken as denoting a primarily cultural phenomenon, mainly refers to the intellectual reverberations of what was and had already been happening both in China and on a global scale since the collapse of the empire and the disintegration of its whole institutional structure. The abolishment of the Imperial examination system, which had been in use for the recruitment of government officials since the Tang dynasty, in 1905 and the closure of the famous Hanlin 翰林 Academy after the Xinhai 辛亥 Revolution of 1911, were two events symbolizing the end of the old order, leading to a complete disconnect between the intelligentsia and the state.\(^90\) This disconnect fed into the demands for radical social and political change voiced in the New Culture Movement. Some of the most often mentioned phenomena include the fall from grace of the “essay in eight sections” (baguwen 八股文) and of classical literary Chinese (wenyan 文言) in general in favor of a movement promoting the vernacular (baihua 白话) spearheaded by Hu Shi, the opposition to patriarchal family relations subjugating individual freedom associated with filial piety (xiao 孝), and last but not least a general criticism of traditional customs and norms, specifically of the Confucian “religion of rites” (lijiao 禮教). All these developments often harked back to the efforts of earlier reformist and revolutionary intellectuals\(^91\), actually predate the dramatic events of 4 May 1919 and were closely linked to the failure of the newly founded Republic to prevent general Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 from restoring the monarchy in 1915 and to the “national humiliation” (國恥) of being forced to accept Japan's “Twenty-one Demands” in the same year.\(^92\)

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90 See Wang Fansen, 2001, p.221-222.


As an intellectual movement in which “all that is sacred is profaned” and a complete “transvaluation of all values” was called for, the beginning of May Fourth is often marked by the launch of the journal *New Youth* (Xin qingnian 新青年) in Shanghai in 1915, in which some of the most famous literary and theoretical texts associated with May Fourth would appear. In one of the perhaps somewhat lesser known pieces published in this renowned periodical, the strong sense of historical discontinuity that pervaded and animated the late Qing and early Republican period in China is cogently expressed in a simple sentence by Wang Shuqian 汪淑潜 in a brief essay entitled “The Problem of the New and the Old” (Xinjiu wenti 新舊問題), published in the very first issue of *New Youth*: “There is not a single thing or matter”, Wang wrote, “that does not manifest itself in the two aspects of new and old” (無物無事不呈新舊之二象). A possible interpretation of this short but suggestive sentence would be that historical change has effectively brought on a bifurcation of every conceivable phenomenon into two temporally distinct entities, thereby splitting everything subject to historical time into two non-identical and not immediately reconcilable aspects. It is interesting that Wang Shuqian used the term *xiang* 象 to describe this temporal bifurcation distinctive of modernity: in classical texts, the two “aspects” or “images” of the Way (*dao* 道) are none other than the cosmic polarity of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, which engender the myriad things (*wanwu* 萬物) through their unceasing intermingling and interaction. On a semantic level, it would certainly be wrong to speak of a complete effacement of the traditional coordinates of meaning. However, in Wang's text, the *yin* and *yang* polarity has become fundamentally temporalized, whereas time was but one of the possible dimensions of the two aspects of the cosmological and political order. Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1888-1927) expressed a similar sentiment in an

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95 Not much seems to be known about Wang's identity. He is usually only mentioned in connection to the article from which I am quoting here. I have not been able to find any other information concerning either his life or works.


97 The integration of historical change into this cosmological polarity can also be found in a more elaborate form in the essay “The Fundamental Differences between Eastern and Western Civilizations” (*Dongxi wenming genben zhi yidian* 東西文明根本之異點) from 1917 by the Marxist Li Dazhao 李大钊 (1888-1927), who would be most readily classified as an iconoclast thinker. This particular essay predates his conversion to Marxism. For the full text see *Collection of Texts in the History of Modern Chinese Philosophy, first series, volume 5: the Debate on Eastern and Western Cultures*.
article published a year later in the same journal, by characterizing the whole of Chinese society as being run through with the contradiction between the new and the old.98 From the rest of Wang Shuqian's text, it is all too clear that he saw this temporal split as inevitable and irreversible. His iconoclast stance expressed itself in an unconditional rejection of the old in favor of the new. Such an attitude is also exemplified by the founder of New Youth and pioneer of Chinese communism Chen Duxiu, in his “Treatise on the Destruction of Idols” (Ouxiang pohuai lun 偶像破坏論) from 1918.99 But even this essay, for all its radical and uncompromising condemnation of the “idols” of tradition, reveals that the attitude of Chinese intellectuals was more complicated than a simple opposition or choice between iconoclasm and traditionalism. This much at least is suggested by the fact that Chen lists the modern state alongside all the great religions of the world as an idol that needs to be destroyed in order to save China from destruction. From the fact that the attack on Confucianism by the revolutionary and liberal thinkers at the forefront of the movement for a new culture led to the paradoxical embrace of traditionally non-canonical schools of thought opposed to Confucian ideals such as Legalism and Mohism by iconoclast intellectuals, one can already glean something of the complexity of the relation between tradition and modernity in modern China.100 It also makes it easier to understand why Mou Zongsan saw Legalism and communism as basically convertible terms.101 As Benjamin Schwartz remarks, “it is possible to speak of conservative modernizers in twentieth-century China”.102 A number of prominent intellectuals affiliated with the promotion of “national essence” (guocui 国粹) in late Qing and early Republican China who are usually portrayed as the most staunch traditionalists and reactionaries, saw no problem in presenting “revolution as restoration”.103 With reference to the May Fourth Movement in particular, Kai-Wing Chow remarks:

98 “A life of contradiction is a life in which the new and the old are not in balance” (矛盾生活即新舊不調和之生活), quoted in Wang Fansen, 2001, p.228.
101 Scholars in post-'49 China however were hardly unanimously decided on whether Han Feizi (and Mozi) should be praised as precursors to communism and materialism. See Kam Louie, Inheriting Tradition. Interpretations of the Classical Philosophers in Communist China, 1949-1966, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp.129-154, pp.178-188.
103 See Hon, 2013.
Non-May Fourth historical agents, including May Fourth's competitors, contributed to the emergence of May Fourth. Across time, the May Fourth historical actors drew significantly on and even combined previous quests for modernity [...] Across discursive space, May Fourth fed on the ideas, decisions, and actions of those who were far from sympathetic to vehement iconoclasm.104

In order not to lose this complexity out of sight, the historian Peter Zarrow cautions that one must be careful in using the notion of a generalized “cultural crisis” to describe the atmosphere of the early modern period. Zarrow emphasizes: “Cultural crisis there may have been, but it did not affect all persons equally, and even those affected by it found ways to adjust to the new world. For many [...] cultural crisis was welcome, for it was part of the process of seeking inclusion [in the modern world]”.105

The anarchist (and later Guomindang supporter) Wu Zhihui 吳稚 晖 (1865-1953)106 for example, certainly did not display much sense of nostalgia or regret when he suggested “flushing all thread-bound [i.e. traditional] books down the toilet” (將線裝書丟在毛廁裡).107 Wu warmly welcomed the advent of industrialization and the invention of machines and systems of automation, celebrating technology and science as solutions to all ethical and spiritual problems, much like the Italian Futurists of the first decade of the twentieth century. Wu famously suggested that the nation could be saved through the power of engines (motuo jiuguo 摩托救國), which would herald the dawn of a world where “each can take according to his need [and] every human being will have an exalted, pure, and exemplary character.”108 One of his texts is revealingly called “On the Advancement of the Great Unity through Machines” (Jiqi cujin datong shuo 機器促進大同說).109 Kang Youwei himself, in the original

107Actually, even Wu's case is a little more complicated. According to D.W.Y. Kwok, he celebrated Confucius and Mencius as the first “urban people” in Chinese history who had a healthy this-worldly focus, which only came to be truly corrupted by the Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi's 朱熹 supposed adoption of Daoist and Buddhist ideas (through the canonization of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 as restarter of the datong 道統). See D.W.Y. Kwok, Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900-1950, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, pp.47-48.
formulation of his Utopian society of Great Unity, had already placed considerable trust in the possibilities of technology and automation for reaching the goal he envisaged. The tragic dimension of the May Fourth Movement's onslaught on tradition now often retrospectively stressed in accounts of the intellectual history of modern China was thus certainly not obvious to all its participants. It is also important to bear in mind that both the selection of precisely which (aspects of) traditions were to be left behind as well the motivations for these selective rejections differed considerably. For Chen Duxiu, who in the eyes of Lin Yu-Sheng exemplifies what he calls modern China's trend of “totalistic anti-traditionalism”, the most important incentive for rejecting Confucianism as incompatible with modern life was the idea that modern life is governed by the economy, which is in turn based on the expenditure of individual labor power. Chen considered the traditional relational model of the individual as embedded in a web of social (familial) relations associated with Confucianism to be incompatible with the principle of individualism, which he called “the great principle of production in the study of economics” (乃為經濟學生產之大則) necessary for the efficient functioning of the modern economy. According to Edmund Fung, Chen's radical iconoclasm has to be understood as an expression of his “fervent nationalism”, a nationalism which, as we saw above, could still at a certain point in his career coexist with the rejection of the modern state as a proper instrument to ensure the political future of China. Chen believed total Westernization and an uncompromising rejection of (the Confucian) tradition to be the only way to avoid China from falling prey to Western imperialism. What he took be the legacy of imperial China's “pacifism” had to be rooted out through voluntary Westernization. The latter paradoxically served as a means for ensuring national independence, since he assumed that the failure to Westernize would inevitably lead to the foreign powers forcefully imposing a perhaps even more radical form of Westernization, enslaving the Chinese nation in the

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111 Fung, 2010, p.31: “Westernized radicalism was not total antitradiotinalism. It targeted Chinese traditions strategically, that is, only aspects of them.”


113 See Chen Duxiu, “Confucius and Modern Life” (*Kongzi yu xiandai shenghuo 孔子與現代生活*), quoted in Ding, 2011, pp.87-88. Also see Lin, 1979, pp.73-74 and Chow, 1960, p.302.

114 Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) shared this vision of premodern China as (hopelessly) pacifist and prone to assimilation and reconciliation. See his article “The Truth about National Revival” (*Fuxing minzu de zhendi 復興民族的真諦*) from 1938. Quoted in Zhao, 2013.
process. What ultimately mattered then for Chen was not culture, but the autonomy of the nation as the necessary condition for any cultural form of self-determination.

Perhaps Lin Yu-Sheng is justified in claiming that it was first and foremost nationalism which both fed and justified the demand for socio-political and institutional change. But by the same token, it can be argued that it remained possible to redefine tradition as actually conductive to modernization and state-formation, or as in some sense providing the resources to overcome perceived pathologies of Euro-American modernity. Nationalism appeared both in the form of a rejection of a tradition which was seen as inhibiting the success of the Chinese state in “catching up” with the Western powers, and in the idea that national emancipation could and should be achieved through a reinvigoration of tradition, the loss of which could then be presented as the root cause of China's demise. Nationalism could come both in the form of allegiance to and rejection of tradition. In other words, for some, the state (as a “territorial-juridical unit”) had to be saved from the nation (when conceived of in terms of cultural and historical continuity), whereas others thought it was only possible to build a state through a quasi a priori unity of the nation in its culture. The possibility of conceiving of a mismatch between nation and state (the state being either too national, or no longer national) also implied that cultural and temporal distinctions did not always neatly overlap. The past was not necessarily conceived of as Chinese, nor was the West always identified with the future. Jiang Qing was not yet there to make the totalizing series of equations according to which state = nation = history = culture (= Confucianism).

From a retrospective point of view, the strong nationalist strain among both revolutionaries, liberals and conservatives active during May Fourth has been a reason for some commentators to see the potential for social and political emancipation displayed and articulated in the movement as essentially, echoing

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116 See Lin, 1979, p.11.

117 See Xu Jilin 许纪霖, “Republican Patriotism and Cultural Nationalism – A View on Two Types of National Identity in Modern China” (Gonghe aiguozhuyi yu wenhua minzuzhuyi – Xiandai zhongguo liangguo liang zhong minzuzhuyi rentongguan 共和爱国主义与文化民族主义—现代中国两种民族主义认同观), in *The Central Concepts of Modern Chinese Thought (Xiandai zhongguo sixiang de hexin guannian 现代中国思想的核心观念)*, edited by Xu Jilin, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010, pp.282-301.


119 Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment. Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, p.4: “'Destructive' and 'dangerous' were accusations quite familiar to Chinese admirers of the European enlightenment. In the context of a nationalist revolution however, they also faced an added charge: that of being 'un-Chinese'. Therefore, it was more difficult for them to persevere in the project of cultural criticism than it had been for European philosophers.” Cf. pp.288-291.
Habermas, an “unfinished project”. What is specifically regretted in such interpretations is that concerns over democracy and individual freedom ended up being overridden by the cause of national independence and “national salvation”, thereby impeding the development of “critical reflection”. Needless to say that such observations take the emergence of the People's Republic as an undemocratic authoritarian state and the ideal of liberal democracy as their point of reference. There is certainly something to be said for this view. That emancipatory ideals can quickly revert into their immediate opposite should, sadly enough, no longer come as a surprise to anyone who has lived long enough to have noticed that cynicism is often a good fortuneteller. For a recent example, one need only think of the bewildering trajectory from the massive demonstrations on Tahrir Square to the repressive military regime in present day Egypt. Much depends, however, on how one understands the word “critical”. From my limited understanding of the May Fourth Movement, I think it could be argued that an overwhelming majority of the ideas developed against the background of the threat of imperialism, internal political and military chaos, unprecedented social transformations, and the factual disappearance of tradition as a straightforwardly accessible source can be seen as instances of critical historical consciousness, as long as one agrees to place them against (and in a sense keep them in) this background, without unfairly expecting them to be able to emancipate themselves from the same condition to which a present day interpreter remains subjugated. In this case, the obvious catch would

122 Edward C. Gu, positioning himself against the influential interpretations of Tse-tsung Chow and Vera Schwarcz, draws attention to the fact that the conception of democracy of many May Fourth agents was generally not liberal at all, but romantic and indebted to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in that they stood for an unlimited form of popular sovereignty without seeing the need for constraint or mediation (representation). Economically, it was mostly socialism which was taken as an incarnation of democratic equality. See Edward C. Gu, “Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)”, Modern Asian Studies, vol.35, no.3, 2001, pp.589-621. It his highly ironic that certain liberal intellectuals see the unconscious persistence of Confucian ideals in Chinese Marxism, which for a long time rejected Confucianism as an ideology of imperial feudalism, as preventing the democratization and the extension of individual rights. They thus assume the disavowed Confucianism of the CCP to prevent the emergence of liberal democracy. See Li Minghui’s 李明辉 comments on the work of Bao Zunxin 包遵信 and Jin Guantao 金观涛 in “On the So-Called ‘Confucianization of Marxism’ ”(Lun suowei ‘Makezizhu de rujiahua’论所谓「马克思主义的儒家化 」), 1991, http://www.confucius2000.com/admin/list.asp?id=3934. Also see Song Xianlin, “Reconstructing the Confucian Ideal in 1980s China: the “Culture Craze” and New Confucianism”, in Confucianism: a Critical Examination, edited by John Makeham, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp.89-90.
be that one allows for the possibility of an irreflexive, or unconscious critique, which would involve admitting that discourses are not so much in themselves critical, but require the passing of time and the occurrence of second-order observations (the observation of observations) to attribute this quality to them. A first-order observer can never know for sure whether his critique is perhaps feeding into the object of his criticism, or will do so in the future. Given the constantly shifting boundaries of what counts as emancipatory and critical, and the sheer impossibility of completely overseeing how what one says is already implicated in what one talks about, this is perhaps not so strange. One would also have to take into account that “functional mechanisms remain stable even when their genesis and their mode of functioning have been revealed.” There is the additional danger of critical consciousness degenerating into a form of desperate wishful thinking Hegel already exposed as the conundrum of the “beautiful soul” in the Phenomenology of Spirit. This would also imply that even ideas which may strike us (depending on who, where and when “we” are) as undesirable today, such as xenophobic forms of nationalism or the prospect of an alienating automated society, have to be, not “excused” or brushed aside, but simply taken for what they are, namely expressions of a historical experience of radical, “continuous” change to which we have perhaps gotten too much used over time. In the context of May Fourth as well, it is crucial to remember that “men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.”

### 2.2.2 Observations on May Fourth

Wang Hui has argued that one would look in vain for a common theoretical method or framework underlying the attempts of the May Fourth Movement's iconoclast participants to overcome tradition in the context of the burden of the present. Since a considerable heterogeneity of both newly imported Western and reinterpreted Chinese ideas and theories can be found even in the work of individual

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thinkers (who often did not see themselves as primarily thinkers at all), it is hard to draw up anything more than a fluid typology held together by distant family resemblances. For Wang, any commonality must be looked for in a certain attitude ( 态 度 ) stemming from a shared horizon of historical experience. 128 Indeed, “May Fourth” continues up to this day to denote a specific stance towards tradition and a certain socio-political “spirit” in general, which was actively “re-remembered” and reinvoked in the spring of 1989 in the weeks of protest leading up to the massacre on Tiananmen square. 129 Vera Schwarcz speaks of the May Fourth Movement as “the Chinese Enlightenment”. 130 The term “Chinese Renaissance” was already enthusiastically used by liberal champions of the movement such as Hu Shi. 131 This is not the way May Fourth has been remembered by those close to the New Confucian cause however. Taking a quite different take on this phenomenon, someone like Mou Zongsan was rather inclined to see the tragedy of Tiananmen as more or less the direct result of the movement's assault on tradition, which had helped lead to the birth of Chinese communism. 132 Commenting on modernization as an “enlightenment” which, in its Marxist guise, leads to “being blinded by material things without knowing human beings” (蔽於物而不知人), he wrote:

Enlightenment is essentially a return from Heaven to the human world and means setting out on the path towards human self-awareness. But is it not obvious that we avert ourselves from man and turn back to a Heaven [as something transcendent] where there is not a single sense of humanity when we no longer recognize human beings and see nothing but material things? From the original search for Enlightenment, one thus relapses into ignorance. This form of unenlightenment is not Medieval superstition, but a blindness following after enlightenment. 134

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130 Schwarcz, 1986.
134 Mou, [1939a], p.924. In many of the essays collected in Impressions of the Times ( Shidai yu ganshou 時代與感受 ), Mou speaks of the modern age as one of “great unenlightenment” (大無明). Tang Junyi went even further: “The biggest error in recent times has been to replace the divine by the human. Human beings want to be at the center of the universe themselves, but the result has been the degradation of man.” (近代之大錯誤，即以人代神。人自己要成為宇宙的中心，而結果則是人自身之墮落). “Humanism of the World and Chinese Humanism” ( Shijie renwenzhuyi yu zhongguorenwenzhuyi 世界人文主義與中國人文主義), [1959] in ZJ, p.447. This why he claimed that, “man must strive for
Tang Junyi would later speak of May Fourth as the emblem of the “spiritual afflication” (精神病痛)\(^{135}\) of his own generation and the generation of his teachers which had incapacitated them to “spiritually direct themselves towards the internal and the higher” (精神不能向内向上).\(^{136}\) Unlike for those who advocated thoroughgoing change and saw themselves as politically engaged instructors of the people who were fortunate enough to be “the first to know and the first to become enlightened” (先知先覺悟者)\(^{137}\), for many traditionalists, the May Fourth “enlightenment” signified the unbalanced victory of what Chen Duxiu had famously called “Mister Democracy” (De xiangsheng 德先生) and “Mister Science” (Sai xiansheng 賽先生)\(^{138}\) over “Miss Morality” (De guniang 德姑娘). In its antitraditional May Fourth guise, enlightenment – defined by Kant as “man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity [selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit]”\(^{139}\) – would come to be seen as, in the words of Tu Weiming, an “externally imposed yet self-inflicted malaise”\(^{140}\) at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For thinkers faithful to the Confucian tradition such as Tu, the problem is not the fact that “everything must submit to criticism”\(^{141}\) as such, but that tradition is no longer employed to directly provide the categories and criteria in which such criticism is conducted. Yu Yingshi 余英时, who, not without cause, rejects the whole metaphor of a “Chinese Enlightenment”, sees the New Culture

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\(^{135}\)See chapter 11 of Tang Junyi’s *The Development of the Chinese Humanist Spirit (Zhongguo renwen jingshen zhi fazhan)*, [1957], vol.6 of *TJ*, pp.233-260.

\(^{136}\)Tang, [1957], p.239.

\(^{137}\)Schwarcz, 1986, p.9. Perhaps Deng Xiaoping’s dictum that proposes to “let some people get rich first” (让一部分人先富起来) is a contemporary variant of this idea, stripped of its scholarly arrogance and replaced by the bare equality of all before the laws of economic development. The highest bodhisattva ideal is now that of the entrepreneur who, instead of wallowing in his pure land of riches, decides to stay among the less fortunate and invests his hard-earned money in boosting the economy and creating jobs.

\(^{138}\)See Chow, 1960, p.59.


Movement as a paradigmatic change of Chinese “radicalism”\textsuperscript{142} in its contempt for tradition, the emergence of which he traces back to the first Sino-Japanese War:

From this time on, whether in criticizing the tradition or advocating changes, Chinese intellectuals would almost invariably invoke some Western ideas, values, or institutions as ultimate grounds for justification. It was now neither necessary nor possible to disguise discovery as interpretation […] The idea of total demolition of tradition as a precondition for the building of a new society was wholly inconceivable to the traditional Chinese imagination, but it was one of the absolute preconditions of the May Fourth iconoclastic antitraditionalism.\textsuperscript{143}

Yu scorns the attitude of iconoclasts such as Hu Shi, and believes that the outlook displayed in their writings after periods of study in “civilized countries” abroad betrayed that they saw themselves as one of the few (un)lucky prisoners to have escaped from Plato's cave, who now had to turn their back on the sunlight and retreat again into their dim cell of illusions to join its deluded inmates.\textsuperscript{144} For Yu, this trend of radicalism paved the way for the acceptance of Marxism, which inherited the worst of May Fourth antitraditionalism, and ultimately culminated in Mao's Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{145} I doubt though, whether he would want to see the “Council for Chinese Cultural Renaissance” (\textit{Zhongguo wenhua fuxing weiyuanhui} 中國文化復興委員會) founded by the Taiwan Guomindang government in 1967 (and presided over by Chiang Kai-shek) in response to the events in the PRC and the subsequent restoration of Confucian temples and monuments as a genuine countercurrent to the mainland tide of violent radicalism.\textsuperscript{146} Rather, these opposed political phenomena seem to belong to the same chain of events as two sides of the same coin.\textsuperscript{147} What Yu Yingshi diagnosed as a form of radicalization ultimately springing from anti-imperialist nationalism, is in the eyes of Thomas Metzger “to a large extent, […] the indigenous, intense, centuries-old desire to escape from a metaphysical, psychological, political, and economic predicament which led many Chinese enthusiastically to devote their lives to

\textsuperscript{142}\textsuperscript{According to the Marxist thinker Liu Kang, what Yu calls “Radicalism is but a coded term for the revolutionary legacy, which in the present circumstances can only be labeled euphemistically.” Liu Kang, “Is There an Alternative to (Capitalist) Globalization? The Debate about Modernity in China”, \textit{boundary 2}, vol.23, no.3, 1996, p.208.}
\textsuperscript{144}\textsuperscript{Yü, 1993, p.131.}
\textsuperscript{145}\textsuperscript{Yü, 1993, pp.134-135.}
the overthrow of traditionally revered institutions and the adoption of strange and foreign ways.”

Peter Zarrow has rightly criticized Metzger’s culturalist take on the New Culture and May Fourth Movement, pointing out that “[l]ike the literati of old, the modern Chinese intelligentsia sought order, but it was a very different order. Nationalism, citizenship (political participation of the masses), progress and evolutionism, egalitarianism, the glorification of struggle: such goals present major discontinuity with the past.” For the intellectual historian Zhang Hao 张灏, “the scope of their moral iconoclasm is perhaps unique in the modern world; no other historical civilization outside the West undergoing modern transformation has witnessed such a phoenix-like impulse to see its own cultural tradition so completely neglected.” However, what is missing in Zhang Hao’s account is a broader perspective which puts the events and the discourses surrounding May Fourth in a global context, since very similar processes can be observed all over the world at the same historical juncture. One clear indication for this is that the semantic schemes adopted in the face of the unprecedented transformation of Chinese society were not specifically Chinese at all. Even among tradition-minded thinkers, it did not always prove so difficult to interpret the generalized cultural crisis they saw around them as an intermediary stage in a larger historical movement, thereby already ascribing a certain necessity to this crisis as a possible mode of “purification” of tradition, paving the way for its rebirth. He Lin 贺麟, who is credited with having been the first to use the expression “New Confucianism” (xin ruxue 新儒学) with reference to himself and his contemporaries, sounds remarkably similar to Chen Duxiu's famous eulogy on the purifying dimension of youth and novelty in the first issue of New Youth when he writes that

148 Thomas A. Metzger, Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, p.17. Cf. p.223: “[T]he Chinese have traditionally regarded humiliating and convulsive disasters as an normal part of their history and indeed as serving to define the moral-political missions to be undertaken by succeeding generations.”

149 Zarrow, 2005, p.172.


151 See Mishra, 2013. Peter Zarrow notes that “the dislocation experienced by China was not unique. Indeed, it was one of a number of revolutionary societies in the early twentieth century. By the 1890s, most late-developing nations were experiencing tremendous disruptions as they were drawn, under varying degrees of imperialist pressure, into the world economy.” Zarrow, 2005, p.132.


153 Quoted in Chow, 1960, pp.45-46: “Youth is like early spring, like the rising sun, like trees and grass in bud, like a newly sharpened blade […] The function of youth in society is the same as that of a fresh and vital cell in a human body. In the process of metabolism, the old and the rotten are incessantly eliminated to be replaced by the fresh and the living.”

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one could say that the New Culture Movement of the May Fourth period was an important turning point for encouraging the development of Confucian thought. On the surface, the New Culture Movement was one big movement to “smash the Confucian shop” and to overturn Confucian thought. [...] The greatest contribution of the New Culture Movement lies in its having destroyed and cleansed away the petrified elements in the details of the formal constitution of Confucianism and those traditional putrefied parts that fetter individuality.\textsuperscript{154}

五四時代的新文化運動，可以說是促進儒家思想新發展的一格大轉機。區面上，新文化運動是個打孔子店，推翻儒學思想的一個大運動。[...] 新文化運動的最大貢獻在於破壞和掃除儒家的僵化部分的軀殼的形式末節，及束縛個性的傳統腐化部分。

In an article from 1953, Mou Zongsan invokes the Romantic poet Hölderlin's idea of “the withdrawal of God”\textsuperscript{155}, with which he was familiar through Heidegger (through the intermediary of Tang Junyi), in an argument where the same logic of “purification” is employed even more dramatically:

His withdrawal\textsuperscript{156} is a temporary separation he establishes between himself and the human world. He wants to uphold his own purity and return to himself as a “pure subject”. Only in this way can he truly establish himself and uphold himself and avoid being washed away. [...] When he returns to his own pure subjectivity, then the cruelty and ignorance of the Middle Ages and the vulgarity and trifling attitude of the modern age all become a process of self-destruction on the side of the human world. At the same time, the obstinacy of people towards God which causes them to fall into darkness and makes their life and their spirit unable to open up and change is not something in which God takes pleasure. That is why he must take a step back in order to allow the life and the mind of human beings to transform itself so that they may temper themselves in this process of transformation and so that they can find out whether they are able to become awakened and free of delusions to attain the region where they circulate and interconnect with God [...] Therefore, the retreat of God is not only that through which he purifies himself, but also that by which he cleanses the human world.\textsuperscript{157}

他的歸寂是自己暫時與人間及世界隔離。他要保持他的純淨性，歸於他的「粹純主體性」之自己。這樣，他才真能建立其自己，保持其自己，而不流失。[...] 他歸於他的純粹主體性之自

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{155}“On 'the Withdrawal of God'” (\textit{Lun 'shangdi yintui' 论「上帝隐退」}), [1953c] in \textit{DY}, p.241-262.
  \item \textsuperscript{156}Literally, “return to loneliness”. \textit{Guiji} 隱寂 is a Buddhist term for death or a synonym for \textit{parinirvāna}. See \textit{Foguang da cidian} 佛光大辞典, edited by Ci Yi 慈怡 et al., Gaoxiong: Foguang chubanshe, 1989, p.5406 and p.6569.
  \item \textsuperscript{157}Mou, [1953c], p.243.
\end{itemize}
The distance between the ideal (God) and the real (a world from which God has retreated) is thereby reinterpreted as a constitutive property of the ideal itself, which needs this temporary withdrawal from the world (to which it must ultimately return in order to come to full, objective existence) in order to sustain its ideality as a “pure subject”. It is also through this very same retreat of the ideal that the real world and the subjects in this world from which it has distanced itself are dialectically stimulated, or one could even say forced, to turn towards the ideal and strive to attain a state of interconnection with the transcendent. Tang Junyi too, in a text from 1949, evaluating the “cultural effects of materialism as a worldview” (Yuzhouguan weiwulun zhi wenhua xiaoyong pinglun 宇宙觀唯物論之文化效用評論), had already taken on an equally heavily Christian jargon to make his case against Marx's historical materialism:

Most of humanity's other intellectual theories had an effect on human culture because they were true, Marx's theory however had an effect [precisely] because of its erroneous nature. This is because Marx made a false prediction and thereby spurred people on to prevent this prediction from coming true, so that they came to attach more importance to social, political and cultural forces outside of economic factors. This then has been Marx's contribution to human culture. God sent Jesus to take on our sins and relieve us of them. He also sent a multitude of scholars to take on errors so that future generations might attain the truth. When people took Marx's errors for the truth and failed to continue to search for a higher truth, they failed to live up to the will of God and as a consequence could not understand the true value of Marx's historical materialism for human culture.158

人類其他的思想學說常是因其真而對人類文化有効用，馬氏之學說則是因其錯誤而對人類文化有効用。因為馬氏說了一個應當錯的預言，於是反而激發人去阻止此預言之實現盡量求應當真者之實現，而更重視經濟力量以外之社會政治文化之力量。這就是馬氏對於人類文化之貢獻。上帝使耶穌承擔罪惡，以為人贖罪，亦使許多學者，承擔錯誤以使後人獨得真理。而後人以馬氏之錯誤為真理，而不能進而求更高之真理，則辜負上帝之意旨，亦將不能了解馬氏之唯物史觀對人類文化之真效用在何處了。

158Tang, [1949c], no pagination.
One of the most important functions the concept of culture (the God of the Chinese people) as Spirit fulfills in Mou's and Tang's thought is identifying the qualitatively unprecedented discontinuity of modernity as part of a continuous trajectory that is not outside of the inner principle of mobility of this substantial subject. Yingjie Guo is certainly justified in raising the following question: “Confucians have been trying to reinterpret, reinvent or 'modernize' Confucianism in order to make it more relevant and appealing to contemporary Chinese. The question is whether or not Confucianism can be modernized without losing its self-identity.” But obviously, the threat of a loss of self-identity can be warded off by inscribing non-identity and discontinuity (in the form of self-negation) into the same dynamic which allows Spirit to realize its “innermost self”. This in my view is one of the primary functions of dialectical logic in the works of Tang and Mou. It is not merely a “magic trick” they use to violate common sense and obfuscate problems of a determinate historical and social origin. Wang Xueqing 王雪卿 and Liao Junyu 廖俊裕 are I think right to stress that the fundamental difference between Tang's idea of the moral self (daode ziwo 道德自我) and the traditional Confucian idea of morality is that Tang proposes that the moral subject must first go through a form of what Wang and Liao call “self-disintegration” (ziwo bengjie 自我崩解). It is through such a form of strategic self-negation that difference is grasped as a modality of sameness. In Hegelian terms, immediate, unreflective self-identity must be subjected to a process of negation, after which the initial identity can be sublated (Aufgehoben) at a higher level by including non-identity into the identical. Zhang Yixin 张怡心 believes that Tang's highly selective use of Hegel becomes apparent in his intentional abandonment of the historical character of Spirit (Geist). According to Zhang, the moral self Tang endowed with the qualities of the Hegelian Geist is an atemporal entity purified of external historical determinations. But she does not stop to consider the possibility that this (far from complete)

160See Yiu-ming Fung [Feng Yaoming 馮耀明], “Three Dogmas of New Confucianism: A Perspective of Analytic Philosophy,” in Two Roads to Wisdom? Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Traditions, edited by Bo Mou, Chicago: Open Court, 2001, pp.245-266. Fung's analytic denunciation of the various violations of formal logic he finds in the work of New Confucian philosophers cannot really go beyond denunciation, nor can it even begin to account for what it denounces. Similarly, the mainland scholar Deng Xiaomang 邓晓芒, a specialist of German Idealist philosophy, has extensively occupied himself with correcting Mou's various misinterpretations of Kant. See the second part of his A New Critique of Confucian Ethics (Rujia lunli xin pipan 儒家伦理新批判), Chongqing: Chongqing daxue chubanshe, 2010.
purification from history is itself historically conditioned, in the sense that Tang's immunization of the moral mind against historical change can be understood as being directed against a particular developmental logic of history in which the tradition he wanted to uphold and safeguard had become to a great extent institutionally effaced and had to be incorporated into the modern coordinates of knowledge in order to survive. As Stephan Schmidt writes:

[T]he only thing to do for a Confucian living under these circumstances was to make sure that an intellectual tradition of Confucianism be saved from collapse — an intellectual tradition that one day might launch the reestablishment of institutions in which a more wholesale Confucianism could live again [...] The first thing that is required is the independence of the intellectual tradition from the institutions that no longer exist.\textsuperscript{163}

Clearly, thinkers who wanted to reaffirm the value of tradition as a “scarce resource”\textsuperscript{164} in the face of unprecedented structural changes in history and in the semantics available for comprehending these changes, were in no way foreign or immune to modernization discourses. “Modern Chinese conservatism”, Edmund Fung judges summarily, “served the purposes of modernization.”\textsuperscript{165} As Sébastien Billioud writes in relation to Mou Zongsan: “Mou Zongsan, far from being an opponent of modernity, is also an heir of the May Fourth spirit and its values of science and democracy. In brief, he embraces modernity while attempting to articulate it within a Chinese cultural tradition that should not be thrown into the dustbin of history.”\textsuperscript{166} Mou did not conceive of the relation between Confucianism and modernity as a problem of compatibility and adaptation (\textit{shiying 適應}) but as one of realization (\textit{shixian 實現}).\textsuperscript{167} Tang Junyi too tried to present the development of science and democracy in modern China as the fulfillment of the internal requirements of Chinese culture\textsuperscript{168}, which he assumed to have always been affected and influenced by other cultures “purely out of its inner yearning and demands”

165Fung, 2010, p.21. Cf. Lin, 1979, p.17: “Those who wanted to uphold or defend traditional ideas and values were forced to look for new justifications.”
168See for example Tang, [1957], pp.143-145.
In this way, transformation essentially comes to be understood as self-transformation. What still remains to be thought through is how the culturally mediated articulations of modernity by twentieth-century Confucian philosophers such as Mou and Tang were in themselves already substantially modified by, and to a certain extent products of, modernization and its confused chorus of discourses. In order to interpret adaptation as realization, that which is realized has to be already adapted beforehand in order to be observed as realizing itself. Aware of their fundamental novelty and the often uneasy fit with traditional coordinates of knowledge, they consciously reflected on categories such as modernity, culture, philosophy, and science (as well as other subdivisions). As we will soon see in more detail, the expression “anti-modern theories of modernization” (fanxiandaixing de xiandaixing 反现代的现代性理论) coined by Wang Hui could be taken as a particularly apt description of what later came to be known as the movement of New Confucianism. The epochal 1923 debate on science and metaphysics will serve as a point of entry in addressing these issues. Before dealing with the import of this debate in relation to New Confucian philosophy, I will devote an extensive section to the general issue of philosophy as a modern category of knowledge by starting out from a number of ideas developed by Feng Youlan. Some of the elements we have encountered so far will hopefully converge here in a manner which allows us to contextualize them and carry them over into what follows.

169 Tang, [1953b], p.2.
2.3 Modernity, philosophy, and the inheritance of abstraction

2.3.1 Feng Youlan's Xin shi lun and his method of abstract inheritance

Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 (1895-1990) New Treatise on Current Practical Affairs (Xin shi lun 新事論)\(^{172}\), subtitled China's Road to Freedom (Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu 中國到自由之路), from 1939 is interesting in the context of the problem of modernity and discontinuity which became a focal point of discussion during the New Culture period. Although technically speaking Feng's New Treatise does not belong to the May Fourth era, it can be useful and relevant for our understanding of this period and its relation to later history nonetheless. That Feng is often excluded from the category of New Confucianists need not concern us here. In general, many of the concerns first articulated during May Fourth were continued in the work of a whole generation of thinkers who had come of age in the atmosphere of the New Culture epoch and its various heated intellectual debates. Inspired by historical materialism\(^{173}\), and in clear opposition to Liang Shuming's typology of cultures, Feng Youlan declared himself in favor of replacing the prevalent opposition between China and the West (zhongxi zhi fen 中西之分) used in diagnosing China's position in the modern world with the distinction between past and present (gujin zhi fen 古今之分). He did not see these two distinctions as mutually overlapping, since from his point of view, the difference between the old and the new is just as applicable to and abrasive of the experience of temporal uniformity in Western countries. Both China and the West can be divided into a tensely related and often conflictual opposition of past and present.\(^{174}\) This acultural distinction between past and present enabled Feng to attribute the “backwardness” of China, not to its culture, of which he tended to downplay the importance in relation to modernization, but to what he considered to

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be a culturally neutral technical and technological gap, which could be bridged through active industrialization without necessarily having to sacrifice culture. “From our of point view”, Feng writes, “what is meant in propagating that which has a so-called national essence [or nature] is in reality not at all a question of essence, but one of habit.” (照我們的看法，主張有所謂民族性者所說底民族性，實則並不是性而是習).\(^{175}\) Simply put, for Feng, China did not need to Westernize, but industrialize, in order to become modern. As he had already stated unequivocally in a speech from 1939, “so-called Western culture is the type which represents industrial culture and anything in it related to industrial culture is relevant. All the rest is irrelevant.”\(^{176}\) Feng thought it possible to build a modern industrial state without recourse to the nation as a culturally continuous community. Starting from the third chapter\(^{177}\), Feng latches the distinction between present and past onto the difference between city (城) and countryside (鄉) and projects this difference onto a global and broader historical scale. He argues that before the end of the Qing dynasty, China was an “urban country”, in the sense that it could consider itself to be a civilized city surrounded by the coarse countryside of a world of tributary states. It was a center of consumption, not one of production. For Feng, the collapse of the imperial order and China’s weakness as a young nation-state had turned it into the countryside (or backyard) of the Western colonial nations (specifically England, France, Germany and America) who had become “global cities” in the meantime. He adds that a large part of the “global countryside” has become colonized by the Western “cities” which effectively rely on the global countryside's exploitable economic backwardness to maintain their own supremacy.\(^{178}\) These Marxist-sounding views and the enormous importance Feng attached to the economy are not, as one might expect, developed into an argument against, but precisely for full-blown industrialization and the advancement of industrial productivity in China. Restoring China’s “urban” status on a world-scale will lead to the production of the necessary welfare and material wealth which are the prerequisites for any future political (e.g. democratic) revolution.\(^{179}\) In the fourth chapter of his treatise, entitled “On the State” (Shuo guojia 說國家)\(^{180}\), Feng discusses what he takes to be the unprecedented revolution achieved in the transition from a mode of production centered around direct family ties to a large scale industrial mode of production involving the functional division of labor and resulting in what Feng calls “the socialization of

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176Quoted in Chen, 2009, p.179.
177Feng, [1939], pp.38-55.
178See Feng, [1939], pp.191-193.
179See Feng, [1939], pp.184-185.
180Feng, [1939], pp.59-73.
production” (生產的社會化). Punning on the modern Chinese word for state (guojia 國家), he writes that “what we used to call a state [guo] was actually still a family [jia]” (舊所謂國者，實則還是家). In a series of vivid tableaux not lacking in literary appeal, he describes the far-reaching consequences of this transition. Feng explicitly states that the change from family-centered to “socialized” (i.e. industrialized) production is far from (culturally) unique to China, but should be seen as the result of a global change in the “type” (see below) of production and social organization, with the modern state as a result of this transformation. The whole chapter on the state is actually about the industrial revolution, with the state figuring as a derivative by-product of economic development. Feng also uses the metaphors of society and family to distinguish socialism from capitalism: socialism (shehuizhuyi 社會主義) essentially means the distribution of socially (industrially) produced commodities according to the old family model, whereas capitalism (ziben zhuyi 資本主義) comes down to the socially organized distribution of socially (industrially) produced goods, without any mediation of natural family relations. Refusing to directly take sides, Feng chooses instead to heap lavish praise on large-scale industrialization itself, which needs no “isms” (zhuyi 主義) to fulfill its modernizing function: all required political, educational and social transformations will follow from industrialization as the socialization of labor. Feng’s New Philosophy of Humanity (Xin Yuanren 新原人) from 1943 is also worth considering in this respect. His theory of the different “horizons” (jingjie 境界) of human life articulated here can be seen as a conceptual device through which what the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann analyzed as the functional differentiation characteristic of modern societies is accommodated. Feng stresses that the jingjie “are not in any way self-sufficient entities external to everyday activities” (並不是於日常行事外獨立存在者). From his descriptions of what he takes to be the four horizons of perception corresponding to certain modes of being and behaving (natural,
utilitarian, moral, cosmic)\textsuperscript{190}, it is clear that these are not so much ontological (denoting a discrete and fixed domain of pregiven objects), but are primarily social in nature and correspond to different subjective perspectives coupled to spheres of human activity in modern society, where these attitudes and modes of behavior are in a sense presupposed and required. The moral and the religious horizons which have a strong continuity with the past thus do not “belong” in domains of activity which are intrinsically dominated by the present, and vice versa.

From the above account, one can already infer that Feng Youlan clearly had a completely different approach to the relation between culture and modernity (which for him essentially meant industrialization) than most other members of the “New Confucian movement”, his status among which has always been a matter of dispute.\textsuperscript{191} His replacement of cultural by temporal distinctions would be anathema to more holistically (and dialectically) oriented thinkers like Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan\textsuperscript{192}, who explicitly attempted to ground modern institutions and practices in Confucian thought. Feng thought that it was possible for Chinese culture to change from one universal “type” (\textit{lei} 類) to another (i.e. from a familial to an industrial type of production), without a substantial cultural basis, all while leaving its individual cultural specificity untouched and intact. The modernization of China would not entail a transition from one “particular” (\textit{teshu} 特殊) culture to another (from Chinese to Western culture), but signify a change from one “type” to the next without corroding its individual specificity. It is no wonder then that Feng’s treatise on practical affairs starts with a properly theoretical discussion on “distinguishing the universal from the concrete” (\textit{Bie gong shu} 别共殊).\textsuperscript{193}

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\textsuperscript{190}The first horizon denotes a “natural” (\textit{ziran} 自然), irreflexive attitude towards everyday life and seems to describe the subjective constitution of the proletarian worker who does not control or reflect on his actions as a producer of commodities. The second sphere of utility (\textit{gongli} 功利) refers to an attitude in which the subject pursues his own interests, even to the extent that personal well-being comes to be sacrificed for the sake of profit. Marx's description of the venture-capitalist as a “rational miser” comes to mind here. In the third horizon, of morality (\textit{daode} 道德), political activity can overcome the exclusive pursuit of “personal” interest and benefits through a devotion to the greater good of society. In the cosmic or religious sphere (\textit{tiandi} 天地) finally, the unmediated natural identity of subject and object from the first horizon is sublated into a higher unity with the extra-social universe as a whole. However, even this later horizon remains inside of society, since it continues to have a determinate place and function, and would not be appropriate for most non-religious activities.


\textsuperscript{193}Feng, [1939], pp.1-18. See Lauren Pfister, “Feng Youlan's New Principle Learning and His Histories of Chinese
philosophical presuppositions he articulates here, and contrary to Mou's and Tang's basic anti-dualist ontological outlook, the particular does not need to incarnate the universal, nor does the universal have to manifest itself as a "concrete universal". For Mou on the other hand, "from a metaphysical point of view, it is only when a universal principle is realized in a particular thing that it becomes an 'individual entity'". In other words, "essential reality" (benti 本體) must always be "embodied" (tixian 體現). On a political level, Mou took the family and the state to be such actualizing embodiments. Within the framework of Feng Youlan's metaphysics, "a principle is not a thing at all, but "subsists" (qiancun [潜存]) as ontologically prior and metaphysically connected to [that is to say factually disconnected from] the dimension of actuality and any actual thing." As Jana Rošker remarks:

Because he understood li [理, principle] as a logical maxim unburdened by space/time coordinates, this historically limited materialism in no way contradicted his historically undetermined metaphysics. For him, the process of changing factual actuality had no connection whatsoever with the metaphysical state of principle and could therefore be interpreted and evaluated within the scope of materialist assumptions.

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194“The Meaning of the Practice of Idealism” (Lixiangzhu de shijian zhi hanyi 理想主義的實踐之含義), [1949c] in DY p.76. Cf. Mou, [1983b], p.37: “Only a particular which has been universalized is something truly particular, or a truly concrete particular.” (普通化了的特殊才是真正的特殊，這才是真正具體的特殊). Mou Zongsan saw the concept of the concrete universal as rare in Western philosophy, but omnipresent in Chinese thought. For him, Hegel was thus something of an exception in the whole Western tradition. See Mou, [1983b], p.35. According to Joël Thoraval, Feng was Mou’s “anti-modèle par excellence”. See “Introduction: idéal du sage, stratégie du philosophe”, introduction to Spécificités de la philosophie chinoise, French translation of Zhongguo zhexue de tezhi 中國哲學的特質 by Ivan P. Kamenarovic and Jean-Claude Pastor, Paris: CERF, 2003, pp.14-15. Feng based his reinvented Song-Ming metaphysics on the “rationalist” Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), who for Mou constituted a “side-branch” (pangzhi 旁支) of the genuine Confucian daotong 道統 represented by Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1192). Additionally, Mou could not forgive Feng for having “capitulated” to mainland Chinese communism. Mou recounts a famous exchange between Feng Youlan and Xiong Shili – in which the latter had vocally expressed his outrage at Feng’s suggestion that “inmate knowing” (liangzhi 良知) was merely a “hypothesis” (jiading 假定) instead of an “active manifestation” (chengxian 呈現) – in his Autobiography at Fifty (Wushi zishu 五十自述), 1957, MJ, vol.32, pp.78-79. According to Thoraval, “derrière l'opposition classique d'un Lu Xiangshan et d'un Zhu Xi, il faut aussi et encore percevoir le débat entre Feng Youlan et Xiong Shili.” Thoraval, 2003, p.33.

196Mou, [1949c], p.78.
197Pfister, 2002, p.166. Cf. p.169: “Principles are the metaphysical ground for the existence of actual things, and while things flow in and out of temporal and spatial existence, which Feng called the dimension of actuality, principles remain fixedly “present” as subsistent metaphysical patterns, the ontologically prior foundations for the existence of all these various things.”
Although I largely agree with Rošker, it has to be borne in mind that Feng developed the ideas later brought together in his New Treatise on Current Practical Affairs already before the publication of his major work on metaphysics.\textsuperscript{199} His materialist assumptions in describing social reality probably influenced his approach of metaphysics just as much as the other way around. It is noteworthy that in relation to the problem of how contemporary thinkers should orient themselves towards the Chinese tradition and potentially maintain a certain continuity with its philosophical heritage, Feng spoke of a “method of abstract inheritance” (\textit{chouxiang jicheng fa 抽象继承法}). Having already “converted”\textsuperscript{200} to Marxism when he articulated his views on this subject in the latter half of the 1950s, Feng took advantage of the relative relaxation of restrictions on intellectual activity during the Hundred Flowers Campaign (\textit{Baihua yundong 百花运动}, 1956 – 1957) to propose using his method of abstract inheritance to partially liberate traditional “philosophy” from the suspicion of being completely run through with ideology and class-based bias, that is to say, to ensure a certain autonomy of philosophy from politics.\textsuperscript{201} The separation of the meaning of philosophical propositions into a concrete, historically determinate and socially conditioned meaning (\textit{juti de yiyi 具體的意義}) and an abstract meaning (\textit{chouxiang de yiyi 抽象的意義}) freed from this historical determinacy and specificity allowed Feng to detach the truth of traditional ideas from the untruth of their ideological prejudice as “reflections” of class consciousness.\textsuperscript{202} As such, it could be put to good use in keeping something like the famous injunction in the 	extit{Analects} “not to do unto others what one does not want them to do onto oneself” (己所不欲，勿施於人) from being seen as nothing more than the reactionary attempt of a

\textsuperscript{200}According to Pfister (2003, p.173) “Feng was forced to undergo more than one hundred self-criticisms.” Zhang Sanping is a bit cynical in attributing this change of heart to what she calls the “success of Marxism in China”. See Zhang, 2011, pp.117-118.
\textsuperscript{201}A conference on the inheritance of the Chinese philosophical tradition was organized at Peking University, the only university which still had a department of philosophy at that time, in January 1957. See Louie, 1986, pp.6-7, pp.33-34.
feudal ideologue to cover up social antagonisms and attenuate class struggle.²⁰³ Feng also believed abstract inheritance had already been used throughout the whole of Chinese intellectual history.²⁰⁴ Unsurprisingly, Feng's method was severely criticized by more orthodox Marxists, who accused him of revisionism and of relapsing into his pre-Marxist “idealistic” system of philosophy elaborated in his New Metaphysics (Xīn lìxué 新理學) from 1939, and condemned his distinction between abstract (general) and concrete (particular) as hopelessly “metaphysical”. For these critics, ideas and propositions had to be grasped in the concrete context of their political dimension instead of the other way around, something which they thought to be possible only through a rigorously “scientific” Marxism.²⁰⁵ Feng's essays on abstract inheritance even invited a rebuttal from Mao's personal secretary Chen Boda 陳伯達 (1904–1989), who suggested that Feng should stick to “critical inheritance” (批判的繼承) instead of propagating “restorationism” (fuguzhuyì 復古主義).²⁰⁶ When reflecting on the controversy from the 1950s in his autobiography, Feng stresses that he did not consider the method of abstract inheritance to be anything exceptional or specifically metaphysical at all, and insists that much of the criticism voiced against his ideas stemmed from an incorrect grasp of what he meant by the term “abstract”. In his defense, he cites the case of Marx's and Engels' “abstract inheritance” of Hegelian dialectics as an example of how the abstract must always be liberated from the concrete. The method of abstract inheritance was thus simply a standard philosophical procedure for all conceivable acts of inheritance.²⁰⁷ “If we emphasize the concrete meaning too much”, Feng wrote, “there will be very little to inherit”.²⁰⁸ In this sense, even the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, which he was not in a position to accuse of being ideological, needed to be submitted to the procedure of abstract inheritance, since their ideas were also elaborated in the context of concrete social conditions that were no longer at hand and did not need to be carried over into the present.²⁰⁹ There could be no inheritance for Feng without extracting the universal from the particular. In the end, he opted for saying that genuinely philosophical propositions only have an abstract, i.e. universal meaning, which due to the constraints of facticity,
“must rest on concrete situations” and is always “lodged within the particular”.210

2.3.2 Moishe Postone's reinterpretation of Marx and the New Confucian critique of communist modernity

2.3.2.1 Postone on traditional Marxism

I have no intention of defending Feng Youlan's views on modernity and his method of abstract inheritance from a normative point of view.211 Instead, I think it might be more interesting to try to approach them, as Peter Zarrow writes concerning Zhang Zhidong's tri-yong formula, as “expression[s] of a lived historical process.”212 In order to do so, I will draw on the challenging Marxist perspective developed two decades ago by Moishe Postone in his *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*,213 which can provide a possible way of tackling the highly complex and entwined issues of abstraction, philosophy as a specific mode of communication, and time, not in the least because it offers an outlook in which these issues can be grasped as related to one another in the first place. Since Postone's work reaches conceptually high levels of abstraction and complexity, my only ambition is to provide the essentials necessary to return with a different perspective to Feng Youlan's ideas and the general problematic treated in this chapter.

Postone's reinterpretation of Marx departs from both a distinction and a restriction. According to Postone, what he calls “traditional Marxism” has consistently mistaken Marx's immanent criticism of the position of labor in modern capitalist societies for a normative and universally applicable account. Specifically, such standard interpretations assume that Marx considered labor to be a “natural” form of

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210Feng, 2000, p.294.
211For an example of such an apologetic for abstract inheritance, see Yang, 1994.
212Zarrow, 2012, p.119.
mediation between the human and the natural world aimed at the satisfaction of human needs and constituting the source of wealth in all human societies, instead of being a specific historical formation distinctive of the modern era. Marx’s critique is taken to be basically directed at the unequal distribution of socially produced wealth. As such, the proletarian class of laborers comes to be presented as the world-forming Subject of history, which has the millennial task of reappropriating the material wealth from which it has been disowned. It can do so by overcoming the exploitative capitalist relations of production through seizing control over the means of production and the unchecked distributive mechanisms of the market. Logically, this implies that capitalist domination would come to an end once the proletariat has abolished private ownership, seized political power, or is represented by a vanguard political party along Leninist lines which can further oversee the “withering away” of the state. In his critique of the failures of communism in Soviet Russia, Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1886–1969) already made the following apposite observations:

What the Soviet Union proudly flaunts in the world are “the dictatorship of the proletariat”, “a classless society”, and “the fading away of the state”. But let us have a look at the results of the past forty years. In the beginning, money was abolished, only for a currency system to be reinstalled shortly afterwards. Originally, there was talk of “from each according to his means, to each according to his needs”, now this has been changed into “renumeration based on competence”. There was the enthusiastic promotion of free love, now they have prohibited abortion while rewarding marriage and childbirth. They said: “workers have no motherland”, but after the war with Germany broke out, they began singing the praise of patriotism.

今蘇聯之所以誇耀於世界者曰無產階級專政曰無產階級的社會曰國家消逝。然試問四十年來之成就如何始也廢止貨幣，不久而幣制恢復，始也呼號各盡所能，各取所需，今則改之曰「因能得酬」。始也鼓吹戀愛自由，今又禁止墮胎，獎勵結婚與子女生。始則曰工人無祖國，及對德國戰爭起後，又高唱祖國之愛。

What Postone calls traditional Marxism is thus inherently unable to account for and to set itself apart from the catastrophe of twentieth-century socialism, which is probably the first task for any reinvention

215 According to Chen Weigang, the absence of a native bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class in peripheral regions of the capitalist world-system led to state-centered nationalism organized by a vanguard party. See Confucian Marxism: a Reflection on Religion and Global Justice, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013, pp.72-75.
of Marxism today. The traditional idea of a universal and transhistorical nature of labor and the proletariat which disposes over labor power as its only commodity as the corresponding universal world-forming class, attempts to make Marx's analysis applicable to all societal forms throughout both space and time. The only differences allowed for would then be the position of various societies within a unilinear process, located at different “stages” of the same development. Postone makes the following distinction in order to counter this traditional misunderstanding of Marx, a distinction which he mainly extracts from a rereading of Marx's Capital in the light of the Grundrisse and twentieth-century developments in critical theory: what Marx offered in his work was not “a critique of capitalism from the standpoint of labor”, but “a critique of labor in capitalism”. Marx did not celebrate labor and the laboring class as the motor of history, fettered by unequal class relations, but instead saw the specific nature of labor in capitalism as a source of surplus value as a “quasi-objective form of social mediation”.

What is specific to capitalism then, is not the existence of private property, class-based relations of exploitation, or a competitive “free” market in which goods are unfairly distributed without the control of its producers, but a mode of production which is normally taken for

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217 Alain Badiou has made it somewhat easy on himself by reverting to communism as an “idea”. Postone's theory has the distinct advantage of being able to account for Badiou's approach, which is hardly the case the other way around. See below, section 2.3.3.

218 “[A]ny theory that posits an intrinsic developmental logic to history as such, whether dialectical or evolutionary, projects what is the case for capitalism onto history in general.” Postone, 2009, p.44. Postone's reinterpretation of Marxism bears a certain resemblance to the distinction Willy Coolsaet makes internal to Marx's own oeuvre. Coolsaet distinguishes (not chronologically) between a teleological “Marx II”, who believed that capitalism was a historically necessary stage in which the productive forces and the antagonisms intrinsic to bourgeois society are to be fully realized in order to dialectically enable the proletariat to lead the world into the future of communism (the logic of the “negation of the negation”) and a critical “Marx I”, who grasped the logic of capitalism as an endless process of the self-value of surplus value (M-M') which does not directly condition its own demise and is not, sadly enough, its own gravedigger. See Willy Coolsaet, Producen om the produceren. Het kapitalisme en de ontwikkeling van de produktieve krachten volgens Marx [Producing for the Sake of Production. Capitalism and the Development of the Productive Forces according to Marx], Gent: Kritiek, no.28, 1996. The much more well-known approach of Althusser, who discerned an epistemological break (located around 1845) between a young, humanist, ideological Marx (of the 1844 Paris Manuscripts) and an older “scientific” Marx who had discovered the “continent of history” is related to Postone's approach insofar as their common theoretical anti-humanism is concerned. Postone however is not interested in drawing such a clear-cut distinction, as he thinks it is possible to interpret Marx's theory of alienation in the light of his reconstructed “mature theory” without having to presuppose an absolute break between two different Marxes. See Postone, 1993, pp.158-166. Additionally, Postone does not share Althusser's aversion to conceptual residues of Hegelian philosophy in Marx (remember Althusser's long analysis of the “reversal” of the Hegelian dialectic, which is equally an “extraction”, his rejection of Hegelian contradiction in the elaboration of his theory of overdetermination, and his idea of history as a “process without a subject”) since he thinks what Hegel meant by Spirit is a pretty good philosophical metaphor for Marx's idea of capital as a quasi-autonomous (albeit blind instead of knowing) Subject. See Louis Althusser, For Marx, London and New York: Verso, 2005. For Postone's take on the Hegel-Marx relation see Postone, 1993, pp.71-83.

219 The Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie (Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy) is an extensive manuscript written between 1857 and 1858.


granted and left unproblematised in traditional Marxist accounts. Postone proposes to reinvigorate the Marxist critique by restricting its validity to the historical condition of which it is in his view an immanent analysis, as what he succinctly calls a “critical ethnography of capitalist society.” At the same time, this restriction has the effect of expanding its applicability within the object of critique. The distinction between “actually existing socialism” and “free-market capitalist” countries is radically undermined by conceptually reducing capitalism to industrial production, which is not specific to so-called liberal countries at all. After all, was something like the archetypally “socialist” Great Leap Forward (1958-1961) not based on the idea of overtaking America and the Soviet Union in terms of productivity (of coal, iron, steel, and so on)? It was not only a specific ideological outlook which allowed an article that appeared in The Economist a few years back to describe China’s post ’78 economic trajectory under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin as “the real Great Leap Forward”. Even more so today, it is hard to see, even on the level of political rhetorics, what constitutes the real difference between the so-called American and the Chinese dream (Zhongguo meng 中国梦) recently voiced by Xi Jinping. That the dreamers disagree over what the dream implies for the currency intervention policies of both countries?

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222 Thomas Piketty’s recent best-selling critique of capitalism (Capital in the Twenty-First Century, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2014) also proposes retaining the capitalist mode of production while drastically changing the mode of income distribution through measures such as a globally enforced form of progressive income taxation.  
225 “The Marxian categories, as traditionally interpreted, are of little use in formulating a social critique of a society that is regulated and dominated by the state.” Postone, 1993, p.11. What the economist Yanis Varoufakis has called the “controlled disintegration of the world economy” (see his The Global Minotaur: America, Europe and the Future of the Global Economy, London and New York: Zed Books, 2013) leading up to the 2008 (~ 20??) economic crisis and the globally enforced austerity measures following the meltdown are simply impossible to understand when abstracting from the role of interventionist nation-states, which have proven their peculiar sense of humor by presenting their putative powerlessness in the face of unbridled corporate “greed” as the principal cause behind the crisis, the latter of course being only over when the international organizations in which they are represented declare it to be so, something the international markets will then possibly observe with a sense of disbelief.  
227 In the 1976 satirical movie Network, it is surprisingly enough the head of a media corporation who explains the logic of abstract equivalence best in a speech chiding his baffled employ Howard Beale, the anchor of an evening news show who had dared criticize the purchase of the network he works for by a large Saudi-Arabian investment group on live TV: “You have meddled with the primal forces of nature, Mr. Beale, and I won't have it! Is that clear? You think you've merely stopped a business deal. That is not the case! The Arabs have taken billions of dollars out of this country, and now they must put it back! It is ebb and flow, tidal gravity! It is ecological balance! You are an old man who thinks in terms of nations and peoples. There are no nations. There are no peoples. There are no Russians. There are no Arabs. There are no third worlds. There is no West. There is only one holistic system of systems, one vast and immune, interwoven, interacting, multivariate, multinational dominion of dollars. Petro-dollars, electro-dollars, multi-dollars, reichmarks, rins, rubles, pounds, and shekels. It is the international system of currency which determines the totality of life on this planet. That is the natural order of things today. That is the atomic and subatomic and galactic structure of things today! […] Am I getting through to you, Mr. Beale? You get up on your little twenty-one inch screen and howl
More important in the context of the present study is that Postone's perspective on the “speculative identity” of capitalism and socialism on the level of industrial production allows us to grasp Tang Junyi's and Mou Zongsan's criticisms of communism and historical materialism as being directed at the historically universalized structural mechanisms underlying modernity in general, instead of being limited to their socialist form of appearance. That they employed Marxist-sounding terms such as “reification” (wuhua 物化), “quantification” (lianghua 量化), “alienation” (shuwai 疏外) and “commodification” (shangpinhua 商品化)²²⁸ and denounced “purely quantitative universality” (純量的普遍性)²²⁹ in criticizing what they took to be Marx's philosophically and socially disastrous materialism, of which they considered Chinese communism to be the diabolical but faithful realization, is remarkable enough and would seem to constitute something of a paradox. Of course, the paradox soon disappears when we remember that Marxism was not only a critique of capitalist modernity, but itself became one of the dominant modes and ideologies of modernization in the twentieth century, favoring state-regulated, collectively organized industrialization above liberal, laissez-faire, “free market” capitalism.²³⁰ Indeed, Tang Junyi often writes as if, in Postone's words, “Marx had written a political economy rather than a critique of political economy”.²³¹ At one point Tang even suggested that


²²⁹Record of Lectures at the Humanist Society (Renwen jiangxi lu 人文講習錄), [1954b] vol.28 of MJ, p.76. Mou saw the work of Zhang Taiyan (specifically his Buddhist-inspired commentary on Zhuangzi's idea of the “equalization of things” (齊物) and Kang Youwei as exemplifying the communist tendency towards a nihilist denunciation of the universal and the propagation of merely quantitative equivalence. Significantly, both Zhang and Kang rejected the state as either a false construct or an impediment to “great unity” (大同). See Mou, [1954b], p.75 and “Upon Reading 'A Reply to Xie Shilin'” (Du 'da Xie Shilin' 讀〈答謝石麟〉), [1935a] in ZW1, pp.507-510.


Marx had composed *Das Kapital* in order to promote economic growth. 232 “Marx” and “Marxism” thus often functioned as mere signifiers for industrialization and the consequences of economic development. I do not mean to claim that Tang and Mou were actually covert communists instead of card-carrying Confucianists. But I do think it can be argued that the true object behind the New Confucian denunciation of economic determinism as a conceptual framework (described by John Dewey as a form of “theoretical absolutism”233) is in fact the “real abstraction” effected by the historical process of modernization in the guise of large-scale, state-regulated industrialization in communist China. 234

In the following passage, Tang attacks Marx's historical materialism and putative economic determinism by insisting that all objects resulting from human labor have an intrinsically dual nature which prevents them from being reduced to their material and utilitarian dimension. But in doing so, he clearly mistakes Marx's critical analysis of the double nature of the commodity in capitalism as both incarnating use value and exchange value and veiling the relations which condition their production for a transhistorically normative one:

The sacrificial cauldrons and vessels we just mentioned are utensils and cultural relics, but they are at the same time ritual objects. Ritual objects are instruments that display moral and religious feelings of interpersonal love and respect. Any utensil that is a product of human labor can become something to entertain guests and to be offered to ancestral spirits, which means that all material instruments have a cultural, religious and moral meaning and spirit. From this it can be seen that the real human world is a humanistic world, a world of human character or of ethical bonds, in which the personalities of all human beings are entwined in ethical relations. It is not just, as Marx claims, a world of material and economic life in which people strive to satisfy their natural needs through laboring on nature and through production and economic relations. 235

232See Tang [1949c], no pagination.
234Many of the most influential Marxists in China were not economic determinists at all, but displayed a very voluntaristic outlook. For the examples of Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1935) and Mao Zedong, see Nick Knight, *Marxist Philosophy in China: From Qu Qiubai to Mao Zedong*, 1923—1945, Dordrecht: Springer, 2005, pp.53-69 and pp.173-185. Knight remarks that “many of the versions of Marxist philosophy and social theory to have reached China from the early 1920s [Lenin, Plekhanov, Motoyuki Takabatake 高畠素之, Hajime Kawakami 肇河上] had repudiated the notion of an economist and deterministic interpretation of Marxism.” Knight, 2005, p.178.
方寸说到之鼎彝，为器物，为文物，即同时为礼器。礼器即表现人与人间、道德性宗教性爱静之情感之器物。世界之任何劳动生产之器物，无不可以待宾客，事鬼神，而此一切物质性之器物，即无不有文化性、宗教性、道德性的意义与精神。由此而真实的人间世界，即一人文的世界，而人格结合成人伦关系的人格世界，或人伦世界。而非如马克思之所说为一唯物的，只有人对自然之劳动生产，人与人之经济关系，以满足人之自然需要之物质生活经济生活的世界。

Similarly, in an early article entitled “Establishing the Basic Principles of Society” (Shehui jiben yuanze zhi queli 社會基本原則之確立)236 from 1933, which probably constitutes his most extensive and still relatively phlegmatic engagement with historical materialism237, Mou Zongsan criticizes the fact that Marx takes the commodity as a starting point for his analysis of capitalist society in Capital. What Mou primarily objects to is that Marx, in his view at least, mistakes the commodity for something concrete and objective, immediately given and straightforwardly analyzable in the same way as the objects of the natural sciences, since these are simply “out there” unmediated by socio-cultural determinations. Remarkably enough, the naive perspective Mou attributes to Marx is precisely what the latter himself criticized in the work of earlier political economists, namely that they ignored the historical specificity of even the most elementary aspects of the capitalist economy. As Marx stressed, the deceptively simple commodity is “full of metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties”.238 For Marx, the outward appearance of capitalism as an “immense accumulation of commodities”239 is already fundamentally mediated by social relations and determined by a specific rhythm of production and consumption which can be conceptually unfolded by taking the commodity as an analytical starting point. Mou however thinks that by departing from the commodity as something simply externally “given” and as a mere “thing”, Marx fails to “interrelate it to the broader process of its overall development” (渾融於發展的大流中).240 He disputes the compatibility of materialism as a philosophical outlook and the analytical goals Marx sets himself, and argues that it is nonsensical to conceive of commodities and the economy in general as something purely material, objective and

237Mou mainly refers to Marx's (indeed highly economist) preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy from 1859. This text had become available to Chinese intellectuals in translation in 1931. See Timothy Brook, “Capitalism and the Unity of Modern History in China”, in China and Historical Capitalism. Genealogies of Sinological Knowledge, edited by Timothy Brook and Gregory Blue, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.131, note 36. The Theses on Feuerbach and a few sections from Capital are also briefly invoked.
240Mou, [1933b], p.647.
concrete. Since the Grundrisse was not yet available to Chinese readers at that time, Mou could not have been aware of Marx's much more Hegelian take on the concept of the concrete, which, as he specifies there, should be seen as “the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation and conception.”  

As such, the commodity already contains anterior determinations and is thus a conceptual starting point that stands at the end of a whole social process of development which conditions its existence as a seemingly isolated and particular thing. Mou further voices his (rather mistaken) impression that Marx presents the final form of value (value as money) as a natural state which one can almost inductively derive from experience and historical observations as a quasi-objective natural law by studying the development of value from the elementary form to the modern money form as the general equivalent for exchange. However, in claiming that Marx overlooks the fact that money can only function as a bearer of exchange value because it is a social construct and an intersubjective convention, and in arguing that historical materialism “takes the object for a subject and turns everything upside down” (以客體為主體，本末倒置) by making human beings dependent on the dynamic between objective structures which surpass their will and control, Mou is actually condemning what Marx himself criticized in his analysis of capitalism as a specific form of social domination that only appears to be “natural” and given. After all, Marx does not normatively uphold the objectivity and operational autonomy of the capitalist economy, but critically analyzes capital as “an independent substance, endowed with a motion of its own, passing through a life-process of its own, in which money and commodities are mere forms which it assumes and casts off in turn”, thereby entering “so to say, into private relations with itself.” Had he been familiar with the 1844 Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, which were discovered in 1927 and only became an

241Mou, [1933b], p.640.
244See Mou [1933b], p.642, p.647, pp.662-665.
245“Religion and the Teaching of Ritual Propriety” (Zongjiao yu lijiao 宗教與禮教), [1940] in ZW2, p.961. Cf. Mou, [1959b], p.98: “The economic structure formed by the forces and relations of production cannot in any way be placed outside of human practice, as if we were dealing with “external nature”, but can only be located within “human practice” and is not simply a material concept [...] Practice is something that only belongs to human beings, and since it cannot be ascribed to God, it does not belong to animals, let alone to natural phenomena.” (生產力與生產關係所成的經濟結構亦決不能如「外在自然」一樣，擺在那裡而外於人的實踐，亦必是內於「人的實踐」，而不只是物質的概念 [...] 實踐單是屬於人的：既不屬於上帝，亦不屬於動物，自然現象更說不上).
important source for Marxist thought much later with the rise of humanist Marxism. Mou would, I think, have concurred with Marx's observation that

the worker is related to the product of his labor as to an alien object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful the alien objective world becomes which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object […] The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.

Interestingly enough, the alternative economic order which emerges from Mou's criticism of Marx in a follow-up article can perhaps best be described as a form of state-led socialism, with an interventionist but non-authoritarian welfare-state functioning as a middle way between capitalism and communism. In this text from 1934, he provides further arguments against the applicability of the concepts of class struggle and the proletarian revolution to both premodern and modern China, arguments which must be placed in the context of the so-called “social history controversy” (shehui shi lunzhan 社會史論戰). This controversy, which started in 1928 and lasted until the beginning of the war with Japan in 1937, revolved around the application of Marxist periodization schemes of economic, political, and social development to Chinese history, but was primarily motivated by the practical concern of how to transform Chinese society on the basis of a correct (and as some would claim “scientific”) understanding of its historical past. The same concern obviously motivated Mou's interest in the whole issue. The most influential and soon to be canonical periodization turned out to be

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247“The philosophical writings of the young Marx were virtually abandoned by Marxists, and did not become available until the late 1920s and early 1930s, by which time the formalisation of a Soviet Marxist philosophy based on Engels’ philosophy was well advanced. Indeed, it was not until the renaissance in Marxist theory in Western Europe during the 1960s and 1970s that Marx’s early philosophical writings were to gain a wide and sympathetic audience.” Knight, 2005, p.16.


249“Transforming Current Society from the Development of Social Patterns” (Cong shehui xingtai de fazhan fangmian gaizao xian shehui 從社會形態的發展方面改造現社會), [1934a] in ZW2, pp.681-739.

the one provided by Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892-1978) in his *Researches on Ancient Chinese Society* (*Zhongguo gudai shehui yanjiu* 中國古代社會研究) from 1930.\(^{251}\) In their comments on Guo Moruo's pioneering endeavors, Arif Dirlik, Kam Louie, and Timothy Brook all emphasize that the great appeal of Guo's periodization did not lie so much in its historical accuracy, but in the fact that it put forward (his own idiosyncratic version of) historical materialism\(^{252}\) as a universally valid interpretative framework and thereby historically placed China in the same developmental trajectory which had led to the rise of the West as an imperialist global power. According to Louie, after the publication of Guo's *Researches*, “the word ‘feudal' was no longer automatically a term of abuse, but could imply progress in the Marxist sense”, as part of a universal scheme built on necessary transitions.\(^{253}\) In other words, it allowed for an equivalence of past and future in China and the West. Mou Zongsan however took issue with Guo's periodization and its intrinsic teleology, arguing that there had been no clear-cut class divisions in imperial China, and certainly no economic classes in the Marxist sense. At best, there had been classes resulting from what he too considered to have been a dictatorial political system where individuals had neither freedom nor rights. This was the only sense the term “feudal” had for Mou when applied to the Chinese past.\(^{254}\) He further claimed that the period from the Qin and the Han dynasties up to the beginning of the twentieth-century, which had fundamentally been one and the same age (一個時代), could be most accurately characterized as one of “merchant capitalism” (*shangye zibenzhuyi* 商業資本主義). In this form of “merchant capitalism”, there had been no separate class of people exclusively concerned with the production and marketing of commodities, since merchants had taken on the role of workers, farmers, artisans, salesmen, and venture capitalists.\(^{256}\) As such, China had failed to develop both democracy and capitalism in the modern sense. The absence of the latter was


\(^{252}\)Following the American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881) and Friedrich Engels's account in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* influenced by Morgan, Guo attributed a supreme importance to the role of technological innovation for social evolution, and not so much to the economy in itself. See Dirlik, 1978, pp.141-146.

\(^{253}\)Louie, 1986, p.17. “In the preface to his book, Guo Moruo explained that he had written the books to repudiate those who believed China had a unique ‘national essence’ and consequently a different pattern of development from other countries.” Ibid., pp.19-20. Also see Mou's “In Praise of Feudalism” (*Zan fengjian* 贊封建), [1939c] in *ZW2*, pp.897-904.

\(^{254}\)Mou, [1934a], p.721.

\(^{255}\)Mou, [1933b], p.659.

\(^{256}\)See Mou, [1934a], pp.719-723.
crucial for Mou in repudiating the need or the use for a proletarian revolution in China: “One should be clear about the fact that today's Shanghai and Tianjin are marketplaces for imperialism, their prestige is that of other people, and since we cannot even boycott Japanese goods [because China produces none of its own], pray, where is there capitalism [in China]?” (現在的上海、天津，你要知道這是帝國主義的商場，體面是人家的，連日本貨不能抵制，資本主義在那裡？). Of course, it is clear that Mou did not stop to consider the possibility entertained by Feng Youlan that China's non-inclusion in the capitalist world-system, as a peripheral region with a weak government providing a source of cheap labor and ample opportunities for unequal treaties and “free trade”, already constituted a paradoxical form of integration into the logic of imperialist expansion. Unlike Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886–1973), who defended the viability of capitalism by distinguishing between foreign and domestic capitalism, arguing that developing the latter could help to alleviate the socio-economic difficulties created by the imperialist expansion of the former, and insisted that capitalism was a stage China would have to go through in order to one day realize socialism, Mou did not advocate the adoption of capitalism. Quite to the contrary:

Since up to the present day, there has never been capitalism in Chinese society, the question for us becomes whether or not we should still be obliged to follow the capitalist path. I say: not necessarily. If today, China is [in any sense] a capitalist society, then it is surely in its initial stage, and if that is the case, then according to Marx's own estimate, China still has to go down the path of capitalism, and the so-called proletarian revolution is completely futile. At present, we have no need for a proletarian revolution, nor are we obliged to follow the capitalist path [...] If we do not have a capitalist society, then we have no use for a proletarian revolution, and also no need to walk the capitalist path, if [however] we were to be in capitalism, then we are still in an early stage, and a proletarian revolution would remain futile. In any case, we can conclude that a proletarian revolution has no meaning in China.

中國的社會至現在既未有資本主義，則我們要問是否還需要非走資本主義一路不可？曰：不必。復次，如果中國現在為資本主義社會，其為資本主義必在初期；如是，接著馬克思的推測，則中國還需要走資本主義之路，而所謂無產革命是枉然的了。現在既用不著無產革命，又用不著走資本主義之路 [...] 如果不是資本主義社會，則無產革命用不著，而也用不著走資本主義之路；

258Fung, 2010, pp.201-203.
259Mou, [1934a], p.723.
Mou considered the establishment of a strong, independent and politically stable state with an independent government free from the coercive and repressive forces of imperialism to be the most urgent task for China.²⁶⁰ Because of this stance, he opposed any form of revolution which would in his view further destabilize China as a political and territorial entity.²⁶¹ Simply put, China needed politicians, not revolutionaries.²⁶² Mou thought that China should be able to choose its own path in a tightrope walk between capitalism and communism, and would only be able to do so by finding a way to promote large-scale industrial development, improve the overall material living conditions and become self-sufficient in the production of the most elementary and necessary goods and services.²⁶³ To achieve this goal, Mou proposed a planned economy (計劃經濟) as the economic side to a form of government he termed “national socialism” (guojia shehuizhuyi 國家社會主義).²⁶⁴ In this respect, he was close to Zhang Dongsun and Zhang Junmai, who had founded the Chinese State Socialist Party (Zhongguo guojia shehui dang 中國國家社會黨)²⁶⁵ in 1932. It had originally been called the “National Socialist Party”, but changed its name in order to dissociate itself from Nazism and ward off accusations of preaching fascist solutions. The Chinese State Socialist Party was to remain a minor political fraction during the Republican period that sought to offer a third way between the Communist and the Nationalist parties but eventually aligned itself with the Guomindang for both ideological and pragmatic reasons.²⁶⁶ The two Zhangs' party advocated the building of a strong, but non-authoritarian state with a multi-party parliamentary system of rule and a depoliticized civil service.²⁶⁷ On an economic level, Zhang Junmai stressed the importance of planning under the influence of Roosevelt's New Deal following the Great Depression.²⁶⁸ Like Feng Youlan and similar to what Postone calls

²⁶⁰ Mou, [1934a], p.734, pp.738-739.
²⁶¹ See “Where is the Path to a Revival of the Countryside?” (Fuxing noncun de chulu he zai?復興農村的出路何?), [1934b] in ZW2, pp.741-776.
²⁶² See Mou, [1937b].
²⁶³ Mou, [1934a], p.735.
traditional Marxism, Mou Zongsan assumed that industrial production was a neutral mechanism for the
generation of material wealth, which could be combined with a politically either socialist or capitalist
system in terms of distribution and ownership: “Both capitalism and socialism alike always take the
independent and autonomous [i.e. efficient] development of the economy as their goal.” (無論資本主義
或社會主義，總期以達到經濟獨立自行發展為目的). Of course, Mou wrote, “we do not need
to go down the capitalist road in building our nation today, but we must absolutely set out on the road
of production” (我們現在著手建國，當然用不著再走資本主義之路。但中國又必須走到生產的路子上才可). His arguments for the development of large-scale industrial production under supervision
of the state instead of following from the initiative of individual capitalist entrepreneurs was not so
much based on political motivations (the collective should be placed above the individual), as it was on
the idea that the supervision and intervention of the state in the operations of the economy would lead
to a more efficient and “scientific” mode of production which would gradually and automatically usher
in the painless disappearance of inefficient small-scale types of private production. He argued that
capitalism had produced a “scientific” system of production which was in itself fully rational and
logical for the efficient generation of material wealth, but could not but lead to irrational results when
left unchecked and unconstrained by a socialist state.

This perspective on a kind of mutually balancing “cooperation” (合作) between socialism and
capitalism foreshadows his later more dialectical take on the relationship between liberal capitalism
and the historical emergence of communism, an approach which he shared in common with Tang Junyi.
A little further on in the text on the irreducible duality of material objects from which I quoted in the
above, Tang refers to individualist capitalism and collectivist communism as “mutually neutralizing
forces” (互相抵消力量) engaged in a struggle between “false Buddhas” (假佛) that will eventually
lead to them canceling each other out and paving the way for their mutual overcoming. Mou Zongsan,
who no longer had either the will or the patience to theoretically engage with Marx's works after the
establishment of the People's Republic, was generally less optimistic on the outcome of this

269 Mou, [1935d], p.823.
270 Mou, [1934a], p.735.
271 See Mou, [1934a], p.737. Also see “A Comparison of Two Trends of Thought in China” (Guonei liang da sichao zhi
duibi) in ZW2, pp.837-840.
272 See Mou, [1934b], pp.773-775.
273 Mou, [1934b], p.775.
274 Tang, [1973b], p.702.
275 As late as 1937, Mou still maintained a minimal distinction between the theories of Marx and actually existing socialism.
diatcical entanglement:

The modern spirit has declined step by step and further degrades with every passing day. From naturalism emerged a successful current of individualism, liberty, equality and fraternity, from which the modern political democracies of England and America were born. But if individualism and liberalism remain unchecked by a transcendent rationality which can provide a place of stability for human existence, then the individual will only be a bodily individual and liberty will only be the liberty of physical desires. This will lead to blind deviations and outbursts of madness that can no longer be controlled, so that in the end it will forcefully give rise to communist parties which will in turn destroy this [form of liberal individualism]. The communist parties call upon each other through the proletarian revolution, oppose bodily individualism with a collectivism which destroys human nature, and put forward a system of mechanical reification to counter a liberalism of physical desires. If this is not a gradual degradation and a complete reification leading to destruction then what is? 276

近代精神，乃步步下降，日趨墮落。自個人主義而自然主義，自由平等博愛之思潮興。近代英美之政治民主，即由此而孕育。然個人主義自由主義，如不獲一超越理性根據為其生命之安頓，則個人必只為軀殼之個人，自由必只為情欲之自由。因以盲發狂，而不能自持，終必逼出共產黨之反動而毀滅之。共產黨以無產階級革命相號召，以泯滅人性之集體主義對治軀殼之個人主義，以機械之物化系統對治情欲之自由主義。豈非步步墮落，非全部物化而毀滅之不可而何耶?

Mou's and Tang's dialectical take on the relation between capitalism and communism, which they saw as fighting out their conflict on the unfortunate battleground of China, bears a striking resemblance to Heidegger's idea expressed in the controversial lectures of his Introduction to Metaphysics delivered in 1935, a work Mou for one was familiar with: “Europe […] lies today in the great pincers between Russia on the one side and America on the other”, Russia and America being for him metaphysically and communism, in clear contrast to his later vitriolic and rather repetitive attacks on Marxism and communism as fundamentally identical. See “Revolutionaries and Responsibility” (Gemingjia yu zeren 革命家與責任), [1937a] in ZW2, pp.885-887. Apart from Mao's On Contradiction and On Practice, he would not feel the need to directly engage with Marxist texts anymore after the ’50s. As Peng Guoxiang stresses, Mou's injunction to his students to ignore everything he had written before he was 50 years old applied mainly to his “theoretical works” and research into Chinese philosophy, not to his socio-political ideas which remained very much unchanged. See “Mou Zongsan's Critique of Communism” (Mou Zongsan de gongchanzhuyi pipan 牟宗三的共產主義批判), Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu tongxun 中国文哲研究通訊, vol.19, no.3, 2009, p.48.

277See Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy (Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue 智的直覺與中國哲學), [1971], vol.20 of MJ, p.6 (preface).
identical insofar as they come down to “the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and the rootless organization of the average man”\textsuperscript{278}. For Heidegger, the Germans were “the people of the center of the West”\textsuperscript{279} caught in the battle of technology with itself, an “onslaught of what we call the demonic”\textsuperscript{280} leading to the “darkening of the world”\textsuperscript{281}. In a way similar to Mou and Tang, Heidegger protested against what he called the various “misinterpretations of spirit”\textsuperscript{282}, with Marxism and positivist science being singled out for special blame in the global reduction of time to “speed, instantaneity, simultaneity”, with the catastrophic result that “time as history has vanished from all Dasein of all peoples”\textsuperscript{283}.

2.3.2.3 Modernity and time

Let us retrace our steps and clarify a few more aspects of Postone's reinterpretation of Marxism before proceeding any further. What then, is so particular to labor in capitalism and to industrial production according to Postone? Here the distinction between abstract and concrete labor and abstract and concrete time derived from Marx's theory of the double nature of the commodity, the analysis of which opens \textit{Capital}, comes to the fore: the difference between the particular use value of a commodity (e.g. a lighter can be used for lighting cigarettes) and its exchange value (a lighter can be exchanged for/has the same value as four cigarettes)\textsuperscript{284} corresponds to that between the double character of modern labor as a physiological expenditure of concrete labor power on the one hand\textsuperscript{285}, and abstract labor, as the amount of quantifiable labor time it takes for a (not a specific, but any) laborer to perform a certain task in the production process of commodities on the other.\textsuperscript{286} Postone stresses that the category of abstract

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Heidegger, 2000, p.52.
\item Mou Zongsan reserved the expression “Demonic Way” (\textit{modao} 魔道) for communism.
\item Heidegger, 2000, p.48.
\item See Heidegger, 2000, pp.49-53: 1) spirit as “intelligence” or “ingenuity”, 2) spirit as a “powerless superstructure” (Marxism), 3) spirit as a mere instrument, or alternatively as the inconsequential concern of “culture” and “values” (which contrary to the New Confucians, Heidegger does not see as proper embodiments of spirit), 4) spirit as a “showpiece” and “spectacle”
\item Heidegger, 2000, p.40.
\item Depending on the relative production costs of tobacco, paper, plastic, gas, the amount of water and electricity it takes to produce the raw materials needed for the production of these specific commodities, the availability of said materials, the taxes levied on tobacco products and so on, one is tempted to say, \textit{ad infinitum}.
\item Let us say, elementarily, the amount of calories a given person with an “average” (which is hardly a natural given as such) physical constitution needs to perform the action of harvesting X tobacco plants, which is qualitatively highly specific given the extent of empirical contingencies and conditions involved. Of course, one would also have to take into account that “man does not live by bread alone.”
\item See Postone, 1993, p.144.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
labor denotes a “real social process of abstraction”\textsuperscript{287}, and is not simply the result of a notional abstraction which allows one to ignore the specific differences between the labor necessary for the production of cigarettes and that required for making lighters. The category of abstract labor is fundamentally related to abstract, qualitatively undifferentiated, uniform and homogeneous time, on the basis of which alone the productivity of concrete labor in producing exchange value has come to be assessed. Heidegger's condemnation of modern technology and a time reduced to speed can also be read in this light.\textsuperscript{288} In the most empirically oriented part of his work, Postone draws on the research of historians such as Jacques Le Goff, which attests to a transition in the experience of time accompanying the birth pangs of capitalism in Western Europe.\textsuperscript{289} Opposed to abstract time is “concrete time”, which is always the “function of events” and is thus not a constant and uniform, but a “dependent variable”\textsuperscript{290}, often interpreted as linked to recursive natural events such as lunar cycles and planetary motions. Postone sees the transformation of temporal experience and the social domination of abstract time dictated by the clock as fundamentally connected with the emergence of capitalism in central urban areas in fourteenth century Western Europe from the cloth-making industry, only becoming generalized much later in the wake of increasing industrialization.\textsuperscript{291} According to Postone, the expansion of the capitalist economy, where exchange value is determined according to (socially necessary) abstract labor time, has led to a general form of “abstract social domination”, in which social structures begin to appear to people (as producers and buyers of commodities) as pregiven objective forces over which they have no control.\textsuperscript{292} In short, it leads to "the domination of people by time"\textsuperscript{293}. Of crucial importance is that Postone thinks that the basic categories Marx used in his analysis are not merely economic

\textsuperscript{287}Postone, 1993, p.152.
\textsuperscript{290}Postone, 1993, p.201. For Postone, the distinction between abstract and concrete time is broader than that between linear and cyclical time, which is often used in (philosophical) characterizations of differences in traditional and modern temporal experience. Giorgio Agamben for example focuses his critique of time in modernity on the distinction between a cyclical “Greek experience of time” (initiated by Aristotle in his Physics) with the “Christian experience of time” as its “antithesis” which has been “secularized” in the modern age by being sanctioned by science, resulting in a “dead time abstracted from experience”. See “Time and History. Critique of the Instant and the Continuum”, in History and Infancy. The Destruction of Experience, London and New York: Verso, 2007, pp.99-116.
\textsuperscript{291}Postone stresses that the historically rather recent preponderance of abstract time must not be understood as a purely technical question, since the availability of the technological means for constructing time-keeping devices according to invariable units (especially in China) predates the emergence of abstract time as a dominant means for the organization and regulation of social life by centuries. See Postone, 1993, pp.203-207.
\textsuperscript{292}Postone, 1993, p.125.
\textsuperscript{293}Postone, 2009a, p.41.
categories, but constitute what the *Grundrisse* calls the “forms of being [Daseinsformen]” or “determinations of existence [Existenzbestimmungen]” of modern social and cultural life in general.\(^{294}\)

As Postone writes: “[S]ocial domination in capitalism does not, on its most fundamental level, consist in the domination of people by other people, but in the domination of people by abstract social structures that people themselves constitute.”\(^{295}\) He explains:

In his discussion of the magnitude of value in terms of socially-necessary labor-time, Marx points to a peculiarity of value as a social form of wealth whose measure is temporal: increasing productivity increases the amount of use-values produced per unit time. But it results only in short term increases in the magnitude of value created per unit time. Once that productive increase becomes general, the magnitude of value falls to its base level. The result is a sort of treadmill dynamic. On the one hand, increased levels of productivity result in great increases in use-value production. Yet increased productivity does not result in long-term proportional increases in [exchange] value, the social form of wealth in capitalism [...] The temporality of this dynamic is not only abstract. Although changes in productivity, in the use-value dimension, do not change the amount of value produced per unit time, they do change the determination of what counts as a given unit of time. The unit of (abstract) time remains constant—and, yet, it is pushed forward, as it were, in (historical) time. The movement here is not the movement *in* (abstract) time, but the movement *of* time. Both abstract time and historical time are constituted historically as structures of domination.\(^{296}\)

In Yan Fu’s essay “On the Speed of Change in the World” (*Lun shibian zhi ji* 論世變之亟) from 1895\(^{297}\), there is the following interesting passage which can be linked up with some of Postone's theoretical insights which I have tried to outline in the above:

Nobody knows where the changes in the world come from. Using forced language we could speak of a

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\(^{295}\)Postone, 1993, p.30. Similarly, for the sociologist Anthony Giddens, the discontinuity of modernity can be summarized in three factors: 1) the pace of change, 2) the scope of change, and 3) the intrinsically novel nature of modern institutions. These derive their dynamism from 1) “time-space distanciation” and the universalization of a homogeneous temporal order of abstract calendar time, 2) the development of “disembedding mechanisms” (such as “expert systems” and “symbolic tokens” which replace direct personal trust) and 3) the “reflexive appropriation of knowledge” which causes social life to be influenced by information coming in from (self-descriptions of) society. See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

\(^{296}\)Postone, 2009a, p.40, p.42. Perhaps it would have to be further analyzed how (“free”, “leisure”) time itself has become one of the most valuable commodities in light of the complex dynamic of abstract, concrete and historical time.

process of *incessant change*\(^{298}\). Once such a process has been instigated, even sages have no power over it, simply because *the sage is also but another thing within this process*. To say that they can take hold of it and influence it is groundless. The sage's role is merely to know its origins and foresee its *movements* [...] The Western peoples surpass the old through the new, whereas the Chinese people take the alternation of order and chaos and of rise and decline to be the natural order of both heavenly and human affairs [...]\(^{299}\)

夫世之変也, 莫知其所由然, 強而名之曰運會。運會既成, 雖聖人無所為力, 蓋聖人亦運會中之一物。既為其中之一物, 謂能取運會而轉移之, 無是理也。彼聖人者, 特知運會之所由趣, 而逆睹其流極 [...] 西之人力今以勝古; 中之人以一治一亂、一盛一衰為天行人事之自然 [...] 

Although Yan Fu generally had a much more voluntaristic belief in the capacity of (civilized and educated)\(^{300}\) human beings to shape their social environment\(^{301}\), the emphasis this passage places on the quasi-objective, uncontrollable nature of historical change, which even the sage can at best accurately anticipate and observe, is revealing in the light of Postone's reinterpretation of Marxism. Equally present in this extract is the opposition between a form of time grounded in the drive of capital towards the transvaluation of value leading to a constant revolutionization of production in which the old must give way to the new, and a form of concrete, in this case, cyclical time, governing both the social and natural order. That Yan Fu identifies the rendering obsolete of the old by the new with the West is not to be wondered at, seeing how the treadmill effect Postone describes necessitated the imperialist expansion of Western nation-states, “cheap prices of commodities” serving as “the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls”\(^{302}\) in order to keep the rate of profit from falling.\(^{303}\)
Of course, what Yan Fu offered was not a critique of the dynamic of capitalism, intent as he was in the eyes of Benjamin Schwartz on providing China with “wealth and power”.\(^{304}\) The same applies to Feng Youlan. Feng saw industrialization in a completely different, that is to say wholly positive light, as a process which contains the solutions for what, from a Postonian-Marxist perspective at least, are fundamentally problems of its own making. When positively appreciated, “industrial civilization” becomes something which allows for the production of commodities that serve to alleviate and facilitate the social conditions of life resulting from the very nature of the production process that enables these commodities to exist in the first place. Buying a car can save time when going to work, but one first needs to invest a considerable amount of (labor) time in order to be able to make this purchase (or pledge future payment to a bank which tries to ensure its own solvency by speculating on, say, the commercial prospects of perhaps a different automobile producer), convert one's own time into money to pay the mechanic in the meantime, make time to overcome the daily post-traffic jam disorder when coming home, and take into account the fact that society at large saves (if only a marginal amount of) time by driving to work, which influences the average demands an employer can make in expecting his employees to show up “on time”. Perhaps this is what Derrida expressed obliquely with the notion of the \textit{pharmakon} he found in Plato, which can mean both a poison and a remedy, an illness and its cure.\(^{305}\) Still, in a basic sense, Postone would probably agree with Feng Youlan's equation of modernity and industrialization. Even Feng's rudimentary definitions of socialism and capitalism as two different forms of distribution (respectively mediated and unmediated by community bonds in the state) of the same form of industrial production performatively accord with Postone's characterization of the defects

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of traditional Marxism. From Feng's ideas, it becomes clear that what Postone considers to be the underlying structural logic of social transformation can be semantically expressed as an ideal to which modernizing societies must devote themselves if they want to become modern. One should bear in mind though, that it can only come to be put forward as a normative ideal in response to the historical condition actually affected by this logic. In any case, the least one can say is that the time in which Feng locates both China and the West and in which they occupy a different place is not just any time, but a historically specific regime of temporality governed by abstract time, operatively empty of cultural determinations, to which, following the globalization of the capitalist mode of production, societies all over the world have been subjected, irrespective of their cultural background or the “isms” its intellectuals and politicians wave around. For Feng, the time that divides China from the West is the same time which separates the old from the new in both China and the West. Such a time is no longer a modality of the nation as a cultural Subject. If industrialization and industrial technology were still a “function” (yong 用) for Feng, then it was one without a corresponding essential “substance” (ti 體). Nothing could be further from Heidegger's romantic condemnation of modern technology as an “enframing” (Gestell), of which the essence is “by no means anything technological”, and which leaves nothing (least of all Being itself) unaffected in the extension of its planetary dominance.306 The implicit irony in Feng Youlan's approach is that he can only “save” culture by in a sense depriving it of its efficacy and relevance for modernity, following his idiosyncratic historical materialist assumption that the industrial base functions without, detached from, and indifferent to culture, the latter apparently being not so much its corresponding superstructure as it is an autonomous dimension of human existence which is neither conductive to nor impinges on the logic of modernization, at least not as a final cause.307 What Feng does is to place culture outside of the historical time intrinsic to industrialization in which China needs to position itself as a nation, while assuming Chinese culture to remain unaffected by the “road to freedom” paved by industrialization. His approach is thus an unabashedly accommodationist one. Jumping ahead a little, we can say that the New Confucians did the same, except that it is much clearer where what they uplifted from the restless dynamic of historical

307Chen Lai indicates the contemporary relevance of Feng's views for an analysis of the intricate relation between cultural differences and temporal/historical differences inscribed in the dynamic of modernization, since the latter has not only changed China, but its own “place of birth” to the same extent. At the same time, he criticizes Feng's implicit idea that the effects of “instrumental rationality” on traditional culture and morality would remain negligible, and that modernization would not impinge on the status of tradition once the latter had been relieved of the impossible duty of either adapting to modernization or providing the normative resources for it. See Chen, 2001, p.121.
time was placed and ended up; namely, in eternity, in the timeless, or more precisely in what (in the words of Mou Zongsan) “does not have the nature of time or space” (無時間性與空間性). Contrary to Feng Youlan, the New Confucians usually do not start by distinguishing, but precisely by identifying the universal with particular. Their basic philosophical assumptions cannot tolerate an externality of the universal to the particular, which must not be simply “lodged”, but truly realized and manifested in the particular. Consider the following passage by Mou, where the relation between universality and particularity is couched in theological language:

Human beings are not 'pure spirit' or 'pure form'. Therefore, the spiritual life of human beings must necessarily appear within the limitations of the material world which it at the same time transforms [...]

The development of culture must proceed by the limitations imposed on ideals or spirit (the universal) by reality and moreover realize itself within reality; if it were to divorce itself from reality and from realization in reality, it would not be culture at all in any sense. God is spirit or the ideal itself, but one cannot speak of culture in the case of God. God must also manifest himself in reality, and in order to do so he must rely on man. Human beings on the other hand must seek to fully develop their spiritual nature and their spirit to become equal to God, that is to say to their ideal or spiritual self. This implies the following: God must be substantiated in the spiritual nature and the spirit of human beings, while at the same time becoming a purely spiritual subject [through humanity]. Therefore, the realization of God is culture, culture which is formed by passing through the limitation to and realization of human ideals and the human spirit in reality.

This approach leads to the additional difficulty that thinkers like Mou have to account for the relation between the atemporal and the time of perpetual transformation specific to modernity, all while

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309 Mou, [1949c], p.74.
somehow making sure that eternity (God) does not lose itself in the process of realizing itself through the medium of time (humanity). It is also from this perspective that the methodological importance of a form of dialectical logic in their work can be accounted for.

In a different way, Xiong Shili's writings also testify to the modern tension between abstract and concrete time, specifically in his attempt to distinguish the Buddhist temporal concept of *kṣaṇa* 剎那 from “the worldly concept of time, in which time is ultimately a changing manifestation of space. Space as well as time [in this sense] are divided into parts” (世俗所謂時間，畢竟是空間的變相。空間是有分段的，時間也是有分段的).311 Xiong notes that “there were no time-keeping devices in antiquity, but still one cannot calculate the measure of *kṣaṇa* using modern clocks” (古代無計時之具，即現代鐘表猶不能定剎那量).312 Although the term *kṣaṇa* is often taken to simply denote the smallest possible unit of time which cannot be analyzed any further, it is not, as Xiong stresses, to be taken as a quantifiable constant unit, but as a fundamentally dependent, insofar as it can be identified with the time of “one thought” or “a single concentration of the mind” (*yi nian* 一念).313 In this way, time is not understood “spatially”, but remains intrinsically bound up with experience. Time and space, in the “worldly” or “vulgar” (*shisu* 世俗) sense of being divisible into identical units, are both “existential forms of the material universe” (物質宇宙存的在形式), matter in turn being only one of the aspects of a world which is characterized by constant transformation. For Xiong, the constant perishing and coming into being of all entities from one *kṣaṇa* to the next (insofar as one can apply a sequential and “spatializing” conception of this sort to the notion of *kṣaṇa*) should be viewed as a process of “ceaseless creation” (shengsheng bu xi 生生不息).315 The permanent change of ceaseless creation is an ontological “function” (*yong*) of the essential reality or substance (*ti*) of both the human and non-human universe. His whole work revolves around bringing this fundamental identity (permanence) of what is different (changing) to the surface. That which causes a particular thing to be what it is and to remain itself, is for Xiong essentially one and the same as its appearance and functioning in reality.

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310 Defined in Soothill's *Dictionary of Buddhist Terms* as “the shortest space of time, a moment, the 90th part of a thought, and 4500th part of a minute, during which 90 or 100 are born and as many die.” Soothill, 2003, p.4. “According to another definition 60 *kṣaṇa* equal one finger-snap […] In each *kṣaṇa* 900 persons are born and die”. Ibid., pp.250-251.
312 *Treatise on Substance and Function* (*Tiyong lun* 體用論), Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, [1958], 2009, p.18.
313 Soothill, 2003, p.6: “The time of a thought of which there are varying measurements from 60 *kṣaṇa* upwards.”
314 Xiong, [1932], p.80.
315 Xiong, [1932], p.85 and Xiong, [1958], p.21, p.59.
There is, in other words, no strict boundary which one could draw through reality in order to separate a substance from its function. In Xiong's own words: “What is called substance does not rise up above mind, matter, and the countless phenomena, nor is it hidden behind their back. Be aware that substance is nothing else than mind, matter and the countless phenomena themselves” (所謂實體不是高出於心物萬象之上，不是潛隱於心物萬象背後，當知實體即是心物萬象的自身).\textsuperscript{316} Xiong repeatedly uses the metaphor of the sea and the drops of water which make up the sea to illustrate what he means. The sea (substance) is nothing but particles of water (function), there is nothing above or beyond these particles which one could separate from them and call “sea”. Conversely, the countless drops of water are not separate from the sea and have no inherent, self-sufficient existence in a state of separation. The world is conceived as a self-enclosed, unending process of change which permits no outside and is identical with its own becoming. At the same time, Xiong Shili clearly remained wary of completely dissolving the permanent aspect of the unity of permanence and change into the contingency of the changeable. The unity of consciousness and its various object-horizons remains constituted and guaranteed by consciousness, and it alone can join together what it has put asunder. The identity of being and the observer can only be misconstrued or reaffirmed through observation. Contrary to what some commentators seem to suggest, Xiong Shili was not Gilles Deleuze, for whom “without consciousness the transcendental field would be defined as a pure plane of immanence since it escapes every transcendence of the subject as well as of the object. Absolute immanence is in itself: it is not in something, not to something: it does not depend on an object and does not belong to a subject.”\textsuperscript{317} Xiong's rejection of a one-sided immanence of the objective, material sides of the various unities he defends was motivated by the tendency he discerned in “recent philosophy to remain silent on substance, and without exception to negate the great origin of transformations, the essential nature of

\textsuperscript{316}Xiong, [1958], p.72.
\textsuperscript{317}Gilles Deleuze, Pure Immanence. A Life, New York: Zone Book, 2001, p.26. Deleuze adds: “Immanence does not relate to a Something that is a unity superior to everything, nor to a Subject that is an act operating the synthesis of things: it is when immanence is no longer immanence to anything other than itself that we can talk of a plane of immanence.” Ibid. According to Chen Yun 陈赟, Xiong's later thought constituted a definite move away from his former “reduction of function to substance” (摄用归体) or “reduction of characteristics to essence” (摄相归性) towards a much more radical insistence on the complete immanence and self-sufficiency of a phenomenal world where there is only “a plurality of free singularities” (复数的自由个体). See Chen Yun, “The Transformation of Xiong Shili's Later Ontology” (Wannian Xiong Shili de bentilun zhuanbian 晚年熊十力的本体论转变), 2002 http://www.confucius2000.com/confucian/wnxslbtlzb.htm. I think it would be more cautious to speak of contradictory tendencies and a tension between transcendence and immanence which run through his whole oeuvre. See the next chapter, section 3.1.3. Chen's claim that this supposed move from oppositional transcendence to full immanence coincides with a final retreat from the “escapist” (chusha 出世) ontology of Buddhism to the “existential freedom” (存在的自由性) of Confucianism is much more disputable.
human life and the root of morality” (近世哲學不談本體，則將萬化原、人生本性、道德根底一概否認). Particularly Western philosophies, in both their idealist and materialist forms, as well as modern science, were for Xiong, “theories devoid of substance” (無體之論). Mou Zongsan would later echo this outlook in terms taken over from Huayan Buddhism by claiming that in modern times, the “dharma-sphere of principles” (lifa jie 理法界) had been collapsed into that of “the dharma-sphere of concrete entities” (shifa jie 事法界) through reductionist forms of modern philosophy and science. He further argued that true universality cannot be thought apart from “substance” (benti 本體), the disregard of which can only lead to the “abstract universality” (抽象的普通性) or “false universality” (假的普通性) of communism, in which all differences of quality (zhi 質) are eradicated, resulting in an “invasive unity” (侵略的同) instead of a “unity within difference” (異中之同). As Tang Junyi wrote: “In abstract philosophical terms, in our conceptual thinking we must emphasize the level of value and quality, focus on the concept of the in-itself, and substitute these for the uneven focus on superficial existence, quantity and efficiency” (抽象的哲學的說，則我們要以注重“價值”之層級，注重“質”，注重“本身”之思想觀念，代替只注重平面之存在，只注重“數量”，只注重“效用”之思想觀點). As I will argue in more detail in the third chapter, the unity of permanence and change is thus essentially formulated as biased in favor of the substantial and the permanent. Xiong's theoretical arguments too, which have been mostly subjected to ahistorical

318 Xiong, [1932], 2010, p.6 (preface).
319 Xiong, [1958], 2009, p.92. Cf. Mou, Record of Lectures on Aristotel's Theory of the Four Causes (Siyan shuo jiangxi lu 四因說講習錄) [1997], vol.31 of MJ, p.24: “This age and our modern civilization are without substance, without substance meaning that they lack an essential metaphysical reality” (這個時代，現代文明就是無體的文明，無體就是沒有形而上的實體).
321 See Mou, [1953c], pp.244-249 and Critique of the Cognitive Mind (Renshixin zhi pipan 認識心之批判), [1956b], vol.18 of MJ, p.11.
322 Mou, [1997], pp.9-12.
325 Mou, [1949c], p.83.
326 “Description of the Spirit of the Journal “Ideals and Culture” and a Discussion of the Prospect of Human Culture” (Shuben kan zhi jingshen jianlun renlei wenhua zhi qiantu 本刊之精神兼論人類文化之前途), [1950b] in ZB, p.586.
readings in available studies of his thought\textsuperscript{327}, can be seen in the context of the complex interdependency of the modern world, in which individuals and communities all over the globe came to be connected in a wholly novel form of what is known in Buddhist thought as “co-dependent arising” (\textit{pratītyasamutpāda}, \textit{yuanqi} 緣起).\textsuperscript{328}

\textbf{2.3.3 Philosophy and the inheritance of abstraction}

I will elaborate a little more on the issues of philosophy, modernity, and abstraction before bringing this section to a close.\textsuperscript{329} The dilemmas resulting from the destabilization of tradition and the associated philosophical assault on foundational substance following in the wake of the modern transformation of time may have been troublesome for Xiong and his fellow New Confucians, but more recently, philosophers have found other, one is tempted to say more devious, ways to accommodate the logic of modernization and to recognize “the rose in the cross of the present”\textsuperscript{330}. The contemporary French philosopher Alain Badiou (b. 1937) for example, departing from a rejection of Heidegger's condemnation of modern technological “nihilism”, proposes to positively interpret the “abstract potency of Capital” as having liberated modern philosophy and human subjectivity from “the traditional figure of the bond”.\textsuperscript{331} Commenting and building on the celebration of the historical role played by the \textit{bourgeoisie} in the \textit{Communist Manifesto}, Badiou describes capitalism as

the general dissolution of sacralizing representations, which postulate the existence of intrinsic and essential relations […] Yet, for Marx, and for us, desacralization is not in the least nihilistic, insofar as “nihilistic” must signify that which declares that access to being and truth is impossible. On the contrary, desacralization is a \textit{necessary condition} for the disclosing of such an approach to truth. It is obviously the only thing we can and must welcome within Capital: it exposes the pure multiple as the foundation of presentation, it denounces every effect of One as a simple precarious configuration […]

\textsuperscript{327}Tu Weiming goes so far as to say that “Hsiung's rejection of the Wei-shih ["consciousness-only", \textit{vijnaptimatra}] theory of causation can probably be interpreted as a conflict within the Buddhism realm of intellectual discourse.” Tu Weiming, “Hsiung Shih-li's Quest for Authentic Existence”, in Furth, 1976, p.269.

\textsuperscript{328}For Li Zehou at least it was clear that the underlying object in Xiong's critique of Buddhism was actually (Western) modernity. See \textit{Historical Essays on Chinese Modern Thought (Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shilun 中国现代思想史论)}, Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1987, p.270.

\textsuperscript{329}The next few pages were largely inspired by Christian Uhl's “What is Philosophy? On Globalizing Capitalism, the Modern Order of Knowledge, and Nishida Kitarō”, forthcoming. I thank Professor Uhl for having shared an early version of this essay with me.

\textsuperscript{330}Hegel, 2008, p.15.

That this destitution operates in the most complete barbarity must not conceal its properly ontological virtue. To whom must we be grateful to be delivered from the myth of Presence […] if not to the roaming automaticity of Capital? […] We must still have as a departure point what is has revealed: Being is essentially multiple, sacred presence is a pure semblance and truth […] is not a revelation […]. Philosophy has not known until quite recently how to think in level terms with Capital, since it has left the field open […] to vain nostalgia for the sacred, to obsession with Presence.  

Badiou's argument poses some terminological and conceptual difficulties which cannot be resolved here, but I will attempt to engage with what I take to be its basic underlying idea nonetheless. Obviously, Badiou, who is a self-avowed proponent of “the idea of communism”, appraises the operational dynamic of capitalism in a highly qualified and peculiar manner. He stresses that in spite of the fact that the logic of abstract equivalence underlying capital accumulation “operates in the most complete barbarity”, one should still recognize its “ontological virtue”, which consists in having emancipated the figure of the philosopher from a certain way of conceiving of the world and of a particular conception of the relation between being and truth. The philosophical equivalent of the social process by which “all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life”333 is the disclosure of being as a bare multiplicity of “bodies and language”334, which can no longer be assumed to be a priori held together in a unity transcending the multiple. Whereas the Communist Manifesto would seem to discern a historically motivated turn towards social and material reality, Badiou interprets this turn in ontological terms: any transcendent unity is imposed on and not discovered in what Badiou calls the “pure multiple”, and consequently does not preexist the operation of “precarious configuration” through which it is constituted. Unity is thus fundamentally a result, and not an origin. As he writes elsewhere, the point of departure for a philosophical thought capable of “thinking in level terms with Capital”

332Badiou, 1999, pp.56-58. Badiou seems to position himself in what the later Althusser identified as an “undercurrent of materialism”, grouping together thinkers as diverse as Epicurus, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Rousseau, Marx, Heidegger, Derrida, and Deleuze. See “The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter”, in Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87, London and New York: Verso, 2006, 163-207. Althusser stresses that the term “materialist” only has the provisional function of setting this undercurrent off against an “idealism” which believes in the existence of Origins and Final Goals, a trend which Hegelian teleology exemplifies for him: “The world may be called the accomplished fact [fait accompli] in which, once fact has been accomplished, is established the reign of Reason, Meaning, Necessity, and End. But the accomplishment of the fact is just a pure effect of contingency, since it depends on the aleatory encounter of the atoms due to the swerve of the clinamen” (pp.169-170). “The materialism of the encounter turns on a certain interpretation of the single proposition there is (es gibt, Heidegger) and its developments or implications, namely: 'there is' = 'there is nothing'; 'there is' = 'there has always-already [again a Heidegerrian expression] been nothing' ” (p.189).

333Marx and Engels, [1848].
must henceforth be that “the one is not” and that “there is no structure of being”. What is philosophically positive then for Badiou in what has otherwise been the socially disastrous “roaming automaticity” of capitalism, is that the existence of pregiven substantial bonds in an ontological sense has come to be exposed as mere vain pretense. To use Xiong Shili’s metaphor of choice: it has become clear, at a specific point in history, that there are only waves and drops of water (“pure multiple”), and that there is no guaranteed totality called the sea in which this multiplicity is intrinsically held together.

A further exposition of Badiou's ideas, which have a much more extensive and complex conceptual background than I do justice to here, would lead us too far astray. Let us instead try to simplify his line of reasoning to the utmost for our own purposes: what Badiou seems to mean is that the historical effects of capitalist modernization have made a certain way of conceiving of being (and truth) as such increasingly improbable and anachronistic. If understood in this way, a few problems with Badiou's overall approach can begin to be signaled. First of all, it is doubtful whether he really has Marx on his side in his philosophical celebration of capitalism as he seems to claim. If anything was jubilantly received by Marx, it was not the conceptual consequences of capitalist modernity, but the growing possibilities for the creation of material wealth, as distinct from, and as a by-product of, exchange value. The potential for an increase in material well-being which he saw as having undeniably resulted from industrialization and the connected development of science and technology is not realized in capitalism, but continues to exists side by side and entangled with the problems resulting from the way in which material wealth is created, namely as value. The material, tangible side of commodities as use-values serving a particular purpose in a sense becomes secondary and ephemeral in contrast to their function as “mere organs” for the expansion of exchange value. People can live in a house, but the latter is constructed and bought first and foremost as “real estate”. Of course, what Badiou offers is not a historical, but a philosophical argument, and I am afraid that is where the problems begin. If we take what he calls “myth of Presence” to refer to the idea of a continued presence of tradition in modernity, it seems obvious from what we have seen so far in the case of modern China that precisely this idea, this “myth” of a tradition which inherently ensures a minimum framework of meaning and order, and which continues to persists even as it is rendered doubtful, denounced, and attacked from all sides, has


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been just as much a beneficiary as it has been the victim of what Badiou calls the “desacralization” resulting from modernization. Additionally, it is always a question of what has become “desacralized” for whom, for what reasons, in which manner, and to what extent. It seems to me that Badiou does not take what Adorno and Horkheimer described as the “dialectics of enlightenment” enough into account. One should therefore entertain the possibility that the very idea of tradition as a substantial “presence”, constituting a paradoxical “continuity of discontinuity”, only emerged as a result at a specific historical juncture, when something like the academic discipline of philosophy came to be used in defense of tradition in the first place. In other words: the idea of tradition as a substantial bond is a specific self-understanding which emerges after the perceived end of tradition, and which does not necessarily predate the latter as an origin.

For Mou Zongsan for example, perhaps the most philosophical of all New Confucian philosophers338, the recognition of Chinese culture at large essentially came to hinge on the recognition of the existence of Chinese philosophy. As he states unambiguously in one of his lectures: “Every cultural system has its own philosophy. Otherwise, it could not have become a cultural system [to begin with]” (任何一個文化體系，都有它的哲學。否則，它便不成其為文化體系).339 From the text of the 1958 Manifesto it is clear that its signatories all saw philosophy as that particular field of knowledge which opens up onto the “single-stemmedness” (yibenxing 一 本 性) of Chinese culture and thus isomorphically embodies the traditional unity and common origin of philosophy, religion, morality and politics in Chinese learning.340 For Liang Shuming as well, the putative essential traits of different cultures had to be approached by investigating their philosophies, as privileged repositories of Spirit where the age-long development of civilizations had been deposited.341 Unsurprisingly, the broader goal of this recognition had the following logic for Mou: “East and West should mutually respect each other as equals, and make use of [their encounter] to re-balance, replenish and revitalize each other's cultural lives. Failing this, there will be nothing to overcome the tribulations of the communist calamity.” (東西 方都應互相尊重平視，藉以調整、充實、並滋潤其文化生命。否則無以克共禍之魔難).342 The

342Mou, [1973], p.4.
active introduction of the category of philosophy as a transcultural and universal category where East and West could finally meet was from the onset equally an enterprise where cultural difference could be both read off and reconstituted. That the construction of a philosophical identity for Chinese thought often went hand in hand with a renegotiation of newly adopted modern categories of knowledge (philosophy, religion, science, wisdom, critique) forces us to adopt a much more complex and diversified approach to this whole phenomenon. As Hans Georg-Moeller observes:

> To become part of a global society, non-Western regions had not only to change their social structure, but also their semantics. Traditional vocabularies had to be recoded [...] To establish academic philosophy, it was therefore not only necessary to institutionalize philosophy at universities, but also to create a new philosophical language.  

Chinese intellectuals were often keen to claim the proud name of philosophy for Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, but at the same time distinctions between China and the West were drawn in order to specify and contextualize the assumed universality of the philosophical. This allowed Mou to present Chinese thought as a form of philosophy not concerned with the accumulation of theoretical knowledge (zhishi 知識) and with objective “nature” (ziran 自然), which he understood as “non-existential” or “not concerned with existence” (非存在的), but with the subject and with life (shengming 生命). Life can be called the “object” of a moral practice and a mode of existence, but this “object” is the human subject itself. Consequently, being and existence are not conceived of in “static” (jingta 靜態) but in “dynamic” (dongta 動態) terms, meaning that to be (shi 是) is essentially to emerge and to become (sheng 生). Mou saw Western philosophy as “averse to the subject” (討厭主體) because of the deep-seated influence of Christianity. He believed that in the Christian religion,
the individual subject is completely overrun and overpowered by a transcendent absolute appearing in the form of an “objective” God forever out of reach for the individual believer. For Mou, the Christian God was a kind of self-contained absolute leaving everything outside of itself in darkness:

Now, that the human race has brought forth an “absolute” is in itself not a bad thing, but if one stops at positing an absolute and thus comes to be inversely suspended in this absolute, then this is ultimately not adequate. It would be as if a blind man were to open his eyes and become stunned by the light coming from the outside, [causing him to] skip from one subject to the next and utter all sorts of peculiar things which really have nothing to do with himself. Even if he were to momentarily get a grip on himself and come to tacitly sense the external [source of] light itself, he would still not have advanced a single step in his own life. Even if we can say that there is a guiding light which can be followed to progress in life, one is still hauled in this direction by something external, so that the internal radiance of one's own life stays undisclosed and remains a place of darkness […] Now why is this the case? Because one never turns back [to observe oneself]. Turning back [onto oneself] is the crucial turning point for illuminating the self. And this teaching of turning back is precisely what was initiated by the Confucian Sages […] It is only through the illumination of the self by means of moral practice that the absolute can be illuminated.

Passages like these can be read in the light of the undertaking of simultaneously identifying and distinguishing Chinese thought from the categories of religion and philosophy. Following Postone's

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348“Explanation of the Meaning of the Term ‘the Universe of Cultural Consciousness’ ” (‘Wenhua yishi yuzhou’ yi ci zhi shiyi 「文化意識宇宙」一詞之釋義), [1979c] in SS, pp.306-307. Cf. Mou, [1949c], p.52: “The practice of Jesus was detached, his lesson was one of detachment. The practice of Confucius was fully real, and his instructions were those of reality. In the case of a teaching of detachment, there is an opposition between the earthly and paradise, without a perfectly integrated synthesis [of the two]. This has determined the particular form of development of the history of the West.” (耶穌的實踐是離的，他的教訓是離教，而孔子的實踐則是盈的，他的教訓是盈教。因為是離教，所以俗世與天國是對立的，而不是圓融的和諧的。由此決定西方歷史的發展形態之特性) For Mou's critique of an anthropomorphic conception of God, see his Treatise on the Supreme Good (Yuanshan lun 圓善論), [1985] vol.22 of MJ, pp.237-248.

349“It is not that Chinese culture has no religion, but that religion is reconciled with humanism.” (中國文化非無宗教，而
suggestions, the philosophical opposition to an exterior Absolute appearing as an inverted world in which the subject no longer recognizes itself, a world which it can perhaps believe to have once constituted but can now no longer control, can be interpreted as a conceptual transcription of the experience of the emergence of autonomously operating social structures in modernizing societies. Similarly, for the historian Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990), an absolute dichotomy between the human and the divine formed the basis for various forms of cultural and social alienation. Appealing to the Daoist notion of “not acting yet leaving nothing undone” (wu wei er su bu wei 無為而無所不為), he rejected the very idea of creation and the concomitant opposition between Deus and ens creatum, and preferred seeing existence as a self-sustaining and ontologically undivided process without a first cause. In Qian's case, the appraisal of a putatively typically Chinese “this-worldliness” and the condemnation of the alienation between God and human beings in monotheism (what Hegel already analyzed as the “unhappy consciousness” in the Phenomenology of Spirit) was closely connected to his dissatisfaction with perceived social oppositions, most importantly between rural (“natural”) and urban (“cultural”) areas. He saw the religious hope for divine redemption as both related to and feeding into the ideological success of political utopias far removed from social reality. For Qian Mu, this religious aspect of modern politics had the very real effect of turning “present existence into a mere transient [transitional and transitory] stage.” His and Mou's criticism of “heaven” (religion) was thus also one of the “earth” (politics).

In the double process of philosophizing Confucianism and Confucianizing philosophy, distinctions (sometimes in the form of downright dichotomies) were constantly introduced only to be almost

350 See Gad C. Isay, “Qian Mu's Criticism of Monotheism and Alienation in Modern Life”, Zhongguo zhexue yu wenhua 中國哲學與文化, 6, 2009, pp.1-19. Qian did not speak of alienation as such, but used “terms such as gehiede [各別的] and weili [違離] that convey separation and difference.” Isay, 2009, p.8. Isay focuses on one of the historian's more philosophical texts, Record of Leisurely Thoughts at the Lake (Hu shang xiansi lu 湖上閑思錄) from 1948. Also see Zheng Jiadong 鄭家栋, Ontology and Method – From Xiong Shili to Mou Zongsan (Benti yu fangfa – cong Xiong Shili dao Mou Zongsan 本体与方法 — 从熊十力到牟宗三), Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1992, p.312.


354 See Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right (Introduction), [1844], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm.

immediately negated, reconciled or sublated, in order to define the specificity of Chinese philosophy. If Hans-Jörg Rheinberger is justified in discerning a distinct trend towards the historicization of epistemology in twentieth-century European thought\textsuperscript{356}, one could speak of a (perhaps dialectically related) turn towards the historically decontextualized culturalization of theories of knowledge in the case of modern Chinese traditionalism. In the process, certain self-descriptions and self-understandings of Western philosophers proved useful in grounding the particularity of Chinese philosophy. It seems to me that the emphasis many New Confucian thinkers placed on the ability of Chinese thought to transcend various perceived dualisms and dichotomies of Western thought for example, owed much to the way in which post-Kantians such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel understood their task of overcoming the oppositions between sensibility and understanding, necessity and freedom, and individual and society in thought. With reference to the example of Xiong Shili, the complexity of the Chinese situation becomes clear when we realize that his “myth of Presence” is formulated precisely in terms of a fundamental identity of the multiple and the one. The reality of substance can be accessed by observing that it does not preexist or exist outside of its various functions. The conceptual tension between transcendence and immanence in the works of Tang and Mou is another such example which cannot be adequately approached on a purely philosophical level without taking the stakes behind this problem in the specific context of their work into account. Perhaps not everything in philosophy can be philosophically resolved.

Instead of following Badiou in conceiving of the notional impact of capitalist modernization in terms of a paradoxical revelation that “truth is not a revelation”, it might be more advisable and nuanced to speak with the sociologist Niklas Luhmann of a shift in the self-descriptions of societies under pressure to adjust to a changed structural social constellation, leading to the increased doubtfulness of ontological approaches to reality, and even of generally binding representations of society as such.\textsuperscript{357} This would make some of Badiou's observations more sociologically relevant, though perhaps philosophically less interesting. Doing so would shift the focus from ontology and the question of being in general, to what at first sight would seem to be a much more restricted “regional ontology” (Heidegger’s expression) of society, which does not concern itself with being and truth as such, but with the way in which ontological claims are generated and with the meaning they have in relation to the


broader socio-historical condition in which they are formulated. The question of being would thus be bracketed out to a considerable extent and subordinated to the question of what questions concerning being mean when explicitly related to their covert object, that is to say, to modern society. We would not ask “what is being?”, but “what is the meaning of 'what is being'?”. If other questions are asked by different philosophers, the same reflexive procedure could be employed. Following the logician and mathematician Alfred Tarski's principle that no semantic system is capable of fully explaining itself, we could apply what Sartre says as a philosopher to philosophy itself: “Being apprehends itself as not being its own foundation.” From this perspective, the properly philosophical question concerning being as such would actually appear to be the narrower and more regional one. After all, truth and being are but specific instances of meaning. As Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann stress, “theoretical thought, ideas, Weltanschauung are not that important in society […] only a limited group of people in any society engages in theorizing, in the business of ideas”. Still, what remains interesting about philosophical reflexion, tainted as it may be by “intellectualistic misapprehension”, is that it often does, in highly indirect and perhaps largely metaphorical ways, attests to how it is embedded in society and history, simply because philosophy has made the relation between thought and being one of its privileged objects. To paraphrase Feng Youlan, who compared the metaphysical mode of exposition to the artistic technique of “bringing out the moon by darkening the clouds” (烘雲托月), one can also talk about what one does not talk about by not talking about it (講其所不講亦是講). From a Luhmannian point of view, this makes it possible to approach philosophical discourse as a highly specific, and often very technical and mediated form of societal self-description. It would become necessary to look at how the categories of philosophy and its various subdivisions (ontology, epistemology, etc.) are constituted, by philosophers and in philosophical works of course (where else?), but within a horizon which exceeds the gaze of the philosopher, and which places his own observational stance (his Standortgebundenheit) between himself and his direct object of inquiry. In this specific sense, Deleuze and Guattari, who famously defined philosophy as “the creation of concepts”, are right in saying that “every concept leads back to a problem […] a concept

361 Berger and Luckmann, 1991, p.27.
362 New Methodology (Xin zhiyan 新知言) [1946], in vol.5 of Complete Work from the Hall of Three Pines (San song tang quanji 三松堂全集), Zhengzhou: Henan renmin cubanshe, 2001, p.150.
always has the truth which belongs to it in function of the conditions in which it was created”363, but do not really seem to pursue this insight in their own exposition. What Badiou calls the “generic conditions” of philosophy (art, love, poetry, politics) are not historical at all, but constitute highly fluid and malleable categories which appear to be strictly philosophical in their own right.364 I agree with Christian Uhl when he writes that philosophy generally suffers from an “incapability to acknowledge as such the historical and social conditions of one’s own possibility”.365 One could go on to ask whether the mode of communication known as philosophy does not almost automatically impose the problem of what Feng Youlan called abstract inheritance. Philosophy, which often if not always disavows its own Seinsgebundenheit (“existential determination”), would seem to be an almost ideal candidate for the inheritance of tradition abstracted from its concrete dimension, when it is this concreteness which has become problematic or has come to be seen as standing in the way of modernization.

In an article discussing the problem of cultural continuity, Mou argued that modernity had reduced Chinese culture to a state of “pure potentiality” (純粹的潛伏性), as an indeterminate totality of “materials/resources” (cailiao 材料) without a self-determined form (xingshi 形式) of their own.366 In this regard, Mou was actually not so far removed from his philosophical opposite and rival Feng Youlan, for whose work he clearly had nothing but contempt.367 In his famous History of Chinese Philosophy, Feng claimed that Chinese philosophy may have lacked a “formal system” [形式上的系統], but did constitute a “real system” [實質上的系統] of philosophical thought nonetheless; “form” being that which can be retroactively applied to a historically unsystematic “reality”, as an organically related but ultimately unrealized potential, by subjecting it to the abstract requirements of formal

364See Badiou, 1999, pp.33-45, pp.61-67. One would have to look at how these terms are historically interpreted and redefined before evaluating the import of philosophy being “sutured” to one of them.
365Uhl, forthcoming. Uhl adds: “In philosophical historiography, philosophy figures as the protagonist, producing and reproducing itself as the ‘overarching subject of its own movement’ [Marx’s Hegelian description of Capital] from the Pre-Socratics to the post-moderns. All historical discontinuities are ultimately aufgehoben in the apparently trans-historical life of ‘philosophy’ ”.
Philosophy as a modern discipline and field of knowledge would seem to offer a way of taking advantage of this historical abstraction by endowing what has been abstracted into a resource with a discrete form and thus giving a form to reality. This does not mean that distance between philosophical conceptions and the world in which they are grounded cannot be internally bridged, for example by positing a fundamental unity of subject and object – as an idea, as an origin, as the result of practice (gongfu 工夫) and so on – but even in that case one can continue to keep the extra-discursive environment, the “objective” proper, at bay as something factual (“ontic”), contingent and inconsequential. It is clear that something happens to problematic social phenomena once they have been transformed into philosophical problems, the “solution” of which often hinges on the introduction of additional side-problems and further conceptual distinctions which are deemed necessary for the problem to be stated in a more adequate or resolvable way. The academic production of philosophical knowledge, which obviously has many other constraints, is fundamentally dependent on the continuous reformulation, complication and creation of such problems, and would run the risk of undermining its own validity by considering a too great amount of cases to be closed, or foreclosed to philosophy. Simply put, problems of a determinate social origin can only be “solved” under the condition that the solution arrived at can qualify as philosophically wholesome and can lead to the successful continuation of philosophical communication. As such, the category of what is “interesting” is perhaps of greater importance than that of what is “true”. As Luhmann never tired of repeating concerning social systems in general, their primary goal is the “continuation of autopoiesis [self-creation] without any concern for the environment”. In the case of comparative philosophy, the need for constant self-justification and self-preservation is perhaps even stronger than in what was traditionally categorized as philosophy (i.e. exclusively Western thought), since everything “Asian” often continues to be commodified as “different” and “new” (vis-à-vis the “Graeco-Judeo-Christian” tradition), a novelty that strangely enough often hinges on the supposed cultural homogeneity and temporal continuity of different Asian world-views. “Traditional Chinese philosophy” for example, is often called on to account for its own validity by specifying how it can function as a sort of conceptual blood transfusion in order to serve the generation of “new” ideas and to keep the cancer of European rationality from metastasizing any further. It is thus faced with the contradictory demands of having to be both identical and different, new as well as old, eternal as well as forever changing. Perhaps ontology is not wholly

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averse to the temptation of internalizing such demands. From Jiang Qing's opposition to “spiritual Confucianism” however, it is obvious that philosophy has hardly been an uncontroversial vehicle for preserving sources of knowledge which have been forced to become resourceful.\footnote{One of the most trenchant critics of the application of the category of philosophy to Chinese thought was the historian Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896-1950). See Carine Defoort, “Fu Sinian's Views on Philosophy, Ancient Chinese Masters, and Chinese Philosophy”, in Makeham, 2012, pp.275-310. Meanwhile, subcategories such as “morality” and “ethics” have also come under attack. See for example Tang Wenming 唐文明, Secret Subversion: Mou Zongsan, Kant, and Orignary Confucians (隐密的颠倒: 牟宗三, 康德与原始儒家), Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2012.}

Calls for a turn to endogenous forms of knowledge and to the indigenization of research into traditional thought which accompanied the rise of modern disciplines in early twentieth century China have recently become more and more widespread.\footnote{Peng Yongjie 彭永捷, “Some Reflections on the Problem of the “Legitimacy” of Chinese Philosophy” (关於中国哲学“合法性”问题的几点思考), 2004, http://www.confucius2000.com/scholar/zgssyjtx/gyzgzxhfxwtdsk.htm.}

The problem then becomes one of establishing a full “subjectivity” (\textit{zhutixing 主体性}) for Chinese philosophy that is both linguistically\footnote{See John Makeham, “Epilogue: Inner Logic, Indigenous Grammars, and the Identity of \textit{Zhongguo zhexue}”, in Makeham, 2012, pp.347-372 and Arif Dirlik, “\textit{Zhongguohua}: Worlding China, The Case of Sociology and Anthropology in 20th-Century China”, in Sociology and Anthropology in Twentieth-Century China: Between Universalism and Indigenism, edited by Arif Dirlik, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012, pp.15-39.} and conceptually unique and determinate.\footnote{Appealing to a misguided reading of Derrida, attempts are now even made to present the Chinese language as marked by a positive absence of “logocentrism” due to the relative sparsity of phonetic indications in the Chinese script. See Chu Xiaoquan, “Identité de la langue, identité de la Chine”, in \textit{La pensée en Chine aujourd'hui}, edited by Anne Cheng, Paris: Gallimard, 2007, p.297. In clear contrast to such culturalist and particularizing approaches, second generation Confucian theories of language and linguistic meaning were set in an overwhelmingly universalist framework. See for example Tang, [1977], pp.257-266. In general, thinkers like Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan tried to ground cultural particularity inside of, and not over and against, the epistemological hegemony of originally Western categorizations of knowledge. On a linguistic level, this universalist stance can be understood as a reaction against the particularizing claims made by a considerable number of Western philosophers, Orientalists, and Sinologists (such as Hegel, Wilhelm Von Humboldt, and Marcel Granet) who presupposed that the Chinese language did not allow for a form of “hypothetical thinking” necessary for the emergence of philosophical reasoning. See Heiner Roetz, “Philosophy in China? Notes on a Debate”, \textit{Extrême-Orient, Extrême Occident}, 2007, 25, pp.53-57.}

Underlying such attempts is the idea that the object of inquiry (traditional thought) must be taken on its own terms, and in a sense through itself. The risk I see here, as I already observed with reference to Zhao Tingyang in the previous chapter, is that of trading in the undeniably distorting influence of Western categories for a deceptive sense of self-transparency in which all

\footnote{Peng Guoxiang 彭国翔 stresses the need for the construction of such a subjective identity for Chinese philosophy to be established comparatively, without an exaggerated postcolonial paranoia of being “contaminated” by Western concepts and categories. See his “Legitimacy, Perspective, and Subjectivity – Reflections and Prospects of Contemporary Chinese Philosophical Research” (合符性、视域与主体性 — 当前中国哲学研究的反省与前瞻), 2003, http://www.confucius2000.com/poetry/hfxsyzytxdqgzxyjdxxqyz.ht.}
constructions come to be presented as discoveries, or as what Kant called analytic judgments, in which the predicates (characteristics of Chinese/Confucian thinking) are assumed to be already contained in the subject as Spirit and merely await being unfolded from the self-sameness of the subject. It is only by taking the determination of concepts by time as history into account that these judgments could be made critical, or in Kant's terminology, expansive and synthetic. Often, the identity of Chinese thought is still defined ex negativo (“not philosophy but still philosophical”, “beyond philosophy”, “something between philosophy, politics and religion”) or through a recourse to paradoxical formulations (such as “immanent transcendence”376), and, even more frequently, by contrasting it with a totalizing conception of Western philosophy as a caricatural form of dualist Platonism. It suffices to have a look at the Parmenides to see that even Plato himself hardly fits this picture. Still, continental philosophers too routinely indulge in a similar form of “self-occidentalization” when they try to present certain thinkers (notably Spinoza) as positively “heretical” and transformative exceptions to the catastrophic logos and nomos of the West. New distinctions, such as that between abstract social structures or high culture on the one hand and “everyday life” (le quotidien) and pretheoretical practice on the other377, can cast suspicion on the now largely accomplished recognition of cultures through their academic emancipation as alternative philosophies which Mou fought for in the case of Chinese thought. Debates about the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy have hardly come to an end.378

Actually, one can at times detect a certain mistrust of philosophy in Mou's own defenses of Confucianism, as when he states that “Confucius was not a philosopher at all, he had already surpassed

375See Kant, 2007, pp.43-45 (B10-14).
377For Yu Yingshi, the Neo-Confucian Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), in his emphasis on the ability of ordinary people (愚夫愚妇) to become sages and worthies, embodies what Yu takes to be the increased orientation of Confucian learning towards everyday life (日常生活化) ever since the Ming dynasty. He opposes this trend to an approach represented by the more “metaphysically” inclined Zhu Xi to ally Confucian thought with those highest in the hierarchy of political power. See “Confucian Thought and Everyday Life” (Rujia sixiang yu richang rensheng 儒家思想与日常生活), in Yu Yingshi, Essays on Modern Confucianism (Xiandai ruxue lun 现代儒学论), Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1998, pp.244-245.
378For a concise descriptive overview based on an extensive corpus of over 80 texts published during the first decade of the 21st century, see Hu Wenhui 胡文会, “General Description of Research into the Problem of the Legitimacy of Chinese Philosophy” (Zhongguo zhexue hefaxing wenti yanjiu zongshu 中国哲学合法性问题研究综述), Hubei minzuxueyuan xuebao 湖北民族学院学报, vol.4, no.26, 2008, pp.139-148.
Still, this surpassing is assumed to have occurred in what Bai Tongdong would call a “modernity before modernity”. The “liberation” from historical specificity which is normatively encouraged in Feng Youlan's method is in a sense already accomplished before the philosopher can begin his rescue operation, since what he wants to save is already radically transformed once it has been resuscitated as philosophy. The resulting timelessness with which philosophical discourse understands itself and treats its objects can thus be grasped as a specific inflection of time in response to the consequences of historical time. Interestingly enough, the abstraction which from Postone's perspective structurally underlies the temporal dynamic of modernity has been successfully mobilized semantically against the effects of this dynamic. Whether one can really speak of the same form of abstraction in both cases, that is to say, whether there can be “abstraction other than by thought”380 is a question which we must leave to the philosophers. What will have to be further clarified instead, is how philosophy as a category of knowledge allowing for perhaps the largest degree of abstraction from history and society while at the same time reserving the right to make pronouncements on historical and social matters for itself, came to be constituted and renegotiated against the background of a fundamentally novel order of knowledge. I will try to do so in the next section by situating the specific case of New Confucian philosophy in the context of one of the most important intellectual debates in early twentieth-century China.

2.4 New Confucianism and the modern recategorization of knowledge: the differentiation of science and philosophy in the 1923 debate on science and metaphysics and its New Confucian aftermath

One of the most important distinctions which helped mold the identity of modern Chinese philosophy in general and of New Confucian thought in particular was the one between science and philosophy.\(^{381}\) Needless to say, both of these terms were new to the traditional Chinese taxonomy of knowledge. One would look in vain for their equivalents in imperial collections of books categorized by means of a fourfold division (sibu 四部 or siku 四库) into “classics” (jing 經), “histories” (shi 史), “masters” (zi 子) and “collections” (ji 集). The fourfold system of classification would not seem to be strictly epistemologically oriented towards the distinction of principally or operationally different kinds of knowledge, the category of zi 子 for example containing anything ranging from the “philosophical” works of the great masters of Chinese thought, to books on warfare, medicine, agriculture, and cooking.\(^{382}\) For Tang Junyi, even the very act of categorizing (類別) instead of integrating (統) different disciplines of knowledge and forms of what he called “cultural activity” (文化活動) would come to be experienced as novel, or rather in his view, as emblematic of the cultural difference between China and the West, as analytically and synthetically oriented respectively.\(^{383}\) As is well known, the Chinese terms for “science” and “philosophy”, kexue 科學 (kagaku) and zhexue 哲學 (tetsugaku), were both taken over from Japanese translations, made by the scholar of Dutch Learning (rangaku 蘭學) Nishi Amane 西周 (1829-1897). Nishi had dealt extensively with the new variety of Western disciplines and their mutual demarcation and interrelations in his Hyakugaku renkan 百學連環 (Encyclopedia), a work inspired by the 18th century French encyclopedists and by the positivism of Auguste Comte.\(^{384}\) Other translations for the word science (such as like 理科) remained in use until standardization was

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\(^{383}\) See Tang, [1953b], pp.12-15, p.46.

achieved, not due to some intrinsic suitability of the neologism *kexue* as a translation of course, but because of the active intervention of the state in the rationalization of knowledge production, given the instrumental function science had in the construction of a modern political body and in the advancement of technology and industrial production.\(^{385}\) Already in the writings of Yan Fu, composed at a time when some scholars still sought a neat overlap between modern science and the traditional Confucian idea of “the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge” (*gewu zhizhi* 格物致知)\(^ {386}\), the concern over science was intimately linked with what Yan called *qunxue* 群學, literally “the study of groups”\(^ {387}\), or as the now more familiar term goes, “sociology”.\(^ {388}\) Sociology in Yan Fu's sense however must not be understood as the investigation of society and social behavior for the sake of the accumulation of knowledge and the improvement of academic insight, but as a tool for the attainment of social progress and the effective governance of a Chinese state caught up in the internationally orchestrated “survival of the fittest”.\(^ {389}\) Science thus served a much broader function as, in the words of Wang Hui, “a new social model and a new principle of morality”.\(^ {390}\) Similarly, Tang Junyi would later advocate the need for China to adopt science and a scientific attitude with very much the same sense of urgency as unabashed modernizers such as Hu Shi, who propagated wholehearted or “full-scale Westernization” (*quannan xifanghua* 全盘西方化)\(^ {391}\), at least on a methodological level, in what Hu called “rearranging the national heritage” (*zhengli guogu* 整理國故). Tang argued that the need for science stemmed from a “lack of order, irregularity and intellectual confusion in the life of the Chinese people, and the absence of organization and systematicity in scholarly learning” (中國人生活之無秩序, 無條理, 思想之混亂紊雜, 學術之無組織、無系統), all of which desperately necessitated a form of “scientific discipline” (科學之訓練)\(^ {392}\). Wang Hui is thus quite justified in claiming that the rise of the

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387 Xunzi荀子 had already defined the distinctiveness of human beings in terms of their ability to form groups (能群). See *Xunzi* 9.16a, English translation in Knoblock, 1990, vol.2, pp.103-105.

388 Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao also used this term before *shehuixue* 社会学 became current. See Dirlik, 2012, p.3.

389 See Wang Hui, “The Concept of ‘Science’ in Modern Chinese Thought”, *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, vol.5, no.1, 2011a, pp.45-67

390 Wang, 2011a, p.50.

391 The expression “total Westernization” was coined by the sociologist Chen Xujing 陈序经 (1903-1967). See Fung, 2010, pp.46-58.

392 “Western Thought which Should Henceforth be Introduced into China” (*Zhongguo jinhou suoyao jieshao zhi xiyang sixiang* 中国今后所需要介绍之西洋思想), [1934] in *ZB*, p.549.
scientific worldview was intricately linked to a new type of sovereignty. The concept of science continued to have an important political import; connoting order, control and regularity over and against chaos, disorder and aberrance. Such a political dimension remains present in the slogan calling for a “scientific outlook on development” (kexue fazhan guan 科学发展观) formulated by the Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 administration (2003-2012) in the recent past.

As is commonly known, the traditional notion of “the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge”, a phrase from the canonical Great Learning (Daxue 大學), was also embedded in a much broader context, extending from the cultivation of the self (xiushen 修身) and the regulation of family bonds (qijia 齊家), all the way up to the pacification of All-under-Heaven (ping tianxia 平天下). But the things subjected to investigation and the way knowledge was meant to be extended acquired totally different meanings in modern times. Most crucially perhaps, the nodal, and in a sense fractal, point in the series described in the Daxue (“investigating things, extending knowledge, rectifying the mind, making the will sincere, cultivating the self, regulating the family, bringing order to the state, pacifying the world” 格物致知正心誠意修身齊家治國平天下) namely self-cultivation, lost its importance as a guarantee for the continuity between the different isomorphically linked practices in general, and as necessary for the extension of knowledge in a scientific sense in particular. Of course, it is not as if Confucian thinkers in premodern China took the continuum outlined in the Daxue for granted and slavishly assumed the transitions from one “step” to the next (or back to the former) to be self-evident. The need for elaborate commentaries stemmed precisely from this lack of self-evidence. Rather, the continuity had now been ruptured functionally and structurally. The different actions described in the linked series do not have to be holistically realized (by the ruler whom the Daxue was meant to instruct) anymore, but only by particular persons in specific (professional) capacities. Perhaps one can

393Wang, 2011b, p.142.
394The full text of the famous section in the Daxue condensed in these 17 characters reads: “The ancients who wished to manifest their clear character to the world would first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. Those who wished to rectify their minds would first make their wills sincere. Those who wished to make their wills sincere would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge consists in the investigation of things. When things are investigated, knowledge is extended; when knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere; when the will is sincere, the mind is rectified; when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world.” Wing-tsit Chan, A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 1963, pp.86-87. Emphasis added.
see the continuous series presented in the *Daxue* as becoming broken down into at least three different parts: “science”/”philosophy” (格物致知), “morality”/”religion” (正心誠意修身), and “politics” (齊家治國平天下). I do not mean to suggest that these familiar yet in a traditional context extremely awkward divisions are even in the least helpful in understanding the text of the *Great Learning* itself. The only thing one gains from using them in this context is what Yong Chen has called “semantic untidiness”.395 Something like the legal system and the economy are novel structural formations that would be very hard to include into the notion of “politics” when projecting this category back onto the *Daxue*, since they fundamentally corrode the unified continuum of governance described there. Everything depends on how one, or rather how a certain society, delineates the boundaries of the scientific, the philosophical, the religious, the political, and so on. During the Cultural Revolution for example, it was not possible to write a philosophical article without committing a political act. Those who sought to uphold the distinction between politics and philosophy nonetheless had to learn how to detect their own disavowed political unconsciousness through self-criticism. Obviously, such boundaries can only be negotiated against the background of societal processes, meaning that they are never given in a clear-cut or definitive manner. Any ideal continuous unity of, to use Feng Youlan’s term, these “horizons” of activity and meaning has to be constantly reconstructed in the face of their real division. Whether we like it or not, these classifications are characteristic structural divisions of modern societies, and it would not have been all too far-fetched for early modern Chinese thinkers, at least if they still thought it useful to consult the *Great Learning* at all, to approach the text in this way. Even internal to the “political” subdivisions of the series, questions of continuity could now arise, such as whether the effective governance of one country is conductive to global peace at large. The logic of modern nation-states described (or rather prescribed) by Carl Schmitt, in which political sovereignty cannot persist in the absence of enemies (*hostis*), would seem to have made this highly doubtful.396 A telling example of the extent to which functional adaptation in the political domain and (what first had to be described as) the differentiation of politics from morality came to be internalized can be found in Mou Zongsan’s conviction that if a Confucian sage were to take on the post of president, he would still have to abide by the requirements of the presidential office, which are not direct extensions or

396Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [1927] 2007, pp.53-55: “As long as the state exists, there will always be more than just one state […] Humanity as such cannot wage war because it has no enemy, at least not on this planet […] Universality at any prize would necessarily have to mean total depoliticalization and with it particularly, the nonexistence of states.” On the Platonic distinction between *hostis* (“public enemy”) and *inimicus* (“private enemy”), the latter being the one we are called upon in the Gospels to love, see pp.28-29.
manifestations of his sageliness: “Being a sage is not the same as being president; if a sage wants to be
president, then even he has to abandon his identity as a sage and comply with the norms and laws
which come with holding the political office of president. This is what I mean by the “self-negation” of
the sage.” (作聖人不同於作總統, 聖人若要作總統, 也必須離開聖人的身份而遵守作總統辦政事的軌則法度。這就是聖人的「自我坎陷」).\textsuperscript{397} In the case of science, different demands came to
replace a sincerity of the will and a rectification of the mind, such as objectivity, reasoning according to
correct laws of induction and deduction where necessary, the rational selection and verification of facts
and the distinction of objective facts from subjective intuitions.\textsuperscript{398} That being said, nothing prevented
scholars, who had to reposition themselves as intelligentsia, from describing the scientific enterprise in
moral terms, as having an ethical dimension and edifying function in society at large. If the
construction and survival of the nation-state comes to be predicated on its ability to rapidly acquire and
efficiently apply scientific insights, then it becomes easy to slander anyone opposed to the adoption of
science as backwards, immoral, and standing in the way of something indisputably “good”.\textsuperscript{399}

The growth of science in China, as elsewhere in the world, went hand in hand with the construction of
a self-understanding of the scientific community, with members ranging from the devoted laboratory
assistant patiently observing the movements of ants, to the politically connected social engineer who
wonders whether his fellow citizens could perhaps be studied and understood in the same way.\textsuperscript{400}
Science thus acquired a territory where it encountered politicians, educators, businessmen, and
scholars, all with agendas, interests and, possibly, suspicions of their own. The much older wisdom that
knowledge is power became more visible and plausible in everyday environments and situations, even
if to the detriment of traditional forms of knowledge which came to be seen as having a “philosophical”
or “religious” flavor. Let us not forget that Kang Youwei's writings already attest to the heavy influence
of eugenics, one of the most drastic forms of what Michel Foucault analyzed as disciplinary

\textsuperscript{397} Mou, [1983b], p.279. Quoted in Stephen Angle, \textit{Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy. Towards Progressive
\textsuperscript{398} For Wang Hui, the introduction of science signified the end of a Neo-Confucian outlook based on the idea of a
“heavenly principle” (tiān lǐ 天理), governing the natural and social world alike, and the rise of “public or general
principle” (gōng lǐ 公理), a shift which Wang sees as entailing an increased orientation of historical consciousness to a
future understood in terms of evolution and progress. Interesting from a Postonian perspective is that Wang discerns a
connected transformation in the conception of time, gōng lǐ being linked to what he calls a “straightforward conception
of time”, or a time which is no longer a function of events. See Wang, 2011a, p.55.
\textsuperscript{399} See below for the example of Ding Wenjiang.
\textsuperscript{400} See Tang's “The Chinese Cultural Background of the Chaos in Present-day China” (Zhongguo jinri zhi luan de
“biopower”. This is evident from a chapter entitled “Removing Racial Boundaries and Uniting the Human Race” (Qu zhongjie tong renlei 去種界同人類) in his Book of the Great Unity. In these pages, Kang proposes a series of rather disturbing techniques for the abolishment of the differences, oppositions and conflicts between the races, the existence of which he saw as constituting one of the main causes of suffering in the world.\(^{401}\) Along with the possibility of defining science as having an ethical dimension, in attaining social order, increasing industrial productivity, and improving human living conditions, comes the possibility that science is instrumentalized for the wrong ends. Science and modern technology were obviously not naively embraced by all Chinese as synonymous with progress. A few years before making a noted appearance in the debate on science and metaphysics, Liang Qichao, who was an informal member of the Chinese delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, had already questioned the omnipotence of science in his Reflections from a Voyage to Europe (Ouyou xinying lu 歐遊心影錄) from 1919, impressed by Western self-condemnations of cultural bankruptcy and the Orientalist admiration expressed for the wisdom of Chinese traditions. If one wanted to continue to see science as continuous with the traditional idea of the “investigation of things”, one had to take into account the difficulty that a moral observational stance must be developed which can no longer be assumed to stem from the investigation of things, but has to be autonomously completed beforehand, so that one can observe whether or not particular forms of investigation and application of knowledge are themselves in line with or detrimental to self-cultivation. In order to ascertain whether science is moral, or whether morality is scientific, one first has to establish the scientific nature of science and the morality of ethics. Both disciplines, science and ethics, can contest each other's self-descriptions, or even claim to be better equipped to realize the goals they set themselves with their own means. But one cannot understand, let alone eradicate, a disease by calling it evil, nor is there any point in trying to observe sageliness or Buddhahood by staring through a microscope.\(^{402}\) Either of the two sides can still consider themselves to be on the winning side, no matter what has happened in factual history. It is all too easy to say that moral (or religious) beliefs have been rendered superfluous by the

\(^{401}\)See Kang, [1902] 2009, pp.92-98, English translation in Thompson, 1958, pp.140-148. Kang proposed four methods to assimilate “inferior races” to the “superior” white and yellow ones: 1) moving populations (遷地), 2) mixed marriages (雜婚), 3) altering dietary habits (改食) and 4) for “hopeless cases”, elimination through selection (沙汰), i.e. sterilization. Also see Tang Junyi's comments on this shadowy aspect of Kang's work in “Reflections on the Cultural Spirit of Learning since the Qing Dynasty in China” (Zhongguo qingdai yilai xueshu wenhua jingshen zhi shengcha 中國清代以來學術文化精神之省察), [1950d] in RJ, p.117.

\(^{402}\)Then again, what is nowadays known as “new age” science/philosophy is often predicated on comparable ideas. The category of “new age” is something both science and philosophy can finally agree to be nonsensical. This “nonsense” in turn serves as a means for the category of alternative or new age science/philosophy to define itself, as filling in a space of “meaninglessness” in modern existence.
impartial objectivity of science and its overpowering battalion of facts, or conversely, to claim that science has proven its bankruptcy by leading to environmental pollution and the creation of the atomic bomb. In both cases, one relies on criteria internal to the discipline one wants to defend, and anything else would probably be perceived as both unscientific and immoral. None of this however, will prevent the laboratory assistant from morally judging his colleagues or reflecting on the ethical consequences of his research, nor will it keep the virtue ethicist from running to the doctor to have x-rays taken when he starts coughing up blood. This does not mean that conflicts over epistemological territory do not occur, or cannot be actively created by “contaminating” one of the fields of knowledge by the other. Disciplines such as bioethics exist because of such contamination, and there is nothing “wrong” with that. One can only say that the so-called “two cultures” jealously sharing the name of science have drifted apart and have stopped communicating if one is already on one of either sides, since “culture” is usually not taken to be an object of science (anymore) and can only be applied to scientific research metaphorically.

If any common ground can still be assumed to exist between these operationally closed forms of knowledge, it is probably to be looked for in the discipline of philosophy. Of course, morality is, for philosophy at least, one of its privileged objects, so that the common ground is not located in a neutral zone, but on one of the two sides' home turf. Still, there seems to be no way around this, since a chemist for example, cannot reflect on or explain the broader (social) implications of his specialized research in the language of chemistry. To do so, he is obliged to stoop to the level of those uninitiated in the finer mysteries of the periodic table. Alan Sokal did not resort to mathematical formula and quantum physics to prove how postmodern philosophers had abused science in the creation of “fashionable nonsense”. A different form of communication is called for, or at least used, here, and that this form of communication goes by the name of philosophy is historically not so strange or even new. Philosophy might have been the dutiful handmaiden of theology in Medieval Europe, but it lent an attentive ear to science as well, even at the risk of heresy. The role philosophy in Western Europe claimed for itself was, at least for Kant, that of a general supervisor of reason in all its operations (rational, moral, and aesthetic). Fichte, who saw himself as having to ground the domain of knowledge opened up (and restricted) by Kantian philosophy in one fundamental (self-positing) principle (Grundsatz) instead of in an unreconciled number of distinct faculties, could still call his philosophy a

Wissenschaftslehre. Hegel too spoke of the road to absolute knowledge as one of Science and of a Wissenschaft der Logik. His and Schelling's infamous (philosophically interesting but scientifically useless) ventures into the philosophization of what had already become the increasingly exclusive objects of the natural sciences notwithstanding, one should withstand the temptation to interpret these German Idealist efforts as expressing nothing but the vain pretense of speculative philosophers out of touch with the advances in the hard, fact-based sciences in trying to swallow up everything non-philosophical in monstrously hybrid systems. Rather, their efforts indicate a point in intellectual history when it was still assumed to be possible to attain a fully integrated order of knowing. Even as late as 1911, Husserl could still aspire to formulate his phenomenology as a realization of the age-old dream of turning philosophy into a “rigorous science”. What is nowadays known as analytical philosophy would seem to be based on the idea that philosophy can be best realized in and as science, at least if it is willing to temper its claims and dispose of most of its traditional questions. For the logical positivist Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970) and the early Wittgenstein, the rational elimination of metaphysics would have to come about by recognizing these questions to be not wrong but simply meaningless. This implied a shift from the message to the medium, that is to say, to language. Working from a completely opposite direction, Heidegger was led to reject the traditional lore of philosophical inquiries as “ontotheological”, as well as to a further attempt to overcome the conception of language as a mere medium or tool. Everything has to be put “under erasure”, not in the least Being itself, but one must speak and write to do so nonetheless. The later Husserl's concept of the concrete life-world (Lebenswelt), as the disavowed pretheoretical origin of science which the latter forgets in the construction of its mathematized world of objects, signified a comparable turn from the conditioned (particular facts, propositions and even specific modes of knowing) to what is conceived of as a condition of possibility. The problem then became how to uphold the privileged position of


In the above-mentioned text, Carnap uses a few sentences from Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics (such as “das Nichts nichtet”) to make his case against the metaphysical abuse of the laws of logic and language.

consciousness within a much broader and complex socially and historically variable environment, in
which the intentionally predisposed stream of consciousness is not so much an organic “part” as it is
but one of the many constructors of possible horizons of perception and meaning. This leads to the
question of how transcendental one can still call the subjectivity resulting from the phenomenological
epoché, when the environment which it puts out of play but in which it continues to function can
bracket out the subject on its own terms and with no regard for the latter's purity from empirical
determinations. Transcendental subjectivity cannot do groceries and does not have to pay taxes. At the
point in time when Husserl still tried to present his phenomenology as in some sense a rigorous science,
other determinations had already set in to distinguish philosophy from both science and wisdom, which
are closer to the Chinese context which we will consider now.

The symbolic event in which the distinction between science and philosophy was (according to some
interpreters, definitively) established in Chinese intellectual history, is the “debate over science and
metaphysics” (kexuan lunzhan 科玄論戰). This debate started with a lecture given by Zhang Junmai
at Qinghua University on 14 February 1923, which was published in the Qinghua Weekly (Qinghua
zhoukan 清華周刊) a few days later. Zhang's relatively short and highly condensed article contested
the omnipotence of science (kexue wanneng 科學萬能) and put forward the enduring importance of
what he called renshegguan 人生觀, a Chinese equivalent for the terms Lebensanschauung and
Weltanschauung. Renshengguan specifically denoted an outlook both on and from the standpoint of
human life. In doing so, Zhang found inspiration in the work of European vitalist philosophers such as
Rudolf Eucken (1846-1926) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941) who had already acquired a reputation in
China as prominent opponents of scientism and positivism. It is has to be made clear from the onset
that Zhang Junmai did not dispute the validity of the experimental scientific method and its results as

412For two good general overviews of the 1923 debate and its subsequent evaluations by both participants and thinkers
influenced by the debate, see Kwok, 1965, pp.135-168 and Ye Qizhong 葉其忠, “The 1923 Debate over Science and
Metaphysics: an Evaluation of the Evaluations” (1923 nian kexuan lunzhan: pingjia zhi pingjia 1923 年「科玄論戰」: 評價之評價),
Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiu suo jikan 中央研究院近代史研究所季刊, 26, 1996, pp.181-234. The primary sources for my own short account have been drawn from a concise selection of texts generated during the
debate: Zhang Junmai et.al., Science and the Outlook on Human Life (Kexue yu renshegguan 科學與人生觀),
Changha: Jilin shushe, 2011.
413See Gad C. Isay, The Philosophy of the View of Life in Modern Chinese Thought, Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz Verlag, 2013
p.76.
415Isay, 2013, p.58. Isay notes that their “counter-positivist thought was marked by dualistic conceptions”. (Ibid.)
such, but argued for a limitation of its applicability and thus of what he took to be its overinflated pretense: science, which he saw as centered around the objective, the theoretical and the analytic and which investigated composite phenomena subject to strict laws of causality, could not in his view completely explain nor account for the problem of human existence. The latter had to be approached from the standpoint of the subjective, the intuitive and the synthetic in order to do justice to the irreducible singularity of free human individuality as a totality.416 Corresponding to the singularity of human existence for Zhang was the innumerable diversity of views on how the self (wo 我) relates to the non-self (feiwo 非我), a diversity which he believed could not be unified into a totalizing scientific account.417 He employed this general polar opposition between self (the “spiritual” or the “internal”) and various forms of (“external”, “material”) non-self (which could denote anything from family members, the opposite sex, property, and the social system, to matter, totality, the future, and so on) as a basic mechanism for the generation of world-views (the relation between the self and property can result in a support of either private or public ownership and so on), which are always centered on the relation of the I to the non-I.418 The overextension of science into domains where it does not belong (i.e. into domains that cannot be objectified into a unified account) would result in an effacement of the sheer endless variety of outlooks on existence which result from the basic polarity between self and non-self. Zhang Junmai’s original argument then, did not revolve around the opposition of science and metaphysics as the name of the debate suggests, but provided a rough sketch for an extensive typology of subject-object relations which he saw as irreducible to the empirical givenness of objects, that is to say, impossible to constitute in a scientific, objective manner.419 Autonomy from science was thus bargained for with epistemological distinctions. Liang Qichao, who was one of the few influential figures to come to Zhang’s support in the controversy following his lecture at Qinghua, agreed that “the majority of the problems of human life can and furthermore should be solved through the scientific method. However, a small, or rather the most important part of these problems transcends science” (人生問題，有大部分是可以 而且必要用科學方法來解決的。卻有一小部分 或者還是最重

417 Zhang, 2011, p.1: “That which has always been and is still least unified in the whole world are the outlooks on human life.” (天下古今之罪不統一者，莫若人參觀).
419 Wang, 2011a, p.58: “Science itself or “science” as a vocabulary item became closely associated with the objective or the concept of objectivity.”
We can already see that restricting the scope of science went hand in hand with a considerable limitation of the outside of science and was combined with a positive appraisal of the resulting exceptions to the scientific rule as “indivisible remainders”. Science could speak up about anything, but should remain silent on what matters most. Voicing a familiar romantic argument, Liang proposed that human emotions and aesthetic experiences could not be accounted for scientifically or reduced to their objective (biological, physical) conditions. What we have here in a germinal state is the now very widespread trope appearing in everything ranging from literature, cinema, fashion and advertising, to psychology, psychoanalysis, political theory, and philosophy, which grounds the irreducibility of human existence, of beauty, style, and even the possibility of political protest, in the emotional, the irrational, the “flawed”, the subversive, the disjunctive, the aleatory, and the aberrant. Altogether, these tropes designate what might be called a certain semantics of the exception and of exceptionality in which, to paraphrase Derrida, the supplement becomes the source. As such, they symmetrically reverse Leibniz in the idea that everything derives its essence from its imperfections. Although this semantics of the exception has a long conceptual history (e.g. in various forms of religious experience), it seems to me that it would be necessary to give an account of it in relation to the ruling structural features of modern society in order to grasp and clarify its contemporary significance.

420 “The Outlook on Human Life and Science” (Renshengguan yu kexue 人生觀與科學), in Zhang et.al., 2011, p.101. In an essay from 1924, Liang would argue that truth cannot be grasped in terms of “only […] isms” (唯 […] 主義) such as materialism (唯物主義) or idealism (唯心主義). See “Not Only” (Feiwei 非唯), in Collected Writings from the Ice Drinker’s Studio (Yinbingshi heji 飲冰室合集), Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1941, pp.81-84.

421 See Tang Yue's 唐钺 (1891-1987) “A Madman Explaining a Dream” (Yi ge chiren shuo meng 一個痴人說夢) for a rebuttal of Liang's stance, Zhang et.al., 2011, pp.222-227. Tang Yue was one of the founders of psychology in China.


423 In the Monadology, Leibniz writes that “created things derive their perfections through the influence of God, but their imperfections come from their own natures, which cannot exist without limits. It is in this latter that they are distinguished from God.” G.W. Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics and The Monadology, New York: Dover, 2005, pp.53-54.

424 The example of the modern semantics of “madness” and “insanity” would be an instructive starting point for such an endeavor. Traditionally, in cultures all over the world, insanity has often been linked to a particular kind of (religious, mystical, ecstatic) “wisdom”. The link between “wisdom” and “folly” is clearly present in the text of the Zhuangzi, which is populated by a whole host of “mad” figures that tell the truth by subverting accepted standards of what counts as true and good. Shakespeare's plays too, to give a completely different example, are full of such characters as well, and it is certainly not by accident that it is a madman who manages to see through the “cannibalistic” (吃人) nature of the Confucian virtues in Lu Xun's 魯迅 (1881-1936) famous story. Typically, the figure of the madman is that of somebody who cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is not, and who takes his own delusions and hallucinations for normal observations or even privileged insights. In this sense, the madman is someone who is caught in his own interiority only has an inner, subjective world, thereby involuntarily turning back on himself in all his dealings with the outside world. It is only in modern times however, that the madman becomes a veritable subject in the strict sense of the word, and is turned into a figure that provides insight into human subjectivity as such. In his classical History of Madness, Michel Foucault claims that before the beginning of what he dramatically describes as the “great confinement”
(grand renfermement) of the mentally ill with the rise of psychiatry as a new branch of medical science and a modern form of knowledge and power from the 17th century onwards, folly and insanity were still seen as a potential form of quasi-religious or mystical, and yet at the same time “commonsensical”, insight into the vanity of worldly existence (exemplified by the motif of a humanity finally united in the posthumous joy of the danse macabre of death prevalent in Medieval art) and in the meaninglessness of all (including even religious) truth. See Michel Foucault, Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique, Paris: Gallimard, 1972 and Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. According to Foucault, the unprecedented physical exclusion of the insane from public life through the construction of specialized asylums went hand in hand with a process through which insanity became an object of disciplinary scrutiny and control through the combined efforts of judicial and psychiatric power. For Foucault, the point is not that the mentally ill were treated more “humanely” before this historical turn (which was hardly the case), but that to a certain extent, abstracting from the grievous maltreatment the insane were undoubtedly subjected to before the “classical age”, madness as a signifier still had a positive function as a potential source of truth concerning the earthly life of mortal human beings in general. However, the idea that there is a certain wisdom or insight to be found in madness is not done away with after insanity becomes and is transformed by becoming an object of psychiatric power, but takes on a wholly different form. Madness is no longer a limit on the pretensions of secular knowledge, worldly wisdom, and religious promises of redemption, but becomes both an object and a source of scientific truth concerning the human being as an object medical scrutiny and of what Foucault calls the physician's “gaze”. The social medicalization and containment of mental illness goes hand in hand with what could be described as an essentialization of the aberrant inside the discipline of psychiatry, in which the truth of “normality” comes to be sought for in the exception. It is only then that one can begin to find statements such the following, made by the 18th century French psychiatrist Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol (1772-1840) in the introduction to his encyclopedic work on mental illnesses: “Que de méditations pour le philosophe qui, se dérobant au tumulte du monde, parcourt une maison d’aliénés! Il y retrouve les mêmes idées, les mêmes erreurs, les mêmes passions, les mêmes infortunes: c’est le même monde; mais dans une semblable maison, le traits sont plus forts, les nuances plus marquées, les couleurs plus vives, les effets plus heurtés, parce que l’homme s’y montre dans toute sa nudité, parce qu’il ne dissimule pas sa pensée, parce qu’il ne cache pas ses défauts.” Des maladies mentales considérées sous le rapport médical, hygiénique, et médico-légal, Paris: J.-B. Baillièrè, 1838, p.1, emphasis added. Already in a highly sarcastic and ironic text entitled Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes [1764] authored by Kant, insanity had even become a counterintuitive mark of civilization: “The human being in the state of nature can only be subject to a few follies and hardly any foolishness. His need always keeps him close to experience and provides his sound understanding with such easy occupation that he hardly notices that he needs understanding for his actions […] Had the brain of the savage sustained some shock, I do not know where the fantastic mania should come from to displace the ordinary sensations that alone occupy him incessantly. Which dementia can well befal him since he never has cause to venture far in his judgment? Insanity, however, is surely wholly and entirely beyond his capacity.” Immanuel Kant, Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp.214-215. Before long, the liberating potential of this aberrance from the bounds of civilization and rationality would escape the confines of psychiatry to become a much more widespread trope and became aligned with what Liang Qichao wanted to preserve as that “small part” of which the fundamental irrationality ensures that it will stay beyond the reach of science. The process I metaphorically describe as the essentialization of the aberrant could be seen as further developing and culminating in the invention of psychoanalysis, where insanity becomes a mode of truth-telling again, that is to say, a fugitive state or permanent condition in which the patient (“analysand”) reveals something about those who are not in any way “sick” or “abnormal” and provides insight into the functioning of an everyday day life which can equally become an object of what Freud called psychopathology (see Freud’s Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens from 1904). In psychoanalysis, psychological pathologies in a sense cease being pathological as such, in the sense that there is nothing “abnormal” about being, at least potentially, insane anymore. From a Freudian point of view, it is those who believe themselves to be sane that are truly delusional. With the advent of modern psychiatry, specifically in the form of psychoanalysis or cognitive behavioral therapy, the patient is no longer simply subject to “external” nefarious influences causing his afflictions (as was usually assumed to be the case both in Western as well as Chinese medicine, were insanity was often associated with demonic possession), but rather becomes a subject who has to “give an account of himself” in order to be cured. Formerly, it was the physician’s gaze that had to directly decipher the underlying pathological mechanisms, whether in the form of the Hyppocratic-Galenian “humors” (the four humores: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, black bile corresponding to four different temperaments: sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic), or in the guise of affictions caused by the nefarious influence of wind (feng 風, hence the expression fengkuang 瘋狂), actually leading to the illness. Now it is the patient who is called upon as a subject to mediate between his own illness and the physicians treating him by actively meditating and reflecting on his own states of mind in order to somehow change the way he
Zhang's assault on what he took to be the exaggerated extension of the scientific perspective into human life quickly elicited a response from the geologist Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 (1887-1936), who was joined by Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, Wu Zhihui, and many others in denouncing the insulation of existential problems in the broadest sense of the word from science as a relapse into a metaphysics which had already disappeared from Europe under the enlightening influence of scientific rationalism. Ding sarcastically wrote that

metaphysics really is a scoundrel of a ghost. After having bummed around aimlessly in Europe for more than two thousand years, it has in recent times gradually run out of places where it can scrape a living together, suddenly assuming a false cover and putting up a new shop sign, [after which] it has swaggered into China, treacherously posing as someone important.425

玄學真是個無賴鬼，在歐洲鬼混了二千多年，到近來漸漸沒有地方混飯吃，忽然裝起假幌子，掛起新招牌，大搖大擺的跑到中國來招搖撞騙。

For Ding Wenjiang, “the scientific method is nothing but the division into classes of facts in the world and the search for their order” (科學方法，不外將世界上的事實分起類來，求他們的秩序).426 Ding believed that “everything which cannot be critically investigated through logical study is not true knowledge” (凡不可以用論理學批評研究的，不是真知識).427 He further claimed that only a logical and critical scientific method could provide a valid, rationally grounded plurality of perspectives. These

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425Ding Wenjiang, “Science and Metaphysics” (科學與玄學), in Zhang et.al., 2011, p.8.
426Ding, 2011, p.9.
427Ding, 2011, p.16.
perspectives would be united in their common adherence to the methodological principles of science and would share the same (set of) objects insofar as the latter appertain to the domain of what is immediately accessible through sense perception (覺官的感觸), the reach of which is constantly being amplified and extended through new technological inventions. This perceptual unity invalidated the distinction Zhang Junmai tried to uphold between matter and spirit as respectively objective and subjective. What Zhang considered to be beyond the reach of science were simply the dreamed up objects of the malingering ghost of metaphysics for which there would never be any objectively ascertainable correlates. For Ding, it was science, and not metaphysics, which was able to ensure social order, economic wealth, and individual health and happiness. Liang Qichao had been wrong to declare the bankruptcy of European science in the wake of the Second World War, which Ding thought had to be grasped instead as the result of a lack of scientific training among politicians and educators and as an alarming sign of the fact that European politics was not yet nearly scientific enough. Ding believed that only science could provide the rational resources for a robust social critique. Zhang Junmai and his fellow “metaphysical ghosts” (xuanxue gui 玄學鬼) as they were disparagingly called, were not slow to respond. A fierce and protracted debate ensued which soon expanded the scope set by the initial polemical exchanges between Zhang and Ding. Intellectuals allied with Zhang clearly saw it as their duty to become or remain “functionaries of mankind”, to invoke the lofty term used by the later Husserl in his Crisis of European Sciences, whose mission it was to resist the “decapitation” of philosophy by positivism. In the Crisis, Husserl also dealt with what he considered to be a loss of meaning of science for life, science ultimately having nothing of any significance to say about the implications of what it still does choose to talk about. The issues touched upon in the 1923 debate on science and metaphysics were certainly not unique or confined to the case of China. The situation in China was arguably even more complicated, since the field of knowledge defined in opposition to science, i.e. “philosophy” and “metaphysics”, was itself new to the Chinese context. A philosophical or metaphysical revolt against science already involved and presupposed a process of redefining and reinterpreting forms of knowledge and practice such as Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, which had to be incorporated into a new field in order to be opposed to the hegemony of science to begin with. Needless to say, not all those who were accused of being possessed by the ghost of metaphysics

429 Ding, 2011, p.17.
430 Ding, 2011, pp.21-23
431 Husserl, 1970, p.17. The Crisis was originally a series of lectures delivered in Vienna in 1935.
were happy with the equation of philosophy and metaphysics, or with the identification of a perspective from and on human life as “metaphysical”.

I am not able to give a comprehensive overview of the arguments put forward by both sides in the discussions surrounding science and metaphysics at this instance. In their prefaces to a collection of texts produced during the debate (prefaces which in turn gave rise to another polemical exchange), Chen Duxiu (who by that time had a “scientific” historical materialist agenda of his own) and Hu Shi already admitted to not being able to get a clear view on the bewildering variety of discussions centered around, but sometimes gravitating far away from, the topic of science and metaphysics in a limited sense. The basic problem was precisely determining their respective limitations. What I would like to do instead of attempting a general survey, which would necessitate a study in its own right, is to try and relate the debate on science and metaphysics to the emergence of New Confucianism as a current of thought. No forced interpretations are needed for this. Various scholars have already pointed out the importance of the 1923 debate for the reinvention of Confucianism in twentieth-century China. The intellectual historian Wang Hui has to my knowledge provided the most extensive, elaborate, and powerful argument for this historical connection, and I will draw heavily on his views in what follows. For Zhang Hao as well, “the revolt against scientism marked the emergence of New Confucianism as an identifiable trend of thought.” This does not mean however that all those opposed to scientism were necessarily self-avowed Confucianists or exclusively sympathetic to the cause of traditional Chinese philosophy. Zhang Junmai may have invoked the enduring relevance of Song-Ming Confucianism as an outlook on human existence, but only as one of the many possible perspectives (of the subject on itself) in a whole spectrum of non-objectifying approaches. Zhang Dongsun, who sided with his namesake, would not readily be classified as a Confucian philosopher because of his overall eclecticism and epistemological pluralism, and more importantly because he is

433 For a recent study of the “metaphysi- cians’” arguments, see Isay, 2013.
438 Zhang Dongsun had translated Bergson's Evolution créatrice and Matière et mémoire into Chinese.
quite simply not included in any lineage of the various New Confucian orthodoxies.\footnote{His radically anti-ontological stance might have had something to do with this non-inclusion as well. Xiong Shili mentions Zhang's opposition to his plea for a Confucian ontology in a letter to Tang Junyi. See “Scientific Truth and Metaphysical Truth (A Reply to Tang Junyi)” (Kexue zhenli yu xuanxue zhenli (da Tang Junyi) 科學真理與玄學真理（答唐君毅）), [1936] in The Complete Works of Xiong Shili (Xiong Shili quanji 熊十力全集), Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001, vol.8, p.145. On Zhang's own philosophy, see Rošker, 2008, pp.227–263, Jana Rošker, “The Abolishment of Substance and Ontology: A New Interpretation of Zhang Dongsun’s Pluralistic Epistemology”, in Synthesis Philosophica, vol.47, no.1, 2009a, pp.153–165 and Xinyan Jiang, “Zhang Dongsun: Pluralist Epistemology and Chinese Philosophy”, in Cheng and Bunnin (eds.), 2002, pp.57-81.} One could even say that few of those in the “metaphysical” camp were strictly speaking metaphysicians, or even primarily concerned with philosophical inquiries. Notably absent as direct participants were Liang Shuming and Xiong Shili, but both were influenced by and to some extent influential in the way discussions concerning the relations between science, philosophy, and culture were carried out.\footnote{Edward F. Connelly, Xiong Shili and His Critique of Yogācāra Buddhism, Phd Dissertation, Australian National University, 1978, p.31: “Although Xiong took no active part in the debate on science and metaphysics, he quite clearly aligned himself with the metaphysicians in opposition to the scientists.” Also see Isay, 2013, pp.110-113.} The same goes for defenders of the extensive or unlimited authority of science. As Fa-ti Fan observes, “it was really a debate among intellectuals about the ideology and cultural authority of science”, since apart from Ding Wenjiang, not that many professionally trained scientists took part in the discussions.\footnote{Fa-ti Fan, “The Controversy over Spontaneous Generation in Republican China. Science, Authority, and the Public”, in Jing and Elman, 2014, p.210.} This is what has prompted Wang Hui to draw a helpful distinction between the Chinese scientific community on the one hand, and what he calls a “community of scientific discourse” (kexue huayu gongtongti 科学话语共同体) on the other.\footnote{See Wang, 2008, pp.1107-1125, Wang, 2011b, pp.150-151 and “Discursive Community and the Genealogy of Scientific Categories”, in Everyday Modernity in China, edited by Madeline Yue Dong and Joshua L. Goldstein, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006, pp.80-120.} The latter designates something much broader than the relatively limited number of individuals engaged in specialized scientific and experimental research in the narrow sense of the word, and as such encompasses all intellectuals who used the language of science and concepts rooted in scientific discourse, both in conducting academic research and in commenting on socio-political and cultural problems.\footnote{On the connection between the spread of scientific vocabulary and the movement for the promotion of the vernacular (by Hu Shi and others), see Wang, 2008, pp.1134-114 and Wang, 2006, pp.90-97. Wang basically argues that this movement did not simply hinge on an elevation of baihua above wenyan, but also involved a far-reaching transformation of everyday language through the influence of scientific discourse.} Because thinkers who opposed the infiltration of science into the domain of “value” and “meaning” employed scientific concepts or methods resulting from a principle of division derived from science to make their case against the omnipotence of the scientific outlook, they were in a sense equally part of this “community of scientific discourse”. Moreover, according to Wang Hui, the contestation of the omnipotence of science by Zhang Junmai and his affiliates ultimately resulted in the acceptance of a new, “scientific” division of labor, and thus
of epistemological separation and recategorization instead of integration. Wang explains:

Intellectual orientations that questioned the absolutely dominant position of science were also incorporated into a rationalized knowledge system […] efforts to preserve the independence of the fields of ethics, aesthetics, or affection were all transformed by their incorporation into an institutionalized, rationalized, and scientific framework of knowledge classification and institutions […] There were changes inside the knowledge system, but the rationalized principle of classification and its process of institutionalization did not change at all […] The activity of the scientific community included a double principle of generalization and specialization. Intellectuals and humanistic scholars who claimed to limit the scope of application of science adopted the basic standpoint of using the principle of division to attack the principle of generalization. They argued that the fields of social life, such as morality, belief, and aesthetics, should be separated from the universal field of scientific knowledge in order to develop their own autonomy. If we take the subjective turn [exemplified by the metaphysicians] as the birth of modern Chinese humanities, then the so-called humanities were not born from an understanding of human beings […] but from the definition and distinction of fields that cannot be explained or regulated by economic rules, political rights, and scientific practices. In this sense, the humanities are not the discovery of human beings, but rather the discovery of fields (individual or collective) of morality, aesthetics, and unconsciousness. Modern humanities represent the disintegration of the human being instead of a reconstruction of the integrity of the human being.

This outcome is the paradoxical, but logical result of the reaffirmation of “the universality of the principle of division on which the scientific community is built”. The metaphysicians' reactive turn to a subject constitutive of various subject-object relations as fields of knowledge irreducible to scientific objectivity (understood as a form of observation where it is crucial that the observer does not see himself or includes himself in what he observes insofar as this inhibits correct, unbiased and reliable observations) and the attempt to delineate the spheres of the objective and the subjective as respectively the domains of the natural and human sciences, forces us to inquire into exactly which kind of subject emerged from the debate on science and metaphysics. That the rather simplistic distinction between the subjective and the objective (which can form a matrix for enormous complexity precisely because of its

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444This would eventually be the case for Tang Junyi as well. See his “Discussion of the Thought of Zhang Junmai from the Debate on Science and Metaphysics” (Cong ke xue yu xuan xue lun zhan tan Zhang Junmai de si xiang 從科學與玄學論戰 談君勱先生的思想), [1976] in ZB, pp.987-993.
445Actually, Wang Hui is referring to what he himself calls the community of scientific discourse.
simplicity) sits uneasily with the difference between philosophy and science is already obvious from the
fact that certain types of philosophical thought developed in the aftermath of the debate presented
themselves as capable of or at least poised towards the overcoming of precisely this distinction as an
absolute opposition. One can relegate the study of the material and the objective to science, but any
philosophical unity of subject and object is thereby restricted to the field resulting from the prior
distinction between science and philosophy, where the “exceptions” or the leftovers of science can be
reinstated in a unitary form. There is unity then within the field of philosophy, but not between the
fields of science (subject-object duality) and philosophy (subject-object identity). As I will show further
on, this is a problem which New Confucians such as Tang and Mou clearly struggled with and, at risk
of already giving the ending away, were not able to resolve without recourse to the principle of division
in a highly dialectical form. Their views on the specificity of Chinese thought in comparison to Western
theology and philosophy, and the uniqueness of Confucian thought vis-à-vis Buddhism and Daoism
played an important role here. Clearly, the cultural differentials introduced during the debates
concerning the “spiritual” divergence of China and the West which intensified in the wake of the
publication of Liang Shuming's 1921 *The Cultures of East and West and their Philosophies* (Dongxi
wenhua jiqi zhexue 東西文化及其哲學) were not simply abandoned, but carried over into the debate
on science and metaphysics and its prolonged aftermath. As we already noted with reference to Liang
Qichao, the self-scrutiny and soul-searching of a considerable number of European intellectuals after
the first World War played an important role in this. The metaphysicians agreed with Bertrand

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448 See Wang, 2008, p.1281. The debate between scientists and metaphysicians was “repeated” in Taiwan in the 1950s in
lively exchanges between liberals like Yin Haiguang 殷海光 (1919-1969) of a more positivist bent and New Confucians
such as Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903–1982) along much the same lines. Ruelin Chen contends that the debate in Taiwan
added a new element to the discourse on the putative contrast between Chinese and Western culture in the form of an
opposition between moral humanism and positivist science, but this opposition was already an integral part of the 1923
debate. See Ruelin Chen, “Morality Versus Science: The Two Cultures Discourse in 1950s Taiwan”, *East Asian Science,

449 As D.W.Y. Kwok notes: “It must be held in mind that the designation of spiritual civilization as belonging to the East
and material civilization as belonging to the West was originated by growing numbers of Western thinkers who, after
World War I, praised the superiority of Eastern spirituality over the Western preoccupation with material things.” Kwok,
1965, pp.46-47. Cf. Isay, 2013 pp.58-59: “After the war ended the negative effects of modern life were fervently
discussed in European intellectual circles; stressing the pace of life, social exploitation, emptiness, and desperation.
Dichotomous contrasts [...] surfaced, such as spirituality vs. materiality; humanism vs. mechanism, subjectivism vs.
objectivism, intuition vs. intellect [...] Once the “East vs. West” dichotomy joined the scene one member of these pairs
was associated with the East and its opposite with the West.” Also see Zheng Dahua 鄭大華, “The First World War and
the Postwar Rise of Chinese Cultural Conservatism” (*Di yi ci shijie dazhan yu zhanhou Zhongguo wenhuabaoshouchu huayi
sixchao de xingqi 第一次世界大战与战后中国文化保守主义思潮的兴起), *Zhejiang xuekan 浙江学刊*, 5, 2002,
pp.38-50 and Yu Shilin 余仕麟, *The Transcendence of the Living Mind: the Confucian Theory of the Heart-Mind and
Russel, who had toured China from 1920 to 1921, that “it is science that makes the difference between our intellectual outlook and that of the Chinese intelligentsia […] What we have to teach the Chinese is not morals, or ethical maxims about government, but science and technical skill. The realm of the Chinese intellectuals is to acquire Western knowledge without acquiring the mechanistic outlook”. 450 In other words, they did not want science to become a general cultural and socio-political perspective.

Even so, cultural differences were established not through the reinstatement of traditional divisions of knowledge, but on the basis of what came to be employed as a universally and transhistorically applicable order. This allowed someone like Tang Junyi to define the West as “scientific and religious” as opposed to an “artistic and moral” China, while at the same time internally applying the same generalized distinctions to the Chinese past: “the culture of the Han dynasty was focused on politics, the Wei and Jin periods were dominated by literature and art, and during the Sui and Tang religion thrived” (漢代文化以政治為主，魏晉以文學藝術為主，隋唐宗教之盛). 451 In any case, the subject that was protected from the hegemony of scientific objectivity through what Wang Hui calls the principle of division was certainly not the isolated, empirical, psychological subject, but rather a subject integrated in a larger cultural and historical continuum, the latter understood as forming the condition of the possibility for meaningful individual subjective being. 452 Wang explains:

What is known as the “turn towards the subject” in modern Chinese thought was not merely a transition from knowledge concerning the objective (natural and social) world to an investigation of the interior world of the individual subject, but also entailed a turn towards culture, in which reflections on Western modernity were taken as an opportunity for a renewed discovery of the value and meaning of Chinese culture. The problem of subjectivity in this context is certainly not just a question of individual subjectivity, but also one of the subjectivity of national culture. 453


452 “The subject, as it is understood in this context, is practical, moral, and, above all, communicating and assimilated with a higher ontological order.” Billioud, 2012, p.28.

For someone like the logician and epistemologist Jin Yuelin 金岳霖 (1895–1984), the successful development of philosophy would enable the latter to acquire a universality comparable to that of science, implying that the more “scientific” philosophy would become, the less it would be bound and constrained by national, cultural or historical specificities. Scientific and philosophical objectivity would thus be gained through abstracting both from the concrete subject and its cultural genus. Contrary to Jin, even the “rationalist” Feng Youlan stressed the positive dependence of philosophy on history. Echoing Hegel, Feng argued that unlike science, which leaves its historical variations and vicissitudes behind as either pioneering stepping stones or errors which have been definitively surpassed, philosophy cannot be considered apart from its history. For those thinkers who wanted to uphold the role of history and culture as horizons of meaning which would have to either withstand or internalize the demand of universality, the subject which was meant to dispose over a rich plurality of cognitive and perceptual fields became a thoroughly relational one. The subject in this sense observes the world through history and culture and not merely in the immanence and factual givenness of sense perception. That any knowledge of the external, “objective” world always has to pass through the temporal density of a culturally constituted moral subject is not understood as undermining the objective validity of knowledge, but as the very condition of possibility for cognition at a deeper level. Especially in New Confucian thought, the subject can only have a substantial existence and access to truth because of its relation to a more continuous “objective” subject, surpassing both the empirical ego and the intellectual cogito, which can additionally ensure the identity of factually different subjects. In other words: the identity of the subject (as a particular individual) is mediated through its relation to Spirit. As such, subjectivity was brought into a privileged relation with the past, the latter serving as a repository of value and meaning against a perceived emptiness in the immanence of “vulgar” time. This


455See “On National Philosophy” (Lun minzu zhexue 論民族哲學), [1937] in Collection from a Journey South (Nandu ji 南渡集), in vol.5 of *Complete Works from the Hall of Three Pines* (San song tang quanji 三松堂全集), Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 2001, pp.270-280. Employing a a grammatical distinction between two possessive modifiers which largely fell into disuse after the 1950s, Feng differentiated 中国的哲学 from 中国底哲学. In the former, “Chinese” has a descriptive/attributive function, whereas in the latter phrase, “Chinese” denotes an intrinsic, substantial bond. Feng considered the distinction between “Chinese” (contingent/neutral/geographical) (中国的) and “of China” (substantial/cultural) (中国底) to be most marked in the opposition between science on the one hand, which is completely devoid of cultural characteristics, and literature, as fully determined by culture, on the other. Feng aligned philosophy more closely to science than to literature. This distinction would later come to be replaced by “philosophy in China” (哲学在中国) and “Chinese philosophy” (中国的哲学). See Chen Lai, 2001, pp.1-19, p.95.

456I do not agree with Gad Isay’s contention that “after 1923, the ‘view of life’ based on metaphysics was […] undervalued because of uncritical support for nationalist concerns.” Isay, 2013, p.126. I do not see any proof for the idea that those opposed to scientism were any less nationalistic.
implies that the turn towards the subject as a reaction against modern scientism involved an internal axial turn of the subject towards the past. As I have tried to show throughout this chapter, in the case of Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan, it was the dialectical paradigm of Spirit which allowed for an accommodation of difference as a difference in time of what was still assumed to be the same, not only in spite of, but precisely through its developmental diversity.
2.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have attempted to give a reasonably extensive overview of some of the issues involved in the complex genesis of New Confucian philosophy in twentieth-century Chinese intellectual history. Needless to say that my treatment of this problematic has hardly been exhaustive and can only appear as somewhat impressionistic. I have not, to name only two omissions, found the time to consider the categories of aesthetics and religion in relation to the development of New Confucian thought. As far as the former is concerned, this incompleteness partly stems from my impression that at least in the work of the recurring protagonists of my study, Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan, aesthetics is not really given its due, and all in all simply appears as a field in which the spirit and worldview of Chinese culture is assumed to express itself through the medium of sensibility.\textsuperscript{457} Especially in the case of Tang, this meant that art was essentially but one particular, and certainly not the highest, manifestation of moral reason.\textsuperscript{458} The works of Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903-1982) and Li Zehou 李澤厚 (b. 1930) would certainly be more interesting to consider from this point of view. The question concerning the religious nature of Confucianism already received a more elaborate treatment in Mou's and Tang's writings, but remained largely subordinated to the ambitious undertaking of providing the Confucian tradition with a distinct philosophical identity. As such, the issues of religion and religiosity were mainly approached through the paradoxical entanglement of transcendence and immanence, that is to say, with reference to general ontological and epistemological problems. In this sense, religion served as a mediating category in the comparison and combination of Chinese and Western philosophy. Of course, that Tang thought the ultimate goal of philosophy was to become a “teaching” (jiao 教)\textsuperscript{459} and believed that “true knowledge must always lead back to truthful actions” (真實知必歸真實行)\textsuperscript{460} tells us something about the fluid boundaries between the categories of philosophy and religion, even if Tang himself consistently focused on the philosophical aspects of what he saw as the three most important religious orientations, i.e. Christian monotheism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

\textsuperscript{457}See Tang, [1953b], pp.213-264.
\textsuperscript{458}Serina Chan notes Mou's dismissive attitude towards literature as leading to “unenlightenment”, since it “dwells on human passions”. Chan, 2011, p.173.
\textsuperscript{460}Tang, [1977], p.9.
Let me connect what I have been discussing in this chapter to the contemporary situation outlined in the first one in order to reiterate my underlying concerns. In the course of the above discussion, I generally limited myself to what one might call the “formative period” of what is now an increasingly influential and discursively prominent current of thought, both for practical as well as methodological reasons. It is not by accident that most accounts of the demise and revival of Confucianism in modern China start with the May Fourth era and the intellectual debates which occurred in its wake. Needless to say, it is not as if history came to end after this contested period of social turmoil and intellectual “enlightenment”. But as the reactions invited by Feng Youlan's qualified plea for an “abstract inheritance” of Chinese philosophy make clear, it was hardly evident anymore after 1949 for mainland scholars to refer to traditional thought without employing either denunciatory or highly euphemistic terms. The idea of philosophy as an autonomous discipline distinct from the “science” of historical materialism itself being looked upon with a great deal of mistrust, even far-reaching procedures of abstraction did not always suffice to clear appeals to tradition of the suspicion of ideological prejudice. In the first chapter of my study, I already indicated that contemporary discourse on the social and political position and function of Confucianism in response to the post-revolutionary condition in the People's Republic is greatly indebted to the endeavors of those who Jiang Qing rather deceptively labels as “spiritual Confucians”. Working outside of the PRC, these philosophers already had other notions (such as concrete universality and the atemporality of the noumenal) at their disposal for the transformation and continuation of tradition. The latter were in my view much more sensitive (if not consciously, then at least performatively) to the conceptual repercussions of the nowadays largely discredited, or rather, disavowed paradigm of Spirit than many present-day intellectuals supporting the Confucian cause. Postmodern-inspired accusations of essentialism and identity thinking, often uneasily accompanied by a strongly totalizing nationalism, have now come to replace the simplistic condemning epithet of “bourgeois idealism” routinely applied to traditionalist thinkers in revolutionary times. Given the current lack a social obligation to continuously relate the study of traditional thought and the act of philosophizing to what were once the overriding exigencies of permanent class struggle and social antagonisms in order to prove or renew one's allegiance to the correct political line (which is in itself not something to be nostalgic about at all), it is at present probably an analysis of the actual, empirically approachable conditions of present mainland Chinese society instead of a transcendental inquiry into forgotten or repressed cultural roots in the ancient past which has become the most subversive and risky enterprise for Chinese intellectuals. Consequently, this has made nationalism more
flexible. Nationalism is no longer constrained by an obligatory adherence to the principles of Marxism-
Leninism and Mao Zedong thought and can afford to appear in a whole range of different guises, as
long as these do not explicitly contest the legitimacy of CCP rule. In this sense, a contestation of the
theoretical feasibility of communism would in itself remain harmless and even apolitical, were it not
that this is still likely to be perceived as implying a contestation of the Party's rightful sovereignty. Mou
Zongsan's most acerbic texts on Chinese communism and Marxism, especially those collected in Moral
Idealism, remain available to mainland readers only in a heavily censored form. Still, in the current
constellation, the poetically inclined businessman from Zhang Shiying's text does not necessarily need
to be able to recite either Tang poetry or the Quotations of Chairman Mao in order to qualify as a
patriot, his contributions to boosting the national GDP surely counting as a better sign of his love of
country.

From the many retrospective writings of the second generation of New Confucians, it is clear that the
decades from May Fourth up to the establishment of the People's Republic came to be interpreted as a
definitive downward turn in the tragic fate of Confucianism and as the beginning of the end of its
relatively continuous history, or at least as the start of a temporary, almost strategic “withdrawal” in
response to the growth of the “universal heterodoxy” of historical materialism. Both Mou and Tang
took the founding of the PRC to be the logical but disastrous outcome of May Fourth iconoclasm,
which eventually forced them, and in their view Chinese culture as a whole, into an indefinite exile in
the peripheral regions of Hong Kong and Taiwan. They saw their own “loneliness” as coinciding
with the forced retreat of Chinese culture from its native soil and its roots in the “divine province”
(shenzhou 神州). In a sense, the epistemological discontinuity and “semantic untidiness” resulting from
the creative adaptation of new categories such as philosophy and science in response to the factual
disappearance of tradition was as much a problem as it was a chance for these thinkers to reposition
and reinterpret traditional sources of knowledge in the light of the requirements stemming from a new
social and historical environment. The universality of the rupture introduced into societies all over the

462 See Moral Idealism (Daode de lixiangzheyi 道德的理想主义), Changchun: Jilin shushe, 2010. Two texts which criticize
Mao's tracts “On Contradiction” and “On Practice”, as well as a text revealingly entitled “A Cultural Consciousness to
Oppose Communism and Save the Nation” (Fangong jiuguo de wenhua yishi 反共救國的文化意識) have been left out.
Most of Mou's direct criticism of Chinese communism and the CCP has been carefully edited away, while purely
theoretical objections to Marxism appear to have been left standing.
463 Lin Zhenguo 林鎮國, “The Lonely New Confucians – Contemporary Chinese Moral Idealists” (Jimo de xin rujia -
world by an intrinsically global modernity allows us to observe, in retrospect at least, that they had no reason to feel alone in this respect. I believe I have already given an initial series of indications for the fact that the problems and dilemmas they faced were, to put it in Marxist terms, part of a common struggle. The intention of the next chapter is to further clarify in a more determinate manner precisely what consequences this structurally conditioned semantic struggle had in the formulation, elaboration, and application of some of their most crucial philosophical concepts.
Chapter 3: The Philosophical Consequences of Modernity: Conceptual Tensions in the Thought of Xiong Shili, Tang Junyi, and Mou Zongsan

[The philosopher] must never ask “What consequences will this have?”

Fichte

Paradoxes [...] are not barriers to communication. On the contrary, they can be formulated. They even have a high level of expressive content [...] Of course, the question poses itself of what can be done with such paradoxes. It is not a problem to be solved by means of logic. Nor is it a problem whose solution could be calculated. For the problem/solution distinction would be sublated in that case, and both the problem and its solution would disappear.

Luhmann

3.1 The thought of Xiong Shili and Tang Junyi in the horizon of modernity

3.1.1 Husserl on science, philosophy, and wisdom

Edmund Husserl's programmatic text entitled Philosophy as a Rigorous Science from 1911 offers a prismatic glimpse into the intricate distinction between science and philosophy in the development of modern European thought, a distinction which I discussed in the context of twentieth-century Chinese intellectual history in the previous chapter. Let me proceed by taking up from where we left off there by investigating how the fundamental differentiation between scientific and philosophical knowledge was further elaborated and refined in the aftermath of the post-1923 “metaphysical” turn towards the subject and towards spirit by New Confucian thinkers. As a starting point, I will comparatively draw on the general import of the arguments Husserl puts forward in his 1911 text with reference to the genesis of New Confucianism as a form of philosophy, specifically in relation to the thought of its founding father, Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968) and his student Tang Junyi, before carrying over this problematic into the second part of this chapter focused on the work of Xiong's most famous and philosophically accomplished pupil, Mou Zongsan. In doing so, I will try to provide a provisional

indication of the factual universality of the problems involved in the modern reclassification of knowledge which Confucian-inspired thinkers too had to somehow accommodate or account for. Husserl's take on the differentiation between science and philosophy can provide some insight into why the signatories of the 1958 New Confucian Manifesto could later proclaim with a certain matter-of-factness that it is essentially wisdom (zhihui 智慧) the Western world should learn from China and can also begin to clarify what the intermediary category of wisdom refers to and means in this regard.  

From Husserl's text, one initially gets the impression that he tried to position his own project of phenomenological philosophy somewhere in between the natural and the human sciences, that is to say, between what he condemned as a “naturalistic” and “psychologistic” positivism setting out to analyze human consciousness as any other object of exact scientific inquiry without according it a privileged position (as the supreme source of all possible cognitive, practical, and affective fields resulting from intentional acts of consciousness) on the one hand, and the approach of philosophy as providing a broader Weltanschauung marked by historical, cultural, and social specificities on the other. Husserl believed that the “naturalization” of consciousness in experimental psychology and the grounding of the various disciplines of logic, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics in the study of the human psyche had turned (empirical) consciousness into the central point of reference for an increasingly large number of disciplines, but only at the cost of debasing it to the role of the shaky center of a bewildering diversity and flux of experiences from which it could no longer be clearly set apart. The naturalistic standpoint made consciousness indistinguishable from any other naturally given “object”, whereas in Husserl's view it had to be grasped as the transcendental condition and “pure” ground for any possible objectivity and for all experiential distinctions resulting from cognitive acts. For Husserl this had far-reaching implications, which as I will try to show in what follows, are remarkably close to Xiong Shili's and Tang Junyi's efforts to safeguard the foundational role of consciousness in relation to its

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4 See Tang et.al., [1958a], pp.910-925.
7 Husserl, 1981, pp.171-172. “[I]f knowledge theory will nevertheless investigate the problems of the relationship between consciousness and being, it can have before its eyes only being as the correlate of consciousness, as something “intended” after the manner of consciousness: remembered, expected, represented pictorially, imagined, identified, distinguished, believed, opined, evaluated, etc. It is clear, then, that the investigation must be directed towards a scientific essential knowledge of consciousness, toward that which consciousness itself “is” according to its essence in all its distinguishable forms.” Ibid., p.173.
plethora of object-horizons (*jing* 境): “That objectivity is, and must manifest itself cognitively as so being, must precisely become evident purely from consciousness itself [...] the essential study of consciousness includes also that of consciousness-meaning and consciousness-objectivity as such.”9

For Tang Junyi too, what Husserl called the “natural attitude” – which does not reflect on the involvement of consciousness as the “phenomenological residuum”10 in the constitution of an “objective” world that must be “nullified” to reveal the absolute being of pure consciousness11 – is already the result of subject-dependent determinations, even if the latter “naturally” present themselves in commonsense and everyday observations of the world. Like Husserl, Tang is of the opinion that “at the onset, all people are natural born realists who believe in the existence of objective entities” (人初皆為一天生之信有客觀存在之實在論者).12

Husserl presents the demise of the Hegelian system of philosophy in 19th century Europe as sounding the death knell of an ambitious but unsuccessful attempt to arrive at a unity of knowledge in the form of an all-embracive system, a system which Tang Junyi once unkindly compared to an impenetrable fortress (堡壘)13 functioning like a “big killing-machine” (大殺機) that eradicates all particularity and difference instead of serving as a bridge (梁橋) leading to an “inclusive” (baohan 包涵) and not a “subsumptive” (nangkuo 囊括) unity.14 Husserl thinks this systematic unity was radically corroded and eventually undone both through the progress of the exact sciences and the growth of historicism in the

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9 Husserl, 1981, p.173. Cf. *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1982, p.84: “Every imaginable sense, every imaginable being, whether the latter is called immanent or transcendent, falls within the domain of transcendental subjectivity, as the subjectivity that constitutes sense and being. The attempt to conceive the universe of true being as something lying outside the universe of possible consciousness, possible knowledge, possible evidence, the two being related to one another merely externally by a rigid law, is nonsensical. They belong together essentially; and, as belonging together essentially, they are also concretely one, in the only absolute concretion: transcendental subjectivity. If transcendental subjectivity is the universe of possible sense, then an outside is precisely nonsense. But even nonsense is always a mode of sense and has its nonsensicalness within the sphere of possible insight.”


12 *Life, Existence, and the Horizons of the Mind* (Shengming cunzai yu xinling jingjie 生命存在與心靈境界), Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, [1977] 2006, p.547. Cf. p.548: “In the objective horizons, there is naturally a subjective living existence and mind which observes this objective horizon. It is only that this living existence and mind has not yet become aware that what it observes is included in what it can observe, hence, [the subject] remains a sort of background for the appearance and existence of the objective horizon, which remains hidden and unseen because one is not aware of it, as if it did not exist (在客觀境中，自有此客觀境之主觀之生命存在與心靈在。唯此生命存在與心靈，未能自覺其所觀，即在能觀之，故稱客觀境。在此客觀境中，以主觀之生命存在與心靈，雖存在而不自覺其存在，故只為此客觀境之呈現與存在之一背景，此背景以不自覺，即如隱而不見，亦若不存在). My italics.


humanistic disciplines. The latter tendency towards the introduction of spatiotemporal variables into the study of reason had come to undermine the absoluteness and closure of rationality, and ironically stemmed from Hegel's own roadmap for the “calvary of Spirit”, in which the various shapes of consciousness take a dialectical detour through history on their long way home.\textsuperscript{15} Husserl quotes Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833-1911) remark that “the formation of a historical consciousness destroys more thoroughly than does surveying the disagreement of systems a belief in the universal validity of any of the philosophies that have undertaken to express in a compelling manner the coherence of the world by an ensemble of concepts.”\textsuperscript{16} In other words: historical discontinuity clashes with the normative unity and universality of reason and destabilizes claims to general validity. In short, the phenomenologist thinks that neither scientific naturalism nor historicism can provide a stable foundation for philosophy as a science of consciousness in its own right, since both approaches end up introducing “impure” contingency, either in the form of physically quantifiable sense data or as culturally specific historical variations, into what would have to become an autonomous and self-grounding study of pure consciousness. Consequently, philosophy is “falsified” by being reductively explained away in terms of either nature or spirit.\textsuperscript{17} What Husserl wants to accomplish through his double distinction of phenomenology from both natural science and the historicist human sciences is to securely ground philosophy as a, as far as he is concerned, wholly novel and revolutionary discipline which partakes both in the rigor and stringency of science as well as in the richness of Weltanschauung philosophies, all while steering clear from the reductionism he associates with positivist science and the lack of analytical clarity and the danger of skeptical relativism he connects to rooting philosophy in the diverse and evolving variables of cultural and historical formations.

Towards the end of Husserl's text, the notion of “wisdom” makes a short but intriguing appearance in the establishment of this two-sided distinction. As we saw in the context of the turn towards the subject resulting from the 1923 debate in China, thinkers who were of the opinion that philosophy should not hopelessly try to emulate the ideal of the exact sciences, but instead understand and present itself as a form of Weltanschauung intrinsically bound up with historical consciousness, presupposed another kind of subject and a different temporal frame than the naturalistic scientism which dissolves consciousness into the indistinct plane of empirically and impersonally accessible sense data which are assumed to be

\textsuperscript{17} Husserl, 1981, p.169.
identical and invariable from one subject to another. Tang Junyi expressed his understanding of the kind of subject underlying the scientific attitude in the following vivid terms:

If one says that [the mind in scientific observation] is dependent on something, then [one should add that] it is as if there were a great empty distance between [the mind] and that on which it depends […] Its observations are conducted within a forgetfulness of the existence of its own observation; the functioning of this horizon is manifested through this self-forgetfulness, a forgetfulness which it does not in turn observe.18

如說其有所依，亦與其所依者之間，如有一遙相距之虛的距離 […] 其観照，乃在一自忘其観照之有中進行，亦即以此自忘，以凸顯此境之用，而亦不見此自忘。

History and concretely situated subjectivity find themselves squarely at odds with the procedural eradication of subject- or spirit-dependent apprehension and time in science.19 Like Zhang Junmai and his supporters, for Husserl too, Weltanschauung philosophy “has a great, even unique teleological function” in the development of the human spirit and counts as “the highest elevation of the life experience, education, and wisdom of its time”.20 Still, in his view, the approach personified by Dilthey in his emphasis on the historical character of thought and the Lebenszusammenhang (“life-nexus”) of knowledge can lead to a potentially highly corrosive and self-refuting relativism resulting in what Husserl describes as sacrificing eternity (i.e. the eternal validity of science) “for the sake of time”.21

This is why he seeks to bring philosophy into a closely knit alliance with science. The supra-individual,

18 Tang, [1977], p.255.
19 Husserl, 1981, p.191: “The “idea” of Weltanschauung is consequently a different one for each time […] The “idea” of science, on the contrary, is a supratemporal one, and here that means limited by no relatedness to the spirit of one time.”
20 Husserl, 1981, p.189. The cultural dimension became much more marked in the later Husserl's revolt against positivist science in the Crisis. At stake for him in the “struggle for the meaning of man” was nothing less than the following question: “[W]hether European humanity bears within itself an absolute idea, rather than being merely an empirical anthropological type like "China" or "India"; […] whether the spectacle of the Europeanization of all other civilizations bears witness to the rule of an absolute meaning, one which is proper to the sense, rather than to a historical non-sense, of the world.” The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970, p.16. Cf. p.15: “To bring latent reason to the understanding of its own possibilities and thus to bring to insight the possibility of metaphysics as a true possibility—this is the only way to put metaphysics or universal philosophy on the strenuous road to realization. It is the only way to decide whether the telos which was inborn in European humanity at the birth of Greek philosophy—that of humanity which seeks to exist, and is only possible, through philosophical reason, moving endlessly from latent to manifest reason and forever seeking its own norms through this, its truth and genuine human nature—whether this telos, then, is merely a factual, historical delusion, the accidental acquisition of merely one among many other civilizations and histories, or whether Greek humanity was not rather the first breakthrough to what is essential to humanity as such, its entelechy.” Niklas Luhmann provides an interesting discussion of this aspect of Husserl's work in the context of the nexus between modernity and science in Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity, Stanford (Cal.): Stanford University Press, 2002, pp.33-60.
spiritual function of philosophy as a communal “world view” or a “life view” can in Husserl's opinion be adequately captured by “the old-fashioned word 'wisdom' ”, referring back to the original meaning of *philosophia* as the “love of wisdom”. Wisdom, he explains, “is no mere accomplishment of the isolated personality (this latter would moreover be an abstraction); rather it belongs to the cultural community and to the time”. Husserl's qualified appraisal of the importance of historically and culturally determinate wisdom, in which knowledge is always bound up with an individually transmitted form of practice, takes place within a clear division of labor and an anterior delineation of epistemological boundaries between science and philosophy as wisdom. Since he flatly rejects the historicist approach to philosophy as equally relativizing and flawed as the naturalist one, Husserl stresses that it is crucial for the dimension of wisdom – always bound up with particular places, peoples, cultures, and times – not to be confused with the territory of science. Indeed, wisdom should “in all honesty relinquish the claim to be a science, and thereby at the same time cease confusing minds and impeding the progress of scientific philosophy.” The categorical separation of wisdom from science as bound to two markedly different forms of temporality – subject/spirit-dependent and subject-invariant respectively – suggests that rather than positioning himself against the complete dissolution of intersubjectively and culturally transmitted knowledge as wisdom into the homogeneous “eternity” of science after the manner of the Chinese “metaphysicians”, Husserl is much more concerned about keeping the “profundity” of wisdom safely contained. What has to be considered then, is the possibility that “wisdom” as a residual category in the differentiation of philosophy and science is as much an (albeit largely informal) part of the modern disciplinary categorization of knowledge as science and philosophy are, and that this was even the case for thinkers who were a lot more sympathetic to the cause of wisdom than Husserl was.

27 What would be needed for a completer picture is a genuine genealogy of the modern idea of wisdom as a counterconcept to both scientific and philosophical knowledge, set in the historical context of colonialism and Orientalism and the global spread of modern categorizations of information. In the case of China, this would require investigating how the idea of wisdom formulated by pioneers of Orientalism such as Max Müller (1823-1900) was rejected and criticized, or, more often, taken over and reinterpreted by Chinese philosophers in comparatively forging an identity for Chinese philosophy and for the specificity of Chinese culture at large. The works of the itinerant philosopher Hermann Keyserling (1880-1946), whom I quoted in one of the epigraphs to the previous chapter, such as his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* from 1919 (*Das Reisetagebuch eines Philosophen*, English translation by J. Holroyd Reece, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925) would be an interesting point of departure. Keyserling (凱瑟林 in Chinese), who would now seem to be reckoned as a minor and relatively unknown figure in early twentieth-century European philosophy, was greatly appreciated and applauded by both Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan. See Yuh-Cheng Fan, *Tang
3.1.2 The tension between identification and differentiation in Xiong's and Tang's outlooks on science (knowledge) and philosophy (wisdom)

Unsurprisingly, most New Confucian philosophers can be located on the opposite side of Husserl's elevation of a “rigorously scientific” philosophy above wisdom. They were not only highly concerned about differentiating and somehow keeping the peace between science and philosophy, but were equally preoccupied with distinguishing Chinese from Western, and Confucianist from Buddhist and Daoist thought. For Xiong Shili, who, as I already noted, did not directly participate in the 1923 debate, the difference between philosophy and science could be neatly matched onto that between China and the West as different and autonomous cultures. This is clear from the text of a lecture entitled *Chinese Philosophy and Western Science* (*Zhongguo zhexue yu xiyang kexue* 中國哲學與西洋科學), which Xiong delivered in 1946 to the rather unlikely audience of the privately funded Huanghai Research Society for Chemical Industry (*Huanghai huaxue gongye yanjiushe* 黃海化學工業研究社) in Tianjin 天津 founded by the industrialist Fan Xudong 范旭东 (1883-1945). Like many other “metaphysicians” of a traditionalist bent, Xiong Shili did not oppose the scientific outlook and enterprise as such, nor did he deny that it was necessary and urgent for China to adopt science and technology from the West. He simply believed that such an adoption would never be successful and could never have socially beneficial effects without a secure basis in Chinese, and more precisely, Confucian learning. Xiong argued that in the West, science had initially grown from inquiries into the

![Junyis Synthese chinesischer und westlicher Philosophie, Neuried: Ars Una, 2000, pp.41-43. From Keyserling's Travel Diary, it is clear that his Orientalist praise for the “wisdom” of China is often intertwined with condemnations of the “Chinaman’s” “lack of the capacity for sympathy” (Keyserling, 1925, vol.2, p.36) and tendency towards “superstition” (pp.44-45). As such, it often diminishes what it sets out to celebrate in the very same gesture: “Every Chinaman until this day, no matter how superficially he may have thought […] demonstrated a deep philosophy in his life; he counted the outer world as something truly external and sought essentials in other dimensions. In Europe only women do this, they are accordingly by far the profounder philosophers of life.” (p.56). “Philosophizing is, as it were, unnatural to the Chinese, although they lead the most philosophical of all lives; their wisdom expresses itself in what they represent by their lives, not by their thoughts about it.” (p.110). In another work, Keyserling revealing states that “the East has not understood its own depth” (quoted in Fan, 2000, p.42). Passages such as the following probably resonated more deeply with the New Confucian philosophers: “It becomes clearer to me every day that if China is in need of reform it is not because the old system as such, but because the old spirit has disappeared from it.” (Keyserling, 1925, p.86, my italics). “[I]t would appear to be the foremost problem of the leaders of New China to invoke the authority of Kung Fu Tse for all the reforms which they contemplate. (p.88). “A regeneration of China, I am convinced, is conceivable only in the spirit of Confucianism. May God grant that it still possesses the requisite strength”. (p.87, my italics). They may have had more difficulty stomaching the fact that Keyserling immediately goes on to add: “Unfortunately, the spirit of Confucianism […] is very little suited to renovation.”

29 Xiong, [1946], p.123, p.137.

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inner workings of nature under the impetus of an objectively oriented Greek philosophy, eventually leading to an instrumental domination and exploitation of the natural world in centuries to come. From the above-mentioned text, it immediately becomes clear that he stresses the historical origins of science in philosophical thought in order to subordinate science to philosophy, the latter continuing to serve as the root (根) for science even after scientific and philosophical rationalities had become separated as distinct forms of knowledge with their own methods, vocabularies, and purposes. In a by now probably somewhat more familiar twist, Xiong claimed that the fact that China had never developed modern science could be explained as a result of a decline and a rupture in the transmission of the authentic teachings of Confucius concentrated in the Yijing, a decline already setting in with the establishment of the unified Qin empire and continuing with the rise of a distorted, authoritarian Confucianism in the Han dynasty. He further blamed the underdevelopment of scientific learning and logical reasoning, the germinal principles of which were in his view already fully present in the Book of Changes, on the influence of Daoist and Buddhist teachings, with their putatively escapist and otherworldly orientation. Moreover, Daoism and Buddhism had also prevented a practically effective and democratic form of “outer kingliness” (waiwang) from being installed on the basis of the egalitarian philosophy of the Yijing. As in the case of Mou Zongsan (see below), Xiong Shili’s take on science is thus fundamentally related to his understanding of the Chinese political tradition as well as to a cultural typology which proceeded from the idea that “Western people are unable to realize that the ten thousand things are one self” (西洋人不能會萬物為一己). For Xiong, the opposition between things and the self (wu wo duiqi) had both a scientifically instrumental function as well as politically negative effects. He saw an unmistakable link between the scientific focus on establishing universal laws of nature in an objectifying manner and the domination of society and collective relations over the individual and subjective freedom. The epistemological conditions and social and moral consequences of science and politics are thus already fundamentally interrelated in Xiong's texts.

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30 Xiong, [1946], p.124.
32 Xiong, [1946], p.129.
33 Xiong, [1946], p.129.
34 Xiong, [1946], p.139.
In his later works dating from the 1950s and 60s, Xiong Shili, who had continued residing on the mainland after the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, engaged in a highly controversial, though not entirely novel, reinterpretation of the Confucian political tradition by representing Confucius as a revolutionary social critic and a champion of freedom instead of as a conservative transmitter. The influence of Kang Youwei's seminal *Treatise on Confucius as a Reformer* (*Kongzi gaizhi lun* 孔子改制論) from 1897, a text which Xiong took issue with as far as some of Kang's more specific philological and philosophical claims were concerned, is unmistakable in these writings.\(^{35}\) In his *Explanation of [the Trigrams] Qian [Heaven] and Kun [Earth]* (*Qiankun yan* 乾坤衍), Xiong introduces a polemical distinction between “Confucians of the Limited Unity” (*xiaokang zhi ru* 小康之儒) and “Confucians of the Great Way” (*dadao zhi ru* 大道之儒), a distinction which is intended to keep Confucianism from being associated with imperial “feudalism” and the *zungfa* 宗法 (“clan-centered) system.\(^{36}\) For Xiong, the first were the followers of an earlier phase in Confucius's thought, developed when the Master was still an autocratic, ritualistic, and conservative transmitter of the example of the Zhou dynasty. These conservatives distorted the original texts for their own political purposes. According to Xiong, damaging interpolations had already crept into the texts of the canonical classics (*jing* 經) even before the Han dynasty. From this perspective, Xiong vehemently condemns the institutionalization of the “three bonds” (*sangang* 三綱, between ruler and servant, father and son, husband and wife) and the “legalistic” version of the “five constant virtues” (*wuchang* 五常)\(^{37}\) which took place during this period. In his view, the *sangang* and the *wuchang* were not originally Confucian at all, but served as instruments of socio-political oppression custom-designed by renegade opportunists attempting to legitimate imperial power and tyranny. He takes them for Han-time distortions of Confucius's egalitarian philosophy resulting in an undue extension of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) to the ruler (*zhong jun* 忠君). This authoritarian deviation from the Confucian Way was first transmitted from the Master's (bad) student Zengzi 曾子, to whom authorship of the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經) is traditionally ascribed, to Mencius 孟子, who repressively stressed hierarchical divisions in society by maintaing that “some labor with their physical power, while others labor with their minds; the latter govern and the former are governed” (或勞心，或勞力；勞心者治人，勞力者

\(^{35}\) See Xiong's *Originary Confucianism* (*Yuanru* 原儒), Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, [1956] 2009, pp.16-96.

\(^{36}\) See Xiong, [1961], pp.3-118.

\(^{37}\) Humaneness (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), ritual propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), integrity (*xin* 信).
Xiong Shili criticizes these “petty Confucians” (xiaoru 小儒) for mistaking the idea of xiaokang 小康 (“moderate prosperity”, recently invoked as a slogan by the Hu Jintao administration in the PRC) in the Liyun 禮運 chapter of the Book of Rites (Liji 禮記) – a chapter which according to Xiong once formed a separate canonical text authored by Confucius, called the Liyunjing 禮運經 – for a prescriptive and normative conception, instead of as Confucius’s covert criticism of a self-centered society where everyone only takes care of himself and his own. According to Xiong, unlike the authoritarian “petty Confucians”, the “Confucians of the Great Way” were followers of the later Confucius, the compiler of the Yijing 詩經 who had stressed permanent change and revolution instead of conservative restoration and dictatorial rule. In the eyes of Xiong, a phrase in the Yijing, commenting on the trigram (gua 卦) “Heaven” (qian 乾, ☢), according to which “the herd of dragons has no leader” (群龍無首), is not to be taken solely as an ontological principle (there is no first cause or transcendent God among the myriad entities), but also as representing Confucius's mature ideal of political and social freedom and incarnating “the ultimate principle of the society of the Great Unity” (大同社會之極則), a society in which any categorical division into rulers and ruled is rejected and overcome.

This helps explain why for Xiong, the Six Classics (liujing 六經), which he sees as having been composed by Confucius himself, are all centered around the Yijing, as the veritable center of an already central matrix of thought which can give rise to philosophy, science, as well as politics in modernity.

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39 See Xiong, [1961], p.55.


41 See Xiong, [1961], p.226 and Xiong, [1956], p.20.

42 The third lecture in his Essential Instructions on the Reading of the Classics is mostly devoted to the Yijing, taking up half of the whole work, with the other five classics receiving a much briefer treatment. See Dujing shiyao 読經示要, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, [1945] 2009, pp.231-329. Additionally, Xiong takes the Book of Changes to be the origin of all schools of Chinese thought: Daoism is a “side-stream” (biepai 別派) of the Yijing. The Tianshi 天志 chapter of the Mozi 墨子 is derived from the more theistic parts of the Shanghu 尚書 and the Shijing 詩經, while Mozi's concept of “impartial care” (jian'ai 兼愛) is drawn from the Chunqiu 春秋 and the Lunyu 論語. Legalism resulted from a misreading of the Chunqiu. See Xiong, [1945], pp.4-5 and pp.146-147. Xiong's revisionist traditionalism challenged the common understanding of tradition and was concerned about saving Confucius from his supporters as much as from his detractors. His radical reordering of the classical jing was severely criticized, not in the least by former pupils and fellow travelers, such as the intellectual historian Xu Fuguan 徐復觀. See Chen Shaoming 陈少明, “Protecting the Way for the Sake of Freedom – Xu Fuguan's Thought, Works, and Character (Wei ziyou er wei dao – Xu Fuguan de xueshi, xueshu yu renge 为自由卫道 — 徐复观的思想、学术与人格), in Historical Essays on Twentieth-Century Chinese Thought (Ershi shiji Zhongguo sixiang shi 二十世纪中国思想史论), edited by Xu Jilin 许纪霖, Shanghai: Dongfang chubanshe zhongxin, 2000, p.359. The break with Xu Fuguan had already set in because of Xiong's refusal to accept the association traditionalist thinkers commonly made between Legalism and communism, a parallel also established by communist intellectual historians themselves. Xiong believed that communism was quite close to Confucianism in its radically egalitarian ideas. See Xiong's Evaluation of Master Han Fei (Han Feizi pingle 謹非子評論), Shanghai: Shanghai
Xiong Shili believed that in order for an egalitarian, democratic political order as well as a socially beneficial form of modern science (subordinated to philosophy) to flourish in China on the basis of the authentic Confucian tradition, a tradition repressed through the combined forces of dictatorial imperial rule, originally non-Chinese or non-Confucian doctrines and teachings (Buddhism and Daoism\textsuperscript{43}), and the onslaught of Western capitalism and imperialism\textsuperscript{44}, the philosophical teachings of the \textit{Yijing} opening up onto a vision of the world as a harmonious process of unending transformation would have to be rediscovered and reinvigorated. The epistemological equivalent of the ideal of freedom and self-determination he adhered to on a political level can be found in his conceptualization of the mind and the subject in relation to the objectifying form of observation he associated with science.

Let us have a closer look at the line of reasoning behind his idea that science would have to be (re)born from the spirit of philosophy. Xiong Shili assumed that unlike science, philosophy presupposed the spontaneous power of involvement (\textit{zhudongli} 主動力) of the subject in the active constitution and establishment (\textit{shishe} 施設 or \textit{sheding} 設定) of an “objective” world, or rather of a world of cognitive objects which simply would never able to come into being without consciousness. Consciousness has to interpose what Xiong, undoubtedly inspired by Kant, called “categories” (\textit{fanchou} 範疇)\textsuperscript{45}, the latter counting as “both subjective and objective” (兼屬主客) determinations which can “tailor” (裁制) the objective world of experience in function of a perceiving subject that does not merely reflect its objects like a mirror or a camera (Xiong's own examples), but actively posits and constructs them.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} “The Daoists tend to get their understanding and experience of the Way from within vacant stillness. This is diametrically opposed to the \textit{Book of Changes}, which allows people to gain insight into essential reality by indicating its energetic and transforming function. That is why Laozi presents weakness as useful, and although he is spiteful and envious of the ruling classes, he does not dare to take the lead in the world and does not allow for revolution.” (道家偏向虛靜中去領會道。此與《大易》從剛健與變動的功用上指點，令人於此悟其實體，便極相反。故老氏以柔弱為用，雖忿嫉統治階層而不敢為天下先，不肯革命). \textit{Treatise on Substance and Function (Tiyong lun 體用論)}, Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, [1958] 2009, p.5.

\textsuperscript{44} See Xiong, [1945], p.21, pp.23-24.

\textsuperscript{45} In his \textit{New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness}, Xiong distinguishes five (dual) categories: time and space (時空), being and non-being (有無), quantity (數量), identity and difference (同異), cause and effect (因果). See \textit{Xin weishi lun 新唯識論}, Changsha: Yuelu shushe, [1932] 2010, pp.227-228, pp.238-242. Xiong claims that Kant could not account for the objective applicability of his categories, so that the latter remained purely subjective.

\textsuperscript{46} See Cheng Zhihua 程志華, “Science Originates from Philosophy – Xiong Shili on the Possibility of Science” (\textit{Kexue
(object) and philosophy (subject) could not be separated for Xiong. This conviction led him to declare that “all those who propagate science while dismissing philosophy are not only ignorant of philosophy, but actually also have not understood anything about science” (凡揚科學而遂棄哲學者，不獨昧於哲學，實亦未了科學也).”47 At the same time, Xiong placed clear limitations on the pretensions of a philosophically grounded science, and these limitations betray that he was only willing to go so far in elaborating what has often been characterized as his own radically immanent ontology. His ontological anti-dualism based on the inseparability of substance (ti 體) and function (yong 用) is paired with a strictly applied principle of epistemological division which places duality and non-duality in separate and restricted fields:48

No matter how far science progresses and what it is able to reach in its investigations, it will always ultimately be limited to the external level of the universe (that is, the phenomenal world). In other words, [science] investigates the laws behind the mutual connections of all things, but it cannot hope to inquire into the source of things or into the true characteristic of the universe (true characteristic referring to substance). Chinese philosophy is grounded in the great Book of Changes, and the guiding thread of this book is to simultaneously clarify the meaning of the unchanging and of change. That change [arises] from the unchanging means that substance forms function [...]. To observe the unchanging within change is to know substance through function [...]. Science only investigates an externally posited world from the aspect of change, but cannot reach the unchanging substance (“unchanging substance” being a pleonastic expression, since there is no change in substance).49

科学無論如何進步，而其所研究所及，終限於宇宙之表層，即現像界。易言之，即研究一切事物互相關係之法則。至於事物之根源或宇宙實相，實相猶云本體。終非科學所能過問。中國哲學以大《易》為宗，其書綱領在雙闡不易、變易二義。不易而變易是即體成用 [...] 於變易見不易是即用識體。科學只從變易方面設定為外在世界而研究之，而不易實體，不易實體四字作為復詞用，

48 Chang Hao, “New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China”, in The Limits of Change. Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China, edited by Charlotte Furth, Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press, 1976, pp.284-285: “Although Hsiung insisted on philosophy as a metaphysical monism, his intellectual outlook in fact contained a dichotomous view of the world which emphasizes the division between the phenomenal realm and the realm of metaphysical reality. Regarding the former realm, the goal of human knowledge is scientific truth. As for the latter the efforts to search for scientific truth would be misdirected.” Also see Zheng Jiadong 鄭家棟, Ontology and Method – From Xiong Shili to Mou Zongsan (Benti yu fangfa – cong Xiong Shili dao Mou Zongsan 本體与方法 — 从熊十力到牟宗三), Shenyang: Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1992, p.20.
49 Xiong, [1946], p.128. The passages in between brackets in my translation are set in a smaller font in Xiong's original text.
Xiong stands diametrically opposed to Husserl in adhering to the idea that the dimension of eternity and the unchanging is categorically foreclosed to science. He sees temporality and impermanence as intrinsically linked to scientific knowledge, the ontological level of an inherently unchanging substance being accessible through *wisdom* (*zhihui* 智慧) alone.50 Xiong often renders the distinction between scientific knowledge and philosophical wisdom as the difference between knowledge in the strict sense of the word, i.e. as the cognition of an external object distinct from and opposed to the subject; and wisdom, which does not really cognitively relate itself to anything external but always contains a reflective movement through which the subject engages in concerned introspection and thereby returns to itself (*fanqiu* 反求, *fanji* 反己).“Wisdom is the substance, substance does not know anything yet leaves nothing unknown. That it does not know anything means that it does not dispose over the cognitive capacity to discriminate and analyze concrete things. That it knows everything means that it is the source of all cognitive capacities.” (智慧即是本體，本體是無知而無不知。無知者，非預儲有辨析一切事物之知能故。無不知者，是為一切知能之源)51. The challenge for Xiong would become to demonstrate how knowledge is dependent on and secondary to wisdom without severing the link between the two.

Traditionally, the idea of wisdom, for example in Daoist and Buddhist thought and practice, or in the Dionysian cults in ancient Greece, has very often been metaphorically linked to a special type of “ignorance”, as well as to “madness”, or “folly”. There is Zhuangzi’s pointed assertion that “knowledge that rests in what it does not know is the most accomplished” (知止其所不知，至矣)53. There is the well-known case reported by Plato in the *Apology* of the wisdom of Socrates, which expressed itself through the latter's insight into the depth of his own ignorance.54

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50 Xiong, [1932], p.63: “Substance is hidden, without shape, and does not have a temporal nature. Substance is everlasting, has neither beginning nor end, and does not have a temporal nature” (本體是幽隱的，無形相的，即是沒有空間性的 [...] 本體是恆久的，無始無終的，是沒有時間性的).


52 Xiong, [1946], p.135.


54 See Mary Margaret MacKenzie, “The Virtues of Socratic Ignorance”, *The Classical Quarterly*, vol.38, no.2, 1988,
In Mahāyāna Buddhism (for example in the stanzas and treatises ascribed to Nāgārjuna), there is none of the theologian's qualifying insistence that although “in theological matters negations are true and affirmations are inadequate […] nonetheless, the negations which remove the more imperfect things from the most Perfect are truer than the others.” Instead, in the refusal to make (n)either affirmations (n)or negations captured by Nāgārjuna's tetralemmas (x, not x, both x and not x, neither x nor not x), what remains is the idea of a more radical non-duality between ignorance and enlightenment, or between saṃsāra (lunhui 輪回) – the world of an endless cycle of impermanence, rebirth, and suffering – and the “realm” or perhaps rather “state” of nirvāṇa (nieban 涅槃) where all karmic consequences have been extinguished (or have never even arisen to begin with). Very broadly speaking, the difference between ordinary or even specialized technical and theoretical knowledge on the one hand, and wisdom on the other essentially hinges on what could be called a difference in orientation: what Xiong Shili called the cognitively, logically, and experientially mediated “pursuit of the external” (外驰) as opposed to a direct, practical, and intuitive “insight into one's own true self” (真的自己底覺悟), or “outbound” and “inbound” knowledge respectively. As such, wisdom can be understood as referring not only to the ability to know or accomplish certain things by means of either a natural or an acquired outlook or know-how, but above all to a reflexive capacity of self-observation resulting in knowledge concerning what one does and does not know, a capacity which in turn enables the subject to act wisely in function of the limitations of his or her knowledge. Once the necessity of engaging with and retroactively applying categories such as science, philosophy, religion, and politics to tradition enters the picture however, the functional differentiation of modern society and the factual operative autonomy of its subsystems complicate the relation between the paradoxical “ignorance” of subject-oriented wisdom and “outbound” knowledge in a different way. The problem of distinguishing wisdom from knowledge by placing limits on what one can know and acting wisely by respecting these limitations is coupled to the equally dire need to

pp.331-350.


56 Nicholas of Cusa, [1440], p.46.

57 \(a, \lnot a, a \land \lnot a, \lnot (a \lor \lnot a)\).


59 Xiong, [1932], p.5.
reconcile wisdom with knowledge, which, in Husserl's case at least, meant *limiting the pretensions of wisdom as well*. It is no longer enough to say that wisdom is a check on the ambitions of (secular, commonsensical, scientific) knowledge when it is the information generated by science which already severely limits the domain of objects and affairs (Liang Qichao's exceptional "small part" of things which matters much more than the norm) that is left for wisdom to be wise about. Consequently, the question can arise whether it is perhaps not unwise to let wisdom meddle in the affairs of science. Even when the act of limiting the pretensions of wisdom is interpreted as being intrinsic to wisdom itself (as knowing what one does not or cannot know) by referring to the traditional reflexivity of wisdom, the problem remains that the "ignorance" produced or presupposed by science (for example in the idea of falsifiability) is of a different nature than the self-conscious "ignorance" through which wisdom functions. Scientific knowledge constantly alters the expectations concerning what it can or might one day come to know as it is produced and disseminated, turning categorical limits ("never") into problems to be resolved through time ("not yet"). This means that the negatively designated category of the "never" foreclosed to science can shrink in and over time. The double need for differentiation as well as identification also entails that the semantics of wisdom can begin to take on certain characteristics ascribed to the scientific form of observation. For Tang Junyi, who was very much influenced by Xiong Shili on this point, wisdom is always bound up with concrete situations instead of abstract generalities, expresses itself in a form of knowledge that works immanently in function of a given state of affairs in all its specificity, and, contrary to science, does not operate on the basis of a disinterested, detached mode of knowing characterized by abstraction and logical reasoning. However, for Tang, it was equally crucial to make sure that wisdom does not get all too mixed up in or contaminated by the concreteness it takes into full consideration in making wise judgments and decisions.60 Otherwise, the subject that practically (morally) transforms itself by engaging with the world through wisdom would run the risk of becoming completely equalized with (*tonghua* 同化) and reified to (*wuhua* 物化) the level of particularity and concreteness with which it is concerned and with which it "resonates" (*ganying* 感應). As a consequence, it would turn into a subject that "forgets its own existence" (忘其自身之存在) instead of keeping a necessary (minimal, but irreducible) distance to the objective world allowing it to "clearly overlook concrete things [while] remaining above and free

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60 See the appendix entitled "Wisdom and Morality" (道德與智慧) to Tang's *The Establishment of a Moral Self (Daode ziwo zhi jianli 道德自我之建立)*, [1963] reprinted in *Three Books on Human Existence (Rensheng sanshu 人生三書)*, Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005, pp.112-141.
from them” (昭臨超拔於具體事物之上). The detachment Tang attributed to the scientific mode of observation, where it entails a functional “self-forgetfulness” ruling out the possibility of the observer standing in his own line of sight, is thus at the same time the transcendental quality or procedure enabling the wise subject to know and act wisely without forgetting itself.

What is left largely unanswered in Xiong's work as well as in that of Tang, and what would be much more elaborately theorized by Mou Zongsan as we will see in the second part of this chapter, is precisely how wisdom as a form of unmediated, “inbound” knowledge is related to a mode of “outbound” knowing characterized by opposition and mediation. In his reply to a letter from Tang Junyi, who had queried his teacher as to how one should understand the relation and the possible unity of scientific and metaphysical knowledge and truth, Xiong wrote to his student that

if one attaches oneself to the realm of phenomena as actually existing, one cannot observe substance. Therefore, it is crucial to brush aside [phenomenal] characteristics. But on the other hand, it is absolutely necessary to establish a phenomenal world. Otherwise, the universe which we inhabit in our everyday lives, that is to say the realm of experience, cannot be established. In that case, our knowledge would find no place to be settled, and science would become impossible.

Philosophy must serve as the foundation for science and keep it in check while at the same time making sure not to completely override the latter's relative autonomy. The priority of “knowledge of essential nature” (xingzhi 性智) appertaining to the “original mind” (benxin 本心) over the “quantitative knowledge” (liangzhi 量智) characterizing the “habituated mind” (xixin 习心) of sense perception

61 See Tang, [1963], p.133.
64 Translation taken over from Rošker, 2009b, p.381.
65 See Xiong, [1932], pp.3-10.
should not inhibit the emergence of the latter. In the end however, we are left with the vague indication that “wisdom is the root and source, whereas cognitive capacities are the streams and the offshoots” (智慧为本为源，知能为流为末) and, in Tang's case, with the idea of a plurality of mutually non-exclusive perspectives that are not, as in Mou's case, systematically unified in an elaborate transcendental account. In other words, the problem Mou Zongsan tried to further address was that of – in a reversal of the traditional Buddhist idea of transforming the attachments of cognition into enlightened wisdom (转识成智) – “transforming wisdom into knowledge” (转智成识).

At the same time, Xiong Shili's and Tang Junyi's take on the relation between scientific knowledge and philosophical wisdom points towards a basic aspect and feature of their work which Mou shared in common with them, namely a paradoxical wavering between transcendence and immanence and a constant oscillation between identity and difference. Within the philosophical framework of the “horizons of the mind” (心靈境界) articulated in his final work completed a year before his death in 1977 – Life, Existence, and the Horizons of the Mind (生命存在與心靈境界) – Tang analyzed the socially disastrous consequences of science and technology, symbolized by the invention of the atomic bomb, as resulting from the “regressive” (下转) and “externalizing” (外转) extension of the (fifth) “horizon of detached observation” (观照凌虚境) in which mathematical, geometrical, and logical knowledge are formed, to the external, sensible world. This regressive application had resulted in both a theoretical and a factual relapse of human beings to the lowest horizon of “the scatteredness of the ten thousand things” (万物散殊境), in which only atomized singularities (唯一無二) remain. For Tang, this lowest sphere of perception and being also had a political dimension, designating the purely negative, abstract, and indeterminate freedom of “self-enclosed” (自我封閉) individuals

66 Xiong, [1946], p.134.
67 According to King Pong Chiu, Tang's appropriation of the Buddhist method of doctrinal classification (判教) was instrumental in epistemologically accommodating the scientific worldview, while at the same time restricting its validity to a carefully circumscribed set of objects. See Thomé H. Fang, Tang Junyi, and the Appropriation of Huayan Thought, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Manchester, 2014, pp.145-147, pp.179-184.
68 See Tang, [1977], pp.661-663.
69 A more literal translation would be “the sphere of the observation of pure emptiness”, but this hardly captures Tang's meaning. What Tang describes here is a sphere of “pure knowledge” (纯粹知识) devoid of any questions of applicability, in which the mind is only directed towards meaning (意義) and the characteristics (相) of cognitive and logical objects, and is detached from the objective world accessible through sense perception.
whose liberty can only take the form of an isolation from the bonds of family, community, and culture.\textsuperscript{70} However, the fact that for Tang, all the epistemological, ontological, cosmological, and ethical perspectives which develop from one horizon to the next have to be realized through an “unending processional sequence” (無窮之歷程次序) asymptotically bridging the gap between the is (shiran 實然) and the ought (dangran 當然)\textsuperscript{71} means that all these fields of apprehension have to be preserved and not abolished, or as he puts it, “swallowed up” (吞沒)\textsuperscript{72} in its highest stage, i.e. the Confucian “horizon of the flow of heavenly virtue” (tiande liuxing jing 天德流行境), where subject and object finally cease being “hostile entities” (敵體)\textsuperscript{73}. In relation to the problem of science, this means that the possibility of an undue extension of one horizon (e.g. of scientific observation) to “objects” that do not belong to it and over which it should have no say (e.g. ethical relations) can only be kept in check by asserting a dialectically articulated form of \textit{hierarchical division} that ensures that the higher stages of development (the last three horizons in which the subject-object dichotomy is overcome in Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism)\textsuperscript{74} have a form of transcendental dominion over the spheres of perception which focus exclusively on either the objective or the subjective: “All lower levels of the mind are unaware of the fact that there are higher levels. Higher stages of the mind however, are necessarily aware of the fact that there are lower stages” (凡低層位之心皆不知有高一層位之心。而高一層位之心，則必知有低一層位之心)\textsuperscript{75}. As I will try to show in the next subsection, this tension between the demands of a form of philosophical systematicity and non-reductive “inclusiveness” or “encompassiveness” (baohan) able to accommodate science as an (objectifying) perspective on the one hand, and the goal of safeguarding the purity of consciousness and spirit, even in the form of a wisdom which is always oriented towards the particular and the concrete, from what Kant called the “pathological” on the other, is already clearly discernible in the philosophy of Xiong Shili and was inherited in a distinct form by both of his pupils.

\textsuperscript{70} See Tang, [1977], pp.662-664.
\textsuperscript{71} Tang, [1977], p.684.
\textsuperscript{72} Tang, [1977], p.695.
\textsuperscript{73} Tang, [1977], p.2. Tang writes that the Chinese words for subject (zhu 主, “host”) and object (ke 客, “guest”) are already the mark of a form of what we might call “epistemological hospitality”.
\textsuperscript{74} Tang calls these the “horizons of the transcendence of subjectivity and objectivity” (超主觀客觀境), “horizons which are neither subjective nor objective” (非主非客境), “absolute horizons” (絕對境) or “metaphysical horizons” (形上境). See Tang, [1977], p.396.
\textsuperscript{75} Tang, [1977], p.4.
3.1.3 Lopsided identities in the philosophy of Xiong Shili

As is generally known, Xiong Shili started out as a student of the Indian school of Yogācāra (Yuqie 瑜伽) Buddhism under the guidance of Ouyang Jingwu 欧阳竟無 (1871-1943), who at the turn of the twentieth century was the most prominent exponent of the school of “consciousness-only” (vijñaptimātra, weishi 唯識), or “dharma-characteristics” (dharmalakṣaṇa, faxiang 法相). This current of Buddhist thought and practice, after having lost most of its institutional and doctrinal standing in China since the Yuan 元 dynasty (1279-1368), went through a remarkable Chinese revival from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, not in the least because of its perceived theoretical proximity to modern logical methods, epistemology, and psychology. Traditionally, Yogācāra Buddhism had been centered on yogic meditation and carrying out subtle epistemological and logical analyses in function of the broader soteriological goal of the Buddhist doctrine, that is to say, of transforming cognitive delusions and attachments into enlightened wisdom. In the context of the school of consciousness-only, “epistemology” is thus only admissible as a designation if one keeps the underlying practical dimension of these analyses in mind. Xiong Shili’s encounter with the intricate theoretical edifice of Yogācāra Buddhism gradually gave way to a conversion to a Confucianist outlook drawn from the Book of Changes and led him to the composition of his magnum opus, the Xin weishi lun 新唯識論, which grew from a commentary on Xuanzang’s 玄奘 (602–664) Treatise on the Perfection of Consciousness-only (Cheng weishi lun 成唯識論). The appearance of the first edition in 1932 resulted in protracted polemics with his former teachers and colleagues at the China Inner Learning Institute (Zhina neixue 学).
In the text of this treatise, the renegade Buddhist Xiong is immediately very clear on the fact that the character 唯 (wei) in the title of his most important philosophical work does not mean “only” or “alone” (du 獨), but rather “unique” or “particular” (teshu 特殊). Not wholly unlike traditional Yogācāra philosophy, he does not want to propagate the idea that there is literally only subjective consciousness (as in the case of solipsism) or that there is no external reality outside of the mind, as is implied by the routine but misleading translation of his Xin weishi lun 新唯識論 as New Treatise on Consciousness-only, but simply that consciousness is “unique” in being inextricably involved in the constitution of an “objective” world. The mind (xin 心) and its object-horizon (jing 境) are “two different aspects of a single totality” (一個整體的不同的兩方面), inextricably linked together in “a totality which contains an internal contradictory development” (具有內在矛盾的發展底整體). The following passage can stand as a summary of what Xiong is up to in his New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness:

Speaking of the uniqueness of consciousness is only meant to do away with the erroneous view that there are horizons external [to consciousness], it certainly does not mean that there are no object-horizons at all, but because these are not present independently from the mind, I speak of the uniqueness of consciousness […] The mind is what differentiates, whereas the object-horizon is the differentiated aspect, the latter can only appear in the presence of the former, [which is why] one should
What Xiong Shili radically objects to in the Yogācāra school of Buddhism initiated between the 4th and 5th century CE by the half-brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu is the fact that they had in his view erroneously transformed the core Buddhist doctrine of conditioned or co-dependent arising (pratītyasamutpāda, yuanqi 緣起) – according to which all entities are devoid of self-nature (svabhāva, zixing 自性) since karmic conditioning rules out the self-sufficient existence of individual beings and even that of constituent elements of being (dharmas, fa 法) – into a theory with a “constructive meaning” (構造的意義). As a result, the causes and conditions actually precluding the possibility of self-nature came to acquire a positive meaning as irreducible, constitutive factors endowed with an irreducible identity of their own. Their approach, Xiong thinks, led to a bifurcation of substance (benti 本體) and phenomena (xianxiang 現象) and resulted in an epistemological attachment to the phenomenal level which the doctrine of conditioned arising was in his view precisely designed to overcome. In Xiong's philosophy, the ultimate unreality of phenomena as “false characteristics” (虛假相) that have to be “emptied out” (kong 空) thus negatively points towards the fundamental reality of the mind as the source of cognitive discriminations which can be mistaken for ontologically “constructive” elements given without the involvement of consciousness. In short, one must “break through characteristics in order to show essential nature” (破相顯性). This also expresses itself in a not straightforwardly “cognitive” way. As Xiong explains, “the substance of all things is not a horizon external to the mind, meaning that it is not a realm which can be reached through the operations of cognition” (一切物的本體，非是離自心外在境界，及非知識所行境界).

86 Xiong, [1932], p.25. This also leads Xiong to the Kantian conclusion that the laws of nature are imposed on rather than discovered in reality. See ibid., p.26.
87 See Dessein and Heirman, 2005, p.182.
88 Xiong Shili was a trenchant critic of the Yogācāra theory of “seeds” which he saw as a form of “metaphysical pluralism”, or an “amassing theory” (堆集論). See Connelly, 1978, pp.103-106. See Xiong, [1932], pp.19-24 and Comprehensive Explanation of Buddhist Terms (Fo jia ming xiang tong shi 佛家名相通释), Shanghai: Zhongguo dabaikequanshe chubanshe, [1936a] 1985, pp.18-21 for his critique of such “atomism”.
89 See Xiong, [1932], pp.47-50.
90 Xiong, [1932], p.116.
91 Xiong, [1932], p.3.
Originally Xiong had intended to compose the *New Treatise* in two separate parts: a “discussion of cognitive horizons” (*jinglun* 境論) dealing with issues of ontology and cosmology; and a “discussion of quantitative [knowledge]” (*lianglun* 量論) providing an independent theory of knowledge, but only managed to complete the first section. This does not mean however that there are no epistemological considerations to be found in his *New Treatise*, far from it. What is in my view so remarkable about this work and about Xiong Shili's philosophy in general, is that Xiong sets out to grasp the inseparability of metaphysical substance (*ti*) and phenomenal function (*yong*), and thus of the fundamental absence of ontologically charged dichotomies, precisely on the basis of what would at first glance appear to be a strictly idealist presupposition, namely that the objectivity and externality of reality are constituted “inside” and through the mind alone, or, in Husserl's words, that “objectivity is, and must manifest itself cognitively”. It is fascinating that Xiong chose to depart from the reinterpretation of an outlook completely at odds with the very notion of anything “substantial” in order to ground the reality of substance, a process in which he by his own admission “roamed in between Buddhism and Confucianism” (*游乎佛與儒之間*)

Xiong shows no hesitation whatsoever in declaring that the independent existence of objective things is “purely a construction for the practical demands of consciousness” (*純是意識因實用的需要而構造的*)

However, his arguments for the basic “unreality” of the external world in abstraction from the mind are always articulated in the form of an opposition to the illusory hypostasisation of a universe characterized by incessant transformation into a fixed and static thing. The oppositional relation between the mind (*xin*) and its object-horizon (*jing*) or between knower (*nengyuan* 能緣) and the known (*suoyuan* 所緣) as subject and object respectively, is thus overcome through the idea that the epistemological relations characterizing the “quantitative knowledge” of the “habituated mind” (*xixin*) through which science operates are positively absent from the mind in its original state (*benxin*), the latter expressing itself in the form of wisdom and not as knowledge in the strict sense of the word. In other words, epistemological oppositions are secondary to

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92 See Xiong, [1932], p.4 (preface) and Xiong, [1945], p.180. He mentions this incompleteness in his 1936 letter to Tang Junyi as well. Also see Liu Junping 劉軍平 and Qing Ping 秦平, “Contemporary Chinese Studies of Xiong Shili 熊十力”, *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, vol.5, no.1, 2005, pp.166-168.

93 According to Liu Aijun, Xiong was unable to finish the second part of his work because he could not separate epistemological from ontological questions. See Liu Aijun 刘爱君, *Cognition and Intuitive Knowledge – A Study of Mou Zongsan’s Epistemological Thought (Shizhi yu zhizhi – Mou Zongsan zhishilun sixiang yanjiu)* 认知与智知 — 牟宗三知识论思想研究), Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2008, pp.13-14.

94 Xiong, [1932], p.145. Also see pp.93-94.

95 Xiong, [1932], p.14.

96 See Xiong, [1932], p.37.
ontological unity. The original mind, as Xiong stresses, “is not something which I can personally claim for myself; rather, it is true nature in which I am completely united with the ten thousand things in one single substance” (非吾身之所得私也，乃吾與萬物渾然同體之真性也)\(^97\). It is only for the habituated mind, which Xiong reveliously describes as “the reifier” (wuhua zhe 物化者)\(^98\), that there are “objective” things opposed to the subject to begin with. The original mind on the other hand, “incarnates things without becoming reified by them [...] it can command things without becoming subordinated to them” (體物而不物於物 [...] 能御物而不役於物也)\(^99\). As such, it is not something that directly serves a cognitive, but rather an ontological function as the ultimate ground of all reality.

To the culturalized differentiation between science (West) and philosophy (China), largely along the lines of the arguments put forward by the metaphysicians in the 1923 debate, Xiong adds the universalistic intra-philosophical distinction between epistemology (knowledge) and ontology (wisdom). This is what causes Xiong to claim that “the only thing that allows philosophy to stand its ground is the fact that ontology cannot be wrested away from philosophy by science” (哲學所以站脚得住者，只以本體論是科學所奪不去的)\(^100\). It also explains why he finds it so disturbing that a great deal of modern philosophers “loathe ontology” (厭聞本體論)\(^101\). The epistemological subordination of objectivity to consciousness, which, when taken to its extreme, could shed doubt on the reality of the non-mental world and degrade it to the status of a mere subjective illusion, is thus supplemented with an even more fundamental ontological identity of the mind in its pure state with the essential nature (xing 性) of all entities that can enter into an object-horizon, a place where they can subsequently be cognized, doubted, and even denied.

Within the framework of this tension between epistemology and ontology, there is what one might call a certain “bias” at work inside the various conceptual identities Xiong Shili continuously tries to establish and defend throughout the *New Treatise*, a bias which exceeds that of his programmatic assumptions concerning the uniqueness and privileged position of the mind vis-à-vis its object-horizons. Crucially, this is the case for the fundamental identity of permanence and change\(^102\) which

\(^{97}\) Xiong, [1932], p.8.
\(^{98}\) Xiong, [1932], p.8.
\(^{99}\) Xiong, [1932], p.9.
\(^{100}\) Xiong, [1932], p.6. My italics.
\(^{101}\) Xiong, [1958], p.11.
\(^{102}\)“If one says that substance is unchanging, then change is already included; if one says that substance is changing, then this already includes the unchanging” (若說本體是不變易的，便已涵著變易，若說本體是變易的，便已涵著不變
Xiong sees as underlying all existence and the coming into being of the whole universe. The “permanent transformation” (hengzhuan 恆轉) that comes about through a polar cosmological process of interaction between “contraction”/“closing” (xi 聚) and “expansion”/“opening” (pi 開) – as two different aspects of a function (identical to substance) that gives rise to matter (wuzhi 物質) and spirit (jingshen 精神) respectively – is clearly dependent, not on the changeability, but on the permanence of the identity of permanence and change, permanent transformation “ultimately always remaining identical to its own nature” (畢竟常如其性). As Xiong announces in his preface to the New Treatise to set himself apart from Hegelian dialectics, his intention is “to observe what is truly permanent within change, and to recognize harmony within oppositions” (於變易而見真常，於反動而識衝和). Now Xiong Shili is certainly no run-of-the-mill idealist. He is not willing to introduce a categorical ontological separation between the “expansion” which gives rise to spirit and the “contraction” conditioning the existence of matter and the generation of determinate objects which effectively constitutes “the circulation of the great function” (大用的流行), even if the latter can at times “approximate reification” (近於物化) and thus no longer bear the mark of the ceaseless change from which it originally came forth. At various instances it becomes clear that he thinks both materialism and idealism are partial and biased outlooks that can never hope to grasp the foundational identity of substance and function in its various guises. Still, his rejection to accord a higher place to spiritual “expansion” than to material “contraction” does not prevent Xiong from making the following arguments:

contraction originally submits to expansion; in other words, contraction [also] has the nature of being directed upwards [and not only downwards]. This is because contraction is submissive to expansion, and since expansion is directed upwards, the same goes for contraction as well […] In summary, contraction and expansion are fundamentally not separate substances, but simply designate a difference in capacity. Expansion can only function once there is contraction, and contraction can only begin to circulate after

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103 Interestingly enough, Xiong was inspired by Yan Fu’s use of these terms from the Yijing. Yan saw the process of alternation between xi and pi as somehow close to modern conceptions of evolution. See Lin Zhenguo 林鎮國, Emptiness and Modernity (Kongxing yu xiandaixing 空性與現代性), Taipei: Wenxu wenhua shiye, 1999, pp.79-80.
104 Xiong, [1932], p.67.
106 Xiong, [1932], p.68.
107 See for example Xiong, [1958], pp.92-93.
108 See Xiong, [1958], p.14, p.73.
there is an expansion by which it is governed. If there were to be only expansion without contraction, then there would just be an empty vastness without any concrete things [...] Should there be only contraction and no expansion, then that would amount to a complete reification and the universe would turn into a solidified and dead thing. As a dead thing it would have no force of its own, or in other words, it would not have any governing power and would be completely mechanical, whereas in fact the universe is a totality circulating without any obstruction [...] Now expansion may have characteristics, but it does not have any shape [...] it is present everywhere and directed upwards [...] it extends and is full of vigor. Contraction [on the other hand] is shaped, has a [determinate] place [...] and [is characterized by] a tendency to sag downwards. In this sense, the force of contraction runs contrary to substance [as the unity of contraction and expansion]¹⁰⁹ [...] expansion [alone] may not be identical to substance [...]¹¹⁰ but since it is not reified, it arises from substance [itself]. It has no shape, is omnipresent, is upwardly oriented and so on, precisely because it manifests the self-nature of substance.

I think passages such as this show that inside of the ontological and cosmological identity of expansive spirit and contracted matter, there is still an elective affinity between the identity of substance and function on the one hand, and one of the aspects in which this unity realizes and manifests itself,

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¹⁰⁹Cf. Xiong, [1932], p.78 and Xiong, [1958], p.13.
¹¹⁰This and the previous four lacunae in my translation are in-text auto-commentaries in the original text which I have omitted for the sake of brevity.
¹¹¹Xiong, [1932], pp.69-70. Emphasis added.
namely the expansion equivalent to mind or spirit, on the other. This affinity allows Xiong to say that, in relation to expansion, contraction is “an instrument it employs” and that “ultimately, expansion contains contraction, and contraction is subordinated to expansion.” Although he declares that neither materialism nor idealism are able to simultaneously distinguish and identify substance and function, it is hard not to notice that Xiong spends a lot more time and effort debunking the materialist misinterpretations of the identity of substance and function than the idealist ones. If anything, this tendency becomes perhaps even more marked in two of his later works, the Treatise on Substance and Function (Tiyong lun) and the Chapter Elucidating the Mind (Ming xin pian) from 1958 and 1959 respectively, which are sometimes presented as constituting a definitive move towards a complete rejection of dualism and a more radical form of ontological monism. Why else would he go to the trouble of demonstrating in these texts that spirit cannot possibly be a by-product of matter, that organic and conscious life are not reducible to their material constituents, and indeed even arguing that there cannot be any causal relations between matter and spirit at all “since there is not a single point of similarity between them” ? The idea that causal connections between matter and spirit have to be excluded impossible hinges on a Buddhist-inspired distinction which has been gratefully employed by New Confucian thinkers from Liang Shuming to Mou Zongsan and beyond, namely between “real causes” or “causes of the same kind” on the one hand, and “accompanying causes”, “auxiliary conditions”, or “external conditions” on the other. It is only the former that can be called causes in the proper sense of the word. I already indicated in the previous chapter that this distinction was often bound up with rejections of historical materialism and pleas for the notion of culture as Spirit. For Xiong, the difference between causes and conditions primarily has a conceptual function in ruling out the possibility of any causal impact of the external conditions of matter on the internal trajectory of

112Xiong, [1932], p.76.
113Xiong, [1932], p.71.
114Xiong, [1932], p.77.
115See Xiong, [1958], p.92.
116See the previous chapter, page 173, note 317.
117See Xiong, [1958], pp.93-96.
118See Xiong, [1958], pp.95-96 and Chapter Elucidating the Mind (Ming xin pian 明心篇), Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, [1959] 2009, pp.112-114.
spirit, and the other way around as well. Matter and spirit can only “gaze at each other” (相望)\(^{119}\). However, in line with the long quote I gave in the above, Xiong proceeds to elucidate the “specificity of spirit” (精神之特殊處) in the context of the categorical dissimilarity between the spiritual and the material by stressing that unlike matter, spirit is not constrained or “enclosed” (封畛)\(^{120}\) in any way, ultimately supervises, controls, and steers the material dimension, and makes all forms of development and evolution possible on a cosmological scale.\(^{121}\) The identity of matter and spirit that is supposed to be more essential than their difference remains strictly asymmetrical, and is constituted through its, so to speak, conceptually “protruding” side.\(^{122}\) At the same time, Xiong himself is the first to insist in these very same texts that the greatest error, especially prevalent in Western philosophy, consists in conceiving of essential reality (shiti 實體) as something “absolute” (juedui 絕對) with a “singular nature” (danchunxing 單純性). Such assumptions preclude grasping the dynamic “composite nature” (fuzaxing 复雜性) of metaphysical essence, which actually thrives on its internal contradictions. Still, in the end, Xiong resolves these contradictions by appealing to the “containment” or “encompassing” (baohan 包涵) of one of the two sides of the distinction (contraction, matter) through the other (expansion, spirit), with only the latter enabling them to be presented as internal in the first place.\(^{123}\) My point is not to show that Xiong Shili contradicts himself or is being inconsistent. Nothing is solved by calling Epimenides the Cretan a liar. The hierarchical procedure of l’englobement du contraire (“the encompassing of contraries”)\(^ {124}\) in his work can, I think, be better understood when one takes into account that the perceived need, resulting from the forceful encounter with the modern categorization of knowledge, to differentiate between wisdom and science, distinguish China from the West, and at the same time join together what thereby comes to be divided and opposed, resulted in the positive affirmation of an “inbound” form of knowledge that is designated as the origin of distinctions which it must be able to reconcile and overcome internally without thereby eradicating or excluding them. Already in Xiong's writings, one can see a strong affinity being established between the objectivity of “outbound” knowledge and scientific reasoning (an objectivity that is approached with a dominantly

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\(^{119}\) Xiong, [1959], p.114.

\(^{120}\) Xiong, [1958], p.96.

\(^{121}\) Xiong, [1958], pp.99-102. Also see Xiong, [1959], pp.114-118, pp.149-151, p.161.

\(^{122}\) As a consequence, Xiong appears as an unabashedly anthropocentric thinker who claimed that “the position of the human race within heaven and earth and the ten thousand things is much like that of the brain within the body” (人類之在天地萬物中也，殆猶大腦之在人體內). Xiong, [1932], p.254. Cf. Xiong, [1958], p.153.

\(^{123}\) See Xiong, [1959], pp.118-121.

pragmatic and functional attitude, since wisdom should not override science, lest it turn into ignorance), and a form objectivity that violates the categorical dependency of knowledge on wisdom and on the subject, the latter “reifying” form of objectivity also being tentatively associated with socio-political pathologies and a reductionism or a force of abstraction that is not so much abstract as it is real. This tendency would become much more strongly developed in the work of second generation New Confucians, where there is a clear difference between objectification (Objektivierung, duixianghua 對像化) as a “neutral” and functional procedure without which there would be no science, and reification (Verdinglichung, wuhua 物化) as the pathological objectification and alienation of what is inherently subjective. Of course, this difference did not prevent them from associating objectification with alienating reification.  

Admittedly, only objectification is developed into a full-blown concept, whereas the term reification remains in play like a metaphor among concepts that changes their historical import.

3.1.4 The sense of transcendence and the place for spirit in the philosophy of Tang Junyi

The work of Tang Junyi offers another good opportunity to observe how a certain internal “lopsidedness” continues to accompany many New Confucian assertions of non-duality and identity. Roger Ames, who is one of the few prominent Western sinologists to have extensively drawn on the modern Confucian's to this day very much understudied philosophy, has repeatedly presented Tang as an avatar for his own notion of a non-individualist Confucian “role ethics”, an ethics which is not grounded in an abstract, formal, and rationalistic (“Western”) fashion imploding morality into quasi-legal criteria (the name of Kant looms large here), but is based on natural family ties and the basic

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125 See Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness, London: Merlin Press, 1971, p.xxiv: “[O]bjectification is indeed a phenomenon that cannot be eliminated from human life in society. If we bear in mind that every externalization of an object in practice (and hence, too, in work) is an objectification, that every human expression including speech objectifies human thoughts and feels, then it is clear that we are dealing with a universal mode of commerce between men. And in so far as this is the case, objectification is a neutral phenomenon […] Only when the objectified forms in society acquire functions that bring the essence of man into conflict with his existence, only when man's nature is subjugated, deformed and crippled, can we speak on an objective societal condition of alienation.” Though he was never so clear on the matter as the Marxist Lukács, Mou Zongsan observed a minimal distinction between “natural/normal reification” (天然的物化) and “intentional reification” (作意的物化). See “Introspections after a Great Disaster” (Da nan hou de fansheng 大難後的反省), [1947] in ZW2, pp.989-993. In Tang Junyi's writings, the socially determinate dimension of the term wuhua 物化, linked to a quasi-Weberian idea of rationalization and specialization, is generally much more explicit.

human emotions which accompany and run through these intersubjective relations. For Ames it stands beyond all doubt that “Tang Junyi's New Confucianism is not so new”. As far as he is concerned, Tang's philosophy positively lacks novelty, though of course not creativity, because of its age-old and typically (although one could argue not at all uniquely) Confucian stress on the primordial role of “family feeling” as the very direct and tangible foundation of moral behavior and ethical relations, politics in turn being “a direct extension of the family.” The ethical outlook Ames ascribes to Tang Junyi is coupled to a somewhat unfounded insistence on the putative absence of ontological dualisms and the elaboration of a radical form of anti-substantialism and immanence in the latter's philosophical thought. What Ames leaves out of consideration in the course of defending his idea of role ethics through the medium of Tang Junyi is the fact that what appealed to Tang so much in the work of German idealist philosophers such as Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, was precisely what he called their stress on the “transcendent character” (chaoyuexing 超越性), “all-inclusiveness” (hangaixing 涵蓋性) and “sovereignty” (zhuzaixing 主宰性) of the mind over the objective world as a subjectively preconditioned and circumscribed horizon. I think it is safe to say that, with the notable exception of “morality” and “moral” (daode 道德), “transcendence” (chaoyue 超越) is the term one most frequently

127“Confucian role ethics is not just an abstract theory that provides principled moral judgments for those particular problematic situations we might encounter along the way, nor does it give primacy to developing a deliberate, rational means to achieve some moral end […] Confucius offers a way of trying to live consummately in family and community through achieving relational virtuosity (仁) in one's conduct.” Roger T. Ames, Confucian Role Ethics: a Vocabulary, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011, pp.164-165.

130To make his case, Ames usually refers to one of Tang's earliest pieces of writing, “An Interpretation of the Fundamental Spirit of Chinese Culture” (Zhongguo wenhua genben jingshen zhi yi zhong jieshi 中國文化根本精神之一解釋), [1935] in Collection of Comparative Essays on Chinese and Western Philosophical Thought (Zhongxi zhexue sixiang zhi bijiao lunwen ji 中西哲學思想之比較論文集), vol.11 of TJ, pp.1-40. It seems to me that Ames's definition of what he and David Hall call “strict transcendence” is so broad and vague is that could be applied to any explanatory principle, regardless of its philosophical leanings, either towards or away from dualism: “Strict transcendence may be understood as follows: a principle, A, is transcendent with respect to that, B, which it serves as principle if the meaning or import of B cannot be fully analyzed and explained without recourse to A, but the reverse is not the case.” David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, Thinking through Confucius, Albany (N.Y.): State University of New York Press, 1987, p.13. I think Christian Uhl is quite right to point out in the context of his critique of poststructuralism that “[i]n fact, every explanation is in a way “metaphysical,” since an explanation, in order to be one, has to relate to a deeper reality behind what it explains (a reason why), and to what as such is reduced, and degraded to a mere surface phenomenon (such as a “superstructure”). Yet, such a hierarchy of depth and surface, of essence and appearance, etc., is precisely what the above two-dimensional metaphors—the various “in-betweens,” “third spaces,” “middle zones,” “contact nebulae,” and so forth—are designed to deny. They are an expression of the liberal wish to flatten the world. What remains is sheer, abundant diversity and anarchic complexity (and what can be more anarchic and complex than a paradox?). This complexity can be empirically described, and metaphorically depicted; but it shall not be explained (beware of the “hubris of reason”).”
encounters in reading through Tang's oeuvre, sometimes even *ad nauseam*. Additionally, as we saw in the first chapter, for Tang, human beings are not only constituted by their direct intersubjective social roles and natural family ties, but also, and I am tempted to say above all, by their relation to a subject of a wholly different order, that is to say, to culture as “the God of the Chinese people”. A Chinese person cannot really qualify as an individual if he or she is not and does not behave as *culturally* Chinese as well. In this sense, Spirit stands in between the self and the proximate other, interposes itself in the relation of an individual to himself or herself as well, and mediates any supposedly natural and emotional immediacy to a considerable extent in the process. Perhaps a naturalization of culture into a quasi-genetic code could restore immediacy to subjectivity and intersubjectivity, but unfortunately Tang Junyi's account of culture is an unabashedly lopsided one. Subjects become subjects by virtue of Spirit. As far as I can tell, Ames does not really take this problematic dimension of Tang's thought into account.

In my opinion, Tang Junyi is a lot closer to being an idiosyncratic example of a philosopher of transcendental subjectivity than Ames would probably be willing to admit. There are numerous indications that for Tang, intersubjectivity is ultimately but one of the possible *modalities of transcendence*, and not the other way around. As he writes unreservedly: “Transcending the self to observe the self is the root of all goodness.” (超越自己以觀自己，乃萬善之本) It has to be stressed from the onset that for Tang, “transcendence” (*chaoyue*) is not merely a figure of speech denoting the overcoming of egotistic self-interest and an ethically pernicious attachment to one's own “limited self” (*xiaoji* 小己), but is intrinsically linked to the faculties of consciousness and self-consciousness and to ontological differences and gradations that have nothing immanent about them at all. Self-consciousness (*zijue* 自覺) is made possible through and reveals transcendence. In this regard, it is revealing that Tang understands the role of Confucius in the development of the Confucian teaching primarily in transcendental terms, by arguing that Confucius self-consciously reformulated what had remained a merely unreflective social and ethical framework inherited from the sage kings. In the figure of Confucius, Confucianism becomes conscious of the direct ethical relations it had perhaps

134 Tang, [1977], pp.671-672.
been emphasizing all along.\textsuperscript{135} Tang does not hide the fact that he believes it is consciousness that serves as the ultimate assurance for the possibility of a genuinely moral life.\textsuperscript{136} As a result, intersubjectivity functions more as an intermediary mechanism for transcendence than as a final station, constituting what he calls “an occasion for the broadening and the surpassing of the horizons of one's own life” (自己之生活境界之擴大超升之機)\textsuperscript{137}. In the encounter between different human beings, self and other mutually recognize and confirm each other's independent existence as beings that are external to each other, and by doing so confirm both each other and themselves as self-conscious, moral, and autonomous beings that can subsequently re-connect through the medium of morality, and thus again, by way of transcendence.\textsuperscript{138} The constant point of reference in Tang's works is not so much the relation of the self to the other, but rather how the self relates to itself, amongst others through the medium of intersubjectivity. As I will indicate in what follows, what is even more primordial for Tang than the human subject is the reflexivity and a \textit{transcendental relationality} stemming from transcendence, a reflexivity of which, at least in Tang's most radically immanent of philosophical conceptualizations, the subject in turn in a certain sense becomes but another modality.

Luckily, more straightforward confirmations of the paramount importance Tang attached not to natural and unmediated emotions, but to the ability of human beings to act rationally and consciously in function of what Kant called “the moral law within” can be found as well. In a concise definition at the beginning of his \textit{The Establishment of a Moral Self} (Daode ziwo zhi jianli 道德自我之建立), Tang states that a moral life consists in “self-consciously controlling oneself through one's own efforts” (自覺的自己支配自己)\textsuperscript{139}. In a perhaps even more categorical statement, he claims that “what makes a moral mindset moral, is that it only relies on its own activity of self-transcendence. It is only when one transcends oneself that one can reach other people and the natural world; therefore, it is only self-transcendence which constitutes the essence of all forms of a moral mentality” (道德心理之所以成為道德心理，則唯賴自己超越之活動。才從自己超越，即達於人與自然，故唯此自己超越，為構

\textsuperscript{136}See Tang, [1977], pp.348-351.
\textsuperscript{137}Tang, [1977], p.361.
This also entails that in the eyes of Tang Junyi, even seemingly pedestrian activities and habits such as eating, through which “coarse nutrients are transformed into fine cells” (粗糙的食物，将变成了精致的细胞), somehow count as counterintuitive expressions of the ability of human beings to establish a kind of rudimentary connection (goutong 溝通) and “interpenetration” (huxiang shenrong 互相滲融) between self and non-self through which individuals transcend their self-enclosure.\(^{141}\) It will be clear that in this case, the “non-self” or “other” does not have to be another subject at all. If we carry his own line of reasoning to an extreme, Tang would be forced to concur with Zhuangzi’s daring declaration that the omnipresence of the Way implies accepting that it “is in piss and in shit” (在屎溺)\(^ {142}\) as well. No doubt, he would only be willing to do so on the condition that urine and feces can be reinterpreted as symbolizing and incarnating transcendence in one way or another. For Tang, even the existence of hypocrisy and the mere pretense of acting or being moral is a sufficient proof for the irreducibility of goodness, since, as he argues, “that human beings are obliged to use goodness as a mask proves that they cannot forget about the good” (人們必須以良善為面具，這是證明了人們是忘不了良善的).\(^ {143}\) That Tang's arch-enemy Nietzsche could say more or less the same thing about horror and monstrosity in Beyond Good and Evil is something I will not dwell on here. The obvious problem with what has often be termed Tang's “pan-moralist” approach\(^ {144}\) is that the category of transcendence provides a totally amoral criterion. Couldn't one say with equal right that a suicide bomber also engages in an act of ultimate “self-transcendence” by relinquishing his earthly existence and possessions in the service of a greater good, even if one takes the latter to be fundamentally misguided and his action to be morally despicable? In the end, the ambiguity of transcendence as a criterion for morality forces Tang to fall back on what Hegel called the “empty formalism” of the Kantian categorical imperative\(^ {145}\) in order to differentiate moral from immoral transcendence. Quite often, Tang Junyi sounds very much like a straightforward idealist and an extreme mind-body dualist who disparages the body as a prison inhibiting the transcendence of the mind and condemns the shackles of the material world as standing in the way of the realization of goodness. This becomes

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140 Tang, [1963], p.28.
143 Tang, [1944], p.34.
rather obvious when he declares that “the true victory of spirit occurs when it raises its brilliant banner on top of the enemy's fortress” (精神真正的戰勝，是在它敵人的城堡上，插下他耀目之旗幟)\(^{146}\), the enemy and the fortress in question of course being the human body, its physical needs, and material desires.\(^ {147}\) When talking about “feelings of filial piety” (孝之情) for example, what concerned Tang most of all was confirming that these kind of feelings “are purely spiritual, and not biological” (純精神的，非生物性的).\(^ {148}\) Commenting on physical love and sexual reproduction, which in his view also constitute instances of self-transcendence, Tang notes that “the body of the child is nothing but a symbolic signifier” (兒子的身體，也只是象徵的符號)\(^ {149}\) for the love between husband and wife. This phrase alone would suffice to raise the question as to how radically or straightforwardly “immanent” Tang's ethical and ontological outlook really is. His bottom-line assumption that all human activities, and indeed the universe as a whole, are expressions, manifestations, or at least symbolic signifiers of morality, value, and meaning presupposes the kind of metaphysical and ontological distinctions Ames thinks an archetypally Confucian thinker such as Tang Junyi would be almost automatically averse to.

Crucially, bridging the gap between signifier and signified, unavoidably introduced when the evaluation of behavior and actions comes to be predicated on the moral value they express and the meaning they symbolize through the attributed quality of transcendence, caused a lot of conceptual difficulties for Tang. His highly complex essay “Introduction to the World of Sense” (Yiwei zhi shijie daoyan 意味之世界導言) from 1944 warrants our attention in this respect.\(^ {150}\) Tang begins this text by boldly asserting that

\[\text{the whole world is a world of sense. The world is nothing but sense; both spiritual and material entities of both the higher and lower orders are all identical to sense. From the standpoint of sense, the distinctions between spiritual and material, as well as between higher and lower seize to have any meaning, nor can one continue to maintain distinctions between all different kinds of entities.}\]

\(^{146}\) Tang, [1944], p.51.
\(^{147}\) Also see Tang, [1961c], pp.21-24 and the whole of his Mind, Matter, and Human Existence (Xinwu yu rensheng 心物與人生), [1953a] vol.2 of TJ.
\(^{148}\) Tang, [1977], p.503.
\(^{149}\) Tang, [1944], p.46.
\(^{150}\) Introduction to the World of Sense” (Yiwei zhi shijie daoyan 意味之世界導言), in Collected Philosophical Essays (Zhexue lunji 哲學論集), [1943] vol.18 of TJ, pp.93-118.
\(^{151}\) Tang, [1943], p.93.
整個世界即是一味的世界。世界即是意味，一切精神物質的存在，上界下界的存在，都是意味。從意味的觀點，也不復有所謂精神、物質，上界、下界之分別，也不復有各種存在之分別。

Remarkably enough, these holistically-sounding and strikingly anti-dualist announcements lead Tang to conclusions which are far removed from his own programmatic intentions. That “the world is nothing but sense” takes on a whole different meaning in the winding course of this fascinating and mind-boggling essay. Let us have a look at how Tang arrives at these observations and try to briefly summarize his line of reasoning. He opens his essay by drawing a distinction between “meaning” or “reference” (yiyi 意義) on the one hand, and what could be translated as “sense” (yiwei 意味) on the other. In short, “meaning” for Tang entails the indication of a discrete object in reality. The “meaning” of the word “dog” for example is a particular four-legged, barking, tail-wagging animal referred to by a speaker in a certain context. Meaning is therefore tied to a real, concrete object, and is always specific, fixed, and determinate insofar as what is referred to in reality can count as a stable correlate of empirical cognition to which a speaker can refer. Meaning or reference is an “instrument” (gongju 工具) and a “symbol” (xiangzheng 象徵) that has to be “transcended” in order for the communicating subject to arrive at what is referred to in a certain statement.152 Conversely, inquiring into the meaning of a given thing involves leaving behind and overcoming the concreteness and particularity of the sensible object that can be signified and meant. According to Tang, if one immediately goes on to apply this rudimentary theory of linguistic signification to the world as a totality, by asserting that the whole world is nothing but “meaning” (yiyi 意義), this would imply that the whole world “should also be taken as a symbol, pointing at and referring to another thing, [so that] the entire phenomenal universe becomes an emblem for something else” (亦當可當作一符號，而指示引導我們到另外一東西，整個宇宙現象只是一另外東西的象徵)153. Such an outlook however, is totally unacceptable for Tang, since it would transform the universe as a totality of signifiable and signified things into an indiscriminate, chaotic mess in which all individual differences are erased and nothing determinate can be indicated anymore; leaving only the vague and largely unspecified belief that there is “another thing” outside of the ensemble of phenomena referred to by the “emblematic” or “symbolic” universe as a whole. That the meaning of the world would come to be located outside of the world itself clashes with his anti-dualist intentions and would turn the entire world into a mere stand-in for another, wholly

152 See Tang, [1943], pp.93-94.
153 Tang, [1943], p.94.
unknowable realm divorced from the immanence of subjective life. If the whole world is turned into “meaning”, it becomes a meaningless signifier for an indeterminate referent. Allow me to note in passing that the abstract equivalence resulting from this totalization of the world into a bare signifier bears an uncanny resemblance to the operational logic of capital analyzed by Marx. From this perspective, it is obviously not meaning as exchange value, but rather as a form of irreducible intrinsic value Tang Junyi is after; a value where all distinctions would fall away in a different manner, that is to say, in which they are not effaced and made equivalent but positively sublated. This is what leads Tang to the introduction of the term “sense” (yiwei 意味), which he does not directly define but describes as “an appreciation of a meaning that has not yet been [fully] cognized” (未意識到的意義之領略)\textsuperscript{154}.

“Sense” is another form of signification that allows the externality and opposition between signifier and signified on which “meaning” as the reference to discrete, objectively given phenomena hinges to be overcome. In contrast to meaning, the sense (yiwei) of a particular thing is not so much located in the thing itself, as it is “in the relation between the object itself and the meaning which it contains” (在其與其所含意義之關係上)\textsuperscript{155}. Simply put, “sense” is to be looked for, not in the object, but in the relation between the object and its meaning, a relation to be established by the knowing or rather “sensing” subject, who can vaguely yet unmistakably “sense” something – by means of association, memory, expectation, imagination, and so on – in a given object to which it can relate in a cognitive and/or emotional manner without being fully conscious of its definitive and determinate meaning, a procedure Tang compares to the experience of tasting a certain flavor.\textsuperscript{156} Though Tang is far from clear on the exact “meaning” of the idea of “sense”, it soon becomes obvious that the operation of transcendence which already played an important role in carrying out acts of standard signification (“meaning”) is once again called upon to give an intricate transcendental account of the workings of sense and sensing. He claims that in order for the sense or the value (jiazhi 价值)\textsuperscript{157} of any given thing to be observed, “it is necessary to transcend the object in question” (必須超越此對象)\textsuperscript{158}, implying in effect that “the objective world [must] be annulled” (取消對象世界)\textsuperscript{159}. What Tang means by this is that the straightforward oppositional relation between subject and object characteristic of attributions of meaning takes on a completely different form in the act and the experience of sensing:

\textsuperscript{154}Tang, [1943], p.95.
\textsuperscript{155}Tang, [1943], p.97.
\textsuperscript{156}See Tang, [1943], pp.95-97.
\textsuperscript{157}On the equivalence between sense and value see Tang, [1943], p.113 and p.118.
\textsuperscript{158}Tang, [1943], p.98.
\textsuperscript{159}Tang, [1943], p.101.
When looking for the sense of an object, one's gaze cannot get bogged down in the object, but neither should one think it possible to go from the object to its meaning, because knowing the meaning of an object is not the same as apprehending its sense. Apprehending the sense of something is to provisionally appreciate its meaning without as of yet knowing [exactly] what it is, which means that one can only apprehend it without looking for it [as something that can be definitively known]. The mental horizon involved in the transcendence of the object in apprehending sense is one of a pure transcendence which does not arrive at anything [fixed]. It is only because one does not arrive at anything [definitive] that one does not leave the object [as is the case with meaning, where one leaves the object as soon as one has understood its meaning]; therefore the relation between the mental horizon and the object in the apprehension of sense is one of both non-identity and non-separation.

In this form of “pure transcendence”, both the object and the subject are left behind in order to put a stop to the externality of signifier and signified that Tang thinks is invariably introduced by engaging in the activity of assigning reference and meaning. In assigning meaning to something, everything different from the thing in question (the world outside of the specific state of affairs “meaningfully” designated and signified) becomes a potential predicate subordinated to meaning as a subject in both a grammatical and an epistemological sense. This pure transcendence enables the subject to access sense as a relation between subject and object in which it too must be transcended and “forgotten” (忘掉). In the experience and the apprehension of sense, subject and object are no longer opposed, and by virtue of the removal of their mutual opposition, the world indeed would seem to have become a place of total and far-reaching immanence, where “all senses are subjects, subjected to other subjects” (一切意味都是主體，都是隸屬於其他主體). However, the relation of sense emerging from the reciprocal cancellation of subject and object, transcending themselves by parting with the identity established in opposition to one another, has nothing to do with intersubjectivity in the strict sense of the word, but designates a relation between concepts argumentatively and structurally grounded in the

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160 Tang, [1943], p.98.
162 Tang, [1943], p.101.
category of transcendence. In the movement of sense in a neither subjective nor objective relation of subject to object, transcendence ends up leaving even the subject behind as it is reflexively deployed. What is important then, is to observe that Tang does not simply depart from what he too would take to be a dogmatic and question-begging confirmation of immanence as the essential feature of human existence or being as such, but arrives at a vision of radical immanence in the form of a world of sense where all distinctions have been actively overcome and forgotten exactly through various stages of transcendence. This becomes abundantly clear in the remaining portion of the essay, where Tang Junyi's train of thought takes a cosmological turn by describing the whole universe as an expression of the "pure movement" (chundong 純動) of sense in terms that unmistakably betray the influence of Xiong Shili.  

What happens in these pages is quite astounding in the light of the conclusions Tang had arrived at so far. He goes on to reinstate stratified, dualistic distinctions between inanimate things, living organisms, and conscious human beings in a dialectical logic of development that describes a "transcendence in stages" (層層的超越) and a form of "layered sense" (層層的意味). It becomes obvious that not everything is sense in the same sense of the word. For Tang, material forms of existence are only endowed with "a kind of external unity" (一種外在的統一), but cannot sense let alone know that they are "together", since they "cannot apprehend this higher unity" (不能感此更高的統一), and "cannot apprehend that their own apprehension is the same apprehension they share in common with other things" (不能感他們自己之感與他物之感是同一的感). In the end it is again mind, spirit, consciousness, and self-consciousness that are drummed up to introduce qualitative and hierarchical distinctions into what Tang Junyi himself had managed to quite spectacularly unify into a harmonious totality of value and sense.

Another good example of Tang Junyi's wavering between confirming immanence and reserving a hierarchical supremacy for consciousness can be found in a fascinating manuscript entitled The Philosophical Spirit of Modern Western Idealism (Xifang jindai lixiangzhuyi zhi zhexue jingshen 西方近代理想主義之哲學精神) composed between 1951 and 1952. The text of the manuscript also presents us with an opportunity to briefly discuss Tang Junyi's mature philosophy and the historical conditions of the notional fault lines discernible in his whole oeuvre. In the longest and most intricate

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163See Tang, [1943], pp.102-104.
164Tang, [1943], pp.105-110.
165Tang, [1943], p.105.
chapter of this text, devoted to the philosophy of Hegel, Tang goes to great lengths in arguing against the possibility of philosophy attaining what Hegel called “absolute knowledge”:

If there really is absolute philosophical spirit and absolute philosophical thought which becomes self-aware of the truth of all its objective material, then this kind of thought becomes one with its object; since there is no longer an object which has the semblance of being external to philosophical thought, we can say that at this point there is no longer anything resembling the activity of thought, leaving only a truth regarding the object of thought, or the merely internal complete manifestation of the fully real [...] When we determine a particular object through a universal [concept], then the external signification of this universal must necessarily transcend [and remain outside of] this [specific] object, [whereas] the meaning of the particular always remains outside of [the totality of] what is contained by the universal, which also contains something else. This means that in the normal cognition of objects, there is bound to remain an opposition between the activity of thought and a seemingly external and objective object [of cognition]. Such an opposition cannot be overcome by non-dialectical philosophers [...] The real problem is therefore the following: at the instance when I become aware of the fact that the universal enters into a more concrete particular, or at the point where the content of the universal is united to what is called a particular and concrete content, that is to say at the instance when truth is attained, whether or not one can still speak of something like thinking at all [...] When thought reaches its goal, it ceases to be thinking [...] When the activity of philosophy reaches its target, it stops being philosophy.166

如果真是有一絕對的哲學精神哲學思維，將一切對象材料之真理均加以自覺；則此時因無對哲學思維宛然外在之對象，則此思維與對象合一，而將可說此時無所謂思維之活動，而只有關於思維對象之真理或只有一內在之全部實在之整幅呈露 [...] 我們以一普遍者規定一特定對象則普遍者之外指意義，必超越此對象之外，而特殊者之意義則恆除包含此普遍在所涵之外，且包含其他。此即注定了一般對象之思維中必不免思維之活動與似外在之客觀對象之對待。此對待在非辯證法的哲學家，恆視為不能泯除的 [...] 真正之問題在：當吾人自覺普遍者融入更具體之特殊者之際或普遍者之內容合所謂具體特殊者之內容之際，即所謂得真理之際，是否尚可說有所謂思維？ [...] 思維在達其目的時，則停止是思維。哲學之活動在達其目的時，則停止是哲學。

The inner tension in Tang's work resulting from an attempt to resist completely imploding the objective (particular) into the subjective as well as the other way around is apparent in this passage and its broader context. Referring to the British Neo-Hegelian F.H. Bradley's (1846–1924) metaphor of “thought's happy suicide” \(^\text{167}\) – the self-cancellation of a form of thought that ceases to think anything outside of and different from itself, and in this sense ends up “alone” in reaching its own goal – Tang suggests that a complete overcoming of the distance between the subjective and the objective and between universal concepts and particular entities is detrimental to the Hegelian undertaking. Indeed, the dialectic between the thinking subject and the conceptualized object should be prevented from coming to a halt, and has to keep itself going by leaving “something else” (其它) unthought in the object and refusing to completely assimilate the particular with the universal. Dissociating himself from Hegel's idealism however, is not Tang Junyi's only, and in fact not even his primary concern. For Tang, the dynamic of transitions (转) from one field of apprehension to the next are grounded in the mind's drive towards transcending its present limitations and overcoming the apparent externality of different cognitive fields to the mind. Because in his view, “the transcendence of thought is the true condition for attaining the truth” \(^\text{168}\), the dialectical development of cognition and conceptualization ultimately hinges on the overcoming of a distance and an opposition (对待) that has to be preserved instead of undone. Therefore, the irreducibility of the particular and the objective is needed as a guarantee for the possibility of transcendence, not in order to ensure that they are kept from being subsumed by the subject as such. Let us note in passing that Tang's standard but quite mistaken identification of Hegel's dialectic with the infamous triad of “thesis-antithesis-synthesis” (a simplistic scheme which actually Hegel never formulated or “applied” at all \(^\text{169}\) prevented him from seeing that this contradictory motion of simultaneously overcoming and preserving is precisely what Hegel meant by Aufhebung (“sublation”).

In any case, it becomes clear in the course of the text of this manuscript that what ultimately matters for Tang Junyi then, is not so much the reduction of the particular to the universal and the subsumption of being under thought as such, but rather that these overinflated idealists tendencies endanger the propensity of a dialectic operating on the basis of transcendence. The non-identity between subject and object is bound up with the self-identity of consciousness. The ultimate condition for the dialectic is

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\(^{168}\)Tang, [1951-1952], p.679.

that it does not suicidally fulfill its own mission, but rather that it keeps going instead of coming full circle. Paradoxically enough, Tang’s insistence on keeping the dialectic mobile, by deferring its lonely moment of realization in a form of thought without a semblance of anything non-identical and external, is in turn based on domesticating the restlessness of dialectical development by furnishing it with a “meta-dialectical” (chao bianzheng 超辯證) ground, that is to say in a “transcendental consciousness” (chaoyue xinjue 超越心覺) centered in the “moral personality” (daode renge 道德人格). The transcendental status of the meta-dialectical consciousness is thus the condition of the possibility for continuing the dialectical movement of transcendence, the latter presupposing that “something remains outside the universal” and in that sense “transcends” the universal. Tang understands the introduction of a “meta-dialectical” moral consciousness as involving a return to the Kantian position of the primacy of practical reason, which can in his view stabilize the dialectic by providing it with an anchoring point: “The philosophical activity which consists in my thinking of [conceptual] categories can at any moment halt [its course] in order to cognize the transcendental consciousness itself which comprehensively interiorizes the categories” (吾人思維範疇之哲學活動，遂隨時可停下以識取統攝範疇於其內之超越心覺自身). In this way, the subject arrives at “the manifestation of consciousness itself” (心覺自身之顯示), determinate conceptual knowledge on the other hand merely counting as a “by-product or trace of philosophical thinking” (哲學思維之流出物或留痕). The text of Tang’s 1951-1952 manuscript also gives an explicit clue to the stakes behind the tension between the immanent mobility of the dialectic subjecting everything to contradiction and change and the meta-dialectical status of the transcendental mind. The immunity of a morally grounded transcendental consciousness as a “pure rationality” (chunjing lixing 純淨理性) to phenomenal change ensures that it is free from internal contradictions, and thus makes sure that the Hegelian cannot be reversed (diandao 顛倒) into dialectical materialism. Outside of the conditioned and evanescent field delineated by historical materialism, consciousness itself as the ground of thought and practice “uninterruptedly seeks to remain identical to itself and positively manifest its own spirit of transcendence” (不斷的求是其自

171 In the latter meaning of “transcendence” as an instance of extra-conceptual facticity, Tang is not so far removed from Heidegger’s notion of transcendence. See below, section 3.2.3.
172 Tang, [1951-1952], p.682.
174 Tang, [1951-1952], p.685.
175 Tang, [1951-1952], pp.696-705.
No wonder then that his extensive discussion of Hegel leads into two critical, though philosophically less interesting, chapters attempting to further expose and render Marxist reification inoperative through the power of transcendence. All of this can help explain why in most of Tang's works, immanence (*neizaixing* 内在性) is rhetorically brought forward as denoting the presence of the transcendent within the real world of everyday comings and goings, without however thereby undoing the necessary distance between the immanent and the transcendent without which the very idea of transcendence would lose any ontological import. Tang is too concerned about the theoretical and socio-political dangers of historical materialism and scientistic reductionism to embrace immanence on its own terms. At the same time, his non-dualist approach led him to formulate this counterconcept in the form of a paradox, that of “transcending the already formed world within the world [itself]” (*在世间超出已成之世间*). This makes it understandable that for him, transcendence was a far more likely candidate as a counterconcept to reification (*wuhua*) than the typically postmodern celebration of immanence. His opposition to the materialist dialectic led him to cling to the necessity of supplementing the Hegelian dialectic with a “meta-dialectical” foundation in a moral “transcendental consciousness” that is not caught up in permanent change and free from contradiction and negation.

In his *Life, Existence, and the Horizons of the Mind*, the residual facticity, designated by the “something else” contained in the particular which cannot be erased in the movement of the universal, constantly stands on the verge of being overrun and obliterated by the reflexivity of transcendence. Like Xiong Shili, Tang continues to maintain that the mind connected to its various object-horizons does not literally create its own environment, even if, again following Xiong, he assumes “objectivity” to be a specific schema of “resonating” (*ganying* 感應) between subject and object and therefore does not pertain to horizon-free objects as a property that merely needs to be discovered and observed from a detached position in which the subject actively forgets itself in order to be able to take the object on its own terms. Such a detachment has now acquired a different meaning, and is not only the specific mode of observation characteristic of science, but transcendentally operates throughout the whole system of alterations and transitions from one cognitive and observational horizon to the next. Tang

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176Tang, [1951-1952], p.698.
177Tang, [1951-1952], pp.706-752.
178Tang, [1977], p.490.
179Tang, [1977], p.3.
insists that “there always remains a certain distance between [the mind] and its horizon, so that a space for spirit can be formed” (與此所觀境，時時有一距離，以形成一精神的空間)\textsuperscript{180}. Through the faculty of self-consciousness, the mind must remain aware of the irreducible difference between itself and its object-horizons (even if the latter come in the form of horizons where the difference between subject and objective is overcome!), in order to avoid becoming attached (舔附) or subordinated to (隸屬) its horizons. This “place for spirit” (jingshen de kongjian 精神的空間) then, is nothing but the difference and the distance between subject and object. It is the subject that must remain permanently present (常在) in the fleeting transitions from one horizon to the next and sustain itself above their identity and proximity.\textsuperscript{181} Once again, this means that, as Giorgio Agamben writes concerning Aristotle, life is not so much defined as it is “divided and ruled”\textsuperscript{182}:

\begin{quote}
We can say that the life-activities of everything that exists in the world that is not yet able to be self-conscious pass away irrevocably, in relation to myself as well as in relation to themselves. There is no real clarity in the interconnections between past and future, nor is there a meaning of existence which can be grasped from the clarity of this interconnection. When human beings are not yet self-consciously active, all their activities pass away irrevocably, go towards non-existence from existance, and are devoid of a meaning of existence. It is only when human beings become self-conscious of their activities that there is a mental and living existence, and this living mental existence and self-consciousness have the same meaning. Therefore, only a self-conscious living mental existence is a real entity.\textsuperscript{183}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{180} Tang, [1977], p.576.
\textsuperscript{181} Tang, [1977], pp.583-596.
\textsuperscript{183} Tang, [1977], p.654.
3.1.5 The struggle between Buddhism and Confucianism in the works of Xiong, Tang, and Mou

The above made observations on the “biased” nature of New Confucian conceptual identities can also shed some light on Xiong Shili’s prolonged “roaming” in between Confucianism and Buddhism, his “conversion” having seemingly lasted nearly a lifetime instead of being reducible to a singular epiphanic event. “Conversions” from Buddhist to Confucianist positions continue to function as argumentative structures in texts written long after his change of heart towards the Yogācāra school. Lin Zhenguo 林鎮國 is one of the many scholars who has rightly emphasized the important role played by Buddhism as a competitor, an adversary and a semi-indigenous source of philosophical and religious knowledge in the formation of modern New Confucian philosophy in general. In his view, which I strongly support, what thinkers such as Xiong Shili and Mou Zongsan were ultimately after in their encounter with Buddhist thought was coming to terms with modernity. Although New Confucian polemical condemnations of Buddhism's putative “nihilism” and “escapism” (accusations which someone like Nāgārjuna already tried to debunk centuries ago) can sometimes appear to be merely rehashing an age-old Confucian tradition of Buddha-bashing going back to Han Yu and the more puristically minded among the Song-Ming Confucianists (for whom someone like Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) was a covert Daoist and Buddhist because of the cosmological linkage he established between wuji 無極 and taiji 太極), the stakes had become markedly different in the meantime. On the level of philosophical discourse, “Buddhism” was now a symbolic signifier with which the discursive element “Confucianism” could be identified in certain respects and from which it had to be distinguished in others. These strategic operations of identification and distinction began to occur within the context of the relations different thinkers wanted to establish between Confucianism, modernization, and the new disciplinary order of knowledge. Crucially, with the rise of modern Chinese nationalism, a renewed emphasis was placed on the foreign origins of Buddhism in India, the British rule in colonial India being seen as a cautionary example of the tragic fate that would befall China if it failed to modernize, become a strong nation-state, and ward off the forces of imperialism. Against this background, it is obvious that the story about Laozi converting the barbarians, which never really seems to have convinced anyone, could no longer offer sufficient reassurance for the “sinicity”

185 See for example Xiong, [1961], p.127. 
of Buddhism. Lin Zhenguo and more recently Jason Clower have both argued that what the latter calls
the New Confucians' nationalist *ressentiment*, predicated on the idea that Confucianism constitutes the
essence and the core of Chinese culture and of the (future) Chinese nation-state, fed and strengthened
their ambivalent attitude towards Buddhism as a non-Confucian and by the same token non-Chinese
teaching. According to Clower, their cultural nationalist predilections eventually made them lose
interest in a philosophical encounter on equal terms, choosing instead to elevate Confucianism above
Buddhism and present the teachings of the Buddha as almost but not quite as perfect as those of the
Sage.\footnote{187}

Bearing in mind Mou Zongsan's seemingly arbitrary yet historically conditioned and in that precise
sense meaningful association between Buddhism and revolutionary communism, Tang Junyi's
observations in the following passage will be instructive in briefly approaching the philosophical
dimension to the New Confucian disagreements with Buddhism:

> From a Confucian point of view, death is in itself also a [form of] permanent being. This permanence of
> being is what is revealed through the ability of recollection and remembrance and [subsequently] comes
to be engraved in the human heart or in the form of written characters, thus forming historical records.
> Of all peoples East and West, there has certainly never been one that attached as much importance to
> history as the Chinese people. Attaching importance to history means stressing the responsive reactions
> of continuation and transmission to what is recalled and brought to mind in the memories and
> remembrances of human beings. The Buddhists were able to see that former and future life is in a state
> of co-dependent arising, which means that the things related to the Buddha and to all living beings arise
> through mutual
> dependence. But they did not yet realize that the greater co-dependent arising in the
> human world consists in [the ability of ] the living to relate to the dead through [acts of] continuation and
> transmission.\footnote{188}


\footnote{188Tang, [1977], p.630. Cf. pp.495-498. Arguing against the Buddhist position that livings beings know nothing of their
former and future lives and their position among the “six destinies” (*liudao* 六道) Tang writes that “within this “not-
knowing” there is not only an expression of ignorance, but there is also an expression of a kind of transcendence of one's
place of origination; that one does not know of it means that one has forgotten it, and that one has forgotten it means that
one has transcended it, and since transcendence is the good, therefore forgetting is good; and because forgetting is good,
not-knowing is also [a form of] goodness, and is not only ignorance.” (此“不知”中，不只表示一無明，而亦表示對
其來處與根源之一“超越”，其不知之，乃其忘之，其忘之，乃其超越之，超越為善，故忘為善；忘為善，故
不知亦為善，而非全是無明也) Tang, [1977], p.497.}
What this boils down to is that for Confucians like Tang, there has to be a difference between what they take to be a typically Confucianist and Chinese “continuity of discontinuity” and a Buddhist “discontinuity of continuity”. The “uninterrupted arising and perishing from one kṣaṇa to the next” (刹那刹那生滅不住) has to be redefined as a “ceaseless creativity from one kṣaṇa to the next” (刹那刹那生生不息). Not wholly unlike Nicholas of Cusa, they too in their own way maintain that “negations which remove the more imperfect things from the most Perfect are truer than the others.” Because the identity of permanence and change is a lopsided one, and is biased in favor of permanence as that which “encompasses”, includes, and conditions change, it is no wonder that Mou Zongsan for one showed a certain fondness for the Madhyamaka (zhongguan 中觀, or kongzong 空宗) Buddhist thinker Seng Zhao's 僧肇 (c.378–413) Treatise on the Immobility of Things (Wu bu qian lun 物不遷論), where Seng reinterpreted the doctrine of co-dependent origination as implying that karmic causal conditioning ultimately shows that nothing really comes into being or perishes to begin with. Nothing arises precisely because there is conditional dependence. Therefore, there is no reason to negate what never came into being or passed away to begin with. Of course, what bothered Mou in this case was that in Seng's treatises, the permanence of immobility is still conceived of in terms of emptiness (kong 空), i.e. emptiness of self-nature, instead of with reference to the unchanging nature of a substance and a metaphysical essence that stays the same precisely in and through self-transformation. After all, what would Mou' Zongsan's Hölderlinian God do without his ability to temporarily retreat from a fallen world? In this sense, time is just as important for thinkers like Mou to resolve non-identity, more specifically discontinuity, as an instance in the self-transformation of the identical and the continuous, which is why they did not simply dualistically and perhaps more straightforwardly assert the hegemony of eternity over time. In the latter cause there would have been no paradoxes that indicate a problem...

189Xiong, [1932], p.85.
190“[W]hat people call permanence, I call impermanence and vice versa. But then impermanence and permanence, though seemingly different, are ultimately the same […] Then the four seasons, fleeting as the wind, and the Great Bear, revolving with lightning speed […] rapid as they are, do not move […] That is why the beneficial act of the Tathāgata remains effective for thousands of generations” Translation quoted from Liebenthal, 1968, pp.51-52.

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beyond the reach of conceptual sublation. The lopsided identity still contains difference, even if in a carefully contained form. It was even harder for philosophers such as Mou and Xiong to stomach the assertion by the founder of the Madhyamaka current of Buddhism, Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250 CE), in the *Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, Zhongguan lun* 中觀論) that even emptiness itself had to be in turn seen through as empty, in the sense that one should take care not to hypostatize the fact that no being or constituent of being can claim a form of self-sufficient and permanent existence for itself by mistakingly turning emptiness into a paradoxical form of ultimate reality distinct from and opposed to the world of *samsāra*. The “ultimate” lesson of Nāgārjuna's texts, taken to heart by the Tiantai 天台 school in the doctrine of the three truths, would seem to be that distinctions such as the one between “conventional” / “provisional” (*jia* 假) and “empty” (*kong* 空) fall away in the Middle Way (*zhong* 中).\(^{191}\) The Middle Way of enlightenment is not different from emptiness and the “convention” that individual entities do exist; it is neither empty nor conventionally established; it is both of these, neither of them, and so on. Xiong\(^{192}\) and Mou\(^{193}\) on the other hand, take the idea that “the emptiness too in turn is empty” (*kong yi fu kong* 空亦復空) as a proof for the nihilistic predispositions and the limitations of Buddhism vis-à-vis Confucianism. What they embraced in Buddhist thought was the idea of non-duality (between substance and function, subject and object etc.), but only insofar as it allowed them to reinstate a hierarchical dependence of non-duality on one of the reconciled terms which is presented as bringing about the ontological, cosmological, or epistemological reconciliation. Contraction is unified in a totality with expansion, not by virtue of itself, but because of its participation in an expansion by which it is governed and controlled. In other words, they cannot tolerate the total effacement of distinctions, even within the most unified and harmonious of metaphysical levels. The same goes for their doctrinal syntheses and creative combinations of Sinitic thought. As Fu Weixun (aka Charles Wei-Hsun Fu) 傅偉勳 (1933-1996) aptly pointed out, it is remarkable and worrisome that even though Mou was of the opinion that Confucianism and Buddhism both constituted “perfect teachings” (*yuanjiao* 圓教, further hierarchically subdivided in both cases), he still insisted on portraying Confucianism as possessing something even more perfect than the Buddhist perfection.\(^{194}\)

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192See Xiong, [1958], p.44-46, p.68.
194See “Buddhist Learning, Western Learning, and the Contemporary New Confucians – A Philosophical Investigation...
Instrumental in maintaining this asymmetrical relation and inequality in the perfection of Confucianist and Buddhist teachings was the distinction between being and thought, i.e. the differentiation of ontology and epistemology. As I tried to demonstrate in the previous sections, Xiong Shili always insisted on placing ontology above epistemology, and according to Lin Zhenguo the same goes for Mou Zongsan as well. Although the overlap is far from complete and not quite as neat as one would like, in their writings the difference between epistemology and ontology was often made to coincide with that between Buddhism and Confucianism respectively. That philosophy was immunized against the analytic, objectifying, and “anatomizing” perspective of science through an appeal to the irreducibility of ontology and that the Buddhist perspective of emptiness was seen as inhibiting the emergence of scientific thought is also something to be kept in mind. In his *New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness*, Xiong makes no secret of the fact that for him, the Madhyamaka school's insistence on the conditioned emptiness of all entities can only serve as an “expedient means” (*upāya, fangbian 方便*, itself a concept of Buddhist origin) for clearing away erroneous conceptions which disregard the foundational role of consciousness as the source of distinctions which do not pertain to object-horizon themselves but to the mind as the “discriminating aspect” of the contradictory totality of mind and object-horizon. However, Xiong thinks it is not sufficient to stick to such an “epistemological perspective” (*認識論的觀點*) without at the same time positively confirming that substance is not only identical to all existing entities devoid of self-nature and thus itself empty (by saying it is *nothing but* “the real nature of all constituents of existence”, *zhufa shixing 諸法實性*), but also and above all fully and actively manifests (*xianxian 顯現*) itself in them. This manifestation occurs in a way that cannot be captured by the idea of emptiness without undermining the ontological reality and cosmological creativity of the identity of substance and function. Xiong believes that Buddhists risk ending up becoming attached to the emptiness that was supposed to overcome the attachment to the self. In other words, the illusory hypostatization of an objective reality existing independently from consciousness, a hypostatization which Xiong himself firmly rejects, in the end only has an epistemological validity, and should not be transferred to a level of ontology that cannot be “emptied

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196 See Xiong, [1932], p.143, p.174.
197 Xiong, [1932], p.117.
out” (kong 空), where substance is and remains identical to the original mind itself.\textsuperscript{198} The unreality of independent object-horizons is simultaneously a confirmation of the reality of the mind. It is the latter that can choose to either confirm or cast doubt on them. Consequently, there can only be a “relative non-being” (bieji wu 別計無), i.e. relative to the essential reality and positive being of the original mind, no “absolute non-being” (zongji wu 總計無) and therefore no “horizon of empty nothingness” (空洞的無的境界).\textsuperscript{199} For Xiong, identity statements (jishi 即是, “is nothing but”) which completely do away with distinctions and discriminations have to be clearly distinguished from identity statements following the logic of manifestation (xianxian) that allow one to assert that substance manifests itself in all things without becoming reified and subordinated to them.\textsuperscript{200} For Tang as well, “manifestation and hiddenness are both equally being, there can be no talk of non-being here” (顯隱同是有，無所謂無).\textsuperscript{201} Instead of an assertion of complete identity and the resulting non-existence or “emptiness” of the asserted identity occurring in Buddhist thought (where identity ultimately amounts to non-existence), the logic of manifestation allows for a distinction between essence and appearance to be reintroduced inside of the identity of substance and function. In this way, the whole universe can be presented as a continuum, while at the same time dividing it into non-identical stages (matter, life, mind/spirit) that are only truly unified at the highest stage of a stratified evolution, i.e. with the emergence of conscious and self-conscious life.\textsuperscript{202} Nevertheless, there is once again not so much a perfectly self-assured conceptual closure as there are unresolved tensions and contradictions, since on other occasions, Xiong asserts that, purely philosophically speaking, there is little reason for according a privileged status to human beings among the “ten thousand things”.\textsuperscript{203} In the work of Mou Zongsan, the oscillation between “Confucian” ontology and “Buddhist” epistemology finally converges in his idea of constructing a “Buddhistic ontology” (佛教式存有論).\textsuperscript{204} For Mou, the Buddhist logic of emptiness functioning in a “struggle for non-being” (為非有而鬥爭) precludes the possibility of finding or producing any statements with a strictly ontological import in Buddhism. Emptiness cannot have an ontological dimension. Still, he believes the Buddhist principle of non-duality can and should be drawn

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{198}Xiong, [1932], pp.116-126.
\item \textsuperscript{199}See Xiong, [1932], pp.58-63 and Xiong, [1958], p.10.
\item \textsuperscript{200}See Xiong, [1932], p.118 and Guo Meihua, 2004, p.136. Also see Tang, [1977], pp.632-636.
\item \textsuperscript{201}Tang, [1977], p.635. Cf. p.508.
\item \textsuperscript{202}See Xiong, [1961], pp.182-185, pp.190-191, p.198, p.227.
\item \textsuperscript{203}See for example Xiong, [1956], p.193.
\item \textsuperscript{204}See Jason Clower, The Unlikely Buddhologist: Tiantai Buddhism in Mou Zongsan’s New Confucianism, Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp.189-191.
\end{itemize}

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upon in articulating a Confucian ontology in a Buddhist “style” or “manner” (shi 式). As I will try to show in the next part of this chapter, the historical and socio-political background of the tension between thought and being can be more clearly identified within the context of Mou Zongsan's oeuvre and the development of his philosophical thought.

3.2 Mou Zongsan's modernity and the modernity of Mou Zongsan

3.2.1 Preliminary remarks on Mou Zongsan's oeuvre and his relation to Kant

Mou Zongsan is a towering figure within the New Confucian current of modern philosophy. His persistent and serious engagement with thinkers such as Russel, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, Leibniz, Hegel, and most importantly Kant, has made him into what is beyond doubt the single most studied and commented modern Chinese philosopher in Western Sinology. Instead of vague, piecemeal, largely nondescript, and somewhat tedious references to a few core ideas associated with the names of famous European philosophers (e.g. Leibniz = monadology, Schopenhauer = Will, Nietzsche = Übermensch, Bergson = \textit{élan vital}) such as one generally finds in the writings of Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili, and even Mou's lifelong friend and collaborator Tang Junyi, his books are replete with extensive quotations and comments on the works of thinkers who inspired and/or irritated him.\textsuperscript{206} I have already indicated that at least in his early politically and socially engaged writings, this was even the case for his arch-enemy Karl Marx, who, to be clear, continued lurking in the background long after Mou had stopped directly confronting and denouncing him. Mou's consistently comparative approach has turned him into an ideal yet highly unwieldy object of investigation for present-day students of comparative philosophy. The latter can follow in his footsteps by comparing, say, Mencius and Kant, through the lens of Mou's conceptual framework built around the opposition between (Chinese) moral metaphysics (\textit{daode de xing'ershaxue 道德的形而上學}) versus a (Western) metaphysics of morality (\textit{daode de xing'ershaxue 道德底形而上學})\textsuperscript{207}, but are at the same time obliged to inquire into how he arrived at a common ground between these two figures and into what enabled him to proceed on the basis of this in many ways improbable equivalence in the first place. Interpreters are thus forced to compare comparisons and to do so in the absence of a predetermined and complete understanding of the

\textsuperscript{206}There is a great deal of cultural reductionism in Mou Zongsan's thought, a phenomenon that we also find in many Chinese authors of the same generation whose exposure to the West remained limited […] However, when it comes to analysis and commentary on Western philosophical texts directly linked to his philosophical project, the situation changes radically. Mou Zongsan becomes extremely specific and sophisticated.” Sébastien Billioud, Thinking through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan's Moral Metaphysics, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012, p.34.

\textsuperscript{207}On the difference between the possessive modifiers \textit{的} and \textit{底}, see the previous chapter, note 455, p.207. In the context of this particular distinction, the implication is that whereas Kant provided a metaphysical account of morality, and thus applied a transcendental mode of exposition in his investigation of practical reason, Chinese philosophy managed to grasp the basic, “metaphysical” structure of reality as essentially run through with morality, the ontological order (“is”) and the normative order (“ought”) ultimately being interrelated and convertible. For a more extensive discussion of the meaning and implications of Mou's opposition between “moral metaphysics” and “metaphysics or morals”, see Serina Chan, The Thought of Mou Zongsan, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011, pp.119-157.
determining ground of comparison. My overall argument in the third section of the previous chapter was that the underlying form of philosophical equivalence at work here is fundamentally grounded in an active abstraction from historical specificity which came about under the pressure and within the constraints of historical time. Outside of the evanescence of history, encounters can take place between figures who are no longer the same even before they are confronted with each other. Still, providing a more specific and determinate account of how this general logic operates in or affects the work of Mou Zongsan in particular is, to put it mildly, hardly an easy undertaking. Leafing through one of the 32 thick volumes which make up Mou's complete works is enough to ascertain that his breadth of reference is astounding and presupposes a familiarity with systems of thought as varied as German Idealism, Wei-Jin Neo-Daoism, Tiantai and Madhyamaka Buddhism, and last but not least the rich tradition of Song-Ming Confucianism. Apart from his personal contributions to philosophy, Mou also wrote extensively on the history of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist ideas, and these prolonged ventures into the history of Chinese thought are intrinsically enmeshed with his own constructive philosophical project. At the risk of exaggerating somewhat, one could say that there are relatively few issues in the long history of Chinese thought Mou did not voice an opinion about. Consequently, his interpretations have appeared as recurring vantage points in contemporary studies in intellectual history and remain visible in a variety of fields and subdisciplines. Some of his favorite catchphrases, such as the idea of the need for a “third period” (儒學第三期) in the development of Confucianism taken over by Tu Weiming, have already become standard clichés in contemporary Confucian revivalist rhetoric. Even when his various classifications and categorization schemes, such as the contested downgrading of the great Neo-Confucian thinker Zhu Xi (1130-1200), are criticized and rejected, they still continue to function negatively as ineluctable reference points. What Michel Foucault observed with regard to Marx and Freud, whom he took to be “initiators of discursivity”, namely that these two masters of suspicion “have not simply made a certain number of analogies possible, but also (and above all) a number of differences”, by having “opened up a space for the possibility of something different from themselves, which nonetheless at the same time belongs to what they have founded” applies in a more limited sense to Mou Zongsan as well. Fu Weixun for one was of the opinion that the future of modern Chinese philosophy would take shape by confronting and coming to terms with Mou, by means of either analogy or difference.

208Published in 2003. For an overview of its contents, see Chan, 2011, pp.16-23.
210Quoted in Zheng, 1992, p.199. Also see Jason Clower, The Unlikely Buddhologist: Tiantai Buddhism in Mou Zongsan’s
As is the case with many great thinkers, it can at first be hard not to feel bullied into submissive reverence and passive admiration when confronted with such an impressive oeuvre, which has no equivalent in modern Western philosophy in terms of its cultural diversity and interpretative eclecticism. Any engagement with an ambitious and systematic thinker of this kind is bound to be partial and biased in function of one's own interpretative horizon. A list of elements I have left out of consideration would be longer than the present chapter. This is the reason I would like to begin by saying a few words about a crucial aspect of this monumental body of work which I will not be dealing with directly or at least not for its own sake in what follows, namely the relation between Mou Zongsan and the one whom Nietzsche once mockingly called “the Chinaman from Königsberg”\(^\text{211}\). As is well known, Mou's own constructive philosophy departs from a highly idiosyncratic appropriation and reinterpretation of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whose three critiques he translated into Chinese (on the basis of English translations), and is usually seen as culminating in the three monographs Intellectuual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy (Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexue 智的直覺與中國哲學, 1971), Appearance and Thing-in-itself (Xianxiang yu wuzishen 現象與物自身, 1975), and Treatise on the Supreme Good (Yuanshan lun 圓善論, 1985).\(^\text{212}\) For Mou, Kant was the Western philosopher par excellence to be interrogated as well as overcome in order for Chinese philosophy to develop its own distinctive identity and lay claim to a renewed validity in the modern world. Unlike Kant himself, who in the Critique of Pure Reason (1781) was concerned with repositioning metaphysics as the toppled, disgraced “queen of the sciences” in relation to the advances of the natural sciences in his age (most importantly Newtonian physics) and ridding philosophy from its dogmatic lack of reflexivity\(^\text{213}\), Mou did not primarily draw on the German thinker to imbue philosophy with scientific validity or to neutralize the conflicts between philosophy and science in general, but in order to place the unsystematic “material” of Chinese thought in a space where it could formally confront a reputedly systematic Western philosophy on equal terms. Mou's take on the relation between mediated, scientific knowledge on the one hand and intuitive, moral knowing on the other, cannot be considered apart from his sustained attempts to underpin the specificity of Chinese thought through the distinction between


\(^{212}\)Due to the constraints and the intentions of the present study, my understanding of Mou's mature philosophy is mainly derived from a reading of the first two works. I have not aimed for a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment and only deal with these last two works in a selective fashion for my own limited purposes.

objectivity ("nature") and subjectivity ("life") within a discursive context where "science" was still seen as both originally and fundamentally Western and at the same time as a positive signifier for progress and modernity in need of being reconciled with, or rather realized by, the Confucian tradition.

For Mou, aligning himself with the Kantian turn towards the subject as both epistemologically constitutive of what can be experienced and known, as well as inherently practically oriented and compelled to apply its metaphysical "natural disposition" in the field of morality, thus played a crucial role in distinguishing Chinese from Western philosophy, all while freeing Chinese thought from the suspicion of being irrational, illogical, incompatible with science, or unable to live up to the standards of systematicity set by categorized academic philosophy. "Failing to pass through Kant", Mou claimed in one of his later lectures, “can only result in bad philosophy” (不通過康德的哲學則會有壞的哲學). At the same time, he saw the sage from Königsberg as something of an exception within the tradition of Western philosophy, due to the latter's insistence on the primordial importance of practical reason, that is to say of morality, in allowing ideas such as God, the freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul produced by pure reason to be employed as regulative ideals or practical postulates instead of being fatally misconstrued as constitutive in the expansion of a priori knowledge. In Mou's view too, morality, or more specifically moral practice (gongfu), could offer a way out of what can only remain irresolvable antimonies and paradoxes for a speculative reason trying to outreach its own limitations and conditions. In this respect, he was very close to Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), an important post-Kantian thinker he only referred to incidentally and in the most general terms. With the crucial exception of Hegel's dialectics, which he in my opinion quite

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214 Kant, 2007, p.50 (B21).
216 Already in the Standard of Logic written between 1938 and 1939, Mou makes the following remarks: “The transcendental dialectic has proven that ideal concepts [such as the unconditioned, freedom as a special type of causality etc.] cannot be proven from the side of the understanding and cannot find a corresponding object in the phenomenal world. Looking for [the objectivity of] these ideals here will necessarily lead to contradictions. Thus one must turn towards the internal and towards practical reason in order to obtain proof for them. Kant showed great wisdom in [commending] this transition.” (超越辯證論就是證明這些理想概念在理解方面不能得到證明，在現象界裏不能尋得對象與之相應，如要想在這方面求，必是矛盾。這個必須轉向內，向實踐理性上證得，在這個轉變上，康德是大有智慧的). Luoji Dianfan 邏輯典範, [1941], vol.11 of MJ, p.685.
217 “[T]he ideas of reason are not, like the categories [of the understanding], helpful to us in some way in using the understanding with respect to experience, but are completely dispensable with respect to such use, nay, are contrary to and obstructive of the maxims for cognition of nature through reason, although they are still quite necessary in another respect [i.e. as postulates of practical reason].” Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science, Cambridge (N.Y.): Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.83 (§44).
218 Zheng Jiadong has noted Mou's understudied relation to Fichte. Zheng, 1992, p.281. For two more extensive studies, see two articles by Pong Wen-Berng 彭文: “Self-Consciousness and Conscience – A Comparative Study of the Theories of Mou Zongsan and Fichte (Ziwo yishi yu liangzhi – Mou Zongsan yu Feixite de liulin zhi biaojie yanjiu 自我意識與良
simply could not do without, Mou generally only engaged with post-Kantians such as Fichte and Hegel in context of his social and political philosophy, and continued to take Kant as the supreme and in a way complete and self-sufficient point of reference for dealing with “purely philosophical” problems. Because he clearly believed that Kant had already touched upon, proposed, or at least sketched out and delineated all major philosophical problems as well as the path to their solution, the “all-destroyer” (Alleszermalmer, Moses Mendelssohn's nickname for his friend Kant) could thus continue to serve as his principal interlocutor. That Kant often stands diametrically opposed to some of Mou's most basic beliefs perhaps made him all the more fascinating for him as simultaneously an exception to and an incarnation of the Western philosophical tradition seen through New Confucian eyes.

Sébastien Billioud has drawn attention to the fact that the deliberate omission of figures like Fichte and Schelling from Mou's comparative treatment of the concept of intellectual intuition in drawing an essentialistic distinction between Chinese and Western philosophy constitutes a serious limitation of Mou's philosophical horizon of comparison. Much like the proper name “Marx”, which consistently appears in his oeuvre as a shorthand symbol for everything Mou thought was wrong with modernity, the name “Kant” too at times seems to function like an authoritative signifier for (Western) modernity

219 See Mou, [1990b], p.47.
220 Consider the following passage where Kant attacks the idea of a “holy will”: “For men and all rational creatures, the moral necessity is a constraint, an obligation. Every action based on it is to be considered as duty, and not as a manner of acting which we naturally favor or which we sometimes might favor. This would be tantamount to believing […] we, like the independent deity, might come into possession of holiness of will through irrefutable agreement of the will with the pure moral law becoming, as it were, our very nature.” Critique of Practical Reason, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993a, p.82. My italics.
221 Billioud, 2012, pp.81-89.
as a normative project grounded in the category of moral autonomy (zilü 自律).

Taking the highly complicated post-Kantian trajectory of Western philosophy into account would have fundamentally compromised Mou's strategic identification of Kant's critical philosophy with the representative endpoint of the conceptual development of this form of rationality and normativity. He needed examples more than exceptions. By way of Schelling and Feuerbach, it would have also brought him face to face with Marx again, and with the heteronomy (taliü 他律) he associated with the historical materialist inability to see beyond the “materially motivated will” (物質機動化的意志).

Of course, as I will indicate in the course of the following subsections, there are other, more specific reasons for Mou Zongsan's lifelong fascination with Kant, reasons which, to use the expressions by Cheng Zhihua I mentioned in my introduction, can be interpreted both “internally” as well as “externally”, or ideally, through a careful combination of both. Suffice it for the moment to remind the reader that Mou was convinced that a fruitful encounter and exchange (huitong 會通) between Chinese and Western philosophy would only be possible through the delicate medium of the Kantian transcendental distinction between noumena and phenomena. He believed this distinction constituted a universally valid philosophical frame (zhexue jiagou 哲學架構) which could be applied to the Chinese tradition precisely because it had already been implicitly present and even tentatively articulated there, for instance in Zhang Zai's (張載 1020–1077) opposition between “sensible knowledge” (jianwen zhi 見聞之知) and “knowing by natural virtuousness” (dexing zhi zhi 德性之知), and in the Buddhist


224“Moral Idealism and Theories of Human Nature” (Daode de lixiangzhuì yu renxing lun 道德的理想主義與人性論), [1949a] in DY, p.33.

225See Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy (Zhi de zhijue yu Zhongguo zhexye 智的直覺與中國哲學), [1971] vol.20 of MJ, pp.237-245. From the text of Zhang Zai's Correction of Youthful Ignorance (Zhengmeng 正蒙) it would seem that between these two forms of knowledge really has very little to do with drawing epistemological distinctions as such, but rather with a moral distinction between “common people” and “sages” that can be bridged through praxis: “The mind of common people is limited to what they see and hear. The sages, by exhausting their nature, do not allow sensuous knowledge to bind their minds. There is not a single thing in the whole world which they do not see as themselves, and what Mencius called “exhausting one's nature” refers to knowing nature and knowing heaven precisely in this way. Heaven is boundless and has no outside, therefore a mind that sees things as being outside of itself is not able to unite with the mind of Heaven. Sensuous knowledge emerges through contact with [external] things, it is not what is known by our virtuous nature. Knowledge through natural virtuousness does not originate in the visible or the audible” (世人之心，止於聞見之狹。聖人盡性，不以見聞梏其心，其視天下無一物非我，孟子謂盡心則知性知天以此。天大無外，故有外之心不足以合天心。見聞之知，乃物交而知，非德性所知；德性所知，不萌於
doctrine according to which “one mind opens two gates” (see below). Mou thought that neither the Western nor even the Chinese tradition had managed to harmoniously reconcile the immanence of a phenomenal world marked by what he, following Heidegger, called “finitude” (*Endlichkeit*) with the transcendent, noumenal dimension. In the form of a wholly otherworldly God, thinkers in the West had treated the transcendent as completely detached and categorically inaccessible to human beings, whereas traditional Chinese thought had remained overtly focused on (or “attached to”) the noumenal level of morality to the detriment of an objectifying but necessary occupation with the phenomenal, thus ultimately inhibiting the emergence of science and the passage to technological modernity. Mou believed that East and West could complement each other and make up for each other's defects through a renewed observation of each other's philosophical heritage through the prism of the transcendental difference.

It will already be clear from these initial remarks that the at times bewildering convergence and intermingling of Confucian, Kantian, Buddhist, and Heideggerian notions forces the interpreter to follow in Mou Zongsan's footsteps by “daring to compare”227. In my view, it is just as important to try to simultaneously delineate the historical horizon in which he conducted his philosophical comparisons, something Mou himself was not at all interested in doing. He would no doubt reject such a contextualizing approach as an interpretative form of attachment (*zhi* 著) to the realm of the phenomenal and the contingent.228 Philosophy provided him with a field in which history could be an (incidental) subject matter (in a “philosophy of history” for instance), without ever allowing it to impinge on the internal affairs of philosophy, where it has no business peddling its factual goods.

228Mou, [1949b], p.341: “That China exists in this day and age cannot be coincidental [...] The meaning of “not coincidental” is that there is a reason. But where are we to look for this reason? If you focus exclusively on phenomenal development, then it will most certainly prove impossible to find the clue to historical development and you will also be unable to establish a future with a clear meaning [...] Therefore, if you want to understand why history has led to the present day and what the next stage will be like exactly, then you must first grasp where the spirit of the age is located [...] The spirit of an age is the general principle that directs the activities of a people within the various causal changes of every stage [of historical development]. Therefore, if one wants to understand the spirit of an age, one must first understand this principle.” (中國之有今日,決非偶然 [...] 「非偶然」即函著說, 有一個理由。這個理由從那裡找呢? 你若只知著眼現象的推移, 你決找不出歷史發展的線索, 你也決定找不出一個確定內容的未來 [...] 所以, 你要想明瞭歷史發展何以有今日, 下一階段的確定內容是什麼, 你就必須把握住時代的精神之何所是。[...] 而時代的精神, 則是指導一個民族的活動之總原則在各階段之種種因緣中的變形。所以欲了解時代精神, 必須先了解那個原則).
Zheng Jiadong 郑家栋 voices a recurring criticism when he accuses Mou of having simply “walked out of history”, and, contrary to Liang Shuming and to some extent even Feng Youlan, having left behind a purely “abstract, transcendent, academic” legacy without any real social force or relevance. There is little point in denying that Mou was not much of an engaged thinker or even a public intellectual. Nevertheless, what I am interested in is trying to chart the winding road he took on his way out in order to show that history followed him to places where he most certainly did not intend to escort it. What has to be taken into account in this regard, and what I have adopted as my overall point of departure in this part of my chapter, is that Mou explicitly professed that he saw the urgent need for philosophy as stemming from something very timely indeed, namely the problem of ideology, by which he of course meant the communist ideology holding mainland China in its grip through the rule of the CCP. He believed that it is because there is ideology a term which Mou often idiosyncratically rendered, in what is simultaneously a translation and a transcription, as yidelaojie 意底牢 结 (roughly: “the imprisoning bonds of ideas”) – that there has to be philosophy. Since Mou Zongsan was convinced only philosophy could offer a counterweight against what he, quoting Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692), liked to call “establishing principles to constrain actual affairs” (立理以限事) and provide a remedy against the splitting of the world into different standards of truth (真理标准) by ideology, we have no choice but to follow him from history into thought.


230Zheng, 2004, p.62. Zheng has also harshly criticized Mou’s undervaluation of the problem of factual suffering and misery in the everyday world: “Could it be that all we need to do in order to realize the dream of all human beings becoming sages and worthies is to close our eyes to the evil side of human nature? […] Do we really believe that the moral level of our people is higher than that of certain developed countries because Confucians talked about the goodness of human nature and bombastically sang the praise of becoming sages and worthies for two thousand years?” (难道我们的认识只要对人性恶的方面视而不见，就可以实现人人成圣成贤的梦想？[...] 难道我们真的相信由于儒家讲了两千年的人性善，唱了两千年成圣成贤得高调，所以今天我们民族的道德水准也就高于某些发达国家？) Zheng, 1992, p.329.


233Mou, [1990b], p.3.
When considering the New Confucian turn towards the subject following the 1923 debate on science and metaphysics we encountered in the previous chapter, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that in both Mou Zongsan's and Tang Junyi's writings on history and culture, the non-Han Manchurian Qing dynasty is routinely presented as a radical interruption and a fundamental break in the trajectory of the Spirit of Chinese (often explicitly identified with Han) culture which paved the way for the downfall of the imperial order, the advent of Western imperialism, and finally the disastrous introduction of communism into China. Specifically, they portrayed the rise of evidential studies (考證 kaozheng) accompanying the revival of Han Learning (汉学 hanxue), centered around philological research and textual criticism, in Qing Confucianism as a direct precursor to the positivist scientism attacked by Zhang Junmai and his supporters in the 1923 debate.\(^{234}\) In his classic study, Joseph Levenson already pointed out that the focus many revolutionary and reformist intellectuals placed on the non-Chineseness of the Qing dynasty served as a way of attributing the inferiority of the Chinese nation in the global balance of power to the Manchurian takeover instead of to China as a nation defined by Han ethnicity.\(^{235}\) Thomas Metzger notes that Tang Junyi viewed these evidential studies, though not wholly without merit\(^{236}\), “as largely taking the same path of “passively” empirical, specialized scholarship that the modern West had taken, forsaking the metaphysical outlook needed actively to confront and transform the given empirical world.”\(^{237}\) Mou too considered the empirical orientation of Qing learning towards the analysis of words (字 zi) instead of meaning (義 yi) to be the beginning of what he called the superficial rationalism and “quantitative socialism” (的社會主義) of May Fourth and of a socially disastrous intellectual “imprisonment in reality” (拘囚於現實中) which would have to be


\(^{236}\)See *The Development of the Chinese Humanist Spirit* (Zhongguo renwen jingshen zhi fazhan 中國人文精神之發展), [1957] vol.6 of TJ, pp.27-28.

dialectically overcome in order to save China from perdition.\textsuperscript{238} In a style which has undoubtedly become quite familiar to the reader in the meantime, Mou argued that

ever since the end of the Ming dynasty up to the present day, spirit has constantly been in a state of being subjected to negation […] All the while, spirit has been steadily disappearing by becoming flattened out, attached to and engulfed by external things. However, spirit is something humanity cannot live without. When the attachment of people to the scattered [external] things they are fixated on has reached its most critical point, spirit must necessarily leave those depthless things for what they are and set itself off against them, return to itself and recover its pure subjectivity. In this way, after having been pursued, external things are now pushed aside and become an object to which spirit is opposed [literally: “objective objects”]. At this moment, spirit withdraws into and returns to itself from its state of dispersal in pursuit [of external things], and retreats into a sphere of a sort of contemplative observation. In this way, subject and object come to be opposed, and if the subject is to revive its own subjective being, then things must first be pushed away to become objects [opposed to the subject] […] The Chinese people […] has reached the moment when it must revive its subjectivity […] That spirit withdraws into itself in order to successfully establish its pure subjectivity is the “thesis”. The things which are pushed aside and thus become objects are the “antithesis”. When this antithesis has completed its negating function […] it must in turn be negated. This second negation occurs when spirit, as a subject, begins to orbit around things, gathers and appropriates them and brings them under its command, this is called the synthesis: a synthesis established through spirit as a subject. What I mean to say is that only when spirit has revived its subjective being, will the science and democracy extolled by rigid rationalism return to their source and thereby find a place to be settled and realized; and quantitative socialism too will be transformed into qualitative socialism, thereby obtaining its true value. This is called a “harmony of the second order”, a harmony which has passed through sublation [Aufhebung, aofuhebian 奥伏赫變].\textsuperscript{239}


\textsuperscript{239}Mou, [1949b], pp.352-353. Compare with the passage on the “retreat of God”, quoted in section 2.2.2 of the previous chapter.
Since Tang and Mou saw the intellectual trends in the Qing dynasty as fundamentally complicit with the attack on the Confucian tradition and the rise of Marxism in twentieth-century China, the Qing and its scholarly developments thus became the déjà-là of Chinese communism for them.\(^{240}\) Apparently, the assimilative power\(^{241}\), both of them ascribed to Chinese civilization, a power which Tang appealed to in explaining that “the result of war [in Chinese history] was always nothing but the unification of the people of the central plain with all the other ethnicities and the broadening universal spread of Chinese culture”\(^{242}\), did not do the trick with the Manchu rulers. Mou expressed this sentiment by stating that despite the fact that the capital of the Ming dynasty had been located in Beijing for almost 300 years, this “sinicizing” and civilizing influence was completely canceled out (抵消) by the rule of the Manchurian Qing, which cleared the way for the “contamination” (沾污) of communism:

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240A strong anti-Manchu sentiment continues to echo as a recurring trope in the works of the younger generation of New Confucians. Cai Renhou 蔡仁厚, a student of Mou Zongsan, for example writes the following: “The Great Ming dynasty came to an end and the Manchurian Qing dynasty took power. Our national life was thus set back and our cultural life distorted.” (大明既亡，满清人入主。民族生命受挫折，文化生命受歪曲), The Spiritual Orientation of the New Confucians (Xin rujia de jingshen fangxiang 新儒家的精神方向), Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1984, p.36. Cai directly echoes Mou's statement that “when the Manchurian Qing took office, the life of the people was twisted. From the end of the Qing until the present day, it has never been able to restore its healthy original form.” (满清入关，民族生命乃受曲折。降至清亡，以迄今日，未能复其健康之本相), Mou, [1949d], p.2. Cf. p.14. Even more recently, Cheng Zhongyin 成中英 has faulted the loss of the “Confucian spirit” under the Qing as the ultimate cause for the invasion of China by European colonial powers and later by Japan. See Chung-Ying Cheng, “Developing Confucian Onto-Ethics in a Postmodern World/Age”, Journal of Chinese Philosophy, vol.37, no.1, 2010, p.12.
Beijing has truly been unfortunate! That city and old capital has always been filled with the stench of barbarians. It is also here that the New Culture Movement after May Fourth came into existence, which has continuously influenced the mindset of present day intellectuals. That old cultural city really cannot symbolize a country built on the basis of the cultural life of China. But where then is Chinese culture? Which place could symbolize it? I say: it is nowhere, and there is no place which can symbolize it.  

Examples such as these would seem to contradict Zhang Hao's idea that the distinctive difference between New Confucianism and earlier forms of cultural conservatism can be located in the absence of a racial definition of identity. Inspired by the discovery of the so-called “Peking Man” in 1929, Xiong Shili went further back in time to establish the supremacy of the Han above other ethnicities by trying to prove that Manchus, Mongols, Hui, and Tibetans had originally all been side-branches of the Han race, with the Yellow Emperor as their common ancestor. There is thus a clear Han-centric racial dimension to Xiong's assertion that the study of history (as "comprehensive history", *tongshi*) should reveal the innate tendency from and towards unity in Chinese history and in the Chinese as a people, which has “split into different branches from the same root, and will return and unite in the same body from these differences” (中華民族由一本而分支，又由分支而合歸一體). On a concrete level, unity is thus established through one of the privileged components of the unity. However, a racially infused discourse about culture was by no means unique to traditionalist intellectuals. Interestingly enough, the very same Qing dynasty “empiricists” vilified by Mou and Tang were praised by the likes of Ding Wenjiang and Hu Shi, as well as the historian Fu Sinian, as pioneers of the enlightened, scientific spirit who had

243 Philosophy of History (*Lishi zhexue* 歷史哲學), [1955b], vol.9 of *MJ*, p.458.
247 Xiong, [1938], pp.84-85.
248 See Jing Haifeng, “The Method of Philosophication in the Modern Interpretation of Confucian Thought and its
managed to break away from the “metaphysical” speculation and emphasis on individual self-cultivation in Song-Ming Confucianism. Instead of the Manchurian Qing, Ding singled out the Mongolian Yuan 元 dynasty (1271-1368) as the principal cause for what he took to be the near disappearance of Han culture.  

In the case of Mou Zongsan however, things were arguably still more complicated. One can even find passages where his theoretical opposition to Marxism and his acerbic anti-communism is bizarrely intermingled with unadulterated anti-Semitism:

You have to remember that Marx is a Jew, and Jews do not have a notion of the nation, because they were already deprived of their country from early on. Because they do not want to return to their home country either, they are called “international Jews”. The only thing they care about is money and using their slyness and cunning to make a living, which is why they only display craftiness and intelligence and do not manifest morality or emotions. Their heart has already accustomed itself to a pitch-black dark where there is neither light nor heat and only gloomy obscurity. They are particularly fond of the dark side of things and enjoy speaking in a negative way to expose everything you have positively established. This is fundamentally a form of demonic evil. Both Marx and Freud are like this.

Significance” (Rujia sixiang xiandai quanshi de zhexuehua lujing ji qi yiyi 儒家思想现代诠释的哲学路径及其意义), 2005, http://www.confucius2000.com/admin/list.asp?id=2507. Jing Haifeng also points out that Xiong Shili vehemently opposed the Qing Confucianists.


250Cf. Mou, [1949d], p.4.

251This expression and the myth connected with it was spread and popularized by the American automobile producer Henry Ford in a series of anti-Semitic tracts and pamphlets from the 1920s, which counted a certain Adolf Hitler among their readers. In a text collected in Moral Idealism, Mou remarks that “Hitler truly did have some original insights into the influence of Marxism, the character of Jewish people and the deficiencies of democratic politics” (希特勒對於馬克思主義的影響，猶太人的性格，以及民主政治的流弊，確有其獨到的體會). Mou, [1949c], pp.64-65.

252“Critique of the Communist International and the Chinese Communist Party” (Gongchan guoji yu zhonggong pipan 共產國際與中共批判), [1952a], in Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu tongxun 中國文哲研究通訊, vol.19, no.3, 2009, p.6. At another instance, Mou even made the bewildering suggestion that Hitler’s idea of a Volksstaat (種族國家) had its origins in the Jewish idea of the chosen people. See Mou, [1940], p.961. Zhang Junmai, inspired by Bertrand Russel (see the chapter on Augustine in his A History of Western Philosophy, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967, pp.363-364), portrayed Marxism as a form of religion – with Marx as the Messiah (彌賽亞), the Party as the church (教會), the revolution as the seconding coming (第二次來) – and attributed these similarities to the strong influence of Judaism and Christianity on Marx. Zhang takes over Russell’s table of “correspondences” between the Judaic/Christian and communist eschatologies. The idea of a secularization of eschatology in modern historical and political thought was also advocated in a more elaborate fashion by Karl Löwith and Jacob Taubes. According to Zhang Junmai, Marxism is not so much a philosophical theory (哲學學說) as it is a religious dogma (教条) used to attract followers and eliminate political opponents. Zhang thus uses the distinction between philosophy and religion to attack politics. See Refutation of Dialectical Materialism (Bianzheng weiwu zhuyi bolun 辯證唯物主義駁論), Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, [1958] 1967, pp.114-115 and Zhang Sanping, 2011, pp.51-52. Cf. Tang, [1955], pp.178-179.
Time and again it becomes clear that for Mou, the problem was not the ghost of metaphysics, but the demonic specter of communism\textsuperscript{253}, which he associated with materialism as a scientific, philosophical, ethical, and political outlook. He applied the denunciatory epithet of “materialist” as a transhistorical signifier to anything from the legalism of Han Feizi and the evidential studies of the Qing dynasty to the “Jewish” economism of Marx, rhetorically linking these together in doing so. One can only wonder what Mou would have thought of Marx's comments on Judaism in \textit{On the Jewish Question}, in which the latter wrote that “money is the jealous god of Israel […] The god of the Jews has become secularized and has become the god of the world. The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jew.”\textsuperscript{254}

In his earlier writings, Mou was mainly preoccupied with systematically researching and expounding formal logic and pursuing an initial study of Kant's \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} (focused on the Transcendental Dialectic) in an attempt to formulate universal a priori laws of rational thought and provide a foundation for both logic and mathematics through Russell's and Whitehead's \textit{Principia Mathematica}.\textsuperscript{255} At that time, he still formulated his opposition to communism and the theoretical framework of dialectical materialism in “colorless” universalist terms, proposing to adopt a “scientific

\textsuperscript{253}Mou, \textit{Autobiography at Fifty} (\textit{Wushi zishu 五十自述}), 1957c, vol.32 of \textit{MJ}, p.95: “How could this international roaming specter be called a citizen of the world?” (此是國際遊魂，何得謂世界人).

\textsuperscript{254}Karl Marx, \textit{On the Jewish Question}, [1844] https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/.

outlook on culture” (科學之文化觀)256 as a solution to the growing threat of communism. Not much mention is yet made of Chinese culture in particular, let alone of ethnicity or race. In his earliest critiques of dialectical logic and concomitant defenses of the inviolable nature of logical laws (the principle of the excluded middle, the principle of identity, and the law of non-contradiction), Mou invoked the universality of scientific truth over and against any particularizing approaches which sought to introduce historical and social contingencies such as class interest and social status into the study of logic and dared to condemn as “bourgeois” the notion of a universal and invariable truth.257

Though allowing for formally different systems of logical reasoning and notation, Mou took logic to be “the development of reason itself” (理性本身的發展)258, purified of all external determinations, and not as conditioned by the socio-historical environment, let alone as a social or cultural convention. Logic was only meant to deal with the potential and the formal, not with the actual and the materially real.259 Freeing reason and logic from empirical contingency by abstracting from specificity on the level of content had to guarantee the a priori identity of reason and logic and the invariability of their truth. As such, the study of logic for Mou was not meant to deal with the correctness or incorrectness of the content of propositions, but only with the correctness of their formal structure, and with the coherence or incoherence resulting from their interrelation and combination. What Mou called for was not yet the realization of “concrete universals”, but the development of “a sense of abstraction” (抽象感) necessary for both science and philosophy, as well as individual people, to avoid becoming “caught in the chains of interrelations between concrete particulars” (陷溺於特相與特相的交引鍊子中)260 and to steep themselves in the element of the universal in order to ward off the reifying reduction of culture.

256“A Comparison of Two Trends of Thought in China” (Guonei liang da sichao zhi duibi 國內兩大思潮之對比), [1935b] in ZW2, pp.827-828.
257See “Is the Dialectical Method the Truth?” (Bianzhengfa shi zhenli ma? 辯證法是真理嗎?), [1931] in ZW1, pp.3-12, “Logic and Dialectical Logic” (Luoji yu bianzheng luoji 邏輯與辯證邏輯), [1934c] in ZW1, pp.93-138, and “The Limits of Dialectical Materialism” (Bianzheng weiwulun de xianzhi 辯證唯物論的限制), [1934d] in ZW1, pp.139-152. The last two texts were included in the collection The Debate on Materialist Dialectics (Weiwu bianzhengfa lunzhan 唯物辯證法論戰), edited by Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀, Taibei : Pami'er shudian, [1934] 1980, pp.71-133. Of course, a universalist, non-constructivist approach to truth does not exclude, and can in fact be perfectly combined with a strong political engagement. Although their work did not deal with politics or history and in fact can be characterized as fundamentally ahistorical (science = invariant truth), most logical positivists of the Vienna Circle had socialist inclinations. Otto Neurath (1882-1945) for example was a fervent (traditional) Marxist, who saw metaphysical thought and idealism as complicit with social stagnation. See Michael Friedman, A Parting of Ways. Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger, Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2000, pp.11-23 on the political dimension of Rudolf Carnap’s and Neurath’s attack on metaphysics.

258Mou, [1934c], p.104. Also see the preface to his Standard of Logic (Luoji Dianfan 邏輯典範), [1941], vol.11 of MJ, pp.3-11.
259Mou, [1934c], p.114.
260See “Introspections after a Great Disaster” (Da nan hou de fansheng 大難後的反省), [1947] in ZW2, pp.973-978.
and human existence to its concrete, material dimension.\textsuperscript{261}

However, already in his first published article\textsuperscript{262}, aside from vouching for the universality and timelessness of science, he also began to invoke cultural determinations against dialectical materialism. In this youthful piece, Mou suggested that Heraclitus (“War is the father of all things”) must be held responsible for the oppositional nature of most Western conceptions of dialectics which stressed the productive nature of contradictions and conflict, and had culminated in the Marxist concept of violent class struggle and the mechanical dynamic between base and superstructure. He further contrasted this belligerent, Western type of dialectics with a non-conflictual form of Chinese dialectics stemming from the \textit{Yijing}, where the synthesis and reconciliation of oppositions was stressed in a way which Mou likened to the method of Hegel. Still, despite the incidental occurrence of such rough cultural specifications, the theoretical and methodological baseline in these early writings was a rejection of materialist dialectics as a dogmatic “metaphysical theory” (\textit{yuanxue lilun} 元學理論) buttressed by an appeal to the scientific solidity of formal logic.\textsuperscript{263} Simply put: formal logic was scientifically sound, dialectical logic was not. Mou thought that “if one holds on to the basic meaning of the logic of negation, then that which calls itself materialism is actually idealism” (保持矛盾邏輯的根本義，則自稱為唯物論的即是唯心論)\textsuperscript{264}, since it endowed historical and natural reality with abilities of negation and contradiction, properties which he thought could only be ascribed to conceptual operations. In another remarkable polemical reversal, Mou chided the communists for being too idealist in all their efforts to defend the theories of historical and dialectical materialism, using the latter as a smoke bomb (煙幕) to distract both themselves and the largely uninformed and ignorant populace from social realities which contradict their overtly abstract and detached speculations.\textsuperscript{265} For Mou, dialectical materialism was nothing but a misuse and distortion of Hegel's “immobile ontology” (靜的本體論), immobile in the sense that Hegel did not subject the dialectical transitions between various categories of being and thought to temporal determinations. Mou thought that the immobility of Hegel's otherwise quite restless, but as he saw it, strictly notional dialectics had its own full development as a result and

\textsuperscript{262}Mou, [1931].
\textsuperscript{263}Mou, [1934d], pp.139-142.
\textsuperscript{265}“Politicians and Revolutionaries” (\textit{Zhengzhijia yu gemingjia} 政治家與革命家), [1937b] in \textit{ZW2}, pp.876-877.
could not be applied to the “material” realms of history and society. He tried to discredit the Marxist misappropriation of the dialectic in its application to society and nature as misleadingly and ideologically introducing distinctions into a reality which “does not have classes, or distinctions of higher and lower, and is undifferentiated” (沒有階級，沒有高下，是一色的). Not unlike Jin Yuelin, who characterized the “world of original being” (benran shijie 本然世界) as being “without perspective” (wuguan 無觀), Mou still conceived of reality as essentially ontologically neutral:

On the basis of Zhuangzi’s “observation through the Way” or what more recently Zhang Shenfu has called “pure objectivity”, [we can say that] the “nature” we observe is “naturally self-so”, “is simply what it is”, “has no meaning”, “has no value”, “has no distinctions between good and bad”, which means that even if there were to be contradictions [in reality], then these would not necessarily be [in a state of] struggle.

266Mou, [1934c], pp.117-118, Mou, [1934d], p.150. Also see Mou, [1933b], pp.653-654, pp.656-657. Tang Junyi too thought that the Hegelian dialectic remained restricted to the level of concepts. Additionally, Tang believed that the procedure of double negation and affirmation in Madhyamaka Buddhism (不 X 不 Y, 非 X 非 Y, 即 X 即 Y), as a higher form of dialectical reasoning (ranked 6th in a total of 8 types of dialectics he distinguishes, the materialist version occupying the lowest place), showed the inapplicability of contradictory distinctions to the realm of being more clearly than the Hegelian variant. See “Types of Dialectics” (Bianzhengfa zhi leixing 辯證法之類型), [1961a] in Tang Junyi, Collected Philosophical Essays (Zhexue lunji 哲學論集), vol.18 of TJ, pp.427-429. Of course the obvious problem is that the difference between being and thought cannot be so easily applied to Hegel's logic.

267Mou, [1931], p.8. Mou compared the formal structure of dogmatic adaptations of the scheme of “thesis-antithesis-synthesis” and of the three “laws” of the dialectic formulated by Engels in his Dialectics of Nature (the unity of opposites, the reversal of quantitative changes into qualitative ones, the negation of the negation) to the old rigid structure of the eight-legged essay (八股文). See Mou, [1933b], p.648. Also see Li Changzhi 李長之, “The Eight-Legged Form of Dialectics” (Baguowenshi de bianzhengfa 八股文式的辯證法) [not dated], in Zhang Dongsun (ed.), [1934], pp.328-338. As Fredric Jameson aptly points out, “Hegel's own analysis would seem to show that the dialectic is out to destroy the concept of law rather than to offer the chance of formulating some new ones.” Valences of the Dialectic, London and New York: Verso, 2009, p.14. A recent neo-traditionalist pamphlet (which shares nothing of the universalism of the 1958 Manifesto) entitled Manifesto for the Renaissance of Chinese Culture: Struggling for the Advancement of the Rebirth of the Chinese People and Peace and Development of the World in the New Century (Zhonghua wenhua fuxing xuanyan: wei cujin xin shijie zhonghua minzu weida fuxing he shijie heping yu fazhan er fendou 中華文化復興宣言：為促進新世紀中華民族伟大复兴和世界和平与发展而奮斗), written by Li Bochun 李伯淳, signed by 85 academics (among whom Zhang Dainian) and published in October 2001 on the occasion of the 52nd anniversary of the PRC, identifies three major particularities of Chinese culture (the unity of man and heaven, a dialectical frame of thought, and the idea of harmonious unity) and seems bent on formalizing what it takes to be the dialectical features of Chinese thought into three laws in a manner similar to Engels' attempt to put the Hegelian dialectic in a straitjacket. For the text of this Manifesto go to: http://www.ruyirensheng.com/xyfx.htm.


269Zhang Shenfu 張申府 (1893-1986) had been Mou's mentor in logic during his studies at Peking University. Zhang was the first to translate Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus into Chinese. Much to Mou's displeasure, he was also one of the founding members of the CCP.

270Also see Mou, [1933b], p.649. Cf. p.670.
Mou repeatedly stressed that “affirmation and negation belong to thought, not to being. The principles of logic are manifested from thought and not from being” (肯定、否定是思的，不是有的。邏輯之理由思顯，不是由有顯)。271 In general, he still kept being and thought strictly separated in order to insulate logic from both the contingencies of facticity and the illusions of a dogmatic metaphysics claiming to be able to reach the unconditioned without recourse to experience. When applied to what is accessible through sense experience, the cognitive structures of the understanding (lijie 理解) and the procedural rules of thought that can be a priori derived from a pure logic which “is not mixed up with any elements of experience” (不雜有任何經驗特性), has the nature of being fundamentally “self-caused” (自因性)272 and “does not originate from a perceptual horizon” (不自境出)273, the a priori laws of logic can “treat things as things without becoming reified by them” (物物而不物於物)274. Moreover, Mou strongly insisted that being and knowledge have their own distinct principles.275 The logically grounded principles rendering cognition of the external world possible have to be kept apart from those which realize (shixian 實現) being, since the former only regulate (jigang 紀綱) the perception and conceptual determination of being as phenomena276:

Logic belongs to the sphere of thought and nowhere else. We do not oppose [the idea] that thought exists. But if one says that thought is being, or observes thought from [the perspective of] being, then

271Mou, [1941], p.7.
272Mou, [1941], p.739.
273Mou, [1941], p.131.
274Mou, [1941], p.734 This sentence is taken from the Shanmu 山木 chapter in the Zhuangzi. See Burton Watson (trans.), The Complete Works of Zhuangzi, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, p.157. Watson translates it as “treating things as things but not letting them treat you as a thing.” Also see Xiong Shili's use of this phrase in Xiong, [1932], p.9 and Tang, [1951-1952], p.612, who employs it to refer to the spontaneity of the understanding in Kant.
276See Mou, [1941], pp.127-143, pp.739-749. Also see Wang Xingguo 王兴国, “Mou Zongsan's Principle of Realization and Principle of Regulation, Including a Comparison with Kant's Regulative and Constitutive Principle” (Mou Zongsan de shixian zhi li yu jigang zhi li – jian yu Kangde de gulyue yuanze he gyouao yuanze bijiao 牟宗三的實現之理与紀綱之理——兼与康德的轨约原则和构造原则比较), 2001, for a comprehensive and systematic study of this highly complex distinction throughout the whole of Mou's oeuvre.
one is taking a metaphysical standpoint. It should not be adopted when discussing logic. Otherwise, logic risks no longer being logic, so that its principle would not be its own, but a metaphysical principle. That thought and being are not one and the same does not mean that “thought” as a factual reality is not also a kind of “being”. It only means that the principles which manifest themselves in thought are not principles which are established with regard to being. What is established [in the case of thought] are judgments and descriptions of the subject concerning existence, [but] what is displayed [in this case] is the manifestation of thinking itself. Therefore, the principle of thought is directed towards itself, whereas the principle of being takes on the perspective of things. The latter has a substantial reality, whereas the former does not.

We are still far from Mou Zongsan's later notion of intellectual intuition as a mode of practical insight which is not restrained by the bounds of sensibility and provides access to the noumenal dimension of value as a “thing-in-itself”. At this stage in his philosophical development, he firmly positioned himself against what he took to be a neglect of the difference between being and thought in Kant's “highest principle of synthetic judgments” according to which “the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience”. A telling example of the outspoken modesty of the early Mou's ontological claims can be found in the in itself rather grandiose conceptual deduction (tuiyan 推演) apophatically unfolding the a priori characteristics of ontological substance (benti 本體) provided towards the end of the second volume of his Critique of the Cognitive Mind (Renshixin zhi pipan 識心之批判). The “logical construction” (luoji gouzao 邏輯構造) of an unchanging absolute Mou undertakes here starts out from the assumption that an unchanging metaphysical substance has no place in sensible intuition (zhijue 直覺)

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277Mou, [1941], p.137, p.143.
279See Critique of the Cognitive Mind (Renshixin zhi pipan 識心之批判), [1956b], vol.19 of MJ, pp.661-698. The manuscript for the massive Critique of the Cognitive Mind was already completed in 1949, but was only published much later in 1956.
subject to space and time (時空), where there are only “things which arise conditionally” (緣起事) and “contingently occurring things” (偶起之事). Substance can be accessed neither through the a priori “empty frames” (xu jiazi 虛架子, xufa 虛法) on which the mind relies in cognition, nor through the “pure principles” (chunli 純理) of logic, which “have no content, and all have a homogeneous and purely formally constitution” (無內容，純為同質而形式的). Such an absolute then cannot be given in experience, but demands a transcendent use of cognitive reason. Before embarking on the challenging deduction itself, Mou already cautions that “this kind of construction follows a logical procedure and only provides formal determinations. Whether or not the concept of substance formally determined in this way will turn out to be real and objectively adequate has to be ascertained on the basis of whether or not it can afterwards meet the conditions of a construction through intuition” (蓋此種構造是按照一種邏輯手續而只作形式的決定也。此種形式的決定所決定之本體概念是否能有真實性或客觀妥實性，但視其後來是否能滿足直覺構造之條件). There is not necessarily any proof for the “objective efficacy” (客觀有效性) of what is nonetheless a legitimate “pursuit of reason” (理性之追求). The deduction, structured in numbered paragraphs (1.00-3.32) reminiscent of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, ends with the equally sobering conclusion that strictly speaking, nothing can be determined concerning the absolute as far as its existence is concerned, and that the entire deduction has only a logical or notional and not any ontological necessity and validity.

Mou seems to have taken to heart Kant's idea, formulated in the context of the latter's frontal attack on the ontological proof for God's existence in the Transcendental Dialectic, that “being is not a real predicate.” In Mou's own words: “Although it may well be that there are no errors in a logical

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280Mou, [1956b], p.669.
281Mou, [1956b], p.672.
282Mou used the term “reference schemes” (gedu 格度) in this context to designate cognitive schemata that do not designate the properties of objects in themselves, supposedly in contrast to the Kantian “categories” (fanchou 範疇), whose function they nonetheless very much resemble. At this point, Mou still assumed that Kant's categories had a overambitious ontological dimension conflating the distinct realms of being and thought. See Wang Xingguo, 2007, pp.395, p.399.
283Mou, [1956b], pp.663-666.
284Mou, [1956b], p.669.
285Mou, [1956b], p.663.
286As Wang Xingguo makes clear, in the *Critique of the Cognitive Mind*, Mou positively appropriates Berkeley's dictum that “to be is to be perceived” (esse est percipi, 存在即被知) by taking it to mean not that perception creates being, but that outside of experience open to cognition and perception, nothing can be known or said to exist. For Mou, Berkeley's dictum has no positive ontological import, since what is given in experience “is taken up by the mind, and certainly not created by it” (為心所攝，並非為心所造). See Wang, 2007, pp.277-288.
287Kant, 2007, pp.500-506 (B620-630).
288See Kant, 2007, p.504 (B626). “The small word is […] only serves to posit the predicate in relation to the subject.”
construction, still, logical claims do not amount to proofs [of existence]” (邏輯構造本身雖可以無邏輯之弊，而邏輯要求不等於證明)⑮. This conclusive moderation of the overtly metaphysical claims made throughout the deduction of the metaphysical absolute, circumscribed and relativized as merely “logically constructed” and only endowed with a conceptual certitude, is all the more remarkable seeing how in the course of the lengthy deduction itself, Mou states that “ontological substance is not only [identical to] its own essential constitution, but is also its own existence” (本體不惟是其自己之體性，且亦是其自己之有)，adding that “its essence cannot be separated from its being (existence)” (不能區別其體性與其有（存在）).⑰ He thus has to assume a radical difference between the “being” referred to in the assertion that one cannot differentiate between the essence and the being of substance, and the meaning of “being” or “existence” in the context of his own skeptical admission that it ultimately cannot be proven whether or not a substance in which essence and existence coincide really exists.⑱ His restriction of the objective validity of what can be logically and conceptually deduced concerning a metaphysical absolute thus comes about by means of a distinction between the real existence of substance on the one hand, and the notional existence of this being, whose essence it is to exist, on the other. This remarkable (and, from a Hegelian point of view, untenable) distinction grounding the internal unity and self-identity of substance through a differentiation of being, allows Mou to go on to ascribe properties such as omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and pure goodness to an absolute which becomes more and more divine (and Christian) as the deduction progresses, while at the same time bracketing the question concerning “the relation between substance and the real world” (本體與現實世界之關係)⑲ as something that will have to be accounted for through the elaboration of a “moral metaphysics” where a non-sensible form of apprehension could provide what has already been established as conceptually necessary with the intuition required for it to become fully objectified and real.⑳ The circumscriptive distinction between being and thought thus

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⑮Mou, [1956b], p.694. Cf. Kant, 2007, p.505 (B628-629): “If, then, I try to think a being as the highest reality (without any defect), the question still remains as to whether it exists or not. For although in my concept there may be wanting nothing of the possible real content of a thing in general, something is wanting in relation to my whole state of thought, namely, that the knowledge of this object should be possible also a posteriori […] Whatever and however much, therefore, our concept of an object may contain, we must always step outside it in order to attribute existence to the object.” Also see Mou, [1956b], pp.695-696.

⑰Mou, [1956b], p.671. “Substance is its own essential constitution, if it were not to be its own existence, then it would necessarily exist on the basis of something else, so that it would no longer exist because of its own essence.” (本體是其自己體性，如果它不是其自己之有，則必因別的而為有，而不是因其體性而為有). Ibid.

⑱See Mou, [1956b], p.672. Mou explicitly invokes the authority of Kant here.


⑳Mou, [1956b], p.694.
allows Mou to maintain a non-duality of being and thought (as well as of being and essence, will and inclination etc.) *internal* to substance, while simultaneously enabling him to ensure that the discriminating force of the distinction prevails over this “indoor” identity by keeping it an “internal affair” of substance. The latter is thereby saved from being subjected to the influence of empirical causality and contingency which would be introduced by appealing to sensible intuition in furnishing proof of existence in the full sense of the word. The question concerning the existence of a being whose essence presupposes existence (St. Anselm’s putatively apodictic definition of God) is thus addressed “inside” a distinct domain insulated from the “real world”, a domain which can even manage to contain an absolute that is supposed to have no outside, presumably tolerates nothing external to itself\(^{294}\), and is capable of not being “fractured by the scattered existence of [individual] entities”\(^{295}\) in which it is immanently present. Mou does not yet call upon dialectics to bridge this gap between (real) existence and (notional) being, but leaves it intact and visible as something still to be thought through. In other words: for now, epistemological considerations (the Kantian limits of thought) win out over the task of settling (安頓) and satisfying (滿足) ontological demands, in clear contrast to Mou’s mature philosophy, where epistemology itself comes to be ontologically grounded as an instance of “attachment” constituted through dialectical self-negation.

As I showed in the above, it was crucial for Mou in his early critiques of materialist dialectics to ensure that the categories of negation and contradiction have no ontological import or reference, and can only be used as a method of exposition in conceptual analysis while remaining under strict supervision of the law of non-contradiction. To recapitulate his uncompromising position on the matter: “There are no contradictions in systems of logic, in the layered structure of nature, in a fact, or in a true proposition; and neither will be there any contradictions in the application of the dialectical method to explain facts […] The only contradiction lies in the objectification of the dialectic.”

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\(^{294}\)Mou, [1956b], pp.685-688. “Not a single a real thing exists separated from substance” (一切現實存在不離本體而自存), ibid., p.686. “Divine knowledge does not only know itself [completely], but also knows everything [else]; this omniscience is based on the fact that substances envelops everything and that there is not a single actual entity which is not dominated by substance. Supposing that there were to be a concrete thing lying beyond the reach of divine knowledge which would not be mastered by substance, then this thing would ground itself independently from substance and would be something substance cannot envelop, in which case subtenancy would not be able to become itself” (神智不但自知，且知一切，其知一切也，基於本體之無不涵蓋，一切現實存在無不以本體為之宰。假若有一物既是一具體存在而又不為神智之所及，不為本體之所宰，則此物即脫離本體而自立，而本體有所不能涵蓋者。假若本體有所不能涵蓋者，則本體不成其為本體). Ibid., p.674.

\(^{295}\)Mou, [1956b], p.675.
矛盾，一件事實無矛盾，一個真命題亦無矛盾；而用辯證的方法來反覆解說事實已不會有矛盾 [...] 矛盾唯在辯證之客觀化)296. At times, he already moved in another direction by giving tentative indications that the dialectical method had its proper place in moral practice, that is to say in a non-conceptual path towards a metaphysical reality only accessible through spiritual practice and closed to rational forms of cognition subservient to logic. 297 However, these suggestions only crystallize much later in his mature system, which can sometimes give the reader the impression of having been written by an entirely different person. Nevertheless, I think it can be argued that the strongest, if not the only clearly identifiable continuity in Mou Zongsan's entire oeuvre is negatively ensured by his life-long revolt against communism and the materialist insurgency against Spirit, a revolt which took on a host of different forms as his thought evolved, not in the least in response to changing historical circumstances. It is important to keep in mind that the young Mou's interest in formal logic was instigated by the debates on dialectical materialism in China which took place in the first decades of the twentieth century. 298 His early critiques of intuitionist and conventionalist approaches to logic which he held responsible for contaminating the a priori nature and transcendental purity of logical laws are taken up and continued in his later endeavor of granting the moral domain the status of something noumenal and positing a corresponding form of intuitive knowledge as in turn providing access to the “in itself”. What he called the “self-constriction” (收斂) of the logical self (luoji ziwo 邏輯自我) necessary to ensure the latter's a priori and transcendental status is thus related to Mou's later theme of self-negation, in which the same movement of reflexive constriction is applied by the moral subject in order to give rise to cognition as a faculty. 299 Right up to his latest writings, logic and morality would continue to figure as two equally “unchangeable substances” (dingchang zhi ti 定常之體) 300 free from the relativizing intrusion of empirical causality and social conditions. His philosophical struggle with the confusion of the autonomous domains of knowledge and being by both psychologistic empiricism, historical materialism (and apparently to a certain extent even Kant) is thus a shadowy precursor to his own attempts to overcome the gap between knowledge and existence in his mature philosophy. 301

296 “Contradiction and the Theory of Types” (Maodun yu leixing shuo 矛盾與類型說), [1933a] in ZW1, pp.90-91. Also see Mou, [1941], pp.715-721.
300 See “The Double-Leveled 'Unchanging Substance' ” (Liang chong 'dingchang zhi ti' 兩重「定常之體」), [1990a] in WW, pp.489-495.
301 See Mou's retrospective remarks on his earlier work in his Autobiography, [1957c], pp.63-64.
However, his later extension of dialectics to Chinese culture and history as a mobile and self-transforming Spirit would make this earlier restriction of the dialectic to the “immobility” of the notional largely untenable. By then, his cultural and historical conceptions had already come to presuppose dialectical negativity as something much more than a merely conceptual determination without any corresponding reality or ontological import. This made it necessary for him to introduce new distinctions, for example by distinguishing between the atemporal validity of logic as a pure and universal manifestation of reason itself on the one hand, and the eternal mobility characteristic of culture as a Spirit which expresses and manifests itself in time and history without succumbing to or becoming affected by the factual contingency of “external conditions” (waiyuan) on the other.

By the time he was working on the impressive amount of texts which would later be collected in his “Three Books on New Outer Kingliness” (Xin waiwang sanshu 新外王三書), presented as an expression of his “objective grief” (keguan de beiqing 客觀的悲情)302 and “concerned consciousness” (youhuan yishi 憂患意識)303, Mou had already come to consider his youthful opposition to communism purely on the basis of science and formal logic as flawed and inadequate.304 As we saw in the long

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302 See chapter 5 of Mou's *Autobiography*, [1957c], pp.75-120.
303 Mou adopted this expression from Xu Fuguan 徐复观. He took it to denote a sense of moral responsibility and positive engagement with social and political problems, and contrasted it with the Christian consciousness marked by (echoing Kierkegaard) fear and trembling (kongbu yishi 恐怖意識) and the Buddhist consciousness of suffering and karmic retribution (kuye yishi 苦业意識). See Mou, [1973], pp.12-19.
304 After the founding of PRC, Mou would reproach Jin Yuelin for remaining confined to purely technical issues in his philosophical works. See “A True Man of Freedom” (Yi ge zhenzheng de ziyouren 一個真正的自由人), [1952e] in *SSXB*, p.50. According to Liu Aijun, Jin Yuelin investigated epistemology in order to resolve epistemological problems, whereas Mou researched epistemology to tackle the issue of the modernization of Chinese philosophy. Liu, 2008, p.23. On Mou's ambiguous stance towards Jin Yuelin, also see Wang Xingguo, “Mou Zongsan on the Modern Field of Philosophy in China” (Mou Zongsan lun Zhongguo xiandai zhexue jie 牟宗三論中國現代哲學界), 2000, http://www.confucius2000.com/confucian/mzlzgxdzxj.htm. Mou also blamed Jin for having stayed behind on the mainland and for having “capitulated” to the communist authorities, pointing out that logical analysis was not sufficient to oppose communist ideology and uphold Chinese culture. Mou's attack on Jin led to an impassioned rebuttal by the Taiwanese liberal thinker Yin Haiguang 殷海光, a fierce advocate of free speech who opposed the GMD monopoly on power in postwar Taiwan. Yin was a former student of Jin Yuelin, and was especially angered by Mou's use of a confessional article (written by Jin's students, among whom Zhang Shiying 張世英), in which Jin had been forced to recant his “idealism” and “bourgeois” views. According to Yin, the scientific method and logical analysis were the most powerful weapons to combat the “Red Demon”. See Ruelin Chen, “Morality Versus Science: The Two Cultures Discourse in 1950s Taiwan”, *East Asian Science, Technology and Society*, 4, 2010, pp.104-105. A criticism of Marxism from the standpoint of science would be continued by Ye Qing 葉青 (1896-1990). See Ye's *A Critique of Marxism* (Makesizhuyi pipan 馬克思主義批判), Taipei: Pami’er shudian, 1974. Ye Qing is most known in modern Chinese intellectual history for his polemics with the Marxist Ai Siqi concerning the introduction of Soviet “new philosophy” into China at a time when Ye himself identified science with historical and dialectical materialism and advocated the “Annihilation of Philosophy” (哲學消滅). See Werner Meissner, *Philosophy and Politics in China. The Controversy over Dialectical Materialism in the 1930s*, London: Hurst & Company, 1990, pp.50-59. Also see Romana Recker, *Zhang Dongsun und Ye Qing und ihre Auseinandersetzung über den dialektischen Materialismus*, Doctoral Dissertation,
quote which I gave at the beginning of this subsection, he had begun to see such “rigid rationalism” as linked to “quantitative socialism”. In this way, the timeless objectivity of the scientific field was identified as a space of technological development, industrial productivity, reductionism, reification and historical oblivion.\textsuperscript{305} Science became increasingly associated with scientism and communist ideology, as equally totalizing approaches marked by an exclusive focus on the material and by a quantifying and calculative form of rationality.\textsuperscript{306} For Mou, both positivist science as well as communist practice were characterized by a total lack of awareness of the pivotal position of the human subject.\textsuperscript{307} Towards the end of his career, Mou suggested that analytical philosophy, a form of philosophy that is too closely aligned with science and ends up being bogged down in the analysis of language (語言分析) as a mode of unveiling the meaninglessness of metaphysical problems, would do better to apply itself, not to attacking metaphysics and ridiculing the philosophy of Hegel, which he still saw as something of a bulwark against the negative aspects of modernity symbolized by Marx, but to uncovering the abuse of language by a communist ideology employing the “dark magic of language” (文字魔术) in order to deceive the Chinese people.\textsuperscript{308} After his increased turn towards cultural and socio-political problems, he would come to think of analytical philosophy as not so much an independent form of philosophy in itself, but rather as a discussion of methodological and “technical” issues.\textsuperscript{309} Eventually, in an article from 1991, he would sound even harsher and progressively more Heideggerian when writing that “modern philosophy has been reduced to linguistic analysis under the conditions of advanced civilization, with logic having been changed into applied computing; this can no longer be called philosophy, and merely signifies the degeneration of philosophy into technology” (現在的哲學只剩下高度文明下的語言分析，講邏輯變成應用電腦，這其實不算是哲學，只是哲

\textsuperscript{Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 1992.}

\textsuperscript{305Cf. Tang, “The World of Science and the World of Humanism” (Kexue shijie yu renwen shijie 科學世界與人文世界), [1949a] in RJ pp.39-52.}

\textsuperscript{306See Mou, [1954b], pp.17-18 and “Comments on Logical Positivism” (Luoji shizhenglun pingshu 邏輯實徵論評述), [1958] in WW, pp.121-129. In the last text (p.121), Mou makes some negative comments on the Jewishness of what he takes to be the anti-Hegelian currents of modern Western thought (Marx, Freud, Einstein, Lenin,...) in line with the passage I cited in the above. For Tang Junyi, the logical positivism of Carnap and Schlick had followed in the footsteps of Kant's critical philosophy without taking over its positive side, i.e. the transference of theoretical aporias to practical reason. See Tang, [1951-1952], p.611.}

\textsuperscript{307See “Refutation of the Communist Treatise on Practice” (Pi gongchanzhuyizhe de ‘Shijian lun’闢共產主義者的「實踐論」), [1952c] in DY, pp.120-123.}

\textsuperscript{308Fourteen Lectures on the Encounter between Chinese and Western Philosophy (Zhongxi zhexue zhi huitong shishi jiang 中西哲學之會通十四講), [1990b], vol.30 of MJ, p.8.}

\textsuperscript{309See “Kant and the Orientation of Contemporary Western Philosophy” (Kangde yu xifang dangdai zhexue zhi quxian 康德與西方當代哲學之趨向), [1980a] in WW, p.300.}
3.2.3 Mou's double-leveled ontology: the transcendental distance between fact and value in the light of the tension between history and thought

3.2.3.1 Mou and Wittgenstein on the limits of the sayable

Mou Zongsan's preface to his 1987 translation of Wittgenstein's 1922 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (with the classical-sounding Chinese title *Mingli lun* 名理論)\(^{311}\) presents us with a good opportunity to gain a better insight into the changed stance towards analytical or “scientific” philosophy in his later period and can serve as a point of entry into a more elaborate discussion of the final presentation of his own ontology and epistemology in *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy* (1971) and *Appearance and Thing-in-itself* (1975). In his own preface Wittgenstein had written that “the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather—not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: *for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable* (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).”\(^{312}\) Mou takes up this foundational issue by departing from the final proposition of the *Tractatus* (“What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.”\(^{313}\)) and uses his translator's preface as an opportunity to provide a new understanding of the relation between the sayable and the unsayable (可說與不可說) in a small treatise consisting of fifteen numbered paragraphs, thus mimicking the formal structure of the *Tractatus*. Mou begins by arguing that for Wittgenstein, “only things which can be experienced within space and time can be spoken of”


\(^{311}\)Mou, [1987], vol.17 of *MJ*, pp.3-18. Mou worked on the translation between 1980 and 1986. He adopted the idiosyncratic rendering of the title from his former teacher Zhang Shenfu. As Joachim Kurtz makes clear, the term *mingli* as a translation of “logic” has a longer history: “*mingli tan* 名理探 ‘the investigation of the patterns of names’, *minglixue* 名理學 ‘the science of . . .’, and *mingli zhi lun* 名理論 ‘the theory of . . .’, had been used as a vague general designation for matters related to argumentation since the early Han dynasty (second century BC) and gained greatest prominence in the lively culture of learned debate emerging in third- and fourth-century China.” Joachim Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011a, p.55.


He adds that “what can be spoken of can be described in a proposition” (可說者可陳述之為一命題), propositions in turn being combined to form what Wittgenstein called a “picture” (圖象) of the relations between things which are the case and which, when taken together, make up the world as a whole. These, Mou thinks, are the minimal conditions for an enunciation about a given (set of) object(s) to qualify as “scientific” and hence as sayable in a logical and scientific sense. He immediately goes on to note that this conception of the limits of the sayable would seem to exclude logic itself from the domain of what can be spoken of, since logical propositions are nothing but “tautologies” (taotaoluoji 套套邏輯), in the sense that they do not ultimately denote the meaning of any real state of affairs, but merely express their own formal validity and internal coherence, and cannot be approached in terms of objective correctness as adequation between (subjective) thought and (objective) being. As such, the structure of logical propositions “does not say anything at all, and therefore also cannot express anything” (一無所說，故亦無所表象).

Mou thinks that the early Wittgenstein's approach to what is sayable is far too narrow, and proposes instead that the category of what can be spoken about should not be limited to a specific domain of objects (concrete states of affairs which are subject to the conditions of space and time and which can be described in logically coherent scientific propositions), but should be defined on the basis of the mode of enunciation, that is to say, by determining whether or not a given enunciation qualifies as being part of a “discursive process” (辨解的歷程). Let me already note in passing that in Mou's mature epistemology, the term “discursive” functions as a shorthand for (empirical) cognition, which is essentially characterized by mediation instead of the immediacy and self-sufficiency of “wisdom”.

These highly condensed and somewhat elliptical arguments bring Mou to a new definition of the sayable, which runs as follows: “Everything which can be placed within a certain relation is sayable” (凡可以被置於關系中者皆為可說者). This much broader definition, Mou believes, allows one to reinstall the traditional questions and objects of metaphysics, theology, and ethics explicitly excluded by Wittgenstein into the realm of the sayable. The category of the sayable would thus have to include “God, the Way, the freedom of the will, the unlimited mind” (上帝、道、自由意志、無限心), which

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314 Actually, as far as I can tell, Wittgenstein does not himself introduce this qualification, but merely gives it as an example to describe the limits of possible states of affairs which make up the world. See Wittgenstein, 2001, (2.0121) p.6.
317 Mou, [1987], p.10.
are, he stresses, actually one and the same “thing” insofar as they are all what Kant called “noumena” (zhisiwu 智思物), that is to say, objects of intelligibility, but not of the understanding (Verstand), which always operates under the conditions of sensible intuition (感觸直覺), i.e. space and time. Mou assumes that even though these noumenal objects cannot be positively determined by placing them in empirical relations with other “objects”, since they are not determinate, finite objects conditioned by the limits of sensibility, they can still be negatively determined and indirectly expressed and accessed through a form of “enlightened insight” (wuru 悟入) which allows the finite human subject to apprehend and clarify the internal “transcendental relations” between noumena. Elaborating on his expanded conception of the sayable, Mou further introduces the distinction between “analytic discourse” (fenjie shuo 分解說) and “non-analytic discourse” (fei fenjie shuo 非分解說). He stresses that “although what is spoken of in a non-analytical way points towards the unsayable, this does not mean that it is not clear and even less that it is not rational; it is just that it is spoken of in the manner of [what Laozi called] “dark unity” and in a cryptic-paradoxical manner” (non分解地說者雖指點不可說，然並非不不清楚，亦並非不理性，乃只是玄同地說，詭譎地說). The non-analytical mode of enunciation thus refers to a manner of expression which is not mediated by either concepts or the restraints of sensibility, and provides human beings with a way of speaking about that which cannot be spoken about, while allowing them to make clear in the very act of speaking that one is not talking about something given or at hand as a simple collection or totality of objective facts. The unsayable is not accessible in an objective, scientific manner, but through a specific kind of relation of the subject to itself. In general, Mou associated science and philosophy with two different orientations of the subject: a “congruous apprehension” (shunqu 順取) directed towards the objective world, and a “reflective

318Mou, [1987], p.10.
320Mou, [1987], p.10.
321Mou, [1987], pp.11-12. Also see lecture 16 in Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy (Zhongguo zhexue shijiu jiang 中国哲學十九講), [1983b], vol. 9 of MJ, pp.331-366 and the appendix to the second volume of Mou’s Buddha Nature and Prajñā (Foxing yu bore 佛性與般若), vol.4 of MJ, pp.1193-1219. Mou also drew a (Buddhist-inspired) difference between “explaining through expression” (biaoquan 表詮) and “explaining through concealment” (zhequan 遮詮). See Mou, [1990b], pp.179-180 and Mou, [1956b], pp.667-668. In a modern context, the terms 表詮 and 遮詮 were already used by Mou's teacher Xiong Shili. See Xiong, [1932], p.50, p.57 and Xiong, [1958], p.31.
322The expression xuantong 玄同 occurs in chapter 56 of the Daodejing 道德經, which opens with the famous lines “one who knows does not speak, one who speaks does not know” (知者不言，言者不知). Translation quoted from Hans-Georg Moeller, Daodejing (Laozi). A Complete Translation and Commentary, Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 2007, p.131. On the character xuan also see Moeller's introduction, pp.xi-xii.
323Mou, [1987], p.12.
cognition” (nide 逆 得 or nijue 逆 覺) referring to subjective self-consciousness and moral self-awareness respectively. He saw the latter movement of the subject turning back to itself instead of pursuing external objectivity as granting access to “the meaning and source behind the realm of facts” (事 實 界 背 後 的 意 義 與 根 源 ). The non-externality of the transcendent (the noumenal) to the immanence of subjective (moral) consciousness, which can “darkly unite” with the transcendent by turning onto itself, is thus called on as a guarantee that the subject is always on “both sides of the limit thinkable”.

As an example of such a non-analytic kind of discourse, which he calls a form of “inspirational language” (啟 發 語 言) or “indicational language” (指 點 語 言), Mou uses one of his favorite Buddhist phrases culled from the Prajñāpāramitāsūtras (Boleboluomi jing 般 若 波 罗 蜜 经): “the true and only characteristic, is what is called being without any characteristics [wuxiang, alakṣaṇa], namely having the character of suchness” (實 相 一 相， 所 謂 無 相, 即 是 如 相). The openness of this ontological realm where all discriminations have fallen away, or no longer stand in each other's way, to cognition and (paradoxical) linguistic expression has to be ensured through the movement of a subject “reversely” apprehending itself as the ultimate source and possible endpoint of discriminations. The realm of “suchness” (zhenru 真 如, bhūtatathāti) denoted here, surpassing yet at the same time not being above or beyond what is accessible through perception and cognition, is obviously a different kind of “suchness” – negatively “characterized” by the absence of ontological determinations – than the absence of conceptual discriminations and distinctions in the extra-conceptual reality which Mou had posited as immune to the forces of dialectical negativity and contradiction in his earliest works on logic and epistemology. Towards the end of his small treatise, it becomes clear that what Mou objects to most of all in Wittgenstein's Tractatus is the often quoted paragraph 6.41, where Wittgenstein makes the following rather “inspirationally” formulated remarks:

325See “Concise Discussion of Science and Philosophy” (Jianlun kexue yu zhexue 簡 論 科 學 與 哲 學), [1953b] in WW, pp.9-14 and Mou, [1956b], (preface) pp.11-12.
326Wittgenstein, 2001, p.3.
328Quoted in Mou, [1987], p.11. Mou glosses 相 (xiang, laksana) as jueding 決定 (“determination”), having a meaning and function comparable to the Kantian categories which determine how what is “given” in sense-perception appears to the subject. Mou, [1983b], p.272. Jason Clower notes that the phrase 實相一相所謂無相即是如相 is not scriptural, but Mou's own reconstruction. See Clower, 2010, p.82, note 57.
The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists—and if it did exist, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental. What makes it non-accidental cannot lie within the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world.\(^{329}\)

3.2.3.2 Kant, Heidegger, Mou: transcendental subjectivity, finitude, and the value of the thing-in-itself

It should be kept in mind that by the time Mou Zongsan wrote the dense preface to his translation of Wittgenstein's work, he had already fully elaborated his famous but highly controversial “two-tiered ontology” or “double-leveled ontology” (liang ceng cunyoulun 兩層存有論) on the basis of a reinterpretation of Kant, in turn inspired by Heidegger's reading of Kant's first Critique.\(^{330}\) Needless to say I cannot even begin to do justice to the subtlety and complexity of Mou's impressive conceptual architectonic here and will only attempt to point towards the fundamental problems he in my opinion tried to address through his two-tired ontological paradigm. A careful look at his New Confucian ontology is in order before briefly returning to his belated dispute with Wittgenstein in continuing our investigation of Mou Zongsan's philosophical modernity.

Kant's epochal inquiry into the a priori conditions of the possibility of knowledge in the Critique of Pure Reason (1781) took the form of a “Copernican” turn\(^{331}\) to the (transcendental) subject, which is

\(^{329}\)Wittgenstein, 2001, p.86. Also see Mou's comments on this passage in Mou, [1958], p.125.


\(^{331}\)The well-known passage runs as follows: “Hitherto it has been supposed that all our knowledge must conform to its objects. But all attempts to establish something about them \textit{a priori} by means of concepts, and thus to expand our knowledge have on this supposition come to nothing. We should therefore attempt to tackle the tasks of metaphysics more successfully by assuming that the objects of knowledge must conform to our knowledge […] We are here in a similar situation as Copernicus was in at the beginning. Unable to proceed satisfactorily in the explanation of the motions of the heavenly bodies on the supposition that the entire collection of stars turned round the spectator, he tried to see whether he might not have greater success by making the spectator revolve and leaving the stars at rest. A similar experiment may be tried in metaphysics, as regards the intuition of objects. If the intuition had to conform to the constitution of objects, I would not understand how we could know anything of them \textit{a priori}; but if the objects (as objects of the senses) conformed to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, I could very well conceive such a possibility.” Kant, 2007, p.18 (preface to the second edition, Bxvi-xvii).
why this reorientation has also been described as “Ptolemaic”\textsuperscript{332}. As Kant notes in the introduction to his revolutionary “inventory”\textsuperscript{333} of pure reason, “I call all knowledge \emph{transcendental} which deals not so much with objects as with our manner of knowing objects insofar as this manner is to be possible \emph{a priori}”.\textsuperscript{334} In his lectures on Kant's first \textit{Critique}, Adorno stresses that the fundamental novelty and specificity of Kant's “Copernican revolution” is not so much the focus on the (perceiving, categorizing, judging, thinking) subject in his inquiry into the origins and functioning of knowledge as such, an evolution in the history of Western philosophy which is routinely seen as already having begun with Descartes\textsuperscript{335}, but the fact that for Kant, “objectivity itself, that is, the validity of knowledge as such, is created by passing through subjectivity, by reflecting on the mechanisms of knowledge, its possibilities, and its limits.”\textsuperscript{336} Let me already point out that this grounding of objectivity in the subject, as essentially a conditioned modality of subjectivity, is something that appealed to Mou Zongsan enormously. Inquiring into how objects must appear and “conform to our knowledge”\textsuperscript{337} in order to be given to us and to become accessible in empirical intuition (\textit{Anschauung}) involved seeing the subject as actively constituting a world (through the application of the categories to what is available in experience) which has the understanding (\textit{Verstand}) as its “lawgiver”. As Robert Pippin explains, this can be boiled down to the idea that “the mind is not a passive receptacle or a mirror (even of itself), but, in Kant's language, a “spontaneity”. This means that it is a self-determining activity, not originally determined by a “given”, because already determining for itself what counts as a given.”\textsuperscript{338} At the same time, Kant constantly insisted that knowledge remains bound by the limits of sensibility (with time and

\textsuperscript{333}Kant, 2007, p.11 (preface to the first edition, Axx)
\textsuperscript{334}Kant, 2007, p.52 (B25).
\textsuperscript{335}With Descartes, it is ultimately still the goodwill of a non-deceiving God which stands as the ultimate guarantee for the existence of the doubting cogito, whereas in Kant, the divinity is radically subordinated to reason, insofar as the godhead is transformed into a postulate which, his existence ultimately being a practical assumption serving the demands of moral reason (“it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God”, Kant, 1993a, p.132) has to abide by the categorical imperative as well and is not exempt from but grounded in the dictates of morality: “[M]an (and every rational being) is an end in himself, i.e., he is never to be used merely as a means for someone (even for God) without at the same time being himself an end”, Kant, 1993a, p.138. My italics.
\textsuperscript{337}Kant, 2007, p.18 (preface to the second edition, Bxvii).
\textsuperscript{338}Robert R. Pippin, \textit{Modernism as a Philosophical Problem. On the Dissatisfactions of European Culture}, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, p.53. According to Karl Mannheim, the Kantian shift to the philosophy of consciousness can be sociologically grasped as a conceptual consequence of the end of “the objective ontological unity of the world”, and the attempt “to substitute for it a unity imposed by the perceiving subject”. Karl Mannheim, \textit{Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge}, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960, p.58. Mannheim adds that this atemporal unity of consciousness (the unity of apperception, the \textit{cogito} which must implicitly accompany all possible representations) was later to be transformed into a historically, nationally and culturally variable unity of consciousness, thereby rendered “dynamic and in constant process of becoming” (p.61).
space figuring as the a priori “inner” and “outer” forms of sensible intuition) and can thus only access an objective world as appearance, simply because “the special conditions of our sensibility cannot be made the conditions of the possibility of things, but only of their appearances”\(^{339}\). The fundamental “spontaneity” of the categories of the understanding which open up onto a determinate perceptual world restricted by or, which is the same thing, attuned to the limitations of human sensibility, is paired with the inescapable “receptivity” of empirical impressions. Objects of experience must be both “given” and “thought”.\(^{340}\) Since, in other words, consciousness cannot get beyond its own involvement and investment in what it perceives, the determination of reality by the “inner” constitution of the observer implies that human beings are not so much little demiurges who can freely think the world they perceive and inhabit into being, as they are fundamentally captivated both by their specific mode of receptive sensibility which determines how the sensible manifold of impressions of a supposed reality as it is “in itself” is given, as well as by the categorical selection and filtering mechanisms (of quantity, quality, relation, and modality) they have at their disposal, or which rather operate on their behalf, in “spontaneously” (that is to say automatically, or, one is tempted to say, systemically) arranging the matter provided through sense perception into determinately formed perceptions and cognitions in an a priori fashion.\(^{341}\) One can only go on to say, as Schopenhauer would later do, that the world is a representation (\textit{Vorstellung}) resulting from the will because the will in this sense is not employed with reference to the individual subject in a psychologistic sense, but refers to the wholly anonymous force of a will to life that is neither accountable to nor understandable in terms of personal volition. That for Kant, the limits of the understanding which make sure that experience is not just an incoherent “rhapsody of perceptions”\(^{342}\) are in a sense “self-imposed”\(^{343}\) is thus as much a mark of epistemological captivity as it is one of freedom. Simply put, it is not the individual empirical subject, but transcendental subjectivity which ensures that “all appearances of nature, must, as far as their combination is concerned, be subject to the categories”\(^{344}\), and this applies as much to “external” nature as it does to the subject in its interiority, or to what Mou called “reflective cognition” (\textit{nijue}). Hence, for Kant, even in self-consciousness the subject “does not intuit itself as it would represent itself

\(^{339}\)Kant, 2007, p.65 (B44).
\(^{342}\)Kant, 2007, p.188 (B196).
\(^{343}\)Kant, 2007, p.261 (B312).
\(^{344}\)Kant, 2007, p.165 (B165).
immediately and self-actively, but according to the manner in which it is affected from within, and consequently intuits itself as it appears to itself, not as it is.”345 Fichte on the other hand would later use the concept of intellectual intuition (Intellektuelle Anschauung) precisely in order to express what he took to be the essential immediacy and unmediated nature of self-consciousness as “positing” (Setzen) both itself and its external limitations in the form of a “check” (Anstoß) on its self-identity, which would otherwise remain without an external world opposed to and different from itself.346

In the existential-phenomenological interpretation presented in his Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics from 1929, Martin Heidegger reads these programmatic Kantian presuppositions and their consequences in the light of his own analysis of human Dasein as run through with a finitude (Endlichkeit) resulting from the determination of existence by time. In this respect, the dependence of knowledge on sensibility is not the cause, but simply a mark of the finitude of human beings347 for Heidegger:

Human intuition […] is not “sensible” because its affection takes place through “sense organs”, but rather the reverse. Because our Dasein is finite – existing in the midst of beings that already are, beings to which it has been delivered over – therefore it must necessarily take this already-existing being in stride […] The essence of sensibility exists in finitude.348

I will attempt to summarize Heidegger's line of reasoning in his controversial Kantbuch very briefly: Heidegger proceeds by trying to argue, contra modern neo-Kantians such as Ernst Cassirer, that the

345Kant, 2007, p.81 (B69). Emphasis added. “If, then, with regard to the determinations of the outer senses, we admit that through them we know objects only insofar as we are externally affected, then we must also admit, with regard to the inner sense, that we intuit ourselves through it only as we are internally affected by ourselves; in other words, we must admit that with regard to inner intuition we known our own subject only as appearance, and not as it is in itself” Kant, 2007, p.154 (B156). “[I]t is not given to us to observe even our own mind with any intuition but that of our inner sense”, Kant, 2007, p.275 (B334).


348Heidegger, 1997, p.19. Cf. p.15: “The finitude of reason […] in no way consists only or primarily in the fact that human knowing demonstrates many sorts of deficiencies such as instability, imprecision, and the potential for making errors. Rather, this finitude lies in the essential structure of knowledge itself. The tactical limitedness of knowledge is first and foremost a consequence of this essence.”
Critique of Pure Reason, is not primarily a theory of (scientific) knowledge[^349], but constitutes the veritable groundwork for a renewed metaphysics[^350], or rather a “fundamental ontology” centered around the finitude of human existence[^351]. For Heidegger, the true significance of Kant's transcendental philosophy is that it “does not investigate the being itself, but rather the possibility of the preliminary understanding of Being, i.e. [...] the constitution of the Being of the being”[^352]. “Transcendental” thus takes on the meaning of “ontological”. Like Mou Zongsan, who was also of the opinion that Kant did not manage to adequately pursue and express some of his own foundational insights[^353], Heidegger wants to show that Kant, perhaps unknowingly[^354], already pointed a way out of the oblivion of being and towards an analysis of Dasein pursued by Heidegger himself in Being and Time (1927). As Sébastien Billioud notes, both of them thus end up pulling Kant in opposite directions (towards and away from finitude respectively[^355]). In order to bring the Critique's ontological dimension to the fore, Heidegger tries to demonstrate Kant's (disavowed and hidden) insistence on the priority of sensible intuition (receptivity) over the understanding (spontaneity) in the genesis of human knowledge[^356] and emphasizes the “servile relationship”[^357] between self-active thought and an intuition conditioned by (spatio)temporal restrictions. Heidegger understands the fact that Kant's critical philosophy was conceived of as a transcendental investigation which inquires into the conditions of the possibility of perceptual objects, instead of trying to determine the (unknowable) internal constitution of objects of experience in themselves, as being poised towards arriving at “a preliminary understanding of Being,

[^349]: Heidegger, 1997, p.11.
[^350]: For Heidegger, “[e]very question concerning the Being of a being [...] and even the question concerning the Being of that being to the constitution of whose Being finitude as the understanding of Being belongs, is metaphysics.” Heidegger, 1997, p.161. This means that for Heidegger, metaphysics is not so much a philosophical discipline in the categorization of knowledge, as it is “the basic happening for the incursion into the being which occurs with the factual existence of something like man in general.” Heidegger, 1997, p.170.
[^351]: Heidegger therefore interprets Kant's “Copernican turn” as implying that “not “all knowledge” is ontic, and where there is such knowledge, it is only possible through ontological knowledge.” Heidegger, 1997, p.8.
[^354]: Heidegger himself admits that he is not so much interested in “what Kant says”, but rather in “what occurs in his ground-laying.” Heidegger, 1997, p.150.
[^356]: “In order to understand the Critique of Pure Reason this point must be hammered in, so to speak: knowing is primarily intuiting.” Heidegger, 1997, p.15. “Heidegger is to protest, repeatedly, whenever Kant seems to yield to the temptation of diluting the priority of the sensory in some kind of rationalistic formula. Whatever nonsensory elements may be demonstrated as essential to experience [...] the ultimate focus of any knowledge is its essential reference to the particular perceptions or appearances represented in sense intuition. Charles M. Sherover, Heidegger, Kant and Time, London and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971, p.39.
[^357]: Heidegger, 1997, p.47.
i.e. […] the constitution of the Being of the being”\(^{358}\) in an “ontological analytic of the finite essence of human beings”\(^{359}\). “Thinking as such”, Heidegger proposes, “is already the mark of finitude”\(^{360}\). This leads him to a labyrinthine demonstration drawing on Kant's notorious transcendental schematism, an obscure and maddeningly difficult section in the *Critique*\(^{361}\) where Kant tries to explain how the a priori categories of the understanding which are arrived at in complete independence and abstraction from anything empirical can be applied to the phenomena given in experience in order to make the latter knowable and intelligible, and where Kant introduces a mediating faculty called the transcendental imagination\(^{362}\) in order to bridge the gap between intuition and the understanding, this faculty, to Heidegger's great delight, in turn hinging on *time* and temporal finitude in the construction of “schemata” interposed between sensible intuition and the categories. I do not feel competent at all to say anything about the merits of Heidegger's interpretation, nor even about what Kant is actually up to in devising his schematism, which, as far as I am aware, is a source of bewilderment even for Kant specialists. More important in the present context is that Heidegger's insistence on the category of finitude as a point of entrance into Kant's work managed to motivate Mou Zongsan into writing Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy\(^{363}\) and continued to resonate throughout Appearance and Thing-in-itself as well. Insofar as Mou too only employed Heidegger's *Kantbuch* for his own particular purposes, it is not necessary to get lost in Heidegger's interpretation of Kant any further.

Mou Zongsan's mature engagement with Kant takes off by means of an opposition against what he calls Heidegger's “misplacement” (誤置) of metaphysics in temporal finitude.\(^{364}\) Mou thinks that “his existential approach can be adopted, but his phenomenological method is not appropriate” (存在的入路是可取的，但現象學的方法則不相應)\(^{365}\). Now and then, he gives conceptually somewhat underdeveloped stabs at Husserl's putative ignorance of the difference between returning “to things themselves” (Zu den Sachen selbst, the phenomenologist's motto) as entities given in the pure

\(^{358}\)Heidegger, 1997, p.10.  
^{360}\)Heidegger, 1997, p.17. Cf. p.20: “Finite intuition […] is dependent upon the understanding, which not only belongs to the finitude of intuition, but is itself still more finite in that it lacks the immediacy of finite intuiting.”  
^{361}\)Kant, 2007, pp.176-183 (B176-187).  
^{362}\)This faculty also plays an important role in the “Transcendental Deduction” in the first edition of the *Critique* (A96-130).  
^{363}\)See Mou, [1971], pp.6-7 (preface). Mou provides a Chinese translation of (excerpts from) sections 4, 5, 16, and 25 of Heidegger's work in the eight, seventh, and ninth chapter respectively, pp. 43-50, pp.31-38, pp.55-63. He also gives a rendering of the ninth section of *Being and Time* in an appendix, pp.473-490.  
^{364}\)See Mou, [1971], pp.447-472.  
^{365}\)Mou, [1971], p.7.
immanence of consciousness and the turn to things-in-themselves as transcendentally distinct from phenomena, a negligence inherited by Husserl's student Heidegger. What Mou objects to the most is Heidegger's attempt to submit practical reason to the same procedure as theoretical reason by relating it to the transcendental imagination, and thereby to time, as well. He thinks that such a temporalization of morality would corrode the moral law's purity from the empirical or "pathological" and thus undermine the autonomy of morality defended by Kant. Heidegger's analysis of the "care" (Sorge, guanxin 關心) bound up with the "thrownness" (Geworfenheit) of human existence as a being-towards-death can only result in a one-sidedly "immanent metaphysics" (neizai xingshangxue 内在形上学) and not a "transcendent metaphysics" (chaojue xingshangxue 超絕形上学) in the proper sense of the word. It will be apparent that Mou and Heidegger clearly have completely different and totally opposed conceptions of transcendence. The German thinker believes that "[t]ranscendence […] is finitude itself," meaning that for Heidegger, "[w]hat is "behind the appearance" is the same being as the appearance […] the “mere” in the phrase “mere appearance is not a restricting and diminishing of the actuality of the thing, but is rather only the negation of the assumption that the being can be infinitely known in human knowledge" He would no doubt have characterized Mou's moral idealism and humanism as another instance of Seinsvergessenheit. For the Confucian philosopher on the other hand, there can be no transcendence without a certain difference in ontological levels irreducible to what Heidegger called the ontological difference between Being and beings, that is to say, without a distance between the immanent and the transcendental as a metaphysical "reality" (shiti 實體).

These differences aside, Mou still agrees that Kant's Critique is not merely a theory of knowledge, but can also be read as a foundation for metaphysics (albeit a transcendent one) and approvingly invokes

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368 Mou, [1971], p.457.
369 This is also why Mou takes issue with Heidegger's exclusive focus on the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic to the detriment of the Transcendental Dialectic, where Kant delineated and restricted the possibility of the transcendent metaphysics of the kind Mou wants to salvage. See Mou, [1971], p.451.
370 See Po Hei-Lau 劉保禧, "Tiandao and Horizon – Mou Zongsan and Heidegger on Transcendence (Tiandao yu jieyu – Mou Zongsan yu Haidege'er lun chaoyue 天道與界域 —— 牟宗三與海德格論超越), Dongwu zhexue xuebao 東吳哲學學報, 8, 2003, pp.97-133.
371 Heidegger, 1997, p.64.
Heidegger's insistence on the intimate relation between Kant's famous three questions (“What can I know?”, “What should I do?”, “What may I hope?”) and a fourth question added by Kant in his *Lectures on Logic*: “What is the human being?” (Seinsfrage). Unsurprisingly, Heidegger insists that the fourth question is the truly essential and authentic one, and that, as Kant himself had suggested, the three other queries are rooted in the question concerning human Dasein. Commenting on Kant's suggestions, Heidegger writes that “human reason is not finite just because it poses the three questions cited above, but the reverse: it poses these questions because it is finite [...] The three questions [...] do not simply allow themselves to be related to the fourth. Rather, in themselves they are in general no different from it.”

Mou opens *Appearance and Thing-in-itself* by asserting that Kant's entire *Critique* and in fact his whole philosophy hinges on two related premises, namely 1) the transcendental difference (超越的區分) between appearance (現象) and thing-in-itself (物自身,  wuzhi zai qi ziji 物之 在 其 自 己), and 2) the finitude of human existence (有限性 or 封限性). According to Mou, the second premise logically includes (包含) the first, but he states that Kant failed to give a convincing and systematic explanation for why the premise of human finitude implies (函蘊) the assumption of an a priori difference in cognition between appearances and thing-in-themselves and why human beings are categorically restricted to knowing appearances only.

Crucial for Mou in this regard was trying to determine how the notion of intellectual intuition (智的直覺) – a faculty Kant explicitly denied to human beings and would seem to have merely employed as a contrastive limiting concept pointing to a boundary that cannot be crossed by human reason – could be related and applied to the transcendental difference between appearance and thing-in-itself implied by human finitude. In doing so, Mou put forward intellectual intuition as a mode of unmediated cognition or apprehension which grants human beings access to reality not as

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374Kant, 2007, p.635 (B833).
375*Kant, 2007, p.635 (B833).*
380Sébastien Billoud makes the following important remark: “[...] *zhì* [智] has both an epistemological and a moral meaning, which is echoed in the syntagm 智的直覺. This is much less the case in the German expression *intellektuelle Anschauung*, in which the adjective *intellektuel* mainly has an epistemological dimension.” Billoud, 2012, p.76.
appearances, that is to say insofar as they are phenomenally given as possible objects of experience within the a priori spatiotemporal forms of sensible intuition and mediated by the relations established through the categories of the understanding which provide the “rules for the exhibition of appearances”\textsuperscript{381}, but as objects as they are in themselves outside of these subjective determinations. Kant himself stressed that “appearances actually do relate to something distinct from them (and so entirely heterogeneous), in that \textit{appearances always presuppose a thing in itself}, and so provide notice of such a thing, whether or not it can be cognized more closely”\textsuperscript{382}. Mou Zongsan however cannot settle for this heterogeneity between appearances and things-in-themselves and departs from what would at first sight seem to be a downright rejection of the basic outlook of Kant's critique of reason. He goes so far as to make the possibility and validity of the entire tradition of Chinese philosophy dependent on the existence of an intellectual intuition allowing human beings to access both sides of the limiting distinction by which their thinking and perceiving operates.\textsuperscript{383} Clearly, such an \textit{intuitus originarius}\textsuperscript{384} hypothetically ascribable to God flies in the face of Kant's intentions and is completely out of bounds for him:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{[A]ll our intuition is nothing but the representation of appearance; that the things we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being, nor are their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us […] if we remove our subject or even only the subjective constitution of the senses in general, then the entire constitution and all relations of objects in space and time, nay space and time themselves, would vanish […] It remains completely unknown to us what objects may be in themselves and apart from all this receptivity of our sensibility.}\textsuperscript{385}
\end{quote}

Following Kant\textsuperscript{386}, Mou takes care not to confuse the (strictly transcendental) difference between

\textsuperscript{381}Kant, 2007, p.256 (B304). “[T]he proud name of ontology, which presumes to supply, in a systematic form, different kinds of synthetic \textit{a priori} knowledge of things in themselves […] must be replaced by the more modest name of a mere analytic of the pure understanding.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{382}Kant, 2004, p.106. Emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{383}Mou, [1971], p.5 (preface).

\textsuperscript{384}Kant, 2007, p.83 (B72). In the famous letter to Markus Hertz from 1772 which is sometimes quoted as marking the beginning of Kant's “critical” phase, Kant makes a difference between an \textit{intellectus archetypus}, “an intellect whose intuition is itself the ground of things” pertaining to the divinity, and an \textit{intellectus ectypus}, which “derive[s] the data for its logical procedure from the sensuous intuition of things”. \textit{Correspondence}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.133.

\textsuperscript{385}Kant, 2007, p.75 (B59). Fredrick Beiser notes that Kant associated the notion of intellectual intuition with mysticism, adding that he “disliked mysticism chiefly because of its dogmatism. Mysticism would attempt to justify certain ontological claims—the existence of archetypes or spirits—by appealing to an esoteric intellectual intuition, which could be had only by an elite.” Beiser, 2002, p.62. Kant's scathing criticism of the visions of the Swedish theologian and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) played an important role in the genesis of his critical philosophy.

\textsuperscript{386}See Kant, 2007, p.75-77 (B59-64). “Even if we could impart the highest degree of distinctness to our intuition, we
appearance and thing-in-itself with the (merely empirical) distinction between subjective (valid for or given to an individual subject, thus potentially including delusions or deceptions of the kind Descartes tried to rule out) and objective (universally agreed upon and correct) cognitions and judgments. The “objective”, universally valid truth of say a scientific proposition concerning the position or the speed of a physical body in space and time does not make the observations through which it is arrived any less subject to the constraints of the phenomenal world. One does not get a single step closer to the thing-in-itself by moving from a splitting headache (“subjectively” experienced by a patient) to the brain tumor (“objectively” observed by a physician) causing it. The limitation of human knowledge to appearances is thus not a question of degree, but one of principle. Mou could not follow Kant's restrictive definition according to which “the thing in itself is not an object given outside representation, but merely the position of a thought-entity [ens rationis] which is thought of as corresponding to the object”**, but strongly supported his assertion that that “the difference [between an object as a phenomenally conditioned appearance and as a thing-in-itself] does not lie in the objects, but merely in the difference of the relation in which the subject apprehending the sense-object is affected for the production of the representation itself”**. For Mou however, a noumenon (zhisíwù 智思物, or wuzítì 物自體), by which Kant meant “a thing insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition”**, had to be more than a mere “Gedankeding” that can only be employed negatively, serving as “an object of the pure understanding […] the problematic concept of an object for an intuition and an understanding totally different from our own, of an object, therefore, that is itself a problem”**. Still, it is obvious that Mou does not seek to overthrow the Kantian distinction through his positive interpretation of this problematic object, but tries to sublate it, that is to say, to preserve the distinction should not thereby come one step nearer to the constitution of objects in themselves.” Kant, 2007, p.75 (B59). As Heidegger expresses it: “Appearances [Erscheinungen] are not mere illusion [Schein], but are the being itself.” Heidegger, 1997, p.22.

387See Mou, [1975d], pp.5-8 and Mou, [1971], pp.128-131. Engels completely misses the point when he writes that “if we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural process by making it ourselves, bringing it into being out of its conditions and making it serve our own purposes into the bargain, then there is an end to the Kantian ungraspable “thing-in-itself”. The chemical substances produced in the bodies of plants and animals remained just such “things-in-themselves” until organic chemistry began to produce them one after another, whereupon the “thing-in-itself” became a thing for us” Friedrich Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, [1886], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/eb02.htm.


390There is considerable dispute over whether the two pairs noumenon/phenomenon and thing-in-itself/appearance have the same significance in Kant's work, but since I have not found the time to delve into this matter sufficiently, I have used them interchangeably, as Mou Zongsan seems to do on most occasions.

391Kant, 2007, p.258 (B307). “The concept of a noumenon is […] necessary to prevent sensible intuition from extending to things in themselves; that is, in order to limit the objective validity of sensible knowledge”. Kant, 2007, p.260 (B310).

392Kant, 2007, p.281 (B344).
while altering the significance and the import of the distinction quite radically.

Of crucial importance is that Mou thinks that the only way for Kant's transcendental difference to be adequately grounded or, as he usually puts it, “stabilized” (穩定), is by relating it to the idea of intellectual intuition as a positive faculty and an actual possibility, and by reinterpreting the thing-in-itself as what he calls a “concept of value and meaning” (價值意味底概念) that has a quintessentially moral significance instead of as a “factual concept” (事實概念). This means that for Mou, entertaining the possibility of an access to reality as it is “in itself” does not automatically imply overstepping Kant's critical restrictions on the limits of factual cognition, but simply comes down to lifting these restrictions from “intellectual” intuition insofar as the latter is bound up with the valuing subject as a moral being and allows it to relate to a moral reality unconditioned by yet inseparable from actual appearances. Mou is Kantian enough to agree that such a reality cannot be approached “discursively” (辨解的) or “analytically”. Unlike for Kant, the thing-in-itself is no longer a mere “procedural placeholder” or a limit-concept on human knowledge in Mou's work, but something which can fully “present” (呈現) itself and can be directly apprehended by a subject manifesting its own innermost nature in the process. Mou's whole point in his mature ontology, built around the linked notions of the noumenal and intellectual intuition, is distinguishing fact from value, while at the same time matching the Kantian distinction between phenomenon and noumenon onto the difference between fact and value and giving value ontological priority over fact. This is precisely why he cannot stomach Wittgenstein's argument that there is no value in the world, but only “in” an outside about which one cannot say anything meaningful. Since Mou has the impression that in the Tractatus, Wittgenstein rejects the very distinction between the phenomenal (fact) and the noumenal...

393See Mou, [1975d], pp.1-20. “The meaning of infinite/limitless is one of value and meaning, it is not meant to imply that [the thing-in-itself] is really a limitless entity” (無限性之意義是一個價值意味，不是說它是一個現實的無限存在). Ibid., p.13.
395See Lu Xing 卢兴 and Wu Qian 吴倩, “Is the Distinction between Fact and Value the Same as that between Phenomenon and Noumenon? – A Examination of Mou Zongsan's Theory of the 'Self-Negation of Moral Reason' ” (Shishi/jiazhi dengyu xianxiang/benti ma? – Dui Mou Zongsan 'liangzhi ziwo kanxian shuo' de yi ge jiantao 事实/价值等于现象/本体吗?——对牟宗三“良知自我坎陷说” 一个检讨, Henan shehui kexue 河南社会科学, vol.19, no.4, 2011, pp.71-74. The authors stress the fundamental novelty of the (Weberian) opposition between fact and value in philosophically exploring the conceptual difficulties resulting from the fact that Mou “valorizes the ontological world/ontologizes the world of value” (将本体世界价值化, 将价值世界本体化), but strangely enough go on to ascribe this double procedure to the Confucian tradition itself.
(value) as “not false, but nonsensical”, he thinks that the possibility of keeping what is non-analytically expressible open as a horizon of value and meaning is thereby unduly foreclosed. The value of the world – which, as Tang Junyi would say, is identical to the world itself – must be prevented from becoming identical with and being reduced to what Mou takes to be Wittgenstein's “depthless” world made up of a factual totality of phenomenally constricted appearances. At the same time, he wants to steer clear from the heteronomy that would result from turning the thing-in-itself into something beyond the reach of human beings as a projected absolute in which they no longer recognize themselves. The task of reconciling the contradictory demands of the non-identity of the phenomenal (appearances) and the noumenal (thing-in-themselves) on the one hand, and the accessibility of the noumenal to human beings marked by finitude on the other, thus comes to rest with the subject as both the transcendental origin and the practical solution for the difference between fact and value.

Mou follows Heidegger in relating the transcendental difference to the problem of human finitude and in assuming that “the concepts “appearance” and “thing in itself” […] is oriented towards the difference between finite and infinite knowledge.” For both thinkers, this has the radical consequence that “only for finite knowledge is there anything at all like an object. It alone is delivered over to the being which already is.” Mou further supports Heidegger when the latter proposes that the hypothetical object of an infinite form of knowing unconstrained by the bounds of existential facticity would strictly speaking not be an “object” (Gegenstand, duixiang 對象) at all, but something like an “e-ject” or “a thing which stands forth” from of out itself (Enstand, zixiang 自相, ziru 自如, or (chusheng) zizaiwu (出生)自在物). For Mou, the latter has its proper place in a Confucian moral metaphysics, where the thing-in-itself

\footnote{Wittgenstein, 2001, (4.003) p.22.}
\footnote{Strangely enough, Mou does seem to note that Wittgenstein himself is at his most mystical, or at least “non-analytical”, in the last paragraphs of the Tractatus which he subjects to so much criticism. Here, Wittgenstein speaks of his whole treatise as a “ladder” that must be discarded after it has served its purpose of showing what can and cannot be said, the latter referring to things “that cannot be put into words”, but “make themselves manifest”. Wittgenstein, 2001, (6.522) p.89. Mou was also probably unaware of what Wittgenstein had written to his publisher concerning the Tractatus: “The book’s point is an ethical one. I once meant to include in the preface a sentence which is not in fact there now, but which I will write out for you here, because it will perhaps be a key to the work for you. What I meant to write, then, was this: My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one.” quoted in Adrian Kuzminksi, Pyrrhonism. How the Ancient Greeks Reinvented Buddhism, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008, p.137. For an interesting interpretation see Michael Kremer, “The Purpose of Tractarian Nonsense”, in Noûs, vol.35, no.1, 2001, pp.39-73. Perhaps it is actually not Mou but Wittgenstein who is closer to the Buddhist idea when he writes that “not how but that the world exist is the mystery”. Mou's identification of the Buddhist notion of “suchness” with the level of “value” on the other hand poses considerable difficulties. See Kantor, 2006 for an excellent discussion.}
\footnote{Heidegger, 1997, p.23.}
\footnote{Heidegger, 1997, p.21.}
figures as “not [as] another object, but another mode of making oneself into an object”\textsuperscript{400}:

Perfect and direct apprehension does not manifest itself within the relation between a subject and an object, and does not have a determinate “thing” as its object; in this way, the intuiting subject becomes aware that it is itself in turn not limited by any particular thing [as an object opposed to it]. Therefore the subject [here] is not the subject of sensibility and of the understanding, but a subject of perfect and immediate apprehension. It has transcended the relational form of subject and object and has absorbed the oppositional characteristics of subjectivity and objectivity [within itself] \[\ldots\] Therefore, in knowing everything, knowledge in perfect apprehension really “knows” nothing at all. Nevertheless, within the complete clarity of direct apprehension all things are fully illuminated as e-jects (created by the original mind itself) \[\ldots\] which are cognized neither by means of the categories (cognitively mediating universal characteristics [of objects]), nor through what is empirically known in sensible intuition (thought as having a specific content). In the latter [sensible] form of thought and knowledge, there is only thinking and knowing, and no creation [of the object of thought and knowledge], meaning that what is thought and known in that case is precisely an object [as opposed to an e-ject], or what is called a “phenomenon”. Within the clarity of perfect and immediate apprehension on the other hand, [things] are illuminated as e-jects, so that they manifest themselves as “things-in-themselves”, or noumena \[\ldots\]\textsuperscript{401}

The “e-ject” which the subject knows and through which it becomes aware of its own unlimitedness is neither opposed to the subject nor determined and constrained by the conditions of empirical cognition and the discursive limits imposed by the categories.\textsuperscript{402} Therefore, the categories of the understanding would be of no use whatsoever in any possible cognition of noumenal things as they are in themselves through intellectual intuition.\textsuperscript{403} Mou Zongsan thus fully agrees with Heidegger that knowledge is

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{400} Kant, 1993b, p.181.
\item\textsuperscript{401} Mou, [1971], pp.241-242.
\item\textsuperscript{403} Mou, [1971], pp.159-160.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
fundamentally bound up with the limitations imposed by time and space as what Kant called pure forms of (sensible) intuition. The latter are not objective properties of things as they are in themselves outside of the particular constitution of human sensibility which imposes these characteristics on them.

Drawing on Heidegger, Mou argues that “things” (wu 物) cannot come to exist as objects (duixiang 對象) distinct from and opposed to the subject without a transcendental act of objectification (duixianghua de huodong 對象化底活動), subsequently applied to what sensible intuition never creates but must “apprehend congruously” (shunqu 順取) or “take in stride”, encounters as already at hand, and to which it is, in Heidegger's words, “delivered over”. However, what is essential for Mou is that objectification is essentially but one of the modalities of subjectivity, meaning that the limitations conditioning the subject in its acts of objectification do not categorically affect or predetermine a subject which essentially reflexively limits itself in objectifying “things” as “e-jects” into “objects”. This explains why the phrase “human beings can become unlimited even though they are finite/limited” (人雖有限而可無限)⁴⁰⁴ appears like something of a mantra throughout Appearance and Thing-in-itself. Additionally, the relation between finitude and its overcoming is conceived of in a dialectical manner, as interdependently linked in the context of moral practice: “[Human beings] are originally finite entities, yet they can attain an unlimited nature, and it is because of this that they are valuable. There is nothing praiseworthy in finitude which is merely finite or in unlimitedness that is merely unlimited. To be finite while struggling to obtain an unlimited nature; only that is of value.” (本是一有限的存在，而欲能取得無限性，這就是他的可貴。有限只是有限不可貴，無限只是無限亦無所謂可貴。有限而奮鬥以獲得一無限性，這便可貴)⁴⁰⁵. This is also why it is important for Mou to demonstrate that the spontaneity (zifaxing 自 發 性) characterizing the a priori genesis of the categories of the understanding, which are always subject to the receptivity (jieshouxing 接受性) of sensibility in their objective application to the manifold appearances, is of an essentially different nature than the spontaneity of morality, no such submission to the empirical being involved in the realization of the moral law. Whereas the freedom of the will which makes moral behavior possible is genuinely autonomous and self-given ( 真自給), only coming forth from itself (由其自己) and relying on nothing else (無所自), the understanding cannot lay claim to such creativity (chuangzaoxing 創造性). The

⁴⁰⁴Mou also expresses this in Buddhist terms, by stating that “finitude does not obstruct being unlimited” (有限不礙無限) and that “delusion is identical to wisdom” (煩惱即菩提). See Mou, [1975d], pp.28-29.  
⁴⁰⁵Mou, [1971], p.448.
deduction of the postulates (shezhun 設準) of the understanding relies on the ontological reference of these postulates, that is to say, their applicability to objects of experience and thus to a sensible manifold which has to be given and passively received.\textsuperscript{406}

Kant, Heidegger, and Mou thus all seem to agree that cognition is fundamentally linked to limitation in one way or another. The linkage of cognition and limitation takes on a peculiar and particularly complex form in Mou's work. In his own words: “the limited mind is the attached mind, it is also the cognitive mind, so that we can speak of the attachment of the cognitive mind” (有限心即是執著心，亦就是識心，故云識心之執)\textsuperscript{407}. Let us have a closer look at what Mou means by this. In his somewhat more accessible Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy (Zhongguo zhexue shijiu jiang 中國哲學十九講, 1983), Mou creatively adopts the Buddhist idea of “one mind opening two doors” (yi xin kai er men 一心開二門) described in the Treatise on the Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna (*Mahāyānasraddhāpadaśāstra, Dacheng qixin lun 大乘起信論)\textsuperscript{408} in order to clarify his position. Mou resorts to the doctrine of two distinct yet fundamentally identical truths (conventional truth, saṃvṛtisatya, sudi 俗諦 and ultimate truth, paramārthasatya, zhendi 真諦) expounded here in interpreting cognition as a form of “attachment” (zhizhuo 执著), which “enables” (or rather forces) the originally unattached and unlimited mind (wuxian xin 無限心) to come to know objects by first attaching itself to something distinct from and external to itself – an externality which is fundamentally “posited” (zhiding 直定) in a Fichtean sense – and endowing it with determinate, knowable characteristics (dingxiang 定相). Both the “gate of samsāra” (shengmiemen 生滅門) opening onto a finite, spatiotemporal phenomenal world where nothing comes into being without perishing, and “the gate of suchness” (zhenrumen 真如門) devoid of all, including temporal, determinations, are possible modalities of the mind.\textsuperscript{409} Knowledge of an external reality endowed with and known through specific categorical discriminations is only one of the mind's functions. “Attachment” here does not have a moralistic connotation, but has a properly transcendental sense as the condition of the possibility which

\textsuperscript{406}See Mou, [1971], pp.17-20, p.27.
\textsuperscript{407}Mou, [1975d], p.17.
\textsuperscript{408}Traditionally ascribed to Aśvaghoṣa 馬鳴 (c.80-c.150 CE), but probably composed in 6\textsuperscript{th} century China according to philological evidence. See Buswell Jr. and Lopez Jr., 2013, p.221. On Mou's plea for the “authenticity” of this text, see Clower, 2010, pp.114-116.
\textsuperscript{409}Xiong Shili had already used the Buddhist doctrine of the two truths, the worldly (sudi 俗諦) and the absolute truth (zhendi 真諦) in order to both distinguish and reconcile science with metaphysics. See Xiong, [1958], p.23 and Cheng Zhihua, 2013.
lets an objective world of cognitive objects distinct from the subject come into being in the first place. Conversely, this allows the mind to go from (cognitive) attachment to an unattachment coinciding with the cessation of cognition in the strict sense, thereby, in a metaphor Mou adopts from the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* (*Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經) “removing the disease without wiping out the dharmas” (除病不除法). For Mou, this implies that the a priori knowledge untainted by empirical contamination arrived at through logic and mathematics are also fundamentally the result of a prior attachment. In other words, logical, mathematical, or in short, scientific objectivity, invariability, and “timelessness” are still dependent on attachment in the transcendental act of objectification through which time becomes a determinate characteristic of what is devoid of all determinations as a thing-in-itself. In the case of a priori logical reasoning however, the “purity” of the unattached and noumenal mind and its freedom from the empirical manifold of sensible intuition is still to some extent transferred to the subject of logical thought, albeit within an “enclosed state” (封限的狀態中). In order to address the question as to exactly how “one mind” is supposed to “open two doors”, i.e. how the unattached and unlimited mind can give rise to a spatiotemporally limited world of determined and conditioned cognitive objects resulting from a transcendental act of attachment, Mou resorts to Hegelian dialectics in formulating his paradigm of the “self-negation of moral reason” (*liangzhi ziwo kanxian* 良知自我坎陷). In order to allow for a cognitively accessible world of

410See Mou, [1983b], pp.265-312 (lectures 13 and 14).
412In *The Philosophical Spirit of Modern Western Idealism*, employing terms and concepts inspired by Xiong Shili that would appear to predate Mou Zongsan's mature theory of cognition by almost two decades, Tang Junyi had already argued that the “substance of the mind” (*xinti* 心體) is originally “unattached” (*wuzhi* 無執) to its “cognitive objects”, that is to say, before the latter become objects cognitively opposed to the mind to begin with: “The ability to be objectified and externalized is only the function of this [substantial] mind, the function of objectification and externalization first becoming apparent in its attachment to the characteristics of a certain thing to which it restricts [itself] after reaching it through the luminosity of its [direct] insight” (可客觀外在化者，只是此心之用。此心之用之客觀化外在化，首即見於其智照之明之及物而陷於對物之相之一執). Tang, [1951-1952], p.686. For Tang too, objectivity is thus not simply given, but transcendally established by a consciousness “attaching” itself to a reality it externalizes in the process and thereby endows with “the characteristic of objectivity” (*wuxiang* 物相). See Tang, [1951-1952], pp.690-693. The crucial difference is that Tang understands sensible intuition as already in itself a form of “blind or ignorant transcendence” (盲目或無明之超越) in which an anterior subject-object identity can be directly experienced without the mediation of rational categories of thought, and thus before objective reality “emerges from being determined by the characteristic of objectivity” (被物相所規定而生). For Tang, sensible intuition qualifies as direct experience. For Mou on the other hand, sensibility is the mark of epistemological attachment and finitude and thus cannot lead to an “unattached perspective” of immediacy.
413Mou, [1975d], p.172.
414The term *kanxian* 坎陷, which Mou routinely glosses in English as “self-negation” has its origins in the *Yijing*, where the trigram *kan* 坎 is explained as *xian* 陷 and refers to water entering a sinkhole. See Yan Binggang 颜炳罡, *Integration and Recasting – An Investigation of Mou Zongsan’s Philosophical Thought* (Zhenghe yu chongzhu – Mou Zongsan
phenomenal objects to appear, the immediate apprehension of directly and immediately manifest noumenal “e-jects” has to negate itself and suspend the immediacy of its apprehension. He stresses that the attachment resulting from self-negation is not at all “ignorant” or “deluded” (無明) but comes about in a “self-conscious” (自覺) manner through a voluntary act of objectification on the part of the moral mind, which needs to make room for the faculties of cognition in order to avoid “withering and withdrawing” (枯萎而退縮) into itself.415 Fung Yiu-ming 馮耀明, who voices his objections to the most well-known representatives of New Confucian philosophy by pointing out the many logical inconsistencies in their work, something it is safe to say they in all likeliness could not have cared less about seeing how someone like Mou sought to dialectically ground the possibility of formal logic, still manages to describe the latter's philosophical predicament rather succinctly:

If what the contemporary new Confucianists pursue or search for is not a mere mental projection, but something with ontological and cosmological significance, they should observe the principle of individuality, that is, no entity without identity and no identity without objectification […] to emphasize the nonduality of the ultimate reality is to make a duality of the nonduality of the ultimate reality on the one hand and the duality of the nonultimate phenomena on the other. Any claim for non-duality […] is self-refuting.”416

“Precisely!”, one can easily imagine Mou Zongsan exclaiming in response, “and it is precisely through this self-refutation of the non-dual ultimate that the phenomenal world characterized by duality comes into being.” In my opinion, instead of resorting to a formalized logification of the problems that appear in Mou's philosophy, it would be more fruitful to take the broader discursive context of his whole oeuvre into account. From this perspective, it can be argued that it is still Marx who is at the back of Mou's mind, about whose historical materialist formula he had the following to say in an earlier text: “Marx said “existence determines consciousness”; this may be admissible from an epistemological point of view, but “consciousness determines existence” is true from the point of view of practice.” (馬

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415See Mou, [1975d], pp.125-133.
克恩 said “existence determines consciousness”, this in the relationship can be said, but “consciousness determines existence” is from a practical point of view. Through his double-leveled ontology, where epistemological relations of opposition and attachment are interpreted as the results of the reflexivity of transcendental subjectivity realizing itself through self-negation, the epistemological “truth” of the Marxian formula can be both reconciled with and subordinated to the “practical” truth that it is consciousness, in its noumenal guise at least, that gives rise to all the specific determinations of objective, material existence. It has to be stressed here that Mou does not use the word “unlimited” (無限) with reference to the mind in any literally spatial or temporal sense, but employs this term to designate the fact that in its pre-objectified state, the mind is fundamentally unconditioned by the spatiotemporal objectivity it has still to give rise to through the procedure of voluntary self-negation. According the dimension of morality and value with the status of something that is “in-itself”, could thus be read as a delicate procedure through which moral value is immunized against dialectical changes and transformations, which in Mou's view the unattached mind disposes over as a means to realize itself in time, by first of all allowing time to emerge from the timeless through reflexive negativity. In this sense, for Mou, “stabilizing” the transcendental difference between appearance and thing-in-itself and thereby maintaining what Tang Junyi called a “place for spirit” where value cannot be reduced to fact is more fundamental or rather prior to the confirmation of the possibility of intellectual intuition, since it is only because of the grounding of the transcendental distinction and the immunization of value as the noumenal that a gap is introduced which the concept of intellectual intuition then serves to bridge. In other words, from a historical perspective, the

418 Heidegger's reading of Kant in terms of finitude could be employed within this line of reasoning, as long as the atemporal category of the finitude of human Dasein as such is historized, something Adorno seems to have been aiming for in his reading of Kant's first Critique. For Heidegger, the status and function of the thing-in-itself is clear: “What does the struggle against the “thing in itself”, which started with German Idealism, mean, other than the growing forgetting of what Kant struggled for: that the inner possibility and necessity of metaphysics, i.e., its essence, are a the bottom brought forth and preserved through the more original working-out and increased preservation of the problem of finitude?” Heidegger, 1997, p.171. Surprisingly enough, Adorno's take on the status of the thing-in-itself within the Kantian system is, purely formally speaking of course, not completely at odds with that of his bête noire, Heidegger: “[W]hile Kant does situate the unity of existing reality and also the concept of Being in the realm of consciousness, he simultaneously refuses to generate everything that exists from the realm of consciousness. The consciousness of what the modern expression calls the 'ontological difference',that is to say, of the fact that a thing is not fully reducible to its concept, that objects and subject are not to be collapsed into each other – this consciousness is powerfully developed in Kant […] he always has the consciousness […] of a ‘block’ ” Adorno, 2001, p.18. For Adorno, the Critique of Pure Reason constitutes “a philosophy that attempts to ground being in the subject – and also a non-identity philosophy – one that attempts to restrict that claim to identity by insisting on the obstacles, the block, encountered by the subject in its search for knowledge.”(p.66.) Cf. p.177: “Kant […] would rather acquiesce in the inconsistencies to which we have repeatedly drawn attention than create a seamless intellectual harmony which nevertheless would prevent him from delivering on his specific philosophical ambitions. To take matters to their logical conclusions means denying the existence of the block and laying claim to absolute identity. The dialectical or antinomic structure of Kantian philosophy means that is aspires to create a system, to provide a central point, which is that of the idea that can construct reality –
transcendental difference signals the real, underlying problem which the notion of non-sensible intuition solves conceptually. It is also obvious that even within the absence of the opposition between subject and object in intellectual intuition, an internal, lopsided hierarchy is maintained and the privileged position of subjectivity and consciousness remains firmly in place:

In the perfect insight and perfect apprehension of the free and autonomous unlimited mind, that is to say in the divine resonance of the knowledge of essence and clear insight, all entities are things “existing in themselves”. Perfect insight and perfect apprehension do not possess the nature of time and space and are not subject to arising and perishing; things as existing in themselves are of course also outside of space and time and do not have the characteristic of constant change; as self-existing characteristics, they come into being out of themselves, having the character of suchness, the singular character of suchness, or what is called being without characteristics, which is the true characteristic. [Because] they are outside of time and space, they cannot be (absolutely) limited [things]; but on the other hand, we cannot go so far as to say that they are unlimited in the same way that the unlimited essence of the mind is unlimited, [since] they obtain their detachment and self-identity and attain an unlimited meaning because of and through the presence of the unlimited mind in them.  

As another example of how this wavering between immanence and transcendence affects Mou's philosophy, we can note that his own defense of the possibility of the inborn givenness and spontaneity of “insightful moral feelings” (jueqing 覺 情)420, in which acting morally requires neither, as Kant would have it, a sort of a priori “displeasure” resulting from the constraint of empirical inclinations by respect for the moral law, nor dismissing the possibility of moral nature functioning as a veritable drive instead of as a conformity to the moral law for the sake of the law itself421, is severely limited, if not

421See Kant, 1993a, pp.75-92. For Kant, “[i]nclination, be it good-natured or otherwise, is blind and slavish; reason, when it it is a question of morality, must not play the part of mere guardian of the inclinations, but, without regard to them, as pure practical reason it must care for its own interest to the exclusion of all else”. Kant, 1993a, pp.124-125.
compromised, by the fact that Mou is very quick to join Kant's instance on purity and freedom from empirical determinations as the fundamental trait and transcendental guarantee of the morality of the will as soon as a historical materialist reification and relativization of the spiritual starts looming on the horizon. The association between communism and reification made him just as averse to the introduction of the empirical into the transcendental purity of practical reason as Kant was, though of course for historically different reasons. In the context of Mou's engagement with Kant as well, it is necessary to think through how history is related to and conceptually transcribed into the generic philosophical category of heteronomy.422

The considerable conceptual difficulties and paradoxes which arise in the later Mou's double ontology, which is, as Adorno wrote concerning Kant's critical philosophy, more like a veritable “force-field” (Kraftfeld)423 than a neat, orderly and perfectly self-enclosed system424, can in my view be seen as stemming from the contradictory demands he places on his own philosophical project and on the reinvention of Confucianism as philosophy at large: 1) one the one hand, he firmly positions himself against a negatively characterized form of radical immanence which grounds the identity and equality of all entities in the world by reducing them to the contradiction-laden unity of matter, or does away with qualitative distinctions altogether and leaves nothing but an indeterminate chaos of atomic facts (Russell) or “things which are the case” (Wittgenstein).425 Mou never ceased to associate these outlooks with the historical disaster of actually existing communism and socialism. As is obvious from all his Three Books on New Outer Kingliness and from recurring incidental remarks in his later monographs and lectures, he keeps invoking a form of moral idealism and the liberating force of transcendence against communist reification on both a conceptual and a social level. As he put it quite clearly at one point, the meaning of transcendence in this regard is that of “not only” (bu zhi 不只)426, that is to say, of not seeing the world only as a totality of facts reducible to matter. 2) On the other hand, he is equally concerned about distinguishing Chinese philosophy from Western, in his view essentially Christian,

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422Moishe Postone, History and Heteronomy: Critical Essays, Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy, 2009a, p.43.
423Adorno, 2001, p.80. Kant himself already used the metaphor of metaphysics as a “battleground”, a comparison which Althusser was found of invoking. See Kant, 2007, p.5 (preface to the first edition, Aviii).
424I fully agree with Liu Tongqi and Zhou Qin when they note that “in interpreting Mou’s anthropocosmic vision, too much attention has so far been paid to the complete fusion of and the perfect harmony and equilibrium between transcendence and immanence.” “The Dynamism and Tension in the Anthropocosmic Vision of Mou Zongsan. A Reflection on the Confucian Concept of tianren heyi 領域時代之精神原理”, in Journal of Chinese Philosophy, 22, 1995, p.404
425See “The Guiding Spiritual Principles of the Age” (Lingdao shidai zhi jingshen yuanli 領導時代之精神原理), [1951b] in SSXB, pp.32-34.
426Mou, [1956b], p.32.
thought, in which the subject is radically divorced from an Absolute in which it no longer recognizes itself. As we saw in the previous chapter, Mou associates such a bifurcation with alienation and “unenlightenement” on a social level. In Kantian terms, this separation of the individual (moral) subject from its “innermost self” constitutes a form of paralyzing heteronomy for Mou. As Olf Lehmann convincingly shows in his monumental study of Mou's philosophy, the rejection of such heteronomy is the central clue to his infamous relegation of Zhu Xi to a “collateral line which became the orthodoxy” (biezi wei zong 別子為宗) in the construction of his new “transmission of the Way” (daotong 道統).427

The transcendence he wants to ascribe to Chinese thought on the basis of his opposition to materialist immanence thus also has to be different (enough, but not too much428) from the “Western” bifurcation of fact and value as completely distinct and irreconcilable ontological realms. Perhaps it comes as no surprise then that his solution to this paradox, or one might even say contradiction, is found in the in itself proudly paradoxical concept of the “self-negation of moral reason”. It is through this concept that he tries to ontologically bridge a gap already “epistemologically” overcome through the idea of intellectual intuition, a gap which must only be closed because he actually needed it himself to conceptually oppose the reduction of fact and value. Simply put: Mou wants to have his gap and bridge it. Hans Joas makes the following remarks concerning the idea of value which are particularly pertinent with reference to Mou as well:

[t]he concept of 'value' takes the place once occupied by the concept of the 'good' in the philosophical tradition. However, whereas the 'good' could, according to this tradition, be accorded a status ascertainable either by rational contemplation of the cosmos or through divine revelation, and thus had a 'being' - even a higher being than other existents - there is attached to the concept of 'value' an ineradicable reference to the valuing subject [...]. The metaphysical unity of the true and the good is replaced in the philosophy of value by a dualism between 'facticity' and 'validity', between a realm of

428“Foreigners say that Confucianism is something finite, concerned only with mundane human relations, and has an insufficiently transcendent dimension. Let foreigners talk that way if they must, but we ourselves should not, for it harms Chinese culture.” (外人說儒家只可通用於人倫日用，故是有限，而超越意不夠；外人如此說就算了，但我們自己便不該如此說，這對中國文化是不利的) "Confucian Moral Metaphysics" (Rujia de daode de xing’ershangxue 儒家的道德的形而上學), [1975c] in WW, p.215. Translation adapted from Clower, 2014b, pp.133-134. As Clower rightly notes, “the foreigner foremost in Mou's mind is probably Max Weber”. Ibid., p.134, note 25. The religious nature of Confucianism was also stressed (contra Weber) in the 1958 Manifesto. See Tang et. al., [1958a] in ZJ, pp.879-884. Also see Yong Chen, Confucianism as Religion. Controversies and Consequences, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013, pp.149-153.
In order to further arrive at a better understanding of how these somewhat abstruse philosophical considerations are historically conditioned and significant and to clarify how the “non-analytical”/noumenal is related to the “analytical”/phenomenal in the broader context of Mou's whole oeuvre, I propose taking a look at his political philosophy, worked out in the 1940s and 1950s against the background of the establishment of the PRC and the victory of Chinese communism. The overall significance of the central theme of self-negation can, I think, be most effectively explained in this context.

3.2.4 The dialectical logic of self-negation in Mou's political philosophy: social mediation and the formalization of the subject

For someone whose lifelong mission it was to uphold and reestablish the Confucian tradition, Mou Zongsan's judgment of the traditional Chinese political order can at times sound surprisingly harsh. Not wholly unlike intellectuals and interpreters who take Western modernity as an ideal and a model to be emulated, he consequently characterizes tradition as marked by certain “absences”, or by specific “lacks” which led to a fatal backwardness of China vis-à-vis the West and prevented the emergence of an endogenous modernity from the Chinese tradition itself. However, as we have already repeatedly seen, if such instances of negativity are taken up as integral moments in a transhistorically active reflexivity which dialectically thrives on its own “withdrawals”, then they can be given a positive twist and endowed with a certain transitional and strategic necessity. Keeping this in mind, it comes as less of a surprise that we even find Mou approvingly quoting and invoking the infamous excerpt from Hegel's *Philosophy of History* on the despotic “Oriental World”, an extract that would seem to exemplify the worst imaginable Orientalism and Eurocentrism:

the Orientals have not attained the knowledge that Spirit – Man as such – is free; because they do not

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432 See for example Enrique Dussel, “Eurocentrism and Modernity”, in *boundary 2*, vol.20, no.3, 1993, pp.65-76.
know this, they are not free. They only know that one is free. But on this very account, the freedom of that one is only caprice; ferocity, brutal recklessness of passion, or a mildness and tameness of the desires, which is itself only an accident of Nature, mere caprice like the former. That one is therefore only a Despot; not a free man.433

Mou notes that this particular passage has often managed to hurt the feelings of his countrymen, but insists that it is necessary to reflect on the fundamental truth of what Hegel is saying here instead of rejecting it out of hand out of a misplaced and unreflective sense of national pride. Needless to say, he does not conceive of China or the “Orient” in general as a kind of premature and abortive dawning of a Spirit which subsequently migrated West and forever turned its back on its place of birth. Like Liang Shuming and so many other twentieth-century Chinese thinkers, he conceives of different cultures and civilizations as being governed by distinct principles of mobility which underly their historical evolution, or even lack of evolution, which is in both cases a strictly internal affair. Still, Mou basically agrees with Hegel that the Chinese emperor was an (at best enlightened) despot, since he “did not have a constitution with an objective and efficient politico-legal form to constrain [his power]” (皇帝沒有客觀的政治法律形態之憲法以限制之).434 He further concurs with Hegel when the latter faults the lack of a well-developed principle of subjectivity distinct from “the immediate unity of the substantial Spirit and the Individual”435 in natural family life for the historical absence of a constitutional form of government which would check and limit despotic political power and supplement a merely abstract “absolute freedom”436 lacking in all distinctions with real individual freedom.437 The emperor was completely “free” insofar as his powers were unlimited, but his freedom remained “abstract” and indeterminate since it was left unmediated by the mutual recognition of the freedom of others. Like Hegel, Mou thinks that it is only the state which can ultimately ensure this type of freedom on a social level, especially in the face of the “pure negativity” of communism.438 Let us note in passing that for Mou, the Hegelian notion that political freedom has to be realized within rather than through the

434Mou, [1956a], p.288.
435Hegel, 1956, p.120.
436Hegel, 1956, p.124.
437See Mou, [1955b], pp.74-75.
438See Mou, [1949c] and Mou, [1952a].
removal or in the absence of institutional and normative constraints had a corresponding theological equivalent in the idea inspired by Leibniz that even God cannot simply do whatever he pleases, since ascribing such a random, wayward and tyrannical will to him would fundamentally undermine divine righteousness.\textsuperscript{439} For Mou, a “Way of governance” (zhidao 治道), referring to administrative and executive power exercised by a bureaucratic system of officials, had been highly developed and internally differentiated in imperial China, but a “Way of political authority/sovereignty” (zhengdao 政道) conferring legitimacy on the execution of political power was never rationally established.\textsuperscript{440} This is why he speaks of a “rule by government officials” (lizhi 吏治) instead of politics (zhengzhi 政治) in the proper sense of the word.\textsuperscript{441} As David Elstein explains, Mou thinks that “[p]olitical power was transferred either by conquest or hereditary succession”. Throughout Chinese political history, a publicly and democratically legitimated form of political authority could not emerge because sovereignty (zhengquan 正權), something intrinsically “formal” (形式的), “unchangeable” (定常的), “static” (静态的) and grounded in the people as a nation, was always made contingent on the ephemeral existence and the even more variable and transitory goodwill of the individual human beings holding power.\textsuperscript{442} China was thus only held together as a “cultural unit” (wenhua danwei 文化单位) instead of as a “national unit” (guojia danwei 國家單位).\textsuperscript{443} In the modern world, Mou thinks, it is revolutionary communism which continues to inhibit the cultural nation from becoming solidified into a democratic political state. In imperial China, governing power could always simply be violently “seized” (取) or “stolen” (拿) and passed on from one “revolution” (geming 革命) to the next with a sufficient basis in popular sovereignty. The people could do nothing but patiently wait and hope for the emergence of “sagely rulers and worthy ministers” (shengjun xianxiang 聖君賢相).\textsuperscript{444} Mou believed

\textsuperscript{439} See Mou, [1956b], pp.676-684. As Leibniz states in the Discourse on Metaphysics: “In saying that things are not good according to any standard of goodness, but simply by the will of God, it seems to me that one destroys, without realizing it, all the love of God and all his glory; for why praise him for what he has done, if he would be equally praiseworthy in doing the contrary? Where will be his justice and his wisdom if he has only a certain despotic power, if arbitrary will takes the place of reasonableness, and if in accord with the definition of tyrants, justice consists in that which is pleasing to the most powerful?” Leibniz, 2005, p.2. Theologically of course, Leibniz's subordination of the divine will to reason and morality creates many difficulties which we need not enter into here.

\textsuperscript{440} See The Way of Political Authority and the Way of Governance (Zhengdao yu zhidao 政道與治道), [1961], vol.10 of MJ. David Elstein renders the distinction between 政道 and 治道 as “political power” and “governing power”. See Democracy in Contemporary Confucian Philosophy, London and New York: Routledge, 2015, p.44.

\textsuperscript{441} Mou adopted the expression lizhi 吏治 from Zhang Junmai. See Jiang Nianfeng, 1992, pp.70-71.

\textsuperscript{442} Mou, [1961], p.7, pp.21-23.

\textsuperscript{443} Mou, [1961], p.55. Cf. Tang, [1953b], p.50: “After the Han dynasty, China became what could be called a purely cultural country” (漢以後。中國即可謂純為一所為文化國).

\textsuperscript{444} Quoted from Elstein, 2015, p.46. See Mou, [1961], p.27.
that the universality which grounds political authority must not be particularized by being made to depend on the emperor's individual will, personal character and moral excellence. He suggested that in relation to political authority (zheng 政), the day-to-day administrative governance (zhi 治) of a state has a secondary role as an application of the former which necessarily involves a certain degree of coercion. 445 Governance however must be subordinated to and contained by sovereignty in order to become rational, objective and legitimate. 446 Mou claims that in imperial China, governance was never fully separated from authority. Unlike many other (ontological and epistemological) unities, this unmediated identity of sovereignty and governance is not one Mou is nostalgic about or wishes to reinstall. 447 Quite to the contrary, his central concern is to rationalize this unity through distinction and separation:

Within the situation of a great unified monarchical dictatorship, the emperor was a transcendent and limitless entity as far as his authority and status were concerned. Because governance and authority were not separated but united in one body, and the emperor further obtained his sovereignty by conquering All-under-Heaven, Confucians were also unable to come up with a way to turn sovereignty into a public good. This amounted to sovereignty remaining without a principle of sovereignty. 448

Because of the persistent lack of differentiation between sovereignty and administrative power, the Confucian “rule by virtue” (dezhi 德治) put forward by Confucius and Mencius after the example of the ancient sage-kings could not be objectified and rationalized and remained restricted to the level of moral self-cultivation of the ruler. The latter's virtuous personality and conduct was supposed to trickle down and positively influence the whole of society, the virtuous ruler being, as we read in the Analects, “like the Pole Star, which keeps its place and receives the homage of the myriad lesser stars” (譬如北

446Mou, [1961], pp.24-25.
447Tang Junyi saw the politicization of science under communism as a negative continuation of the traditional Confucian spirit of political and social responsibility which would have to be preserved without violating the integrity of both disciplines. See “The Chinese Cultural Background of the Chaos in Present-day China” (Zhongguo jinri zhi tian de Zhongguo wenhua beijing 中國今日之亂的中國文化背景), [1950c] in ZJ, pp.262-23.
448Mou, [1961], p.33.
Much like Jiang Qing’s critique of “spiritual Confucianism”, Mou faults traditional Confucian political conceptions with an exaggerated orientation towards (an unfree and unobjectified form of) subjectivity and interiority and the lack of an objective institutional and legal framework in which virtue can become a performative source of political sovereignty and effective social order. Mou could no longer follow Xiong Shili’s idea that the difference between morality and law could be grasped as autonomous and internal, and heteronomous and externally imposed respectively. This is why for Mou, in one of his most concise and open-ended definitions, “modernization is the problem of opening up the learning of the inner sage towards the external [world]” (現代化是由內聖之學向外開的問題). The anti-Manchu rhetoric I commented on in the beginning of this section plays a crucial role in presenting the non-emergence of a viable political system (extending, incarnating and realizing self-cultivation) as the result of a “stifling” of the Chinese Spirit by the Manchurian rule. Specifically, Mou was of the opinion that late-Ming Confucianists had begun to work out an efficient political dimension based on the learning of self-cultivation inherited from previous Confucians, efforts which were undone through the Manchu invasion:

Huang Lizhou [Huang Zongxi], Wang Chuanshan [Wang Fuzhi] and Gu Tinglin [Gu Yanwu] began advocating an opening up of outer kingliness from inner sageliness, that is to say, an openness to the outside, which is why they started emphasizing “statesmanship for practical use” [...] The three hundred-year long rule by the Manchurian Qing caused intellectuals to lose their powers of reflection, so that the above-mentioned historical opportunity to generate outer kingliness from inner sageliness was missed and stifled. If the Manchurian Qing had not ruled for three hundred years, then the natural direction of development of the Chinese people would not have differed so much from that of the West.

450 See Xiong, [1946], p.131.
452 Notably, Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695), Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692) and Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682) were all Ming loyalists fiercely opposed to the Manchu rule.
Remarkably enough, the very same Qing period foreshadowing the positivism, scientism, and materialism spearheading the attack on the Chinese tradition coming in from the West can at the same time be held accountable for the fact that China did not enter into the political evolutionary path which led to the birth of Western democracy. As a highly unstable signifier, the “Manchurian Qing” is thus at the same time the precurrence and the dark side of a modernity conceptualized in terms of science and politics. What should be kept in mind here is that for Mou, the “new outer kingliness” (xin waiwang 新外王) which he hopes will help usher in a new period in the development of Confucianism refers to what he called the “universal dharmas” (gongfa 公法) of science and democracy. Science and democracy respectively constitute the “formal” (xingshi 形式) and “material” (caizhi 材質) conditions for modernization as the externalization, objectification and rationalization of “inner sageliness”. Because both conditions must be met in order for a society to qualify as modern in a positive sense, Mou rejected communism as a partial and one-sided form of modernization which is only focused on developing modernity's “material conditions” (science and technology) and not the requisite “formal condition” (democracy). He considered the “four modernizations” (si ge xiandaihua 四个现代化, i.e. of agriculture, industry, national defense, science and technology) propagated in Deng-era mainland China to be restricted to the “material” dimension which would remain lifeless and useless without the fifth modernization demanded by human rights activists such as Wei Jingsheng 魏京生 (b. 1950), i.e. the modernization of politics towards representational democracy. Mou had no doubts about constitutional democracy being the final form of political government and often gave the impression that the only thing standing in the way of global prosperity and world peace was the dictatorship of the

455 “If we want to be our own masters and continue to exist, then modernization is something we absolutely have to perform. Although modernization first started in the West, it only has to appear in order to shed its regional nature. It only needs to be true in order to become universal, and once it has [acquired] universality, all nations should recognize it.” (我們要自己做主，要繼續生存下去，現代化是我們必做的事。現代化雖先發自於西方，但是只要它一旦出現，它就沒有地方性。只要它是個真理，它就有普遍性；只要有普遍性，任何一個民族都當該承認它). Mou, [1961] (preface), p.24.
Mou's vision on the nature of the political order in premodern China is further complicated by the following distinctions drawn within the framework of yet another cultural typology: the Chinese drive towards synthesis instead of analysis resulted in what he calls “a functional manifestation of reason” (lixing zhi yunyong biaoxian 理性之運用表現), as opposed to the “structural manifestation of reason” (lixing zhi jiagou biaoxian 理性之架構表現) prevalent in the West. The “reason” or “rationality” Mou has in mind here is not the “withered, abstract reason” (乾枯的抽象的理性) based on theoretical abstraction and analytic distinctions, but a “practical reason” (shijian lixing 實踐理性) expressed in daily, unreflective moral practice as a manifestation of virtue in which “one sees the substance through its functioning” (即用見體). This kind of practical reason is “functional”, not in any utilitarian or instrumental manner, but, calling Xiong Shili to mind, in the sense that it does not exist outside of its concrete functioning in virtuous conduct and has no need for an additional “medium” (meiti 媒體) or a “structure” (jiagou 架構). Although he has nothing but praise for such immediacy in the field of individual and intersubjective moral behavior, Mou makes it clear that he thinks this conception is inadequate on a broader political level. With reference to the influential text of the Daxue, which states that “from the Son of Heaven down to the common people, all must regard self-cultivation as the root or foundation” (自天子以至庶民，壹是以修身為本), he argues that at present, it is no longer possible to establish a direct connection between “inner sageliness” and “outer kingliness”. The latter cannot be taken as an immediate extension (直接延長) of the former anymore. Self-cultivation and

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459 Also see Tang's “How to Decrease the Risk of War Breaking out between Communist China and Soviet Russia” (Ruhe xiaojian Zhonggong yu Su'e zhanzheng de kenengxing 如何消減中共與蘇俄戰爭的可能性), [1973a] in ZJ, pp.681-686.
461 Mou, [1961], p.52.
462 Mou, [1961], p.53.
463 When we read the Analects, it is clear that the whole life of Confucius was a manifestation of wisdom; from this we can see that Confucius's personality was one of complete humaneness. The humaneness as a universal rationality and the complete wisdom of Confucius were united into one [in the person of Confucius]. In his person, humaneness was fully realized in a real individual, and Confucius as an individual was thus himself a confirmation of humaneness.” (論語，可知孔子之生活透體是智慧之呈露，因之可知其人格全幅是「仁」之人格。仁之為普遍理性與孔子透體是智慧之人格打成一片。在孔子，理全幅實現於現實之個人，而孔子之個人亦即是仁之證實). Mou, [1949d], p.11. Similarly, Tang Junyi spoke of the teachings of Confucius as an “immediate, self-sufficient totality” (当下具足之整體). Tang, [1953b], p.41. Also see Tang, [1953b], pp.34-41.
sageliness remain necessary conditions for harmonious interpersonal relations and overall social order, but modern societies cannot function without what he calls “complications” (曲折). As he declares quite unambiguously: “The economy has an independent law that is intrinsic to the economy, politics as well has an autonomous law that is internal to itself” (經濟有經濟內在的獨立法則, 而政治亦有政治內在的獨立法則). The economic and the political system ideally exemplify or contribute to the moral perfection aimed for in self-cultivation, but cannot operate on the basis of the same principles and procedures. Mou even quotes the interesting assertion that “those in Western medicine who discovered anesthetics were great Bodhisattvas” (西医中發明麻醉藥者為大菩薩), which he takes to mean that compassion for the suffering of all sentient beings ultimately remains empty without the means to, as the familiar phrase goes, “actually do something”. Like the sage taking the office of president, the bodhisattva too has to submit to “self-negation”, even when his or her compassion for those suffering or in need remains the “transcendental ground” (超越的根據) for the adoption of science and technology. The general (culturally determined) distinction between a “functional” and a “structural” form of rationality is thus made to hinge on the category of mediation, which has moral, political, as well as epistemological implications: mathematics, logic, science, the state, the legal system, and a political sovereignty as distinct from administration are all identified by Mou as instances of a structural type of rationality based on conceptual and social mediation missing in traditional China.

His fellow traveler Tang Junyi had tried to keep modern epistemological and institutional divisions together by appealing to his central concept of the “moral self” (道德自我) as a centripetal force serving as “that which commands and unites all divisions of cultural activities” (個門類之文化活動之統攝者、貫通者). Like Mou, he considered all these divisions to be practically inevitable and functionally necessary for modern societies. In what is probably his most important and systematic work of social and political philosophy, Cultural Consciousness and Moral Reason (Wenhua yishi yu daode lixing 文化意識與道德理性) from 1958, Tang put forward the idea that all human activities are

466Mou, [1981], p.381.
467Mou, [1961], (preface) p.18.
468See Mou, [1983b], p.279.
469Mou, [1961], pp.56-61.
unified and held together by virtue of being cultural activities which count as “diversified manifestations” (分化表现) of the “moral or spiritual, transcendent self” (道德自我或精神自我、超越自我).471 Tang presents a social diversity of phenomena encompassing everything ranging from art, religion, philosophy, science, politics and family life, to sports, military affairs, the educational and legal system472 as united in a moral reason which expresses its identity through difference. All these spheres of activity have an “internal goal” (内在的目的)473 which ensures that each can pursue its own course. Tang explicitly objects to the operational logic of one sphere of human activity (e.g. politics) being contaminated or undermined by that of another field.474 However, these internal goals simultaneously serve to realize the more fundamental goal of moral reason striving for its own self-perfection. All cultural activities are “equally dominated by the moral self” (同受一道德自我之主宰)475 which is fundamentally characterized by transcendence and the overcoming of restrictions as the source of its goodness. What Tang does not consider is the possibility of overlaps, contradictions, and conflict, occurring when the same real object or subject is taken up in the internal strategy of functionally differentiated forms of activity. A human person is a physical body (for medicine), a source of labor power (for the economy), a form of electoral potential (for politics), and what is far from clear is how morality is to keep these different roles together except through the observation that they embody transcendence transcendentally.

Now clearly, the catch is that Mou will not simply settle for a mere “compromise”, “synthesis” or indifferent middle ground between morality and modernity, China and the West, or between morality and science. He expects “Miss Morality” to give birth to the twins “Mister Democracy” and “Mister Science”. The problem of the relation between the immediate functioning of practical reason and the establishment of epistemologically and politically mediating structures which are still somehow related and not extrinsic to morality is resolved through Mou's commanding paradigm of self-negation.476 What

471Tang, [1958b], p.3.
472Tang specifies that sports, military affairs, the legal and educational system” serve an auxiliary supporting role in allowing all other cultural activities to pursue their own course and do not constitute goals in themselves. See Tang, [1958b], pp.348-372.
473Tang, [1958b], p.348.
474See Tang, [1958b], pp.397ff.
475Tang, [1958b], p.176.
476In a recent article, Yang Zebo 杨泽波 tries to supplant the so-called Needham question by means of Mou's paradigm of self-negation. See “The Needham Question Considered from the Perspective of the Theory of Self-Negation” (Cong kanxian lun de shijiao kan Li Yuese wenti 从坎陷论的视角看李约瑟难题), Qinghua daxue xuebao 清华大学学报, vol.28, no.6, 2013, pp.85-92. Stephen Angle has recently attempted to appropriate Mou's idea of ziwo kanxian 自我
Wang Hui calls the principle of division mobilized against the hegemony of science by the metaphysical camp in the debate of 1923 is thus assumed to be self-grounding as a necessary moment in the constitution of self-identity. In short, Mou thinks that in traditional Chinese thought, “knowledge” (zhì 智) always remained encapsulated (笼罩) or assimilated (收摄) by “humaneness” (ren 仁), as a form of intuitive knowing in which the object is not opposed to the subject, since the “object” of moral practice is the subject (including its intersubjective life) itself, and does not constitute a distinct cognitive object opposed to the subject at all. Self-negation is thus the key to reconciling the ontologically foundational “lack” of opposition between subject and object with a functional “indirectness” (qu 曲) and “limitation” (xianzhi 限制) necessary for cognition to become possible. This is why Mou proposes that in order for innate moral knowledge (liangzhi 良知) to able to give rise to a “cognitive mind” (renshi de xin 認識的心), “knowledge must momentarily compose itself and separate itself from humaneness, in order to become a pure [theoretical] understanding, [because] only then can the understanding develop autonomously and accordingly give rise to its own results, namely logic, mathematics and science.” (智，必須暫時冷靜下來，脫離仁，成為純粹的知性，才有其自身獨立的發展，因而有其自身之成果，這就是邏輯，數學與科學). As Mou writes in a memorable passage:

In this peaceful contemplation [of intellectual intuition] scientific knowledge cannot be generated. God坎陷，which he glosses as “self-restriction” instead of “self-negation”. See Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy. Towards Progressive Confucianism, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012, pp.24-35 (chapter 2). Angle writes: “Mou’s idea, which I endorse, is not that a constitution, laws, and rights are merely compatible with Confucianism, but rather that these objective political structures are required by Confucianism if it is to realize its own goals. Mou's argument does not depend on an independent commitment to constitutional democracy, but is a critique internal to the Confucian tradition.” Angle, 2012, p.29. In Angle's heroic attempt to disentangle the concept of ziwo kanxian from its metaphysical dimension, what risks being lost is the genesis of this concept from its historical context as well as the "genetic" aspect of the concept itself, that is to say, the idea that moral reason must relinquish its own sovereignty without ceasing to ground what results from its self-negation and what is freed up and enabled in this way. What is not obvious to me from Angle's take on Mou's idea is why he still considers it necessary to speak of self-restriction instead of simply talking about an (external) restriction of morality by democratic politics and the legal system, nor is it clear to me precisely how the continuity between that which is restricted and what results from this restriction is to be guaranteed. Tu Wei-ming, sees the whole paradigm of self-negation developed by Mou as incoherent and unnecessary, but does not manage to go beyond the rather bland suggestion of having more “dialog” between the natural and human sciences, and the vague suggestion that moral knowledge could somehow be “deepened” and “expanded” through scientific rationality. Tu does not realize that Mou's concept of self-negation can perhaps better be taken as signaling a problem instead of offering an adequate solution. See Tu Weiming, “Confucian Encounter with the Enlightenment Mentality of the Modern West”, Oriens Extremus 49, 2010, p.291, pp.294-296. 477Cf. Mou, [1952c], pp.126-127. 478See Mou, [1956b], p.642. 479“The Fundamental Spirit of Humanism” (Renwenzhuyi de jiben jingshen 人文主義的基本精神), [1953d] in DY, p.201.
does not create the atomic bomb, and even though there is nothing he does not know, he still has no scientific knowledge. In other words, he does no know in any scientific manner. The Buddha has knowledge of all karmic causes, but the wisdom of the Buddha does not and in fact cannot create an atom bomb. The knowledge of the Middle Way [described in the phrase] “There is not a single color or smell that is not the Middle Way” is only knowledge of the true characteristic of things: the true and only characteristic, what is called being without any characteristics. [The Buddha] can only lead you to liberation, but he cannot give you scientific knowledge.

This intentional process of self-negation, by which a “primary harmony” (原始的和諧) between an as of yet undistinguished subject and object in moral practice is sublated through mediation involves “emptying oneself in order to yield to things” (虛己以從物). Occasionally, Tang also seemed to subscribe to the idea that inner sageliness must first be separated from outer kingliness in order to be reunited at a higher level. What has to be accomplished then anew in the modern age is the reinstatement of a duality the spirit of Chinese culture had already overcome since its inception. The abrogation of the immediate identity of subject and object by the moral subject is thus just as important as overcoming various philosophical oppositions which are brought forward as the underlying consequences of social pathologies at other instances. In this way, a “temporary forgetting” (暂忘) on the part of the moral subject becomes as a prerequisite for an effective and authentic realization of both the self and the non-self (cheng ji cheng wu 成己成物). The distinction between science and (moral) metaphysics is no longer straightforwardly grounded in different orientations of the subject towards either the objective external world or a “reversal” (ni 逆) onto itself, through an appeal to the Confucian dictum that “the exemplary person seeks it in himself” (君子求諸己). Instead, it is now precisely this

480Mou, [1975d], p.125.
481Mou, [1951b], pp.40-41.
483See Tang, [1950c], p.268.
484See “The Development of Chinese Culture and Science” (Zhonghua wenhua zhi fazhan yu kexue 中華文化之發展與科學), [1968b] in SSXB, pp.175-178. Also see the Manifesto, Tang et.al., [1958a], p.899.

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act of the subject turning to itself in the form of a “disjunctive mutation” (轉折上的突變)\textsuperscript{486} which must give rise to an external world of independent cognitive objects distinct from the subject to begin with. In what is perhaps the single most dense and difficult passage in the whole of his \textit{The Way of Authority and the Way of Governance (Zhengdao yu zhidao 政道與治道)}, Mou writes the following:

\begin{quote}
[t]he meaning of this “reversal” can be established as follows: although virtuous nature does not contain science and philosophy, which are structurally manifested, within itself in its direct moral significance and functional manifestation; still, according to its own essential nature, moral rationality cannot but require the knowledge represented by science and the justice and fairness expressed by democratic politics. Furthermore, when viewed internally from the standpoint of science and democracy, the realization of the essence of these two “structural manifestations of reason” goes against the functional manifestation of moral sense, which is to say that observing and analyzing reason goes against practical reason. It is precisely here in this “going against” that the meaning of “reversal” becomes clear, which is to require something going against one's own essential nature. This is clearly a kind of contradiction. That which it [practical reason] requires can [therefore] only be established through a self-negation [allowing practical reason to] change into something which goes against its own nature and is contrary to itself (that is to say change into observing and analyzing reason). That it demands something which runs contrary to its own nature would at first sight appear to be [nothing but] a contradiction. But if we observe [this whole process] internally and comprehensively, then the fact that [practical reason] can only satisfy and realize its own demands within this reversal [shows that] this apparent contradiction is reconciled in being realized or satisfied. Furthermore, this realization is an “objective realization”, which means that [the contradiction] is resolved in the realization [itself]. The objective realization in this reconciliation shows that one can establish a connection in an indirect manner [through complications]. This means that in order to arrive at this sort of connectedness, one must first establish an indirect route. This is a disjunctive mutation formed through reversal. If our virtuous nature would remain in its [direct] functional manifestation, then there would only be a subjective realization, or an absolute [complete] realization. If we want to arrive at an objective realization, then we cannot but go through this [form of] indirect connection. A subjective realization can be expressed through logical reasoning, but in the case of objective realization which is arrived at through indirect connection, then logical inference is not enough. If that is the case then one must learn to understand dialectical necessity. One cannot go without a dialectical form of proof here.\textsuperscript{487}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{486}Mou, [1961], p.62.
\textsuperscript{487}Mou, [1961], p.63.
In the complex movement described here, we have finally come full circle: the self-identity of the moral subject and the immediate identity between subject and object within its precognitive, “functionally” manifested form of rationality are dialectically reconciled with the non-identity and the mediation seen as necessary preconditions for a modern, “structural” grounding of moral reason which must enable the latter to become something “objective” and “real”. Mediation and non-identity are thus reconciled with, or rather by, immediacy and identity through dialectical negativity and contradiction as the creative “venom of all life”\(^{488}\). Contradiction resolves itself by being realized and objectified. Obviously, the prize Mou has to and is quite willing to pay for maintaining the identity and the transcendental status of moral reason in relation to the structural mediations, which he sees as both epistemologically and politically normative requirements of modernity, is that contradiction and negation, the applicability of which was strictly confined to the level of conceptual “reality” in his early work, have to be granted a properly ontological status. Contradiction and negation are now no longer notional differentiations introduced into and fundamentally distorting a homogeneous reality empty of all distinctions, but constitute the very origin of distinctions resulting from a “reversal” within subjectivity: all such distinctions result from a form of what Fichte called \textit{positing} which can no longer be strictly notional or epistemic, since it is precisely this act of positing itself which is supposed to give rise to the indirectness and mediation characterizing all notional and cognitive operations. Mediation

separates the subject from an immediacy which comes to be opposed to it as an external, non-identical object, but in doing so, it simultaneously allows the subject to reclaim a world which is already factually different and separated from itself as a result of its own act (Tathandlung) of positing. Dialectical negativity now has to be actually performative in order to be able to give rise to reality in a cognitive sense (which can be accessed “congruously” (shun) through science, logic, and mathematics) and in order to ensure that the categorical demands of morality can be efficiently realized through the political and legal institutional mediations without which Confucianism will never be modern and modernity can never become Confucian. Instead of a “self-constriction” of the logical self insulating itself from the contaminations of a posteriori sensibility and empirical contingency in general, it is now a “disjunctive mutation” which must paradoxically ensure the self-identity of the subject as a moral agent. The scientific principle of division behind the modern differentiation of specialized and largely autonomously operating fields of knowledge is thus internalized in the figure of the subject. The latter must in a sense sacrifice itself and temporarily suspend its natural mode of functioning in order to fully realize what are taken to be its own intrinsic demands. In Mou Zongan's theory of self-negation, we are not so far removed from the idea of “self-emptying” (kénōsis) in Christian theology, which harks back to the way Plotinus established the cosmological relation between the One and the Many in the Enneads, and according to which, in creating the world, God sacrificed himself by renouncing his own perfection and self-identity and trading in eternity for a time in which things become and perish, an act of divine self-renunciation which was subsequently redemptively repeated in the becoming-human of the creator in the person of Christ. The tensely related attempts to turn Confucianism into a distinct form of philosophy while simultaneously distinguishing Chinese from Western thought on the basis of the putative domination of Western philosophy by the radical transcendence of an Absolute Subject forever out of reach for individual subjects thus end up bringing in the figure of Spirit through the back door. Clearly, it is Spirit which Mou must call upon to serve as the conceptual solution to the following difficult (yet self-created) problem: what is it that ultimately ensures that the double process of self-negation and externalization does not become irreversible, in the sense that the objectivity of mediating structures would no longer be genetically related to or even (transcendentally) traceable to the immediacy of the subject? The relation between identity and non-identity, immediacy and mediation is ensured by a formal structure of reflexivity which allows objectivity (grasped as a result of the differentiation of subject and object) to be recovered as the result of subjective self-positing. Consequently, there is nothing “subjective” about the subject here anymore. Mou is quite clear on the
fact that “it is not the actual person, but the substance of the heart-mind and its moral creativity which are identical to Heaven” (不是現實的人與天同，而是心之體與天同，心之道德的創造性與天同)⁴⁸⁹. Instead, the “subject” has become a largely anonymous, reflexive structure which gives rise to modes of knowing and institutional forms as indirect extensions of what Liang Shuming would have called its own “will” (yìyu 意欲). Even in the dialectical transition from the moral to the epistemic subject, the subject for Mou is as much Spirit as it is structure. It is now the subject, turning on itself as a structure, that gives rise to cognitive fields through its own disintegration, which has become the condition for its integrity.

3.3 Coda: on philosophy and consequences

As I noted at the beginning of the second part of this chapter, Mou Zongsan understood the task of philosophy in the modern world as being oriented towards the lurking danger of ideology, against which philosophy had to immunize both itself and the world held in the grip of misrepresentations and deceptions. The question concerning the relation between being and thought would seem to almost inevitably lead back to the problem of the nexus between power and representation, even in the work of thinkers who were not at all interested in becoming theorists of ideology, let alone of class consciousness, but were inclined to believe they could make sense out of history and society in a state of permanent change through a form of philosophy which had already sublated “becoming”, “the subject”, and “life”, along with everything that runs contrary to it, within itself. For Mou, the consequences of thought had to be contained by, in, and through thought. The combination of a reflexive, formally subjective structure (ziwo 自我) with the force of dialectical negativity (kanxian 坎陷) proved a potent instrument for him to accomplish this goal, at least on a philosophical level. What he left open was the question as to how (philosophical) thought should speak truth to power. He did not consider what truth would do with power if it ever were to acquire any. Tang Junyi appears to have been more sober-minded than his fellow Confucian in this regard. Towards the end of his career and life as a self-proclaimed “moral idealist” (daode de lixiangzhuyi zhe 道德的理想主義者), he had grown doubtful of what he had called the “rationalization of immediate life” (當下生活之理性化) marked by real contradictions and factual fissures (fenlie 分裂) through the power of self-conscious reflection (zijue 自覺). In what reads as a striking admission of insufficiency that tempers the prevailing image of Tang as a woolly-eyed, “Panglossian” idealist, he writes the following posthumously published words:


During the last one or two years I have been thinking about the negative side of things. I have already solved this duplicity on a metaphysical level, but in the real world there still remains something unresolved. I am talking about the problem of evil. I still need to rethink this problem. It cannot be completely accounted for metaphysically in terms of philosophical ideals, since evil does not pose a problem on the level of philosophical ideals.\(^\text{492}\)

最近這一兩年，我在想反面的東西。這兩面，在形而上學上，我已經解決了，但在現實世界還有未解決的，就是罪惡的問題。罪惡的問題還要重新再想。罪惡的問題不完全可以就形而上的哲學理想講，哲學理想上講這個不成問題。

In an interesting text from 1961 entitled “Cultural Problems in Today's World” (Dangqian shijie wenhua wenti 當前世界文化問題)\(^\text{493}\), Tang had already added a crucial element to (what could be reconstructed as) Mou's picture of ideology. In this text, Tang laments the fact that in the modern world, “the power of cultural thought has become intrinsically linked to actual and real power” (文化思想之力量與現實力量結合在一起)\(^\text{494}\), and that all forms of “cultural thought”, including of course philosophy as a supreme crystallization of culture, can now become fundamentally complicit with political and economical forces and influences.\(^\text{495}\) In this sense, for Tang, ideology constituted a kind of negative and perverted incarnation of an age-old Confucian ideal, namely that of the unity of knowledge and action (zhixing heyi 知行合一), dramatically transformed into an inseparable but uncontrollable link between knowledge and the extrinsic consequences impinging on its internal goals.

As he put it on another occasion in the long postscript to his Life, Existence, and the Horizons of the Mind from 1977, in a time where “the divine and the demonic are intermingled” (神魔混雜之時代), there is no longer anything left that cannot be turned upside down and abused for purposes that run contrary to its own intentions, intentions that cannot foresee or control their “corresponding” results:

Although it has always proven possible for religious and moral ideals and philosophical thought to be instrumentalized, it is only in modern society and politics that all kinds of organizations have been established, so that not a single person engaged in any kind of philosophical or religious and moral work and activities can escape finding himself in one of these organizations […] There is not a single sacred

\(^{492}\)”The Academic Atmosphere in the Early Republican Period and My Path of Philosophical Inquiry” (Minguo chunian de xuefeng yu wo xue zhexue de tujing 民國初年的學風與我學哲學的途徑), [1979] in ZB, p.361.

\(^{493}\)See ZJ, pp.403-422.

\(^{494}\)Tang, [1961b], p.409.

\(^{495}\)Tang, [1961b], pp.407-408.
thing of which the value cannot be reversed and put to the service of the demonic in modern society.496

At this point, he even goes on to praise the “wisdom” (zhīhùi 智慧) of Marx and Nietzsche, not his most likely of accomplices, along with psychoanalysis and existentialist philosophy, for having already anticipated and seen through the social reversibility of intrinsic value into the equivalence of exchange value and the transformation of “the mask of goodness” into a tool for the will to power. Remarkably enough then, even for thinkers who adhere to the (Confucian) goal of a unity between knowing and acting, and who often complain about the disconnect between reality and their ideals, it can at times become equally important to separate and decouple knowledge from action.

What characterizes and complicates the relation between knowledge and action, or between philosophical thought and its real consequences (which, in Tang's words, “do not pose a problem on the level of philosophical ideals”), is neither the complete ineffectiveness and inertia of thought, nor, conversely, that the latter is brutally imposed and thereby “perfectly” realized and fully manifested in social reality. Rather, the most salient feature of the relation between knowledge and action in modern societies is the increasing contingency involved in the “transition” or rather the highly mediated, indirect, and fuzzy coupling between the two.497 “Something” results from knowledge, if only because it influences the way things and events are approached, perceived, communicated and evaluated, but not from knowledge itself, which like “[t]he light dove, parting the air in her easy flight and feeling its resistance, might come to imagine that flight would be easier still in empty space”.498 The question would of course become whether this is a normal or a pathological state of affairs. Nothing remains without consequences, at least not on all occasions and in all situations, not even the “idle speculations” of philosophers, but these consequences cannot be internally regulated or contained by who or what “causes” them; the causal agents in question perhaps increasingly merely serving as the “external conditions” (wàiyuán 外緣) for processes which go about their business no matter in what way they are understood and accounted for. After all, even the unity of knowledge and action, when taken as a

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notional unity, in turn becomes something to be put into practice. An epistemological shift in perspective is perhaps a precondition, but not an efficient cause for its realization, and does not turn an action into a telos. From Mou Zongsan's work, we learn that putting this identity into practice possibly requires an intermediary uncoupling of knowledge from action, subject from object, wisdom from science, and so on. Negativity is reflexively contained in the subject as a structure, but the latter must take leave of its identity in the process. It is doubtful whether anything remains of the living subject – what William James called the “I breathe” that must be able to accompany all subjective representations\footnote{See William James, \textit{Essays in Radical Empiricism}, Mineola: Dover Publications, [1912] 2003, p.19.} – in the dialectical transition from “function” (\textit{yunyong} \运\用) to “structure” (\textit{jiagou} 架構). Moreover, it is highly likely that the unity aimed for will finally come in the form of an observation, and not in that of an event. Niklas Luhmann's programmatic remarks on the structurally conditioned shift from ontology to epistemology in modern philosophical semantics (a turn usually symbolized by Kant) are worth quoting at some length in this context:

From now on, no world exists without observations. Instead, the one who states that the world exists is the one who says that it is so. It is necessary to know, then, that a theory, a system, a science, a mode of communication, a consciousness, or whatever else could do so, claims that the world has such and such qualities. In comparison with the tradition, […] ontology is no longer the assumption of a reality that is shared, and of which it can be assumed that everyone sees the same facts, as long as he or she gives the matter enough thought. Instead, \textit{ontology becomes itself a schema of observation} – namely, a schema of observation on the basis of difference. Something is or is not the case. The difference thus concerns existence and non-existence […] Whether or not philosophers accept this, we will henceforth always be dealing with a world of description that filters the presentation of facts, including purposes, action potentials, and so forth, by indicating a reference to an observer. \textit{One always faces the question of who says a particular thing, and who does something, and from which system perspective the world is seen in a particular way} (and no other) […] \textit{The observation of the observers – that is to say, the shift from a consciousness of reality to a description of descriptions, or the perception of what others say or do not say} – has become the advanced mode of perceiving the world in modern society.\footnote{Niklas Luhmann, \textit{Introduction to Systems Theory}, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, pp.99-100. Emphasis added.}

The double need on the part of modern philosophers, as well as other social agents, to be able to both distinguish and identify, to at times bridge and then again close the gap between being and thought, or between action and knowledge, says something about the world we continue to inhabit and about how
modern societies function, bequeathing their structural features in the form of conceptual problems to philosophers, as observers who are well aware that someone else is observing them in turn. Thinkers such as the New Confucians are not alone in displaying great concern over the consequences of their own observations and in trying to anticipate how their observations will be perceived and possibly relayed by politics and society. They do not only ask whether something is true or not, but also take into account what would happen if it were to be perceived as true, would come to count as true, and make the leap of faith from truth to power. Especially the work of Tang Junyi is a prime example of this kind of constant self-observation, which of course also played an important role in the practical development of a moral self for him. The fact that each of the three thinkers discussed in this chapter and throughout my study had more or less systematic ambitions, in the sense that their philosophical gaze covered a wide range of domains and was not restricted to purely academic topics alone, allows a present-day observer to identify other, and in my opinion at least, more interesting phenomena than the adequacy and correctness of their solutions. By studying their work, one can point at problems that change the way these solutions are perceived and how they still relate to us today.
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Note: Numbers in between square brackets refer to the original year of publication.

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