Chapter 7 — Claiming the Canon

307 1 "…the Nguyen in Vietnam (1812-1884)"—The epigraphs for this chapter come from Jon Saari (1990), p. 211; and Mayfair Yang (1994), pp. 38-39. The orthodox teachings of late imperial China first strongly influenced Vietnam during the Le (1428-1529) and restored Le dynasties (1592-1788), lasting into the early part of the succeeding Nguyen dynasty. Nonetheless, True Way Learning never dominated the lives of rural elites in Vietnam, presumably because its abstract metaphysical speculation had little relevance to their daily lives. In Tokugawa Japan, the Four Books and Five Classics served as central texts in 95 percent of all domain schools. During Meiji, the curriculum combined strong training in specifically Western subjects (science, technology) with a continuing (though seldom identified) promotion of conservative Confucian social values, as summarized in the Imperial Rescript on Education. For Korea, where a version of classicism flowered in the sixteenth century, see Pak Chong-hong (1983); de Bary and Haboush (1985); James Grayson (1989) and Martina Deuchler (1992). In Japan, as in Vietnam, attempts to appropriate Ru teachings were less concerted and totalizing than in Choson Korea. Of course, the role of Confucian learning in empowering elites was radically different in China, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan, because of the nonaristocratic, semiaristocratic, and fully aristocratic nature, respectively, of those societies.

307 1 "…the literate population"—There is no way to establish reliable figures for literacy in late imperial China, since literacy rates differed widely by place and by gender. See Evelyn Rawski (1979), pp. 7-18; Sally Borthwick (1983), chap. 2; Jacques Gernet (1962), p. 148; J. Holmgren (1986); and Francesca Bray (1997). According to a modern estimate, 800 characters are needed for basic literacy and 1,200 for fuller literacy (the approximate attainment of a primary school graduate today in rural areas and in cities, respectively).

308 1 "…to Christian religiosity"—David Mungello (1985), introduction, shows clearly that even among the Jesuits continual modifications had to be made to the proposals of Matteo Ricci (1522-1610) and Nicholas Trigault (1577-1628) concerning a Chinese-Christian synthesis: Jesuits in the late Ming focused more on the utility of the Four Books and the feasibility of working through the Chinese literati and established scholar-officials at the time of the Wanli emperor (1573-1620), while later Jesuits focused on the Hermetic value of the Yijing and the patronage of the Kangxi emperor. Ibid, chap. 6, also makes the distinction between the various acts of assimilation Jesuit missionaries made in conveying information about China and the assimilation of China to European culture "in a broader and deeper ... proto-sinological way" (p. 174), which engaged such brilliant figures of the seventeenth century as Leibniz and Adam Kochanski. The broader acts of assimilation were spawned by the European search for the origins of a universal language in the pre-Babel world. The European interest in the Four Books and related materials is shown by the numerous reviews accorded them in the leading journals of the day (pp. 289-99).

308 1 "…of the Chinese past"—Lionel Jensen (1997).

308 1 "…of the classical traditions"—Benjamin Elman (1990); Chang Hao (1987).

308 2 "…learning for application"—The tiyong dichotomy, first devised by Wang Bi (226-249), was employed by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi in their "commentaries by chapter and verse" to the Great Learning. For the later use of the tiyong formula by Chinese reformers, see Joseph Levenson (1965), esp. pp. 59-78.

"...war of 1895"--Benjamin Elman (forthcoming) shows just how crucial the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 was in moving Chinese to adopt the "failure narrative" for Chinese learning, which held that Chinese refractions of Western science and technology were doomed to failure and wholesale rejection of the past was necessary. Chen Huanzhang (1888-1931), in his "On Confucius-Religion" (Kongjiao lun) (1912), retorted that those who held Ru learning responsible for the autocracy of the imperial government overlooked much of the content of the Ru tradition. Furthermore, "Confucius worship," which had been an integral part of the distinctive patriotic culture of China for several thousand years (p. 43), could help smooth the transition from monarchical to democratic traditions, if China recognized it as the "national religion." A good overview of attitudes toward Ru learning in the Republican period may be found in Pang Pu (1997), I, 364-413.

"...two thousand years"--The first book is called Xinxue weijing kao (Forged Classics of the Wang Mang Era); the second, Kongzi gaizhi kao (Confuciuss as a Reformer). Chang Hao (1987), p. 52, observes that although Kang claimed to derive his theories from the Gongyang and "Li yun" classical texts, his teachings radically departed from older, cyclical views of history, positing instead a history that moves "in a unilinear, irreversible process of evolutionary development."

"...gone largely unchallenged"--Liang Qichao (1959), esp. p. 94.

"...his circle"--Only in 1913 was Kang prevailed upon to publish the first half of his Datong shu in the pages of his "Buren" (Intolerable) magazine. Kang refused to publish the second half during his lifetime, despite entreaties by would-be translators in America and even by President Woodrow Wilson, because the second half was still more radical. The entire book was published only in 1935, eight years after Kang's death.

"...their common efforts"--The translation is taken from Thompson, passim. Tan Sitong (1962), p. 7, averred that in the Great Commonwealth, the traditional bonds between father and son, ruler and subject, would cease to exist.

"...to keep Confucius important"--This summary has inevitably somewhat simplified the situation at the turn of the century. To take but one example, Benjamin Elman (1993) has shown that the desacralization of the Confucian scriptures began as early as the early sixteenth century; cf. Joseph Levenson (1965), p. 274. An early essay of Du Yanchuan, perhaps to refute Liang Qichao's theory of the strong nation-state, co-opted the language of Kang's One World to emphasize that "individualism is but a modern version of Confucianism that emphasizes the need for self-reform and at the same time articulates a version of socialism that is predicated on the interest of the average members of society." See Lydia Liu (1997), in Tani Barlow (1997), p. 97.

"...of classical teachings"--Wolfgang Bauer (1978), p. 302. Ibid., p. 316, remarks that Kang's objections to "family selfishness" went against the venerable text of The Great Learning (Daxue), which proposed that peace in the world could only be established through the "ordering of the family."

"...of China's interests"--Klaus Ruitenbeek (University of Toronto), lecture, at Princeton University, 26 April 1997, in comparing building regulations for the Qing imperial palace with the Qin fragments from Shuihudi, suggested that the Qing had come to justify the very Legalistic principles that the classicists were paid to deplore in their professional capacities as imperial advisers; the legal code of the supposedly Confucianized Manchus, for example, had become no less stringent than the legal codes of the Qin two millennia earlier. For the notion that the conquerors of late imperial China, as well as the ruling elites of neighboring East Asian states, had used the classical Chinese texts and literati interpretations for their own ends, rather than succumbing to either "sinification" or "Confucianization," see Evelyn Rawski (1997). Regarding Qing corruption, critics pointed to the fact that monies from semiofficial tolerance of the opium trade were diverted to the official academies of classical learning (whose value was disputed by the Bible schools and Bible study groups subsidized by European and American opium traders). For example, support for the Xuehai tang Academy in Canton, center for the production of the monumental compendium of Qing commentaries and treatises on the classics, the Huang Qing jingjie in 3,666 volumes, was most likely funded in part from profits of the opium trade and the official collusion in it, according to Wm. Theodore de Bary (1991), pp. 84-85.

"...outside their locality"--Sally Borthwick (1983), p. 6. William Skinner (1977), pp. 23-26, points out that while the population in China from the Tangg through the Qing dynasties grew tenfold (from roughly fifty to four hundred million), the state bureaucracy grew little or not at all, so by the Qing, the state apparatus barely touched the lives of ordinary subjects. Hymes and Schirokauer (1993), p. 3, argues that the Chinese state, beginning in Song, consciously relinquished control to its literate elites.

"...classically based system"--Some five million educated Chinese males attempted to take the exams in the 1890s. In addition, about a million men supplemented their income through teaching and learning in some four thousand academies. See Sally Borthwick (1983), p. 45; Mark Elvin (1996). Many presume that the loyalty of these men might have been secured by the prospect of bureaucratic positions procured through the examination system. Paula Harrell (1992), pp. 11-60, documents the uncritical but widespread view of Western schools and Japanese education as success stories.

"...way of life"--This analysis sees the abolition of the traditional examination system as the single most important blow to the Confucian tradition. Other studies see later events as equally important, for example, the disastrous flirtation between some Confucian advocates and the despicable President Yuan Shikai (1912-16) or the May Fourth debates on culture, science, and metaphysics.

"...questionable in hindsight)"--Sally Borthwick (1983), p. 38, is one of several contemporary experts on China's early modern institutions to dispute the assessment of early modernizers that China's indigenous institutions had to go. She writes that indigenous institutions "were called into question less by their own defects than by the inability of the Chinese polity as a whole to resist Western and later Japanese ... aggression."

"...more notional than real"--Bernard Williams (1981) develops the terminology of real vs. notional options. Adopting a system of beliefs wholly incompatible with the life of one's time is defined as a notional option. As Williams writes, "The life of a Greek Bronze Age chief, or a mediaeval Samurai, and the outlooks that go with those, are not real options for us: there is no way of living them. This is not to say that reflection on those value-systems may not provide inspiration for thoughts about elements missing from modern life" (p. 140).
"...to weaken them"--For example, Zhang Binglin [= Zhang Taiyan], a student of Yu Yue (1821-1907), conceded that the Manchu-supported version of Confucian orthodoxy had been little more than a means of stupefying the people. See "Ding Kong" (Re-evaluating Confucius), in Zhang Binglin (1976), I, 169.

"...if not ritual"--These were three of the revisionist theories that the advocates of national essence offered about Confucian traditions. Proponents of the national essence theory seldom emphasized the important role of ritual (li) in Confucian traditions, according to Charlotte Furth (1976), p. 33.

"...like Zhang Binglin (1869-1935)"--Zhang Binglin was a well-known anti-Manchu activist and cultural conservative. The most prominent "antiquity doubters" were Gu Jiegang, Qian Xuantong (1887-1939), and Hu Shi, each of whom were frequent contributors to the journal Gushi bian. For Gu Jiegang, see Laurence Schneider (1971), Liu Qiyu (1986), and Tang Xiaofeng (1994); for Zhang Binglin, see Chang Hao (1987), pp. 104-45; and Kauko Laitinen (1990).

"...old and new"--Quoting Hu Shi (1922), pp. 6-7, on the tenor of the times. As Jeremy Paltiel puts it in Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998), p. 273: "The central problematique which arose at this time was how to revive China as a symbol of pride while systematically rejecting its moribund traditions." Hu Shi concluded that if any part of Chinese tradition were to be salvaged in the face of Western cultural challenges, non-Confucian schools of thought would have to be revived and the lixue of late imperial times jettisoned.

"...countries without reservation"--The phrase "strategy of amalgamation" comes from ibid., p. 39. Note the Chinese propensity to equate peoples and cultures. TThe concept of national essence was proposed by Zhang Binglin as a viable alternative to both the religious Confucianism proposed by Kang Youwei and total Westernization. See Zhang Binglin (1925), pp. 53-71. Doubts about the value of their cultural heritage afflicted even the most devoted classicists, as expressed in Gu Jiegang's comment of 1926: "In recent years each of the great powers of the world has violently encroached upon our sovereignty. But as their civilization is superior to ours, it is futile to expect that they can also be subdued, like the neighboring tribes of earlier times, by assimilation to our culture" (Hummel, p. 167).

"...from the Pamirs"--For Zhang and Liu on the origins of the Chinese race, see Laurence Schneider (1976), p. 66. Wang Gungwu (1991), p. 137, says that the revolutionaries "were prepared to admit that Chinese civilization was a result of diffusion and migration from the West because this emphasized the difference between the Chinese and the Manchu 'northern barbarians' who conquered China in 1644." Jer-shiarn Lee (1993), p. 55, says of Zhang, "Like his contemporaries, his attitude toward Western learning at this time was to claim that the concepts of Western science were all to be found in the Chinese classics."

"...eluded their state"--Zhang and Liu agreed that the Han Chinese people had descended from an ancient culture hero, the Yellow Emperor, who was himself descended from peoples farther west. More important, the Han race had possessed the pure blood, the sacred lands, and a unique moral heritage longer than that of any other people on earth. See Chang Hao (1987), p. 112.

"...of organic assimilation"--Hu Shi (1922), pp. 6-7.

"...local sociopolitical systems"—In Choson Korea, for instance, the yangban ruling class had been quick to employ Cheng-Zhu ideas to buttress their hereditary privileges, according to Ho Ping-ti (1962); Martina Deuchler (1992). And in Meiji Japan, carefully selected Confucian teachings had served to "strengthen the basis of the nation" by instilling "collective patriotism." See Carol Gluck (1985), esp. p. 130.

"...contact with it"—Professor Yü Ying-shih in a 1990 public lecture made the point, for example, that "the most important current trend in historical studies" is the recognition of "culture as a relatively autonomous force in history." See Tessa Morris-Suzuki (1995), p. 759.

"...the nation's public school curriculum"—Cai Yuanpei was the last Hanlin scholar to have exerted a major effect on twentieth-century politics and intellectual life. Although Cai had been trained in the Classics, he attributed China's defeats by Russia (1895) and Japan (1905) to be the result of its backward educational system, so he was a strong advocate of the radical Westernization of the curriculum. After acting as principal of the Zhongxi xuetang (Sino-Western school), he entered revolutionary politics in 1902. Then, having served as the first minister of education under both Sun Yat-sen and Yuan Shikai, he made his first trip abroad in June 1912, going to Germany and France. While in France, he helped set up the work-study program that trained many Chinese revolutionaries, including Zhou Enlai. In 1916, he returned to China, where he served as chancellor of Peking University for the period 1916-26.

"...their traditional perquisites"—Kongfu dangan, pp. 705-9.

"...No Confucianism, No China,"—Kang Youwei (1916), pp. 135-36.

"...with relative ease)*"—Borthwick (1993), chap. 4, cites several key differences between the situation in China and in Japan, including (1) the Meijji emperor had clean hands, as he and his inner circle of advisers had made no concessions to foreigners, but had in fact overthrown the signatories to the unequal treaties; (2) no great disputes had torn apart the elites in Japan as they had in China; (3) the Meiji government was strongly centralized; (4) the Meiji had a much stronger tax base, appreciably higher rates of taxation, and greater control of revenue, all of which benefited its modernizing efforts. Cf. Mark Elvin (1993), on China's greater population. On Japan's differently Confucianized traditions: First, Tokugawa Japan embraced some Confucian teachings as an instrument of social and political policy, but Japan's active Buddhist and Shinto traditions prevented Confucian rites from deeply permeating every aspect of Japanese society. Second, Japanese Confucian learning, which was largely text- rather than ritual-based, was credited with the creation of the tools for social analysis that could keep pace with historical change. Third, Confucian values continued to be upheld by the Meiji Restoration government reformers, who associated Confucian thought with modern forms of government. See Kurozumi Makoto (1994), and for the possible contribution of Confucian teachings to the militarism of the Fascist era in Japan, see Wang Jiahua (1995), esp. pp. 168-76; and Xu Zhengxiong (1993), esp. pp. 120-28.

"...Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy"—For the May Fourth reformers' "mystical faith in progress," see Leo Lee (1991), p. 160. For the expression "Confucian curiosity shop," see Hu Shi, cited in GSB, III, 425. The catchphrase "Confucius and sons" (Kongjia dian) was also coined by Hu Shi, who deplored the "undisputed sway" that Confucianism had supposedly exerted over ethics and politics in China for some two thousand years.

"...unfamiliar with it"—Their training in the new, Western-style curriculum led them to reject classical learning as an evil remnant of China's backward past rightly excoriated for its presumed "aversion to change." See John Dewey (n.d.) for the charge that Confucianism instilled an aversion to change.
"...and the emotions"--The phrase is Liang Shuming's, cited in Guy Alitto (1979), p. 76. Later, Liang tried to associate Confucius instead with "reesoluteness" (gang) and with pragmatism. See ibid., p. 123.

"...of special interests"--Mary Wright (1962), p. 9. This way of thinking was standard in the modernization theories of the 1920s through the early 1980s.

"...to resist that"--Sun Yat-sen (n.d.), p. 23.

"...and the ethnic pride"--In Japan, however, a group of Confucian-Shintoist thinkers developed the idea of the unchanging Japanese essence that continues to serve as rallying cry for modern ultrarightists. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834-1901) wanted Japan to "cast off Asia" (datsu-Ajia) completely, so as to Westernize as quickly as possible. Support for Pan-Asianism often was merely a subterfuge to promote Japanese hegemony in Asia as a counterforce to Western imperialism. For further information, see Carol Gluck (1985).

"...for fear of opposition"--Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu (1918). Yi Baisha (1916) lambasted Confucius for identifying the ruler with Heaven, thereby creating an ideological justification for autocratic rule. (Of course, the identification of the monarch with Heaven did not begin with Confucius.) Yi further criticized Confucius for discouraging his disciples from asking questions; Yi reasoned that Confucius's advocacy of the golden mean was merely a way to evade making important decisions with regard to practical problems. As Charlotte Furth (1976), p. 42, writes, "Whereas the old morality had valued a style of poise, equilibrium, and centrality, now people demanded ... a dynamic engagement with history." Note that some leading Western thinkers (e.g., Bertrand Russell) thought Confucian learning less harmful than its Western counterpart, nationalistic patriotism. The May Fourth reformers, however, felt that the peaceful Middle Way could provide no sufficient deterrent to the continual deprivations of the imperialist Great Powers.

"...to be 'long dead'"--Hu Shi (1922), pp. 7-8. Hu charged that Confucianism had "outlived its vitality."

"...of pre-Qin fame"--As early as 1902, the imperially sponsored civil service examinations had asked candidates to "prove in detail that Western science studies mainly were based on the theories of China's pre-Han masters," according to Zhongwai, "mu lu," pp. 13a-13b. (I am indebted to Ben Elman for this reference.) Cf. Chen Duxiu's concept of science and Confucianism, as recounted in Wang Hui (1997), pp. 46-56.

"...in the land"--Fu Sinian (1919), pp. 124-28. While footbinding probably arose first among court dancers as a way of supporting the arch (producing a makeshift toeshoe), the master Zhu Xi promoted this custom among gentry women. See Howard Levy (1966), p. 24; Bettine Berge (1989). Dorothy Ko (1994), however, in discussing women as cultural agents and literary producers in late imperial China, argues that footbinding was neither Ru (a classical or classicizing impulse) nor misogynist.
"...the slaves of Confucius"--Before the ellipsis, Wu Yu (1921), pp. 15-16; after the ellipsis, Wu (1917), pp. 3-4. Some few reformers went so far as to advocate the abolition of the family in order to strengthen the state (as did Kang Youwei in his One World Philosophy). Mao rewarded children for informing on their parents. Lu Xun merely tried to instill liberal values of equality between parent and children. Li Yimin (1915) was one of many to insist that Confucianism encourages a slave mentality because it ritualizes the dependency of the subject on the ruler, of son on father, and of wife on husband: "Like slaves and beasts of burden, these tragic creatures could not aspire to self-autonomy, to say nothing of self-development." One of the first to decry the unfairness of the anti-Confucius critique was Liang Shuming (1922). Two years later, in published lectures given at Tsing-hua University (March), Zhang Junmai [= Carson Chang] called for a renewal of Ru learning while berating the May Fourth reformers for their blinkered scientism; science alone, he said, can never answer philosophical questions. For comparable critiques of Westernizers and Marxists by Xiong Shili, see below.

"...to save China"--The split between the pragmatists and the theorists became overt with the publication in July 1919 of Hu Shi's polemic, "Morre Study of Problems, Less Talk of Isms," which appeared in the Weekly Critic. Reformers often disagreed about the relative priority of direct political action vs. cultural reform. See Chow Tse-tung (1960b), chap. 9.

"...community-sanctioned violence"--Lu Xun (1918). Chen the historian ignored the abundant evidence for social mobility in imperial China, just as the deeply leearned Ļu underplayed the religious persecutions, civil wars, and slavery that marred the history of the supposedly enlightened West. Present-day young Chinese idealists often suffer from a similar naiveté, ascribing only unparalleled enlightenment to the West and dastardly oppression to the Chinese Communist Party, though this is changing.

"...subjects for millennia"--The "public" (gong) partnership between the state and its ruling elites does not, of course, resemble in any way the public, civil sphere envisioned in Habermas' model for Europe. See Mizoguchi Yûzô (1995).

"...in the household"--See chap. 39 of the Mozi, describing the marriage ceremony, quoted in Harry Hsiao (1978), p. 152; cf. the (1963b) trans. by Watson from the same text, pp. 125-26 ("Against Confucians").

"...their proponents wish"--I suspect that the May Fourth reformers, like most moderns, credited their predecessors with very little intelligence; they also inadvertently operated on Chinese presumptions, assuming the degree of sacredness belonging to a particular text to be measured by the text's power to direct men's actions. To be fair, the May Fourth reformers were only following the latest modern thinking on the totalizing effect of systems of thought and culture. Only in the postmodern era have we come to talk of the resistance to totalizing effects by the individual and society.

"...passed onto others"--Andrew March (1974), esp. chaps. 1-3. The best definition of "scientism" in early twentieth-century China comes from D. Kwokk (1965) and from Wang Hui (1997), pp. 21-81: "the application of the prestige of science in areas that had hardly any relevance to science itself," so that science takes the place of a "new religion."
"...in this century"--The May Fourth leaders were determined through their vernacular literature movement to reach greater numbers of the Chinese people, so as to persuade them, first, of the need to establish a self-conscious, anti-imperialist front and, second, of the strategic necessity to establish this front primarily through cultural change. Since the 1930s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has tried to make the May Fourth "democratic revolution" a watershed in its periodization of Chinese history, citing it as the precursor to the "new democracy" of Mao Zedong. See Chow Tse-tung (1960b), pp. 347-55.

"...extreme of iconoclasm"--For the swings between utopian and dystopian visions, see Jing Wang (1996), esp. chap. 2. For the quotation, see Jon Saari ((1990), p. 195, citing a 1916 complaint.

"...as the best"--For the compensatory logic of spiritual victory, see Jing Wang (1996), p. 62.


"...harden their line)"--See one essay included in Mao's (1927) "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan."

"...or secular orientations"--This humanistic impulse supposedly gave rise to a pronounced practical or utilitarian bent. There is an irony here, since early Confucian teachings explicitly denounced utilitarian thought.


"...as the Kuomingtang [KMT]"--As the May Fourth movement wound down in the summer of 1923, Chiang Kai-shek was in the Soviet Union, under orders from Sun Yat-sen, head of the Guomindang, to study the Leninist-style organizational methods needed to improve the cohesiveness of the GMD party. Chiang returned to China by the end of that year, deeply suspicious of Soviet intentions toward China but greatly admiring of the Soviet organizational skills.


"...as the propellant force"--See their "Declaration."

"...of international leadership"--GMD publication, cited in Lloyd Eastman (1974), pp. 40-45. The Blue Shirt disciplinary code stated, "If we continue to use tolerant methods to deal with these rotten elements, we can never expect to exterminate them completely. Now we must punish them, killing them with 'extreme measures,' causing the masses to become so frightened that they ... will not again transgress the laws" (ibid., p. 47).

"...of the individual"--See Lloyd Eastman (1976), p. 192.

"...himselt as emperor"--See Mary Wright (1955), esp. pp. 515-17, 529-31, for the "neo-Restorationist" efforts of the GMD under Chiang.

"...a healthy economy"--Chiang Kai-shek (ca. 1936). Compare Republican rhetoric on welfare mothers, which handily ignores the issue of corporate welfare.

"...Western nations of today"--Ibid., (1947b).

"...in the world"--Ibid., (1947a).

"…elements were preponderant"--Cf. the New Life's dictum, quoted in Tang Xueyong (1934), p. 68: "Adopt whatever can be used of Western ceremonial and music; copy whatever can be used of ancient ceremonial and music."

"…and one mind"--The phrase yizhi yixin comes from the GMD national anthem.

"…the modern problems"--It is no surprise that the Guomindang's chief support came from urban areas, for Chiang preferred to build his power base byy alliances with the "great families" belonging to China's burgeoning entrepreneurial class and with the foreign interests in China. These two groups vehemently opposed the trade unions as "red bases," so the GMD systematically dismantled and reorganized the unions under conditions favorable to the capitalists in China and abroad. As a result, as Jean Chesneaux (1977), pp. 195-97, maintains, "Chinese foreign trade, too, continued to have the same colonial character," with France, England, and Japan enjoying their concessions, extraterritoriality, and special military rights. Such policies made Chiang's 1927 split with the CCP inevitable.

"…an ancient tradition"--See, e.g., Mary Wright (1962), p. 300.

"…and too dangerous!"--Chiang Kai-shek (1941), trans. modified from Chow Tse-tung (1960b).

"…of government organization"--Chastising China's citizens for their supposed failure to view "the rise or fall of the nation as their own responsibility," Chiang exhorted every one to develop "a keener sense of duty and a deeper conception of responsibility, to play his part as a social reformer." See Chiang Kai-shek (1947a), pp. 200-201; Strauss (2000), p. 92. See also Wakeman's "A Revisionist View of the Nanjing Decade: Confucian Fascism" (in ibid., pp. 141-78), which nicely distinguishes the "small freemasonry of Chiang Kai-shek loyalists within the right-wing movements" from "the fascist-seeming fanatics and terrorist thugs" in the Blue Shirts and the associated Renaissance Society (pp. 155-56).

"…at any time"--See Chiang Kai-shek (1934).


"…for national values"--Walter Ch'en (1936), p. 199.

"…of traditional values"--This celebration of Confucius's birthday (at a cost of approximately $16,000) was the most elaborate ceremony to take place during Chiang Kai-shek's regime in China. Comically, the Japanese invaders in China, as well as the "Confucian emperor" Puyi in the puppet state of Manchuguo, rushed to follow suit. In 1935, the Japanese government also invited Confucius's direct descendants to attend the opening ceremony for a Temple to Confucius in Japan. See Kong Demao (1988).

"…cleanliness and orderliness"--Chiang Kai-shek, quoted in Arif Dirlik (1975), p. 952. However, Vera Schwarcz (1986), p. 215, preferring to focus on the official version of events, says that by 1936 Chiang saw "no wandering or shuffling in the streets, no stopping in the middle of the road, no gaping about and no blocking the traffic, no smoking or spitting in public places," so Chiang officially declared the New Life movement a great success.
"...the imperial traditions"--The Regenerationist Society, whose very name seems ironic, was founded to spearhead this attack on the (suddenly) "old culture" of May Fourth and instructed to use thoroughly un-Confucian means (including mass murder and torture) to achieve an ostensibly Confucian goal: social cohesion. But Confucius had insisted that no amount of violence could induce social cohesion, which depended directly upon economic and social justice.

"...to the state"--Analects 18/8 (Waley, 222): "As for me, I differ from these [men of reputation], in that I have no 'thou shalt' or 'thou shaalt not.'" Confucius also told his followers that each must decide in each social interaction how best to "range himself on the side of the Right."

"...and chi (shame)"--It is significant, of course, that Chiang Kai-shek rejected part of Mencius's "four beginnings" discourse on Confucian virtue (found in Mencius 2A/6). For example, Chiang says nothing of rang, "giving way," as his program is predicated on the healthy use of violence to effectively impose unity upon China. Nor does he mention zhi, "wisdom," defined by Mencius as the ability to distinguish right from wrong. In other words, Chiang emphasizes only those Confucian virtues that are amenable to his vision of state.

"...of Chinese philosophy"--Of course, as defined by Chiang, the Four Virtues worked against the reformist project of Confucius, which had been designed to promote full humanity and empathy. Confucius presumes that loyalty and filial piety are important, but several passages in the Analects (corroborated by many early anecdotes) suggest that for Confucius these are minor virtues necessary to the continuance of the state and family. Real virtue must be tempered and developed by ren and shu, empathetic concern for one's fellow human beings.

"...echo of Confucianism"--Mary Wright (1962), p. 312.

"...state-sponsored ideology"--Post-World War II dictators in both South Korea and Vietnam also tried to induce compliance with central government decrees by exploiting traditional respect for Confucian values. Like Chiang, they reduced Confucian teachings to mere slogans intended to serve highly un-Confucian ends. See Koh Byong-ik (1992), p. 64, fn. 42; Tu Wei-ming et al. (1992), chap. 7; and Dennis Duncanson (1993), p. 189.

"...and self-seeking"--Shen Jieren (1935), pp. 90-96, lists ten guidelines for China's New Youth; no. 9 urges them to discourage "individualism and famility."

"...grounded in the past"--This summary comes from Arif Dirlik (1975), p. 957.

"...emerging social forces"--Arif Dirlik (1975), p. 975 (before the ellipsis) and p. 976 (after), with one modification of the verb "to be" in the first sentence.

"...in the ancient world"--Guo Moruo (1931b), p. 6. Contra Guo, the classicist Liu Jie in 1962 reportedly argued that Marxist class analysis was appropriate for foreign and modern history but inappropriate for ancient Chinese history, which had a distinctive developmental pattern. See Zhang Yulou (1963), pp. 27-44.

"...whole of Chinese history"--Cf. Kam Louie (1980), p. 19. As Louie points out, over two hundred articles were devoted to the topic of periodization in the 1950s alone. Debates on this topic continued throughout the Cultural Revolution. By contrast, before 1955, there were no journals specifically devoted to philosophy or history. (Note that many of the translations presented in this section follow Kam Louie's.)
It was conceivable that Confucius's original message had been distorted by those anxious to promote it as state ideology. Perhaps it was simply that Confucian classicism had become more reactionary as its institutions evolved.

Mao Zedong (1942), p. 81.

Wu Han (1961), 132.

Liu Shaoqi (1962); Hua Shibin (1971); David Nivison (1972). As Sumner Twiss, writing in Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998), p. 42, notes, "Both Confucianism and Marxism tend to emphasize an organic society oriented to the primacy of the collective good... and the responsibility of the ruler or state to ensure social stability and the material welfare of the people."

Two academics opposing this more sympathetic view of Confucius were Yang Rongguo and Ren Qiyu, both of whom argued that Confucius's opposition to written law represented the interests of the slave-owning class.

Kam Louie (1980), pp. 66-73.

Survey 1967, no. 3863, pp. 9-133.


Campaign against the four olds was officially launched on August 8, 1966. Initially, the surviving bases of religion were considered possible threats to collectivization.
"...of the masses"--Kam Louie (1980), p. 135, remarks, "Although the May Fourth campaign was restricted largely to the educated, ... the movement in the seventies was mainly launched by guidance from above." Ibid., p. 105, notes that a great many articles were written by groups and published under pseudonyms, so the "letters of the people" were possibly inventions by the Party.

"...of the Communist Party"--See Kam Louie (1980), p. 107. Perhaps the last gasp of the "Pi-Lin Pi-Kong" impulse is found in the documented cases of exploitation by the Kong family descendants, as recorded in Kongfu dangan (1982).

"...proletarian educational revolution"?--PiLin, p. 3. Confucius had recruited students regardless of their class background. Also, the "Confucian" examination system was widely (if somewhat erroneously) seen as meritocratic, given Confucian educational theories that suggested that hard work, rather than innate talent, was the chief factor in the acquisition of classical learning and moral feelings.

"...recently rehabilitated supporters"--Including Zhao Zhiyang and Hu Yaobang.

"...most prominent supporters"--Following the arrest, trial, and sentencing of the Gang of Four (with the sentencing of Jiang Qing and Zhang Chunqiao in January 1981), the leftist supporters of Jiang Qing continued to try to harass and embarrass Deng Xiaoping and his supporters in public arenas and in documents marked "for internal circulation only" within the CCP bureaucracy.

"...a certain cachet"--These evaluations are described in Kam Louie (1980), chap. 6.

"...from the West"--For Confucianism as the Chinese alternative to the Protestant ethic, see Yü Ying-shih's extensive writings, which trace the positive influence of Confucian culture on mercantilism back to the Ming and Qing period. Yü's arguments implicitly refute the writings of Max Weber, who found Confucianism a "hindrance to economic development" because Confucius had decried the relentless pursuit of profit as inimical to virtue. On the other hand, in the Analects Confucius concedes, "Wealth and rank are what everyone desires." He continues, "If any means of escaping poverty presented itself, I would adopt it, so long as it did not involve wrongdoing."

Many prominent American economists and political scientists since the late 1970s have postulated a strong link between Confucian values (principally, an emphasis on education, on thrift, and on communal orientation) and economic success in the era of global capitalism. See, e.g., the writings of Nathan Glazer (1976), Lucien Pye (1985), Hofheinz and Calder (1982), Hung-chao Tai (1989), Ronald Dore (1987), and Ezra Vogel (1991). According to these researchers, a distinctive "Confucian script of parental governance" results in a highly positive view of the state as interventionist coordinator of economic development. For a more skeptical view, see Marion Levy (1992). I incline to the view that China in particular and East Asia in general have become, in the words of Johnson and Ouchi (1993), a "junkyard for Western theories of economic development and political modernization." For general information on spiritual pollution campaigns against ideological imports from the West, see Tu Wei-ming (1987), (1991), cited in Zhongdang Pan et al. (1994), p. 12; Pang 1988; Su and Wang 1988.
"...the sinological community"—Support for the China lobby was for many years particularly strong within the ranks of Christians (often ex-missionaries or children of missionaries in China). Many within the American Christian community believe that "the most exciting encounter will be that between a reinterpreted Christianity and a reinterpreted Confucianism." See, e.g., Douglas Elwood (1982); John Berthrong (1989); Kang-nam Oh (1993); and Christian Jochim (1995). An entire issue of Pacific Theological Review 22-23 (1992-93) is devoted to the Second International Confucian-Christian Conference, held at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California (7-11 July 1991). Julia Ching has made significant contributions to this dialogue in her many works. According to Lionel Jensen (1997), pp. 242-46, it was Hu Shi, even more than the early Jesuits, who noted deep similarities between Christ and Confucius.

"...of political persuasion"—Both characterizations were designed to enhance a pan-Asianism directed against the West.

"...Western developmental errors"—The dissident Wei Jingsheng, of course, counters this description with a single question: Should modernity be understood only in economic terms or should it also embrace democracy as a Fifth Modernization?

"...during the 1980s and 1990s"—In other words, the distinctive Chinese Way or Asian Way can be made to signify both an ideal society and a regrettable backwardness that temporarily justifies less-than-ideal contemporary conditions, including economic exploitation and human rights abuses. Note that Confucian learning among the old bureaucrats "regained some respect as a martyred object of persecution in the Cultural Revolution," according to Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998), p. 277.

"...such a pat assumption"—For the quotations, see Mary Wright (1962), p. 301. I coin the term "New Confucians" to distinguish the "third-wave New Confucians" (Xin Rujia) from other neoconservatives in China; the New Confucians are but one subset of the larger neoconservative group, which makes ultranationalism the cornerstone of its theories. Neoconservatives point with pride to three aspects of what they regard as traditional Confucianism: (1) the "mainstream culture" of traditional Confucian [=literati?] culture; (2) the rural gentry that supposedly guarded peasant interests; and (3) the examination system that gave some access to those outside the ruling class. Alleging that forty years of political reeducation campaigns have effectively destroyed mainstream culture in the PRC, the neoconservatives propose to promote China's interests through an ultranationalism aimed against the United States. Their most famous publication is the best-seller coauthored by five intellectuals, China Can Say No, whose chapter headings include "The Blue Sky must Die, the Yellow Sky [i.e., China] Must Rule," and "Don't Fear the Declaration, Prepare for War." Cf. the revised Sanzi jing (Three Character Classic) published in 1994.

"...promote human flourishing"—The phrase "Antiquity is now!" comes from Zhuangzi via Han Yu, as cited in Charles Hartman (1986b). The phrase "fiduciary coommunity" comes from Tu Wei-ming (1989). Cf. the statement by Tu Wei-ming (1976a), p. 242: "To be sure, as the mainstream of Chinese thought in the last millennium, Confucianism has deep economic, political, and social roots in traditional China. However, even if those roots are completely destroyed, we cannot conclude that Confucianism has thereby lost all of its human relevance. Indeed, it is not inconceivable that some contemporary Chinese intellectuals find in Confucianism not a fixity of past wisdom but a reservoir of humanistic insights ... relevant to ... the vital issues of the modern world." Discussions about human flourishing appear in a number of modern works on philosophy and ethics that consider the prospects for a common morality. See Outka and Reeder (1993), for example.

"…quickly and well"--It need hardly be said that Weber's Protestant ethic, unlike the New Confucians' "third-wave" version of the Confucian ethic, celebrated individualism, given the personal character of Protestant salvation. For the more self-consciously nationalistic appeals of the New Confucian thinkers, see Pang Pu (1997), I, 438ff.

"…to China and East Asia"--See Koh Byong-ik (1992). The work of Yü Ying-shih has provided particularly valuable support for the New Confucian claims, as it purports to show the positive influence of Confucian culture on mercantilism during Ming and Qing.

"…the predatory West"--Chang Hao (1976), p. 295. For the self-conscious adaptation of Ru learning to modernization themes, see Pang Pu (1997), I, 4430ff.

"…for local consumption"--Merle Goldman (1998) locates the main continuing influence of Confucian literary culture in the group of leading intellecutals who draw upon it when considering their role in relation to the state. Presumably the persistence of such influence allowed the New Confucian message to resonate strongly in some circles. But see Lynn Pan (1988) and (1989); Robert Elegant (1990). For the judgment that New Confucian theory is a foreign import, see Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998), passim. The academic leaders included Yü Ying-shih, Tu Wei-ming, and Cheng Chung-ying.

"…of Chinese history"--This was said only of the CCP, in Jing Wang (1996), p. 20.

"…new power centers"--Hence, the arguments put forward in Wang Jian (1992), esp. p. 19.

"…of the revolution)"--As Wm. R. Jankowiak (1993), p. 64, notes, "The Communist party never questioned, altered, or rejected the Confucian notion that the best government was staffed by 'superior men.' The general assumption has been that elites should lead change, rather than be in genuine dialogue with local forces." Liu Zaifu speaks of the May Fourth writers viewing themselves as "bodies of light who can illuminate and awaken other people." See Leo Lee (1991), p. 173. I see the present generation of intellectuals largely as inheritors of this May Fourth identity. Note that the 1985 "Educational Reforms" in China have basically rejected Maoist ideals promoting egalitarianism in education, thereby condemning a larger proportion of China's population (especially female) to an inadequate education.

"…in world culture"--People's Daily, cited in Frank Ching (1994). (The verb has been changed from "has" to "have" since the subject has been changed from singular [the West] to plural [their Western counterparts].)


"…making a new entry"--Jing Wang (1996), p. 53. The sophistication of the New Confucian theorists is demonstrated by their calls for a dialectical, "dual, simultaneous movement of modernity's critique of tradition and tradition's critique of modernity" (ibid., p. 65).
"...in the eighties"--See Lin Tongqi's comments, cited in Tu Wei-ming, et al. (1992), pp. 126-27. Note, however, the (brief) CCP campaign attacking Confucian teachings during the reform movement of the late 1980s. Taiwan, by comparison, has an ongoing monograph series published by the Academia Sinica: Dangdai Ruxue yanjiu consgshu (Research on Contemporary Confucian Studies).

"...Shandong*"--The Qufu office was completed in 1984; the Beijing office, in 1985.


"...usually in attendance"--In 1985, Harvard's Tu Wei-ming paid a half-year visit "of inquiry" to the PRC, as the guest of Peking University, during which time a number of informal and formal conferences were arranged. In March 1986, at a government-sponsored conference, Fang Keli gave the keynote speech, "Taking a good look at the modern New Confucians." In May 1986, in the journal Beijing Society and Science, the leading philosopher Bao Zongxin published an article on New Confucian thought and its relation to modernization. In the same year, a prominent professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Liu Shuxian, published an influential article devoted to the same subject in a journal from Taiwan's Dongwu University. In 1987, an all-China conference was held on the topic, and another in 1989.

"...birth of Confucius"--The 1994 celebrations, which commemorated the 2,545th anniversary of the birth of Confucius, were even more splendid than those of October 1987.

"...the Confucian temple"--The poster specifically mentioned Dai Jitao, who as early as 1924 had urged Chiang Kai-shek to use the GMD as a base from which to "restore the spirit of our ancestors and thus cause the country to flourish." See Mary Wright (1962), p. 304.

"...with Western principles"--Kam Louie (1980), p. 10, also cites some criticisms of li as philosophical support for a highly stratified society. <

"...soul of China"--See, for example, Chow Tse-tung (1960b), pp. 345-46, on the notion that "the history of the latter part of the nineteenth century had proved that tradition can not make China strong and independent"; that "traditional Confucianism ... embodied many archaic elements contrary to the principles and spirit of modern democracy and science"; and that "all previous governmental authorities ... emphasized the antidemocratic elements in Confucianism in order to stabilize a despotic rule." My choice of these three representative quotations from Chow does not discount the value of this monumental piece of scholarship that has stood the test of time.

"...in imperial times"--According to the New Confucian theorists, the late imperial classicizing texts prescribe an intimate symmetry between moral values and ontological foundations, which affirms the instrumental use of ren as a cosmic, moral, and pragmatic principle. Accordingly, the New Confucians rely on the supposed instrumental value of Confucian theory to the state (specifically, its promotion of loyalty to the natural hierarchy of the state) to cozen the party into supporting their particular social ethics, based very loosely on the lives and teachings of a few Confucian masters (e.g., Mencius, Wang Yangming).

"...countries in Euro-America"--Once the state no longer delivers increased material prosperity and social tranquility, economic downturns or civil unrest may spur citizens naturally to question the regime's version of ideology.
"...and intellectual capital"--As postcolonial states prefer to rework older themes for their own benefit, the state insists that an official morality identified with "Confucian values" upholds strong government control in every area of life, offering in exchange the state's guarantee of collective well-being. This doctrine severely limits democracy (defined as individual rights) and socialism (claims on the state). What is worse, in the post-Mao period, the proffered quid pro quo -- the guarantee of collective well-being -- has disappeared, as the PRC dismantles the social safety net for the vast majority of its citizens.

"...in the social fabric"--In a forthcoming book, Benjamin Elman et al. suggest that teachers, students, journalists, and scholars interested in Asia learn to use the terms associated with Confucianism in Asia in a more nuanced and self-critical way to illuminate the Confucian revival.

"...elites inspiring emulation"--According to the manifesto published in the Hong Kong conservative journal Minzhu pinglun (Democratic Tribune), the New Confucian leaders themselves experienced a spiritual awakening, though ordinary people will only understand "this awakening" through their actions. See Donald Munro (1970); also Mou and Tang (1992).

"...current party politics"--Three seminal articles by Wang Ruoshui proposed that the Chinese Communist Party had erred in pitting revolution against humanism, since an important aspect of Marxism is its inherent humanism. See Wang Ruoshui (1981), (1983), and (1997). Jing Wang (1986) shows Wang on the defensive against those within the CCP who have charged him with idealism. But if Wang's views are accepted, it may be possible to coordinate the humanistic impulses in Chinese Marxism with those in New Confucian theory, so that "the essence of man can be ... realized amid social relationships... [and so that] in this way each individual would be able to give ample play to his or her own wisdom and talents in an all-around manner and to contribute to society in the course of self-fulfillment" (pp. 78, 85). However, Pang Pu (1997), I, 431, lists three areas of serious disagreement between the New Confucians and the proponents of scientific Marxism: (1) the New Confucians would resuscitate the outmoded formula of "Chinese for the base and Western for the function" (tiyong), unmindful of the way that essence and function affect one another; (2) the New Confucians are idealists proposing a "constant way" while the Marxists as materialists believe in economic and historical change; and (3) the New Confucians largely deplore the spirit of May Fourth and of Communism.

"...the first place"--Kam Louie (1980), p. 146. Heiner Roetz (1993), p. 4, argues that the Chinese youth will inevitably reject this conversion off traditional ethics into a utilitarian ideology designed merely to consolidate the established power structures. Cf. Bruce Cumings (1999), p. 161. Cumings attributes this sensitivity to the fact that China, like many other states in East Asia "is nowhere near the self-definition and comprehensive autonomy that local nationalists have long sought" (ibid., p. 225).

"...effect of that intended"—As one social critic notes, "The unpopularity of Confucianism among the younger generation does not necessarily have anything to do with the vices and virtues of Confucian culture." See Jing Wang (1996), p. 71, though I have changed the verb tense of Wang's statement to include the present, as well as the 1980s. Randall Peerenboom, writing in Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998), p. 253, rightly worries that Confucianism may not be able "to escape guilt by association with the CCP." According to Jing Wang (1996), p. 15, the CCP, Singaporean Progressive Party, and the New Confucian leaders are all really antitraditional, for they tinker with traditions and "make any compromise" to retain power. The New Confucian leaders at times seem more interested in finding an "integrated guide for action" than in restoring Confucian thought. See Tu Wei-ming's epilogue, in Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998), esp. p. 299. For the more benign aspects of New Confucian thought, as manifested outside the PRC and Singapore, see Pang Pu (1997), I, 448-55; Xu and Xiao (1979), esp. pp. 11-34; Zhai Zhicheng (1992); New York Times, July 3, 1998; Kim Dae Jung (1994); and Li et al. (1992); Black and Munro (1993), p. 313.

"...hard to control"—Wang Shan, author of Viewing China through the Third Eye, who is quoted in Matt Forney (1996), p. 24, refers to the "active volcano" of xenophobia. Allan S. Whiting's discussion of foreign policy after Deng distinguishes three levels of nationalism: affirmative, assertive, and aggressive (i.e., hypernationalism). Talk of Chinese values, which the New Confucians helped to promote, asks us to regard adherence to a constructed "Chineseness" as an emancipatory act, but clearly some want a new cultural hegemony over a China-centered horizon of influence. See Ben Xu (1998), esp. pp. 220.

"...greater cultural homogenization"—Psychologists like Kurt Lewin (1952), p. 151, have long concluded that one's sense of well-being and confidence depends to a great extent on the strength of one's cultural identity; the greater one's pride in identifying with one's cultural or ethnic heritage, the higher one's self-esteem. "Chinese nowadays are still in search of a self-worth, an identity," according to L. Sternberg (1992).

"...of traditional culture"—The phrase originated with the scientific positivists, such as Hu Shi and Gu Jiegang. Though critical of the positivists, the New Confucian thinkers also wish to reorganize the national heritage, making it more amenable to their spiritual-moral orientation. Prasenjit Duara (1991) talks of a continual overlay of new interpretations that "superscribe" the past but rarely if ever erase completely what came before.

"...authority within China"—Cf. one definition of "fascism" given in Stanley Payne (1980), pp. 204-5: "mass mobilization of frustrated nationalism."


"...for nationalist ends."—The messianic overtones, of course, are comparable in intensity to that Confucius gave the Way, according to Analects 4/5-6; 6/10. The term "new men" encompasses both sexes, though few women have been drawn to the movements. Note that each movement has disdained the Enlightenment belief that successful reforms must be based on material self-interest.

"...politically and economically"—Li Dazhao (1919). Schell (1995) sees the Chinese Communist Party's continuing efforts in the 1990s to "raise Confucius from the dead" as contributing to the pervasive "sense of cognitive dissonance" in a fin de siècle People's Republic. Others, including Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, do not approve of the New Confucians' pandering to dictators but think that Confucius should be raised from the dead, as he has much to teach us.
Among New Confucian thinkers, Yü Ying-shih and Tu Wei-ming are particularly insistent that the reformist spirit has always been part and parcel of the pragmatic tradition within late Confucian classicism. The critics of imperial authoritarianism whom they cite as examples, however -- men such as Wang Fuzhi (1619-92), Huang Zongxi (1610-95), and Tang Chen (1630-1704) -- were classicists but not necessarily Confucians.


Here credit goes to certain lonely voices, for instance, Zhang Shenfu, who wrote in 1937 that true modernity could not evolve from a basis of either Chinese or Western tradition, but must evolve from both. Similarly, the New Confucian philosopher Xiong Shili (1885-1968) always insisted that creative solutions to human predicaments depend upon more nuanced analyses of these clumsy dichotomies. For Zhang's writings, see Vera Schwarcz (1986), p. 228; for Xiong, see Tu Wei-ming (1976a); Wing Tsit-Chan (1953), pp. 126-27.


Some might argue that the ritual classics, especially the Yili, provide specifically Confucian liturgical formulae for ceremmonial use. But the Yili formulae simply reproduce polite locutions in current use among the lower aristocrats of the Warring States period, as does the Analects. For the specifically Confucian temple rites dedicated to the Sage, see Thomas Wilson (1995). Since the official worship of Confucius began only in the postclassical period, there could be no canonical liturgy of sacrifices dedicated to the reputed author/editor of the Five Classics. Julia Murray (1996) reviews the Ming dynasty production of images of the Sage to counter Buddhist propaganda, but such images had fairly limited circulation. Thomas Wilson's work-in-progress explores the functions of the state liturgy of the Confucius cult within Chinese society. Deborah Sommer (forthcoming) reviews the 1530 imperial decision, frequently disregarded, to eliminate the posthumous titles and ennoblements and sculpted images of Confucius, outlining the arguments of the iconodule and iconoclasts from Tang through Ming.

Sally Borthwick (1983), chap. 6, also contrasts the specialized classrooms and curricula needed for Western-style education with the amateur ideals associated with the old-style learning in imperial China, which focused on learning how to live in the world.

For the ritual bow toward Confucius's portrait, see H.Y. Lowe (1940); Frederic Helmer (1925), pp. 53-54: "Confucius is oftten thought of as a Chinese god." For the fellowship communities, see Hoyt Tillman (1992), esp. p. 3, which argues that Daoxue (True Way Learning) was conceived of as a fellowship," a network of social relations and a sense of community with a shared tradition, "which was not necessarily organized as an association or society. Thomas Wilson (forthcoming) writes, "It was possible not to know ... of the hierarchy superimposed upon this sacred landscape by the officials of the Ministry of Rites" (p. 1).

Confucian teachings favored orthopraxy over orthodoxy, as noted in James Watson (1988), chap. 1. For the Confucian concern with motivations and with practice rather than with doctrines, see David Nivison (1996), p. 119. Note, however, that the late imperial conception of civilization in China was both more bookish and more historical than earlier visions. Note also that the distinction between orthopraxy and orthodoxy is never absolute, as moral truth was believed to be immanent in the rituals devised by the sage-kings of old.
"...and eventual desiccation"--But if social Darwinist tenets were marshaled against Confucian classicism as an anachronism conducive to the malfunctioning of its host state, those same tenets could be made to say the precise opposite: that the very complexity of the Chinese script and the enduring literary and philosophical influence of Chinese classicism, together with the technological and organizational complexity attained in imperial China, all betokened a genetic excellence that made the Han Chinese eminently fitted for continued historical progress. While such scientistic metatheories have long been discredited in respectable quarters of the academic world, talk of the (ever-more) ancient roots of the Chinese people and of the "amazing survivals" of ancient customs in modern life continues to exercise a strong hold on the popular imagination in China and abroad. See, for example, Hong I-sop (1983), p. 162; George Stocking (1969); Wilhelm von Humboldt (1836), pp. 39, 197; and, for a useful comparison with the case of Greece, Nadia Seremetakis (1993), esp. chap. 1.

"...heritage seem superfluous"--The summary I have used is drawn almost verbatim from that given in Chang Hao (1987), p. 3. Some even assert that modern Chinese intellectuals have by and large -- at least unconsciously -- inherited the basic moral goals and aspirations of the Confucian tradition, so that they take nothing more from Western learning than the new technologies and institutions needed to implement their goals and aspirations. See Thomas Metzger (1977), pp. 191-235, for what seems like a revival of the hoary tiyong (substance/function) thesis. Similarly, Ronald Dore (1984), chap. 10 ("The Legacy"), states that pockets of Confucian values, often presented as elements of the indigenous traditional culture, continue to survive as subcultures throughout East Asia.

"...representatives of culture"--See Rey Chow (1993), esp. chaps. 3-4, on "international educational standards." See, e.g., Chao and Sue (1996), esp. p. 93, on the older generation's posturing: "Studies of Chinese parenting have often described the parents as being very controlling or restrictive. More recent research has found that Asian-American parents, in general, are more authoritarian [than the Chinese] in their parenting style." The offspring of such parents, having no other experience, feel that Confucian teachings boil down to a repressive ideology placing unusual restrictions on individual expression.

"...dictates of fashion"--For the changing balance of power from governments to markets, and the resulting political repercussions, see Yergin and Staanislaw (1998).

"...as the Confucian Way"--I have borrowed this notion from Hymes and Schirokauer (1993), p. 9.

"...Confucian key chains"--Such historical theme parks are hardly unique to East Asia. Disney proposed three years ago to set up a Civil War theme park in the rolling hills of Virginia. Disney spokespersons, in praising the veracity of the historical experience to be had in the park, promised that fee-paying tourists would experience the true feel of being enslaved in the ole South.
"...approach to history"--Arif Dirlik (1995b) suggests that these theme parks are global capitalism's solution to the complex needs for identity that arise in the face of increasing economic and political dislocation engendered by global capitalism. Desires for identity are to be satisfied through an illusory connection with a past allowed only an artificial or fossilized existence via a few representative samplings of past culture. Mayfair Yang wonders whether "economic privatism has paradoxically produced, not so much individualism, as a great deal of community participation in the rebuilding of local infrastructure and traditional culture." Helen Siu argues, on the other hand, that religious life in China is still at the stage of "recycling cultural fragments" from within an environment that has experienced a highly intrusive state power. See Mayfair Yang (1993), p. 2; Siu (1989), pp. 121-37. Jun Jing (forthcoming), pp. 39-40, notes that the temple management at Qufu has "since the early 1980's assertively tapped into regional, national, and overseas funding to refurbish the buildings in the splendid Confucius temple complex (kongmiao), the multi-courtyard residence of the Kong family mansion (kongfu), and the Kong clan's immense cemetery (konglin) ... a small city of no more than 60,000 local residents, Qufu was able to receive, in 1992 alone, 1,300,000 million domestic tourists and 14,600 overseas visitors. The success of Qufu's tourism industry has been promoted enthusiastically by national news agencies as an exemplary case of utilizing historically renowned landmarks to boost the local economy."


"...and (later) painting"--For Confucius's belief that Zhou culture would never perish, see Analects 9/5. Insofar as culture consistently embraces whatever is old, any increased interest in East Asian culture may prompt renewed interest in Confucian values. East Asian nouveaux riches, like the old American robber barons, can now easily afford to acquire the trappings of culture. But unlike the American robber barons who plundered Europe, their modern East Asian counterparts can raid the antiquity of their own culture. Ironically, the very capitalist wealth that prompts such searches for the past -- and even massively invests in them -- often undermines real continuity with the past. I would link the National Essence thinkers to today's leaders in the PRC who relentlessly intone that "China is the oldest continuous civilization," though the earliest written records in China correspond to the New Dynasties in Egypt. For further information, see Lothar von Falkenhausen (1993a-b); Mullen and Nylan (forthcoming).

"...to bureaucratic totalism)"--For the nostalgia, see, e.g., Laurel Kendall (1985), chap. 2, especially pp. 34ff., on the postwar "luxury of nostalgia" in Korea, wherein abstract issues of national identity and the preservation of a Korean cultural heritage infuse intellectual discourse. Small groups of relatively powerless working people, responding to the political, economic, and social displacement that always accompanies rapid economic change, have launched staunchly fundamentalist returns to what they perceive as Confucian values promoting a kinder and gentler past. Regarding the search for roots, I am reminded of the African protagonist in Amistad who says that he will pray to his ancestors, as he is, in his own time, the sole reason that his ancestors once lived.

"...prestigious literary awards"-- Since the translation of the book from Japanese into Chinese, it has been doing a brisk business in Chinese-speaking communities as well.
"...and the afterlife"--A summary of Professor Kaji's views (Osaka University) may be found in Kaji Nobuyuki (1991). For Kaji, ancestor worship and filial piety, surely the most visible remnants of traditional practice, both represent key insights of Confucianism. Kaji contends that the religious aspects of Confucianism continue to affect legal and social realities throughout East Asia (e.g., in opposition by a clear majority of Japanese to organ transplants). Many New Confucian figures, including Tu Wei-ming, insist on the transcendent character of Confucian learning, in this going further than Kang Youwei and other early Republican figures, who tried to make Confucian learning the national religion.

"...the Chinese model"--At Van Mieu, candidates for a classical degree once lived in wooden dorms, walked paved courtyards, studied in the famous library, and declaimed original verse from the Poet's Library before undergoing six weeks of grueling baccalaureate examinations. Successful graduates had their names inscribed in Chinese characters on stone tablets in the courtyard. Eighty-two tablets survive at Van Mieu today, despite the pitched battles between the French and the Vietminh that took place in the area during the wars of independence in the 1940's and 1950's.

"...and ritual Confucianism"--Tu Wei-ming (1992), p. 46.


"...values and institutions"--Of course, Songgyun-gwan University of Seoul is a university like any other, except for its Confucian Studies department. South Korea's current criminal laws continue to provide for the graded application of rights and punishments in accordance with the late imperial notions of patriarchy, primogeniture, and family hierarchy. Twenty years ago, the Yu-rin was regarded as a stuffy seniors' club for members of the old aristocratic yangban class, but recently it commanded enough lobbying power to block a law intended to ease the Confucian prohibition against endogamy, marriage between members of the same branch of a clan.

"...with a preindustrial past"--The village headman of Hanhak insists, "Hanhak is not a return to the past; instead, we are creating a future. We do not reject everything about modern life, just miniskirts, T-shirts with violent slogans, and other things which encourage the wrong kind of thinking." The blending of old and new has not been achieved entirely without effort. Tensions have arisen in the community over the extent and timing of female participation, for example. Still, most residents insist that the arduous effort of this social experiment allows them to achieve an enviable peace of mind. See Adrian Edwards (1994).

"...remaining foreign languages"--See NHH 2:6-7. Probably the novelist got the idea from the reformist writer Feng Guifen's Jiao bin lu kang yi (published posthumously in 1893).

"...launch significant change"--See, for example, Tetsuo Najita (1975). See chapter 3 for further examples.


"...TV, VCR, and DVD"--Jesse Nash (1988). I'm also thinking of Bill Moyers's filmed interview with Tu Wei-ming, entitled "A Confucian Life in America."

"...like Samuel P. Huntington"--Samuel Huntington (1992) and (1993).

"...first have ideas"--Su Shi, trans. Jacques Gernet (1962), p. 156. Similarly, Huang Zongxi likened his anthology of Ming classical learning to a "barrel of water on the highway," from which thirsty travelers might "drink their fill." I am indebted to Thomas Wilson for this information.
"...the reader's own"--Hans Georg Gadamer (1975), esp. pp. 258-67. Here, along with David Bromwich (1995) and Paul Rabinow (1996), I reject the increasing tendency to treat culture as an autonomous agent, as the only alternative to theories of the individual rational agent begun by Hobbes and sustained by modern economics and rational choice theory. I thank Steve Salkever for problematizing such views for me.

"...keep tradition alive"--Judith Berling (1993), p. 23. Scriptural Ru learning is gone forever, according to Mark Elvin (1996). But Confucian masters in the pre-Han and Han periods specifically disputed the idea that the Master's teachings were reducible to textual traditions. See Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan (forthcoming).

"...constructions and intellection"--Analects 1/6, where Confucius advises followers to study the polite arts only after they have fulfilled their societal obligations.

"...need for community"--See, e.g., Robert Bellah et al. (1985). Two years after the publication of Bellah's book, in March 1987, Zhao Fusan, then the vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, wrote an extended essay attacking individualism in which he quoted American scholars like Bellah and Daniel Bell. Amitai Etzioni (1983) similarly cites clashes of self-interest and "victim politics" as chief destroyers of communal responsibility. Jack Moody (1996) effectively demolishes the notion that rugged individualism engendered by the Protestant ethic propelled Western progress.

"...social roles as possible"--Alaisdair MacIntyre's After Virtue, p. 245, on the other hand, argues that the dark ages have arrived, in large part because modern humans reject the notion that they have a single telos (nature and function) guiding them; modern philosophy simply cannot find adequate criteria by which to decide between incommensurate claims about human goods and duties. See David Wong (1984), esp. p. 131, for further information.

"...of constructive communities"--The Confucian notion of self comprises not only the full range of social interactions (including the judgments of others) but also the self's reactions to those interactions. See Analects 6/30. I am not unaware of poststructuralist attempts to deconstruct the self by presenting it as a recent Western construct. Nor am I unmindful of Tu Wei-ming's belief that the use of ji in late imperial classicism is absolutely different from the Western notion of self. But following the work of Wang Xinggong (1921) and Henry Rosemont (1996), I try to speak here in terms that roughly approximate the early Chinese constructions, while avoiding unnecessary abstractions and binary oppositions.

"...beauty, strength, and health"--See Analects 6/9, on Yan Hui, which goes with ibid, 6/18.

"...one cannot be good when alone"--See FSTY 3:24, on a family member who lives alone. Cf. Fingarette (1983).

"...classmate from another"--Merry White (1993); James Shields (1989); Tobin and Wu (1989); and Harold Stevenson (1992).

"...onset of old age"--Analects 7/19.

"...efforts were in vain"--Analects 14/41.

"...has been patriarchal"--The best articles on this subject are J. Holmgren (1986); Alison Black (1986); Henry Rosemont (1997). A reconsideration of the ritual texts in light of other literary and archaeological evidence tends to undercut current assumptions about Confucian learning as a system that was unusually oppressive to women.
"...was not uniformly humane"—Cf. E.M. Forster's famous formula in (1951).

"...open to oneself and others"—Heiner Roetz (1993), p. 154, cogently deals with the tendency to confuse individualism with autonomy. (The term "individualism," of course, was coined in the 1830's by Alexis de Tocqueville to describe the most notable characteristic of the American people.) For the early Confucian requirement that each person "take care [to develop] what is singular about him," see chapter 4, note 19.

"...that much more obvious"—Contra, Max Weber (1981): "Only the occident knows the state in the modern senses, with a professional administration, specialized officialdom, and law based on the concept of citizenship. ... Only the occident knows rational law. ... Furthermore, only the occident possesses science. .... Finally, western civilization is further distinguished from every other by the presence of men with a rational ethic for the conduct of life."

"...systems, fellowship, and spectacle"—XZYD chap. 18

"... public good can operate"—Xunzi in the Warring States period, as well as Chen Liang and Sima Guang in the Song, were famous for such views. See also HHoyt Tillman, in Hymes and Schirokauer (1993), p. 33. Much of the current discourse on the evils of "anti-individualistic Confucianism" has to work hard to ignore the inconvenient fact that the historical claims of the Confucian state over the populace "do not seem as extensive as those ... developed in Europe and parts of Latin America." Mary Rankin (1986), p. 13, for example, attributes the chronic underfinancing of the bureaucratic mechanism to the weakness of the claims of the Chinese state over the individual. Hymes and Schirokauer (1993) posits by Song a developed notion of public (gong) space or public activity lying somewhere between the private (si) and the official (guan) (p. 52). Rankin confirms this for late Qing.

"...negation of human rights"—According to Alexander Woodside (1971), foreword (unpaginated), "Chinese political theory is deeply concerned with the subject of non-democratic techniques of representation: the obligation of rulers to allow ordinary people to speak out, to validate with their critical comments the reputations of court officials, and to become officials themselves if they are capable. Western scholars tend to underestimate this concern because such techniques have little in common with our own traditions of parliamentary democracy." Woodside's contention draws strength from many texts, including the Dao Yu mo chapter of the Documents. Compare Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998); John Ho (1992), pp. 181-206; L.H.M. Ling (1994). The myth of the Confucian insistence on rote learning has been effectively exploded in Sing Lau (1996).

"...about Oriental despotisms"—See Andrew March (1974); Harold Isaacs (1958).

"...remonstrate with superiors"—See CQJY. This is clearly stated in many Ru texts, e.g., HSWZ 10/21.

"...distribution of scarce resources"—See Michael Nylan (forthcoming-b).

"...notions of ritual efficacy"—This probably explains the well-known propensity of Chinese to regard as ancient a pagoda entirely rebuilt in 1912 on a Tang dynasty site. It is not so much the bricks or even the site that matter, but the charisma accumulated there over time.

"...situation in life"—As in the Chinese proverb about "the old frontiersman's horse." For the Changes, see Kikuchi Kiyokatsu (1991). Cf. Robin Yattes (1994), p. 62: "By sites [i.e., Space], the early Chinese meant 'locations favourable or unfavourable for a given action'."

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"...of the people in it"--Mencius 4B/16. As Mencius 1A/7 argues, "Now if you would practise benevolence in the government of your state, then all those in the Empire who seek office would wish to find a place at your court, then all farmers would wish to till the land in your outlying regions, and all merchants to enjoy the refuge of your market-places."

"...lies in making contact"--FY 3:7. Cf. HS 56:2507, where the bad state is described as one in which the qi is completely blocked.

"...through ritual gift exchanges"--See Michael Nylan (1996); Mayfair Yang (1994).

"...necessities to the poor"--See, e.g., Mencius 1A/3. The ruler's duty to redistribute wealth is also the subject of the Great Plan chap. of the Documents. Mencius 1B/4 makes it the ruling elites' duty to distribute aid to the needy. Mencius 2A/8 justifies the state's taxation by its periodic redistribution to the poor. See also Mencius 1B/6, 8 on the Mencian right to rebel.


"...within the realm"--Liji 5/22 (Legge, I, 216), where audiences and sacrifices are conducted by the king in each outlying domain, in order to bring the royal presence there; meanwhile, lists of local market prices, descriptions of local peoples, and such are compiled in the hope that local conditions will "come alive" to the throne at center.

"...directly to Confucius"--The slogan "Employ the Worthy" began with the Mohists, a group that aimed to reform the Ru. But the germ of the idea may be traced to Confucius's insistence on teaching the aristocratic Way of the Ancients to persons of any social rank, so long as they were sufficiently motivated; also, to Confucius's insistence that he, along with other followers of the Way, was fit to advise kings, despite his low rank. Mencius (late 4th c. B.C.) urged rulers to found schools at the village, prefectural, and county levels, so as to maximize local contributions of talent to the state.

"...stagnation in distribution"--XZYD, chap. 9; trans. from Burton Watson, Basic Writings (New York, 1963), p. 43.

"...on personal freedom"--Sun Lung-kee (1991); Po Yang (1992); Takeo Doi (1973); Michio Morishima (1987). Recent studies undermine the negative stereotypical. Studies show, for example, that "Japanese tend to disagree with their superiors frequently and politely; Americans less frequently and more violently." See Johnson and Ouchi (1974). Recent empirical studies of Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan find far more individualistic value orientations than these societies were assumed to have. See Yang Kuo-shu (1987), and Edward Winckler (1987). Uwe Gielen (1987) shows Taiwanese students earning even higher scores for ethical independence than their counterparts in the United States.

"...without conformity' (he er butong)" Wm. Theodore de Bary (1995), p. 182, reminds us of this fact.

"...more fearsome than tigers"--The Liji is the source of this anecdote about Confucius, which became a popular source of illustrations. Cf. Analects 12/17; 13/16; 14/4.
"...and intellectual activities"--Early Confucian theory differs in this regard from that of the Cheng-Zhu True Way Learning, which tended to sharply distinguish between li (as Heavenly principle) and qi (as physical substance). Regarding economic justice, the Confucian tradition seems more protective of such "second-generation" human rights than the Euro-American tradition, originally devised to protect the interests of property owners against the state. See Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998), chaps. 2-3; Henry Rosemont (1998), pp. 55-56, p. 62.

"...Asian or American exceptionalism"--See chaps 1-3 of the Mencius. C.B. Macpherson (1973); for the role of timing, see Dietrich Rueschemeyer et al. (1992).

"...their territories reduced"--Mencius 4A/2. To seek "to extend one's territory by such means [as are typically employed] is like looking for a fish by climbing a tree" (Mencius 1A/7).

"...in China and Korea"--These leaders included men like Huang Zongxi (1610-95), Gu Yanwu (1613-82), Yan Yuan (1635-1704), and Li Gong (1659-1733) in China, and Yu Hyong-won (1622-73), Yi Ik (1681-1763), and Chong Yak-yong (1762-1836) in Korea. For the Korean thinkers, see Young Kihl (1994). For the professional Ru's propensity to invoke the superior authority of the Classics in contesting absolute imperial power, see Ronguey Chu (1998), Wm. Theodore de Bary (1998).

"...attract most human beings"--This set of ruminations followed the reading of three texts, none concerning China: Gordon Graham (1997), from which the Bossanquet quote was derived; Nicole Loraux (1993); and John Winkler (1990).

"...associated with Confucius"--The Chinese were probably the first to try to tell a story of the maturation of humanity as a whole, the first also to believe that human beings could take charge of history and create a fair and just society. In Europe, the first great historical attempt dates to Giambattista Vico's narrative (18th century), which coincided with the growing conviction that human beings were on their own in this world.

"...flat, ahistorical model"--See Miriam Levering (1989) for the many kinds of approaches that people brought to the Chinese canon.


"...dedicated to collective unity"--Just possibly, though, they can be used to challenge current assumptions based on Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment theories, for while "the focus of ethics in the post-Enlightenment era has ... been directed toward the search for a universal principle of law which would be binding for all individuals regardless of their particular circumstances, Confucianism ... is not a morality of universal laws or principles, but a morality of virtues within a historical tradition." See R.P. Peerenboom (1990), p. 25. Peerenboom continues, "There is not a fixed rule, or for that matter a given ideal or standard of excellence which is universally operable and straightforwardly applicable in every context." In place of absolute laws, Analects 18/8 has Confucius proposing a simple but radical test: does a given action facilitate or hamper the full development -- material and ethical -- of the humans concerned? Some people have assumed that Confucius did not admit the need for laws and punishments. Analects 12/13 specifically admits that need, while deploiring it. Xing Yitian (1990) cites numerous law cases from the Qin-Han period that show the desire to limit the powers of the state.
"...far more daunting task"--Historians rely perforce on the extant accounts, knowing that they often suppressed or misrepresented evidence. No magic touchstone reveals whether a particular text is a faithful record, a calculated bluff, a spun fantasy, or the justification of its author's personal agenda. And the more monumental a text, the more it creates the past that it purports only to transmit. Thus an uncritical and literal reliance on any set of canonical texts is as likely to distort as it is to clarify one's understanding of the past. As Richard Kraus (1991), pp. 162-68, shows, there have been five incompatible approaches to Chinese history: (1) that traditional elite culture has been destroyed; (2) that Chinese culture is a dead hand from the past; (3) that Confucian values stimulate economic growth; (4) that traditional culture is irrelevant; and (5) that traditional culture has been relegated to a museum. Seeing beyond the written texts of the Five Classics, like seeing beyond the official state-sponsored histories of China, can be hard, not only because our written and archaeological sources are often relatively limited, but also because their version of China's past is remarkably vivid, seductive, and meaningful.

"...need to develop"--See Jerry Mander (1996), esp. part II; Fox Butterfield (1997). The term "knowable communities" is one Raymond Williams uses in describing the history of English literature.

"...activities and experiences"--Observation by the late scholar Chen Yinke, to be found in Charles Hartman (1986b). On "reconstruction," see Jurgen Habermass (1982), p. 9. That each generation receives a distinctive imprint from the social and political events of its own life-course is the contribution of the work of Karl Mannheim (1952).

"...problems that plague humanity"--In the spirit of the legendary Confucius, we might consider selective borrowing of some of his messages, all the more so as the Chinese have long been accustomed to contemplate a very densely populated world. See E.N. Anderson (1972).

"...as in those of Confucius"--See R.P. Peerenboom (1990), p. 23; Analects 2/18 (Waley, 92).