

## Contemporary Chinese Study of Confucian Hermeneutics

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### I. Introduction

During the past two decades, the study of East Asian Confucian hermeneutics has been taken seriously by scholars in the field, both in and outside of China. It has produced numerous publications. This is a field with much potential for growth in the diversity of subjects, the complexity of contents, and geographical vastness. It involves both the transformation of political power and social economy. Such a study is inseparable from interpreters' inclinations and the context of the time period studied. Its contents include exegetic research, systems of names and things, intellectual history, and hermeneutical knowledge. As far as its geographical extension is concerned, Confucian classics are indispensable readings for intellectuals in East Asia. For several thousand years, intellectual histories of China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan have been closely related to Chinese classics as interpreted by thinkers in these areas, even though their interpretations carried their own local characteristics. Indeed, Confucian hermeneutics may be regarded as the common denominator of all intellectual histories of these East Asian countries. The interactions between the universal values in Confucian classics and the unique features of these countries prompted thinkers to produce new interpretations from old texts. It is in the call for diverse interpretations that classics demonstrate their universal significance. Confucian classics are the origin of East Asian thought; they have continuously been the subject of study and interpretation by thinkers since ancient times. For these reasons, it is natural that the field of the study of the East Asian Confucian hermeneutics of classics has drawn attention from scholars in and outside China in recent years.

### II. Type, Characteristics, and Methods of Study

For almost ten years, TANG Yijie 湯一介 has been promoting "Chinese hermeneutics" (Tang 1998, 2000a, 2000b). Two collections of articles on the subject

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have been published in mainland China (CHEN Shaoming 1999; Cheng). The first issue of the journal of *Chinese Hermeneutics* (中國詮釋學), edited by HONG Handing 洪漢鼎, appeared in October 2003. Between 1998 and 2000, faculty at the National Taiwan University initiated the project of "The Study of Hermeneutic Traditions of Classics in Chinese Culture." It includes over ten sub-projects and has produced preliminary results. Since 2000, this project has expanded to become "Hermeneutic Traditions of Confucian Classics in East Asia," with more than ten monographs published.

DONG Hongli's 董洪利 book *Interpreting Classics* summarizes the historic development of Chinese annotation of classics. Chapter 1 explicates the purposes of annotation; Chapter 2 explores the contents and methods of annotation; and Chapters 3, 4, and 5 study styles of annotation. The main content of the book is on various forms of Chinese annotations of classics; it summarizes and categorizes these forms and provides expositions. In Chapter 2, Dong points out that annotations of classics are aimed at recovering the intentions of the original authors. However, this aim is not warranted for a number of reasons. First, language has its limitations and cannot fully express the author's intentions. Second, after the work is completed, the author's writing context fades away. Consequently, interpreters' only access to the meaning remains within the textual context. The author's intended context becomes either indeterminate or ambiguous. Third, without the author's context, a work becomes an independent entity, open to all interpreters of later times. Fourth, even though the author's intention largely determines the use of language and images and hence the realization of the meaning in the work, the chosen language and images determine only interpretation's general direction rather than its specific contents and forms. Fifth, the interpreter can only carry out his/her interpretation on the basis of his/her social and cultural background, traditional ideas, customs, conventions, knowledge, and experience (see Dong). According to Dong, the real purpose of interpretation is to understand the meaning of the work.

HUANG Junjie 黃俊傑 has been studying the hermeneutics of the *Mencius* for a long time. In his publications, both in English and in Chinese, Huang concentrates on the history of *Mencius* interpretation and categorizes Chinese hermeneutics into three types. First is hermeneutics as expressions of the attitude of scriptural students. By annotating classics, many Confucian scholars manifested their aspiration to the Confucian ideal of the sage. For example, when ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) annotated the *Four Books*, he established his own philosophy. Through interpreting Mencius' teaching of "having an insight into words and cultivating flood-like *qi* (*zhi yan yang qi* 知言養氣)," Zhu expressed his own understanding of human life. WANG Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) reinterpreted the *Mencius* after enduring a life of "death and catastrophe" and coming to realize "the heart/mind as the principle" (*xin ji li* 心即理) and aim at "the realization of intuitive moral knowledge" (*zhi liang zhi* 致良知). The second type is Confucian hermeneutics used as political science. Because the imperial political system centered on the ruler, whereas Confucian political philosophy centered on the people, it was difficult to realize Confucian values in the actual world. While Confucian scholars were unable to realize their political ambitions, they often expressed their political ideals for the good society through annotating classics.

This type of interpretation is a moral study. It has more to do with what is morally right than with governance. For example, KANG Youwei 康有爲 (1859-1927) wrote *Detailed Study of Mencius* during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when China underwent a crisis of division and exploitation by foreign powers. He used his writings to express the desire to salvage his country. The third type of Chinese hermeneutics uses Confucian hermeneutics as a weapon to defend a particular school of Confucianism against Buddhism, Daoism, and other schools of Confucianism. For example, HAN Yu 韓愈 (768-824) wrote *Yuan Dao* 《原道》 and argued that it was a tremendous accomplishment for Mencius to carry on Confucius' teachings. Han's work was clearly a defense of the Confucian tradition. Similarly, WANG Yangming reinterpreted Mencius' concepts of *jinxin* 盡心 (extending the heart/mind) and *jiyi* 集義 (summarizing the meaning) to criticize ZHU Xi. In 1777 the Qing Confucian DAI Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777) wrote *Authenticating the Words and Meanings in the Mencius* in order to criticize Song Confucians as well as Buddhists and Daoists (Huang 1997).

Huang has also explored a question of general significance in traditional hermeneutics of classics: how should "classic" be defined in East Asian Confucian thought? He tries to identify the main elements of the "classic" in the history of East Asian Confucianism. According to Huang, the Confucian "classics" include three kinds of content: social and political, metaphysical, and heart-nature (*xin xing* 心性) philosophy (Huang 2002c). Huang maintains that Confucian hermeneutics of classics is a study by living experience. In such study, the interpreter and the classic form a relationship of "mutual subjectivity." The interpreter's historicity is important because it is the motivating force to explore the potential meanings in the classic. However, the interpreter's historicity is a double-edged sword. It can also distort the meaning of the classic. Therefore, how to settle the interpreter's historicity becomes a methodological problem. The interpreter must keep a balance between completely eliminating his/her historicity on the one hand, and overextending his/her historicity on the other. Huang has also analyzed the dialectical relationship between historical narratives and general principles in Confucian classics. In the Confucian classics, historical narratives of the golden ancient times and exemplary persons always aim at moral principles or general propositions. Therefore, Confucian hermeneutics is actually a moral or political study. The problem, however, is that there is a significant distance between general principle (*dao*) in Confucian classics and their actualizations in persons (the sages and their personal experiences in history). There is a tension, which challenges the universality and necessity of *dao* in Confucian classics (Huang 2000).

Li Qingliang's 李清良 book *Chinese Hermeneutics* analyzes the characteristics of Chinese hermeneutics. In the introduction, Li states that Chinese hermeneutics is rooted in a traditional scholarly method in Chinese culture. Li calls it "the method of dual reduction." It includes "the reduction to the nature," which attempts to return to the original state of things, and "the reduction to existence," which attempts to return to the original state of understanding. He maintains that the fundamental problems for Chinese hermeneutics are: Can the interpreter understand things and people outside himself? How does the interpreter understand things and people outside him/herself? Chinese hermeneutics

aims to solve these problems. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4 the author analyzes the problem of context in Chinese hermeneutics. According to Li, the key in Chinese contextualist theory is that the context always includes the interpreter. The interpreter has “an existential horizon” and “an ultimate horizon.” The former provides the interpreter with the context of his or her existence; the latter refers to the context of the universe as the ultimate source of meaning (LI Qingliang: 3). In Chapter 8, Li raises two questions. First, as the meaning of a term changes over time, does it retain a relatively definitive meaning? Second, as interpreters of different times have different understandings of the same text, can they understand one another? The first question is about the temporality of meaning; the second is about the temporality of understanding. Citing a large number of ancient documents on temporality, Li points out that Chinese interpreters often distinguish between original meaning (*yuan yi* 原意) and intention (*yongxin* 用心). This means that one must see not only the changing meaning but also the unchanging meaning. The author’s expressions of the original meaning may be diverse, even self-contradictory, but his “intention” remains constant (LI Qingliang: 251). The third part of the book is on understanding in Chinese hermeneutics. Li states that, in Chinese hermeneutics, real understanding is “the meeting of the interpreter’s mind with the author’s mind.” A person who has real understanding is one who “meets” the mind of the author, one who “knows the author’s mind.” Therefore, the question of whether understanding is possible is the question of whether “the meeting of the interpreter’s mind with the author’s mind” is possible. Li maintains that the issue is a matter of contextual congruity between the author and the interpreter. It includes the congruity of contextual elements and of the method of expressing meanings. The fourth and fifth parts of the book discuss the process of understanding and forms of interpretation. Li maintains that Chinese hermeneutical theories usually insist that the interpreter situate him/herself at a position lower than the author; this ideal of “modesty” requires the interpreter to extend as much as possible his existential horizon. This constitutes a cover-up (*bi* 蔽) in understanding.

The most recent work on the subject of Chinese hermeneutics is *Introduction to Chinese Hermeneutics of Classics* by ZHOU Guangqing 周光慶. Zhou’s book consists of seven chapters. The first chapter is on the historical existence of Chinese classics. Chapter 2 is on the origin and development of Chinese hermeneutics of classics. Chapter 3 analyzes exemplary styles in Chinese hermeneutics of classics. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 discuss linguistic interpretation, historic interpretation, and psychological interpretation in Chinese hermeneutics of classics. Chapter 7 investigates DONG Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE), WANG Bi 王弼 (226-249), ZHU Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), and DAI Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777) as case studies. The most important contribution of Zhou’s book is that he puts forth three interpretive methods in Chinese hermeneutics of classics (Zhou: 11-12). The first is the method of linguistic interpretation. This method matured after a series of movements, namely “the distinction between names and realities,” “the distinction between words and meanings,” and “the distinction between investigation of the principles and textual study.” The method includes “grasping realities with names,” “mutual understanding through conventional names,” “clarifying principles by analyzing names,” “forgetting the words after grasping the meaning,”

“gradual inference,” “following the words to reach the *Dao*,” and “discovering meaning through the sound (of the word).” The second is the method of historic interpretation. It began with the approach of interpreting the classic based on historic events, first found in the *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn*. Later, it became influential in Mencius’ theory of “interpreting the text by understanding the author’s personality and age” (*zhi ren lun shi* 知人論世), an approach that focuses on the morals of historic events and persons. The third is the method of psychological interpretation. This method started with Mencius, who advocated “meeting the intention of the poet with sympathetic understanding” (*yi yi ni zhi* 以意逆志). It reached maturity in ZHU Xi’s theory of awakening direct experience (*huan xing tiyan* 喚醒體驗).

### III. Interactions between Power Structure, Political Order, and Interpretations of Confucian Classics in East Asia

Behind different interpretations of classics, there are often various political motives. During political transitions, there is a close connection between interpretation of classics and political changes. ZHANG Kunjiang’s 張崑將 master’s thesis investigates the relationship between political power and interpretation of classics during the Edo Era (1600-1868) in Japan. According to Zhang, Mencius’ political philosophy includes five subjects: (1) relationship between ruler and ministers; (2) the revolutions by Tang 湯 and Wu 武; (3) GUAN Zhong 管仲; (4) the theory of *wang* 王 (king) and *ba* 霸 (hegemony); (5) the dispute over *renyi* 仁義 (humanity and rightness) and *liyue* 禮樂 (propriety and music). ZHANG maintains that the concept of the kingly way (*wang dao* 王道) may mean both the way of rulership and the way of ancient kings. ITO Zinsai 伊藤仁齋 (1627-1705), who promoted Mencius, represented the former, while OGYU Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728), who opposed the Mencian school, promoted the latter. The so-called “way of rulership” does not define rulership in terms of the position; it includes the way in which ancient sage kings ruled, as well as the ideal rulership of current times. This also includes the local kings. The so-called “way of ancient kings” refers to the way in which ancient sage kings ruled. For example, Confucius and Mencius both used ancient sage kings such as Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Tang 湯, Wen 文, and Wu 武 as exemplars when they taught the kings of their times about ideal rulership. The innovative point of Zhang’s thesis is that, through the study of the “kingly way” in the Ancient Learning (*guxue* 古學) School, he concludes that the Japanese Confucians demonstrated the characteristic of “practical learning (*shixue* 實學).” This practical learning is not based on the internal moral value judgment of the “heart-nature” philosophy. According to Zhang, both ITO Zinsai and OGYU Sorai opposed explicating *ren* 仁 in terms of heart/mind as found in Mencius and in the Song-Ming Confucians. The characteristic of practical learning was two-fold. First, Ito and Ogyu did not agree with the interpretation of Mencius’ theory on king vs. hegemony as “using force while borrowing from *ren* (*yi li jia ren* 以力假仁).” Second, neither of them trusted that morality could transform a person internally.

XU Fuguan’s 徐復觀 (1902-1982) *History of the Han Thought*, published over

twenty years ago, was a pioneering and exemplary work on the relationship between political power and the hermeneutics of classics. Recently, JIANG Yibin 蔣義斌 has studied the influence of the classic *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) on policy-making during the Han dynasty. He found that the policy of the Han court was deeply influenced by the *Chunqiu*. Along with the rising of the Ancient Text School, the *Zuo Commentary on Chunqiu* became the reference principle for policy-making. The New Text School emphasized the interconnection of political power, while the Ancient Text School emphasized the superiority of the upper class and the inferiority of the lower class; the Ancient Text School undermined the New Text School's principle of institutional structure. In regard to foreign policies, the New Text School regarded foreigners as "born with the same *qi* as Chinese," while the Ancient Text School stressed the conquest of the foreigners. Consequently, these two schools exerted different influences on the foreign policies of the Han Dynasty. The Western Han successfully established peaceful relationships with the surrounding countries. Toward the end of the Eastern Han, however, the court adopted the Ancient Text School's attitude in dealing with the Qiang 羌 ethnic region, which planted the seed for long-term ethnic conflicts (see Jiang).

Another important article on the relationship between political power and hermeneutics of classics is CHEN Zhaoying's 陳昭瑛 "Studies of Confucian Poetry and Taiwan under Japanese Occupation: The Thread of Interpretation of classics" (in Chen 2000). It focuses on the interpretations of traditional Confucian poetry studies during the Japanese occupation:

As a link in the Han traditional culture, the study of Confucian poetry faced a critical double test. On the one hand, with the land being colonized by a foreign power, it faced a danger of the disappearance and the ending of its history. On the other hand, under the challenge of the New Culture movement, it made a "modern transformation." These two factors determined the peculiar contour of the study of Confucian poetry during that period. The pain and pressure caused by losing the country and national identity lead poetry critics to elevate the value of "non-moralizing poetry (*bian feng bian ya* 變風變雅)" in sharp contrast to traditional Confucian poetry studies, which put the value of "orthodox classics" at the top. (Chen 2000: 252)

In Chen's view, during a time of complete change in political structure and political order (like the period of Japanese occupation in Taiwan), the interpretation of classics often goes through essential changes as well.

In addition, GAN Huaizhen's 甘懷真 *Imperial Power, Rituals, and Classics Interpretation: A Study of Ancient Chinese Politics* investigates the political order under the imperial system during the Qin-Han 秦漢 and Sui-Tang 隋唐 periods, with a focus on the relationship between knowledge and political power. Specifically, it investigates the relationship between Confucian theories on the one hand and "Confucian nation" and "imperial system" on the other. First, the Confucian nation and the imperial system were a mechanism for power. People of different times and locations may have different ways of understanding political power. Gan maintains that we should closely follow historical evolution in analyzing how ancients, on the basis of their own culture, interpreted and constructed power through language. Second, Gan concentrates on the study of the *li* or rituals within Confucianism. Third, on the relationship between Confucianism

and political system, Gan criticizes past works that took Confucianism since the pre-Qin era as an unchanging entity and overlooked the fact that the content of Confucianism often depended on the specific understanding by its representative in history. Gan maintains that, as we study the imperial system, we must abandon Western concepts and, instead, use the vocabularies of Chinese political systems to explicate its power operations. All these vocabularies come from Confucian classics, and are thus Confucian concepts, such as *li* 禮, *tian* 天, *the governing li*, *nation-family*, etc. Gan also points out that, after Confucian classics became canons of the imperial institution and Confucian teachings became national teachings, the texts of Confucian classics became the foundation of political theories. Hence, Confucian hermeneutics became political hermeneutics. For instance, the term “Son of Heaven” can be traced to the West Zhou era. However, by their interpretation of the term, Confucians made their own exposition of the function and power of “Son of Heaven.” The term “emperor” is similar. Although it was first used when the first Qin ruler became “emperor,” the term came to mean the Confucian ideal ruler and political institution after later Confucians gave it a different definition in Confucian classics. Furthermore, Gan looks into the recent scholars who have regarded Confucianism as a tool of justification for current political power. Gan holds that, as political hermeneutics, Confucian study is not only the tool of the people in power, but also contains resources for activists for social change. It both lays out the framework for activists to interpret and provides possibilities for creating new political orders.

HUANG Junjie analyzes the dispute on Mencius’ political thought among Song-Confucians and explores issues involved in the dispute (Huang 1997: Ch. 4). Since the Northern Song period, the focus of this dispute among some Confucians had been Mencius’ lack of respect for the King of Zhou and his effort to persuade the dukes to unify China. This was so for a good reason, which was rooted in the peculiar background of Northern Song’s political history. Within the social context since the establishment of the Northern Song, Mencius’ lack of respect for the King of Zhou was in direct opposition to the political thought of venerating the king. Because WANG Anshi 王安石 used Mencius as a spiritual banner during his political reform, Mencius became a target of attack by those opposed to the reform.

#### IV. Development of the Hermeneutical Tradition of East Asian Confucian Classics: Internal Resources and the Influence of External Interpretations

##### IV.1. Internal Resources

###### (a) Expositions and exegesis of Confucian Classics during the Han and Tang Eras

In his article “A Study of Sources of Expositions of Confucian Classics during Han and Tang,” ZHANG Baosan 張寶三 shows that interpretations of Confucian classics in these periods were primarily expositions (2001a). Zhang points out that interpretations of classics had existed before the Han Dynasty; toward the end of Eastern Han, interpretation of classics began to be labeled as *zhu* 注 (noting). Zhang also explores the causes of the rising of interpretations of

classics, their contents, the origin of syntactic and semantic analysis, etc. during the Han Dynasty. Zhang's other article, "On the Relationship between Exegesis and Expositions of Confucian Classics," shows that in traditional scholarship, exegesis belonged to the discipline of *xiaoxue* 小學 (textual studies). Since Han, *xiaoxue* has been a servant to classics studies. Therefore, there is a close relationship between exegesis and expositions (Zhang 2002a). Zhang maintains that Confucian expositions of classics began in the South-North Dynasties. They were not only expositions but also corrections of previous notes (Zhang 2001b). Zhang also points out that the *Expositions of the Five Classics* 《五經正義》 was not restricted by previous notes, and it advanced the cause or discipline of classics expositions (Zhang 2002b). Furthermore, Zhang argues that syntactic and semantic analysis and exegesis are the foundations of the Confucian hermeneutics of classics, but the context of classics and their expositions also influences syntactic and semantic analysis and exegesis (Zhang, 2002c).

(b) *Interpretation of the Yijing* (Book of Change)

ZHENG Jixiong 鄭吉雄 studies the differences between Confucianism and Daoism in the interpretations of the *Yijing* during the 10<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> century. His book, *Images and Interpretations of the Yijing*, makes two impressive contributions to the study of East Asian Confucian hermeneutics of classics. First, while scholars studying Chinese hermeneutics of classics usually focus on words, Zheng focuses on "images." His study is innovative and presents a new perspective of "image hermeneutics" (Zheng). After examining 498 out of thousands of images in such works as the *Dao Zang* 《道藏》 and the *Book of Dao beside the Zang* 《藏外道書》, Zheng summarizes the difference between the Daoist and the Confucian images of the *Yijing* as well as the variety of expositive images used to interpret the *Yijing*. Second, Zheng analyzes the *Yijing* within the historical development of Chinese thought and explores issues of the dispute between Daoism and Confucianism. His finding indicates that using images in interpreting the *Yijing* started with the Daoist priests rather than with Confucian scholars. Confucians of the North Song period adopted this Daoist method in establishing their own metaphysical theories. Daoists of the Yuan Dynasty then adopted the Confucian image-exposition of the *Yijing* in explicating the Daoist method of cultivation for longevity. Zheng's study makes evident the convergence and divergence between Confucianism and Daoism on the image-exposition of the *Yijing*.

YANG Rubin 楊儒賓 has also engaged in the study of interpretations of the *Yijing*. Yang maintains that Confucians gave different interpretations to the concept of "the Ultimate" (*taiji* 太極) and to the statement that "the process of *yin* and the *yang* is called *dao*," and their different interpretations often indicate the schools to which they belonged. When the interpreter took "the *yin* and the *yang*" as a process of *qi*, and regarded it as determined as *li* (principle), he would accept the *li-qi* dualism of the Cheng-Zhu School. On the other hand, when the interpreter took the *qi* process of "the *yin* and the *yang*" itself as the *dao* and took the patterns of *qi* as *li*, he followed a *qi*-monism. Furthermore, when the interpreter regarded "the *yin* and the *yang*" as substance that cannot be separated from its function, he followed the substance-and-function approach. Yang explores the relationship between the *Yijing* and the learning of principle (*lixue* 理學). Yang

maintains that the Song-Ming Confucians' studies of the *Yijing* followed traditional classics study, which relied on the principal doctrine of the ultimate *qi* with the ontology of "nothingness" as a secondary doctrine. Song-Ming Confucianism replaced the doctrine of the heavenly principle for the Han-Tang Confucian doctrine of the ultimate *qi* and the Buddhist doctrine of empty-nature. According to Yang, the reason that Confucians for over two thousand years interpreted the *Yijing* in very different ways is that the *Yijing* contains the thought of organic holism; scholars disagreed on whether the work contains any meaning of "substance" (Yang: unpublished manuscript 1).

(c). *Pre-Qin Confucian concepts and interpretations of the classics*

HUANG Junjie explores Mencius' attitude toward the classics and his methods of classics interpretation (Huang 2001). Huang maintains that Mencius often used classics within the "confirmative" or "directive" thread of thought. For example, in Mencius' use of the *Book of Poetry*, Mencius often liberally interpreted the classics; he was not constrained by the classics in his dialogues with others; he quoted ancients for use in his own time. However, Mencius' over-interpretation of the classics often led to misreading the classics. Therefore, Mencius himself did not stand by his own two rules of interpretation. Huang maintains that Mencius' attitude toward the classics was typical of pre-Qin scholars. From a methodological perspective, Confucians used the classics rather than merely interpreting them. This practice has its pros and cons. From the perspective of intellectual history, that Confucianism continued to renew itself has a close connection to its method of "revisiting the old in order to produce the new."

CHEN Zhaoying 陳昭瑛 makes a thorough study of hermeneutics of classics in Mencius and Xunzi. In her article "Mencius' Interpretative Theory of 'Understanding the Author and His Circumstances' and the Issues of Classics Hermeneutics," Chen points out that Mencius' interpretative theory of "understanding the author and his circumstances" has been taken in different directions over time. From the Han, Song, Ming, and Qing periods, interpreters of the *Mencius* mostly emphasized its moral implications. Recent interpreters, however, looked more into its implications for literary criticism and aesthetic consciousness. No matter which way they went, most people still grasped the historical and contextual characteristics of Mencius' theory of "interpreting the text by understanding the author's personality and age (*zhi ren lun shi* 知人論世)." Chen also investigates the hermeneutics of pre-Qin Confucian classics by closely examining the concepts of *dao* and scholar (*ru* 儒) in Xunzi's thought. Most contemporary Xunzi scholars do not study his philosophy of *tong bian* 通變 (comprehensive transformation), and most scholars who do study *tong bian* do not cover Xunzi. Chen claims that Xunzi's idea of *tong bian* influenced the view of *tong bian* in the files of history, the view manifested by SIMA Qian's 司馬遷 approach of *tong bian* in ancient as well as current times; it also influenced the idea of *tong bian* in the files of literary criticism and literary theory, as summarized by LIU Xie 劉鐸 in his *tong bian* chapter of the *Literary Mind and the Carving of the Dragon* (*Wenxi Diaolong* 文心雕龍). Furthermore, Xunzi's idea even influenced the ideal of "Confucians with comprehensive knowledge" (*tongru* 通儒) in the study of classics (Chen 2003). Chen also writes about pre-Qin Confucian scholars' view of the nature and function of classics and the relationship between readers of classics

and the classics (Chen: N.D.).

(d) ZHU Xi

WU Zhanliang 吳展良 studies ZHU Xi's new interpretation of Confucian classics during the North Song period. Wu maintains that the center of ZHU Xi's worldview is the theory of *liqi* 理氣 (principle and vital force). Analyzing the contents of Zhu's cosmology, Wu has discovered that the key element in Zhu's *liqi* philosophy is Zhu's view that "*li* and *qi* are neither separate nor mixed" (Wu 2002). In another article, Wu points out that Zhu put his whole life into interpretation of classics, as if he had been in a sagely realm in which his heart-mind became one with those of the sages; Zhu reached a state in which he did not subjectively regard himself as having acquired the *dao*; rather he used the reading of the classics to examine his own state of cultivation, reproducing the sages' words and actions from himself (Wu 2003). In his 2001 article, Wu maintains that Zhu's view on spirits and gods was an important part of this *qi*-cosmology. Zhu held that the cosmos was the evolution of *qi*; he also held that *qi* within itself contained marvelous qualities that could only be described in terms of spirits and gods. Modern scholars regard Zhu's philosophy as rigidly emphasizing *dao*; Wu insists that, if we see it from Zhu's view of spirits and gods, the universe is a lively, marvelous, unpredictable, comprehensively connected, and animated one. According to Wu, Zhu's view is rooted in Confucian classics and came out of the cosmology of *qi*. Wu holds that Zhu's interpretation of Confucian classics has a theoretical foundation. In his 2004 article, Wu maintains that Zhu's interpretation of classics was based on the fundamental premise that classics are the books of the sages. Wu stresses that Zhu's interpretation of the classics aimed at recognizing the heavenly principle and the pursuit of the intended meaning of the sages. It assumed that the sages were pure, clear, and selfless, and that they were capable of best recognizing the principle in nature as well as in human society. More recently, in "The Basic Characteristics of Zhu's Worldview," Wu summarizes Zhu's four basic characteristics: this-worldly and monistic, cyclic evolution, animated world, and heavenly-principled world. The this-worldly monistic world is the starting point of Zhu's worldview. From this comes the view that the *yin* and the *yang* are one, and from the latter view comes the cyclic view of the world as evolutionary. In this holistic world there is life throughout; hence comes the view of the animated world. This view exists in the company of related views such as that of organic life-philosophy, of the myriad things with one body, of the interacting heaven and earth, of the oneness of heaven and humanity, and of the consciousness of heaven and earth. In this world of oneness exist principle and order. From here emerges the view that the world is heavenly-principled. The heavenly-principled view exists in the company of another cluster of views. These views include that of the disenchanting world, of the world of natural order, of the world of constant change, of returning to the original principle, of one principle with many manifestations, of *li* and *qi* being neither separate nor mixed, etc. In a word, Zhu's world is a holistic, living world with constant cyclic evolution according to natural principles.

ZHU Xi's *On Ren* (仁說) occupies an important position in his philosophy. LIU Shuxian (Shu-hsien) 劉述先 claims that this work was completed in 1173, when he was 44 years old (Liu). LI Minghui's 李明輝 recent study of Zhu's *On Ren* shows

that, by the time Zhu proposed his new interpretation of “Central Harmony,” he had established his theoretical system of *liqi* 理氣 dualism as well as the triad of *xin* 心 (heart-mind), *xing* 性 (nature), and *qing* 情 (actuality or sentiment). His *On Ren* was written after his numerous rounds of debates with ZHANG Shi 張栻 on *ren*. At the same time, ZHANG Shi also wrote a piece called *On Ren*. These two pieces contain some similar expressions and have caused confusion. Li compares the two pieces and emphasizes the difference between Zhu and the Hu-Xiang 湖湘 School represented by Zhang. According to Li, generally speaking, Zhu inherited the theoretical orientation of CHENG Yi 程頤, whereas the Hu-Xiang School inherited CHENG Hao 程顥, XIE Liangzuo 謝良佐, and YANG Shi 楊時. On the four issues of “consciousness of the Heaven and Earth,” “*Ren* in terms of love,” “the unity of the world and oneself,” and “interpreting *ren* in terms of enlightenment,” Zhang sided with CHENG Hao, XIE Liangzuo, and YANG Shi on the first three but followed Zhu on the last issue. Consequently, Zhang failed to completely establish his position and to further extend his theory (Li 2003c).

#### IV.2. External Interpretations

##### (a) Taiwan

CHEN Zhaoying has studied LIAN Heng's 連橫 (1878-1936) *History of Taiwan* and its relationship to the Gong-yang 公羊 thought during the Qing 清 Dynasty. The *History of Taiwan* was completed during the Japanese occupation period. Chen maintains that it was modeled after traditional Chinese historiography as well as situated in the context of Japanese-occupied Taiwan, and it has anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist modern significance. Furthermore, another pillar of LIAN Heng's *History of Taiwan* lies in its thoughts about race. ZHANG Taiyan 章太炎 was close to LIAN Heng in thought. Their ideas about the Han race contained traditional as well as modern characteristics. Whereas Zhang held an obviously anti-Manchurian stance, Lian secretly held an anti-Japanese motivation. Both defined “race” in terms of language, history, and custom. Analyzing the concept of “nation” in Lian's book, Chen points out that the new meaning of Lian's concept of “nation” lies in his theoretical structure of the nationality in and by itself. Lian did not see nationality in terms of race or kinship. Instead, nationality is found in people's everyday lives, customs, geography, crafts, literature, language, and so forth. Lian elevated nationality to the level of the spirit of the nation (Chen: unpublished manuscript 2).

##### (b) Japan

In his 2000 article “New Horizon in the Study of the History of East Asian Confucianism,” HUANG Junjie reveals a new possibility for the study of the history of East Asian Confucianism. According to Huang, there are two ways to study the history of East Asian Confucianism. One is to study it as a conceptual history; the other is to study it as an intellectual history. The former focuses on the linguistic aspect of the interpretation of classics, whereas the latter focuses on the historical context of the interpreters of classics. From the perspectives of the geographic features of Confucian classics and of the internal issue-consciousness of Confucian classics, Huang points out several directions (Huang 2003). Huang also analyzes Japanese scholar ITO Zinsai's 伊藤仁齋 interpretation of the *Analects*. Huang maintains that Ito's study of the *Analects*

represents one type of East Asian Confucian classics interpretation: apologetics. Its aim is to purify and restore the original meaning of the classics and to attack heretics by means of expositing and interpreting the classics (Huang 2002b). Huang investigates the critique of ZHU Xi by NAKAI Riken 中井履軒 and points out that Nakai's critique of ZHU Xi focused on the relationship between the heart/mind and principle (*li*), a central theme in ZHU Xi's philosophy. Nakai followed Zhu's old metaphysical system and struck Zhu a fatal blow with a new interpretation of the *Four Books* (Huang 2003).

When Japanese scholars interpreted Chinese Confucian classics, they faced many problems. Taking Japanese Confucians during the Edo period for example, Huang analyzes changes in cultural identification among Japanese scholars who accepted Chinese culture. Although these scholars aspired toward Confucianism, merged themselves in Confucius' and Mencius' thought, and resolutely took upon themselves the mission of spreading the *dao*, they nevertheless lived in Japanese society. On the one hand, they were molded by Japanese culture, and on the other hand, they also created a new Japanese culture. Their identification with Japanese culture undoubtedly occupied the most fundamental and most central position. Therefore, there was in these scholars a tension between Chinese and Japanese cultures. Huang points out that Confucians of the Edo period often used two strategies to ease the tension. One was to regard the *li* (principle) in ZHU Xi's philosophy as a universal principle and used it to prove the value of both Chinese and Japanese cultures. The other was to make Confucianism completely suitable to Japanese soil so that it can take root in Japan (Huang: unpublished manuscript 1).

Another issue in the history of cultural exchange between Chinese and Japanese Confucianism is the tension between Chinese cultural values and the special characteristics of Japanese geography. Huang uses Japanese Confucians' reactions to and interpretations of the *Analects* and the *Mencius* during the Edo period to show that the values and ideals with strong Chinese characteristics in Confucius and Mencius were interpreted by Japanese Confucians to suit the peculiar Japanese social and political environment. Edo Confucian scholars interpreted the *dao* in the *Analects* in terms of the *dao* of ancient kings, and thus mitigated the difficulty they were facing due to the separation between the *dao* and the king. In contrast to Confucius, Mencius' political idealism was completely opposed to the Japanese imperial system. Many Japanese Confucians vehemently criticized Mencius; some said that Mencius ruined the *dao* of the sages, while others called him "a criminal against the sages and one who harmed *ren* and *yi*" (Huang: unpublished manuscript 2).

The "ancient school" represented an important mainstream thought during the Edo period. YANG Rubin 楊儒賓 studies this school within the context of East Asian "modern Confucianism." Yang maintains that although the ancient school (*guxue* 古學) – *qi* School (*qixue* 氣學) criticized the Cheng-Zhu School's transcendental philosophy of *li* (principle) and demanded a return to the primary Confucian classics, different scholars nevertheless had different concerns and appealed to different grounds. ITO Zinsai was similar to China's DAI Zhen 戴震; they both emphasized the inter-subjectivity of morality and wanted to return to the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. On the other hand, OGYU Sorai 荻生徂徠, like China's

YAN Yuan 顏元, emphasized social values as guidance for morality and advocated a return to the Six Classics (Yang: unpublished manuscript 2). Yang also compares YE Shi 葉適 and Ogyu. Yang maintains that, although these two scholars lived at different times, never communicated with each other, and did not have a relationship of scholarly inheritance, they both emphasized the importance of the Six Classics, the concept of social institution (*zhizuo* 制作), and ritual and music, which were the main contents of social institution. They were opposed to the “heavenly *dao* and nature-destination (*tian dao xing ming* 天道性命) philosophy of the Song Confucians (Yang: unpublished manuscript 3). Yang points out that Confucians of the “ancient school-*qi* School” believed that there is only one kind of human nature, and there are no such things as the transcendental *li*. Therefore, they believed that scholars must first of all cultivate their *qi* and realize their potential accordingly (Yang: unpublished manuscript 4).

In his recent insightful book, ZHANG Kunjiang 張崑將 concentrates on the development of the Confucian concepts of loyalty (*zhong* 忠) and filiality (*xiao* 孝) during the Edo period (Zhang 2003). First, Zhang places these two concepts within the context of Japanese history and points out that, unlike the Chinese understanding of “filiality” as based on father-son blood relationship, Japanese thinkers attached “filiality” with a mysterious sense of a quasi-blood-like moral and political function. In that sense, “filiality” and “loyalty” had similar functions. Consequently, in Japan there was congruency between “filiality” and “loyalty,” rather than believing in “loyalty-first” as was the case in China. Second, Zhang investigates the view of nature in the Japanese tradition, which has been much under-studied. He compares the Japanese view with the view of nature in Chinese Daoism and Confucianism, and thereby clearly highlights the characteristics of Japanese thought. Finally, from the perspective of the substance-function philosophy, Zhang analyzes the differences between the Chinese and Japanese views of *ren*, loyalty, and filiality. According to Zhang, filiality in Chinese Confucianism was the “highest virtue and fundamental *Dao*” of the phenomenal experience, and the “practical use” of morality; whereas within the stream of Japanese thought, filiality was elevated to the height of substance, i.e., a watered-down version of the rational moral substance. Japanese military scholars took loyalty to be the transcendental principle and *ren* to be a secondary virtue; loyalty was taken to be the ultimate standard of all behaviors; it became a metaphysical concept. This was different from the Chinese concept of loyalty.

One of HUANG Junjie’s recent articles studies the method of “contextual transformation” used by Japanese thinkers in adapting Chinese Confucian classics to Japanese soil. This method placed the concepts and values rooted in Chinese Confucian culture in the context of Japanese culture and systems of thought, and gave them new interpretations. This was a kind of cross-cultural contextual transformative works; it involved the level of an individual thinker’s particularity as well as that of the larger cultural context. It has led to numerous issues of cross-cultural hermeneutics. Engaged in such works, Japanese Confucians had first to de-contextualize Chinese Confucian classics. This practice itself lacked methodological legitimacy and contradicted the fundamental characteristic of Chinese Confucian classics as works of direct experience. Huang maintains that, from the perspective of the comparative history of Chinese-Japanese

thought, this cross-cultural contextual transformation of hermeneutics of classics demonstrated not only a tension between the universality and the particularity of classics, but also the tension between conceptualization that transcends time and space, on the one hand, and contextualization that is situated in time and space (Huang: unpublished manuscript 3).

(c) *Korea*

In his study of the debate between Yi T'oegye 李退溪 and Gi Gobong 奇高峰, LI Minghui 李明輝 analyzes the different interpretations of Mencius' theory of "the four beginnings of the heart" by Chinese Song-Ming Confucians with different theoretical frameworks. ZHU Xi grounded his view on a dualism of *li* and *qi*, and on the triad of *xin* 心 (heart-mind), *xing* 性 (nature), and *qing* 情 (actuality or sentiment). Zhu's interpretation of Confucian classics had a major influence on later generations, even a decisive one on Korean Confucians. Korean Confucians faced a double-text in their interpretation of Mencius' "four beginnings": they had to deal with both Mencius' and Zhu's texts. This resulted in an extremely complex situation. Li points out that Yi T'oegye's interpretation of "the four beginnings" was more truthful to Mencius' text, but he sometimes swerved in order to be consistent with Zhu's text. Gi Gobong relied on Zhu's text and questioned Yi T'oegye's interpretation; in the meantime, Gi continued Zhu's misinterpretation of Mencius' text (Li 2003a).

YANG Zuhan 楊祖漢 has written about the first important debate among Korean Confucians on Confucian philosophy. Based on a thorough research and analysis, Yang concludes that Yi H'oejae's 李晦齋 interpretation of ZHU Xi's thought was quite accurate in demonstrating characteristics of Zhu's thought. CHO Hanbo 曹漢輔, Yi H'oejae's opponent in the debate, had a tendency toward the philosophy of LU Xiangshan 陸象山 and WANG Yangming (YANG Zuhan: unpublished manuscript). Yang has concentrated on the study of the debate among Korea Confucians on "the four beginnings and seven sentiments (*siduan qiqing* 四端七情)." The issue of "the four beginnings and seven sentiments" originated in Mencius; the debate started with Yi T'oegye and Gi Gobong. According to Yang's study, although Yi T'oegye was a towering ZHU Xi scholar in Korea, Gi Gobong's interpretation was more consistent with Zhu's philosophy of principle, *qi*, heart/mind, and human nature. Gi regarded the difference between "the four beginnings" and "the seven sentiments" as a matter of perspective, whereas Yi T'oegye regarded the former as originating from *li* and the latter as originating from *qi*. Yi T'oegye integrated Zhu's interpretation of Mencius with Mencius' own thought. His effort involved numerous theoretical difficulties because Zhu and Mencius had different theoretical frameworks. Yi T'oegye's endeavor caused Gi to question him. By the route of Zhu's philosophy, Gi's question was reasonable. However, Yi T'oegye's interpretation fairly well demonstrated the characteristic of moral self-legislation in Mencius' philosophy (YANG Zuhan 2003).

YANG Zuhan also investigates Korean Confucian scholars' interpretation of Confucius' philosophy of enhancing oneself by learning from practical matters (*xia xue er shang da* 下學而上達). He analyzes the thought of Yi T'oegye and CHO Nammyung 曹南冥. Cho did not care for the debate between Yi T'oegye and Gi Gobong on "the four beginnings and seven sentiments." According to Cho, any

discussion of the heavenly principle (*tian li* 天理) had to be grounded on family morality, filiality, and fraternal love. Throughout his life, Cho took personal integrity seriously and refused to sacrifice principle for personal gains. Cho's life was a good demonstration of Confucian moral philosophy, which stresses personal practice and character building (YANG Zuhan: unpublished manuscript).

From the above, we can see that the field of interpretation of Chinese classics outside China contains great scholarly energy. Chinese Confucian classics have been the common denominator of Confucian studies in all these regions. New interpretations of Chinese Confucian classics in these surrounding areas promoted the development of "non-Chinese Confucianism" and "Confucian studies around China." The historical thread and context were different from those of Chinese Confucianism (e.g., Song-Ming Confucianism). Their philosophical issues were also different. All these are worth further investigation.<sup>1</sup>

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