

January 1992

# Confucius and Capitalism: Views of Confucianism in Works on Confucian Ethics and Economic Development

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## Recommended Citation

Christian Jochim. "Confucius and Capitalism: Views of Confucianism in Works on Confucian Ethics and Economic Development" *Journal of Chinese Religions* (1992): 135-171.

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CONFUCIUS AND CAPITALISM:  
VIEWS OF CONFUCIANISM IN WORKS ON  
CONFUCIANISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT<sup>1</sup>

Introduction

In "the Myth of Confucian China," Laurence Thompson surveyed the development and nature of a certain bias in Chinese studies down into the 1970s: the tendency to consider all of Chinese culture "Confucian" (Thompson 1974). He indicated that this bias had its roots in attitudes formed among Chinese intellectuals during recent centuries, and that it had influenced Chinese studies for decades. In his own work on the religious dimension of Chinese culture, including the text *Chinese Religion: An Introduction* (Thompson 1988), he set out to correct this bias by striving to present Buddhist, Taoist, and "folk" traditions in China, alongside the Confucian tradition, as distinct traditions each worthy of scholarly attention and respect. Others working in this area during recent decades have also strived to use interpretive categories, especially "Confucianism" and "Taoism," very carefully. Thus, in most current work in Chinese Religious Studies, the myth of Confucian China seems to be nought but an error of the almost forgotten past.

In many recent works on Confucianism and economic development, this is not the case. Therein we find an ironic replay of the work of Chinese reformers and Western sinologists of the past who, falling prey to the myth of Confucian China, used the label "Confucianism" to identify a wide range of elements of Chinese culture that they felt obstructed modern development. Now that theorists are seeking to explain developmental success rather than failure, many identify as "Confucian" cultural elements that purportedly enhance development in Chinese societies--Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan--that are experiencing economic growth. Moreover, some theorists go as far as to expand their scope of interest to include Korea and Japan, defined as "Sinic," and to identify as "Confucian" all cultural elements that are somehow basic to "Sinic" civilization.

Apart from wanting to identify views of Confucianism in the social scientific works in question, there are at least two other motives for studying them. First, the phenomenon they seek to explain--the success of East Asian efforts to develop industrial capitalism--is one that merits explanation and has attracted global scholarly attention. Just as Weber felt called to explain the first origins of modern capitalism in Europe, others are now naturally

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<sup>1</sup> Research for this article has been carried with support from the Pacific Cultural Foundation, Taipei. It has benefitted from the help of several Chinese scholars in Taiwan, of whom two deserve special thanks: Chang Wei-an (Zhang Weian 張維安), Institute of Sociology and Anthropology, Tsing-hua University; and Jai Ben-ray (Zhai Benrui 翟本瑞), Sociology, Tunghai University.

attracted by the first major case of its development outside the West in a way that challenges the West's global economic hegemony. Second, the works we will study also constitute an important new phenomenon. The social scientists who have written them are the first large group of post-May Fourth Chinese intellectuals who, largely sharing a scientific Westernized background, have come to the defense of the Confucian tradition. For some, these two phenomena are directly related. In other words, now that hard facts have verified Confucianism's potential to aid modernization, its erstwhile critics have naturally changed their minds. We believe the issue is more complex than this, as the following pages will show.

Of the many works on Confucianism and economic development, this article will restrict itself to describing works by social scientists in Taiwan and Hong Kong.<sup>2</sup> It will not attempt to criticize these works for the purpose of arriving at a better understanding of the role of religious ideals or moral values in East Asian economic activity. There is already sufficient criticism of theorists who link "Confucianism" and economic activity by other scholars *within* the Chinese debate over Confucianism and economic development (see Jochim 1992). The purpose of this article is to understand certain social scientific works as contributions to contemporary Confucianism as a normative moral-spiritual tradition, despite the fact that they have been written as descriptive social science. In other words, this is an article treating the modernization of the Confucian tradition, not one treating the role of Confucianism in economic development.

Peter Duus, acting as a discussant during the Conference on Confucianism and Economic Development in East Asia (Taipei, May 1989), made the following statement regarding the fact that there should be such a conference: "What this says to me is that the intellectual milieu in which this conference takes place is part of a continuing history of the revision and reinterpretation of Confucianism" (Chung-Hua Institution 1989: 57). This intellectual milieu is assumed to be the context for our analysis of recent works on Confucianism and economic development, including papers presented at the conference just mentioned. In our analysis, we also aim to adhere to the advice of Winston Davis, who has for some time criticized what he calls "Japan theory," social scientific explanations of the cultural factors in Japanese modernization which, despite their aim simply to describe Japanese values and behaviour, tend to have the normative effect of telling Japanese how they *should* behave. His advice is found in a passage suggesting a revision of current "Weberian" approaches to East Asian development as follows:

Weber and Weberians have generally approached the problem of religion and development by analyzing the religion and values established before the onset

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<sup>2</sup> Because much of the research for this paper was done in Taiwan, it reflects a clearer understanding of recent intellectual developments in Taiwan than of those in Hong Kong.

of industrialization, and by postulating a correlation (or 'elective affinity') between them and subsequent historical events.... I would suggest that more attention be paid to the religious attitudes that appear while development is taking place.... I think we should return to Weber's own interest in the (internal) transformation of the religions that are (externally) affecting development (Davis 1987: 269-70).

Here we contend that an important dimension of what has appeared during the course of development in Taiwan, at least, are new attitudes about what "Confucianism" is and how people under its influence should behave. We also contend that among interpretations of the Confucian tradition that express and shape such attitudes are ones found in social scientific works discussing Confucianism and economic development.

In the first section of the article, we will attempt to demonstrate how widespread and visible work on Confucianism and economic development has been for the last decade in Taiwan. In the second, we plan to describe the content of views of "Confucianism" as discussed in selected works. In the third section, we will comment on the possible effects of these views on the Confucian tradition itself, especially as it has evolved in recent decades.

## 1

### The Debate over Confucianism and Economic Development

Successful development in East Asia, especially in places under the influence of Chinese culture, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, surprised many observers. During the 1950s and 1960s, development experts were pessimistic about the economic future of these areas; sociologists, under Weber's influence, expected development to occur only with the import of Western "Protestant" values and the removal of "traditional" cultural obstructions to development; and sinologists continued to discuss Confucianism as a factor in China's failure to change and modernize in recent centuries.

By 1980, however, Western scholars had begun to re-evaluate some of their positions. Some even began to praise East Asian societies for their "superiority" or, at least, "comparative advantage" over the West in economic matters. Works such as *Japan as Number One* (Vogel 1979) and *The Eastasia Edge* (Hofheinz and Calder 1982) became popular in the U.S. as well as in East Asia, having been translated into Chinese (Vogel, trans. Wu Yiren, 1980; and Hofheinz and Calder, trans. Chen Weiping, 1983). This was also the time of the formation of the "post-Confucian hypothesis." The futurologist Herman Kahn first made a direct connection between the traditional values of so-called "neo-Confucian" societies (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore) and economic success (Kahn 1979: 121-123). Roderick Macfarquhar shortly afterward called attention to the "post-Confucian challenge" to the West of East Asian economies

(Macfarquhar 1980). As the term "Neo-Confucian" already had a standard use in the history of Chinese thought, the term "post-Confucian" came to be used in connection with the hypothesis that certain Chinese cultural values rooted in the Confucian tradition have a positive effect on economic development in societies where Confucianism no longer exists as a political or religious institution. Slightly later, Peter Berger formulated his "vulgar Confucianism" concept, suggesting that certain values of Confucian origin are now diffused throughout East Asian societies, aiding economic development (Berger 1983; cf. Berger 1988).

Although Western scholars had linked the values of Confucian, or "post-Confucian," societies with economic development, Chinese scholars would take a more active role in presenting the facts of East Asian economic development as a direct challenge to Weber's views on the Confucian tradition. Weber's *Religion of China*, first translated into Chinese in 1989 (Weber, trans. Jian Hui-mei, 1989), almost thirty years later than Weber's *Protestant Ethic* (Weber, Trans. Zhang Hanyu, 1960) was for the most part ignored by Chinese scholars until the 1980s, when it became a lightning rod for Chinese scholars challenging views on Confucianism as obstructing economic development. The first such Chinese scholar to take Weber to task seems to have been the well known Hong Kong sociologist Ambrose King (Jin Yaoji)<sup>3</sup> in his paper "Rujia lunli yu jingji fazhan: Weibo xueshuo di chongtan" (Confucian ethics and economic development: a re-examination of Max Weber's thesis) which was presented in March 1983 at the first Seminar on Modernization and Chinese Culture, Chinese University of Hong Kong (Jin 1985; also see Jin 1983). The same year Yu Tzong-shian (Yu Zongxian, economist at Academia Sinica, Taipei, and now President of Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research) published an article criticizing Weber and explaining the influence of Chinese culture on Taiwan's economic growth (Yu 1983).

We can see how quickly the debate developed by looking at four issues of *Zhongguo Luntan* (China Tribune) that were published during 1982-1984, featuring topics related to modernization and traditional Chinese culture. The first one (October 10, 1982), featuring discussion of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism and Chinese Modernization, had virtually nothing to say about economic development. The second (August 10, 1983), featuring discussion of Chinese Style Management, began to address the role of traditional cultural values in economic development, but without any mention of Weber and Confucian ethics. The third (January 10, 1984), featuring an Overview of the Economies of Asia's Four Dragons, included essays directly responding to Weber (e.g., Hou 1984). And the fourth (December 25, 1984), featuring discussion of An East Asian Development Model: Cultural

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To indicate the name of the author of a Chinese work, we will use an author's own name for himself or herself in English, when it is known to us, followed by a standard Pinyin Romanization. Otherwise, we will use Pinyin Romanization only. In parenthetical citations, we will always use Pinyin so that these citations will match names as given in the list of Chinese References at the end of the article, which are in Pinyin.

Factors in Taiwan's Post-War Experience, was based on a September 4, 1984, forum in Taipei chaired by Peter Berger that began by addressing the topic: "Reinterpreting Weber's Thesis."

The debate's further development can be seen by looking at the two other journals most frequently read by intellectuals in Taiwan: *Zhishi fenzi* 知識份子 (The Intellectual) and *Dangdai* 當代 (Con-Temporary). Several articles on Confucianism and economic development appeared in *Zhishi Fenzi* from 1985 to 1987 (Yu 1985, Sun 1986, Xiao 1986, Yang 1986, and Bao 1987). In 1987 and 1988, *Dangdai* ran articles responding to some of the work that had appeared previously in *Zhishi fenzi* and elsewhere (Chen 1987a, Chen 1987b, and Hang 1988). In addition, several books on the topic became widely known among Taiwan's educated public (Yu 1987, Huang 1988, Gao 1988, and Zhang 1989). Of these, two will be the focus of special attention in section two of this essay: Hwang Kwang-kuo (Huang Guangguo), *Ruijia sixiang yu dongya xiandaihua* (Confucian thought and East Asian modernization) and Zhang Desheng, *Ruijia lunli yu zhixu qingjie: Zhongguo sixiang di shehuixue quanshi* (Confucian ethics and the order complex: a sociological interpretation of Chinese thought). Compilations of articles, largely by Chinese authors, have also appeared in Chinese (e.g., Yang and Du 1987) and English (Berger and Hsiao 1988 and Tai 1989). Late in the decade, the Taiwan Provincial Government ordered a study of religious beliefs and economic development (Qu and Zhang 1989); and a major international conference was held in Taipei (Conference on Confucianism and Economic Development in East Asia, May 29-31, 1989), the papers from which were later published (Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research 1989).

The preceding discussion has been solely for the purpose of familiarizing the reader with some basic details regarding the discussion of Confucianism and economic development. In section three of this essay, we will offer our comments on the significance of this discussion, especially insofar as it has affected the internal development of the modern Confucian tradition. Prior to this, in section two, we aim to cover views of "Confucianism" in selected social scientific works produced during the course of the discussion.

## 2

### Views of Confucianism

The views of all the theorists to be discussed here bear a relation to the "post-Confucian hypothesis," broadly defined. In other words, they all assume that "Confucianism" has elements which, in the appropriate modern environment, will encourage economic development, although these elements may not have done so in premodern China because of its different institutional (social, economic, political) environment. Also, while theorists look for continuity between modern and premodern China, they acknowledge that post-Confucian culture is not the direct offspring of either the philosophy of the traditional Confucian elite or the imperial state ideology. Thus conceived, the post-Confucian hypothesis

has three forms that will be discussed here: (1) the post-Confucian hypothesis as such, the standard examples of which are found in Western works, with Chinese authors revising it and seeking to verify it empirically; (2) the "vulgar Confucianism" concept, coined by Peter Berger and influential among Chinese social scientists in recent years; and (3) the idea of a redirected sense of achievement motivation which, once linked to traditional moral or career goals, now drives economic development.

### The Post-Confucian Hypothesis

Despite his use (or misuse) of the term "neo-Confucian" to describe economically successful East Asian societies, Herman Kahn is generally considered the originator of the "post-Confucian hypothesis." He listed two sets of factors that he believed to be instrumental in East Asian economic success: "[first] the creation of dedicated, motivated, responsible, and educated individuals and [second] the enhanced sense of commitment, organizational identity, and loyalty to various institutions" (Kahn 1979: 122). At almost the same time, Roderick Macfarquhar created a list of factors that overlaps with Kahn's namely: self-confidence, social cohesion, subordination of the individual, education for action, bureaucratic tradition, and moral certitude (MacFarquhar 1980: 71). As the reader has perhaps surmised, these lists were created with primary awareness of the Japanese case and, moreover, present relatively broad value orientations whose links to the Confucian tradition are rather tenuous. This has had several results: Chinese authors have treated these efforts to list cultural factors with caution; they have tried to ground these or similar lists of cultural factors in historical Confucianism, and they have sought empirical verification of the contemporary influence of such factors.

Without necessarily using the term "post-Confucian culture", many Chinese authors share certain assumptions and a certain kind of response to Weber's work. They assume that Japan and the "four dragons" (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore) have a common cultural background, which is lacking in other parts of the developing world (Africa, Latin America, etc.) and has been suppressed in communist East Asian nations (Vietnam and PRC). They refer to this cultural background as "Confucian." With reference to Weber, they approve of his effort to include so-called "cultural factors," along with "institutional factors," in explaining social and economic developments. However, they find fault with Weber's understanding of Confucianism historically and, more importantly, argue that Weber was unable to see how Confucian culture would influence people's behaviour once it was separated from the political and religious institutions of imperial China.

To give our first example, we find most of the theoretical assumptions just described in the aforementioned work of Ambrose King, although he is very cautious in presenting them and uses the terms "post-Confucian" and "vulgar Confucianism" only in connection with their creators, whom he identifies as Kahn and Berger, respectively (Jin 1985: 139 and 141). Nonetheless, King is typical in arguing that recent economic growth in East Asia is empirical

evidence that challenges Weber's judgment of Confucianism. He states: "Our view is definite: Weber's judgement indeed has just received a major challenge of empirical phenomena" (Jin 1985: 134).

The relevant phenomena can be explained by reference to two kinds of factors: structural (or institutional) and cultural. The relevant cultural factors are identified as "Confucian ethics," but King says little about their content, except in describing the contributions of others, such as Kahn, whose contribution we have described above, and Berger, whose contribution will be described below. In any case, the reason for challenging Weber is that, although he was aware of the relevant elements of Confucian ethics, he did not foresee their role in societies free of the institutions with which Confucianism was linked in the past.

Turning from sociology to economics, we find rather different explanations of the Confucian potential to aid economic growth that has been released during the recent East Asian "economic miracle." The case of Hou Chia-chu (Hou Jiaju 侯家駒, Director of the Institute of Research Economics, Soochow University) is especially interesting because, in his view, he had already proposed something like the post-Confucian hypothesis two decades earlier than Kahn. In an article in one of the aforementioned issues of *Zhongguo luntan*, he reviews the position he held already in 1960 (Hou 1984; also appended to his book on Confucian economic thought, Hou 1985: 401-407; in English, see Hou 1989). He had listed the key features of traditional Chinese culture that encourage economic development, "all of which were advocated by Confucianism." They are diligence and thrift, tendency to save, respect for work, honesty, and harmony (Hou 1984: 35). In the same place, he also acknowledges that traditional Chinese culture had economically-dysfunctional elements (most of which were advocated by Taoism!): restraining desires, following fate, lacking courage, and being conservative and complacent. Hou's main purpose, however, is not simply to list modern remnants of traditional Confucian ethics. It is to demonstrate that there was, already by the late Zhou period, Confucian economic thought that continues to have value today. This was "liberal" economic thought, stressing free competition, self-interest, private property, and specific economic planning strategies. In this article, and in greater detail in his book, *Xianqin rujia ziyou jingji sixiang* (Pre-Qin Confucian liberal economic thought; Hou 1985), he seeks proof of this in classical Confucian texts. Of course, in the context of the post-Confucian hypothesis, we must ask: Why did this thought have so little effect until recently? Hou answers with a three part explanation (Hou 1985: 394). First, telling us to understand that economic growth is a relative matter, he points out that there was substantial economic activity in traditional China. Second, he explains that values from sources other than Confucianism, such as Taoism, had a negative influence. Third, and most important, from Han times onward, the centralized imperial state thwarted free economic activity at every turn. Thus, only after the demise of imperial China was it possible for the potential of the Confucian tradition to realize itself in the realms of both private ethics (popular Confucian values) and public policy.



In another example from economics, the aforementioned article by Yu Tzong-shian explains that, in terms of modern views on "production relationships" (*shengchan guanxi*), traditional China had a basically sound system that was spoiled by certain misunderstandings and shortcomings. It is therefore a good example of a theory that sees traditional culture as having a potential which has been released in the twentieth century by the challenge and contribution of the West. Finding traditional potential involves considerable reinterpretation of classical Confucian texts. For example, according to Yu, passages in *Lunyu* (Analects) and *Mengzi* (Master Meng) that contrast "profit" (*li*) and "rightness" (*yi*) should not be interpreted as meaning that Masters Kong and Meng were against profit. They were only against profit obtained by immoral means. "However, Yu concludes, people's misunderstanding of Kong-Meng thought, increasingly viewing them as emphasizing 'benevolence' (*ren*) and 'rightness' and neglecting 'utility', became a source of chronic weakness in China. Not only were early Confucians open to moral "profit," or "self interest" (*zili*), says Yu, their works yield evidence that ancient China had a concept of private property (Yu 1983: 4).

The key problem in later times was the tendency of the educated class to think only of entering the gentry path and, hopefully, officialdom but not of entering technical or mercantile trades. There were also other shortcomings, such as the family's monopolization of "management" and the lack of a banking system. However, in the twentieth century, as a result of facing the challenge of the West and borrowing some of the West's institutional innovations, these shortcomings have disappeared and more successful production relationships have merged. Yu puts this as a simple formula: "China's traditional culture + Western catalyst = economic growth" (Yu 1983: 9).

A third economic theory that we wish to summarize here is also very optimistic in its assessment of the potential of traditional Chinese values. It is from a paper by John C. H. Fei (Fei Jinghan, Economics, Yale University) presented at the aforementioned Conference on Confucianism and Economic Development in East Asia (Fei 1989; also see Fei 1986, in Chinese). Traditional Chinese values, Fei says, "at the risk of over-simplification" can be called "Confucianism" (Fei 1989: 259). His aim is "to prove" the cultural affinity between Confucianism and the cultural values of the "modern growth epoch" (1780-1980) as defined by the internationally known economist Simon Kuznets. For Kuznets, these values, or "historical values inputs," were secularism, nationalism, and egalitarianism (Fei 1989: 270). Due to Confucianism's well known interest in human affairs and advocacy of a life characterized by ceaseless endeavour and moral discipline in the world, it easily qualifies as "secular" (Fei 1989: 274-75). As for its contribution to "nationalism," Fei states: "Under Confucianism, the nationalism of a 'country family' (*guo-jia*) is always a cultural phenomenon which is readily extended to be inclusive of all human beings" (Fei 1989: 275). Regarding egalitarianism, he explains: "the belief in 'individualism' (or, more correctly, individual family) in the Confucian tradition is deductible from the high value attached to human dignity guaranteed, not so much by 'birth right,' as by the equality of a potential that one is free to explore" (Fei 1989: 275-76).

In light of his analysis, Fei concedes, readers might ask why the modern growth epoch did not first occur in China. The missing ingredient, he explains, was science. Believing in a unity of the inner and outer world, traditional Confucians thought they could grasp the principles of the universe without outward, empirical investigation. This lack of a philosophical basis for a tradition of science and technology explains why the modern growth epoch first occurred outside China (Fei 1989: 277). Yet China's overall cultural value system, i.e., "Confucianism," was preadapted for modern industrial capitalism, once it arrived.

Our final example of a work related to the post-Confucian hypothesis as such, from the discipline of psychology, is interesting for two reasons: (1) one of its authors, Yang Kuo-shu (Yang Guoshu, Psychology Department Chair, Taiwan National University) has been known as a leading behaviorist researching the shift away from traditional values in Taiwan<sup>4</sup> and (2) the explicit purpose of the authors, Yang and Cheng Po-shyun (Zheng Bo-xun) is to offer empirical verification of the post-Confucian hypothesis. Their article is entitled "Chuantong jiazhi guan, geren xiandaixing ji zuzhi xingwei: hourujia jiashuo di yixiang weiguan yanzheng" (Confucianized values, individual modernity, and organizational behavior: an empirical test of the post-Confucian hypothesis [authors' English title]). In a brief English abstract, we find the main thrust of the article expressed, as follows:

The present study provides an empirical evaluation of the Post-Confucian Hypothesis, as elaborated by G.S. Redding (1984), in which Post-Confucian values are said to be related to positive organizational behavior. To test this hypothesis, a new scale in the Chinese language was constructed to assess five clusters of Confucianized Chinese values, viz., Familism, Modesty/Contentment, Face Consciousness/Relationship Orientation, Solidarity/Harmony, and Hardship-overcoming/Hardworking. Scores on these clusters were related to various measures of organizational behavior for a sample of 462 employees chosen from nine business organizations in Taiwan. It is found that Confucianized values has [*sic*] a positive relationship with good organizational behavior....(Yang and Zheng 1987: 49).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Yang, "Zhongguoren di tuibian" 中國人的蛻變 (Transformation of the Chinese; yang 1980), the content of which is used by one of the most vehement critics of the post-Confucian hypothesis, the Chinese mainland scholar Bao Zunxin, to argue that the values aiding Taiwan's development are essentially Western (Bao 1988). In English, see Yang, "chinese Personality and Its Change" (Yang 1985).

<sup>5</sup> The work referred to by Gordon Redding is a conference paper entitled "Operationalizing the Post-Confucian Hypothesis," which was subsequently published (Redding 1985). Also see Redding's more recent work, *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* (Redding 1989).

It is perhaps relevant that in the sample of 462 employees, most worked for large companies (65.4%), rather than the small to mid-sized enterprises that make up the great bulk of Taiwan's businesses; and all but 3 (0.6%) had gone beyond the compulsory nine years of education to high schools (21.6%), career colleges (33.3%), universities (37.2%), or graduate institutions (5%) (Yang and Zheng 1987: 9). More relevant for present purposes are the "Confucianized values" which these predominantly well educated corporate employees say they hold. The survey instrument contained 40 actual terms, which for purposes of analysis were grouped into the five clusters described. Each item is a four-character phrase stating, in aphoristic form, a well-known Chinese virtue (Yang and Zheng 1987:10). For example, in the Familism (*jiating juyi* 家庭主義) cluster are listed "loyalty to family" (*zhong yu jiating* 忠於家庭), "filial to parents", (*xiaoshun fumu* 孝順父母), "having a sense of justice" (*you zhengyigan* 有正義感), "family members help one another" (*jiaren huju* 家人互助), "having constancy in working" (*zuoshi yuheng* 做事有恆), "taking responsibility and exerting oneself" (*fuze jinzhi* 負責盡職), and so forth. To give a few more examples, in the Modesty/Contentment (*qianrang shoufen* 謙讓守份) cluster, the Way of the Mean (*zhongyong zhi dao* 中庸之道) leads the list; in the Face Consciousness/Relationship Orientation (*mianzi guanxi* 面子關係) cluster, "keeping face" (*baohu mianzi* 保護面子) leads the list; in the Solidarity/Harmony (*tuanjie hexie* 團結和諧) cluster, we have "harmony with others" (*yuren hexie* 與人和諧) and "spirit of being together" (*tuanjie jingshen* 團結精神), among other phrases; and in the Hardship-overcoming/Hardworking (*kenan keku* 克難刻苦) cluster, these two are listed: "Take risks and face difficulties" (*maoxian fannan* 冒險犯難) and "suffer hardships and withstand hard work" (*chiku nailao* 吃苦耐勞).

It would be enlightening but impractical to give the authors' entire list of 40 items. The examples given should indicate clearly enough what the authors mean by "confucianized values," which interestingly are referred to in Chinese simply as "traditional value orientations" (*chauntong jiazhi guan* 傳統價值觀). Whether or not the authors are justified in connecting these values with good organizational behavior is an issue that does not concern us here. We are concerned primarily with two other issues. First, as with the economists discussed above, the authors use a rather utilitarian standard to evaluate Confucian values (i.e., whether or not they improve organizational behavior), and second, they list a wide range of traditional Chinese values which can be identified with the Confucian tradition only at the expense of making the tradition seem extremely broad and amorphous. As we turn to look at examples of the use of "vulgar Confucianism," we will find these same tendencies exhibited again.

### Vulgar Confucianism

Peter Berger has been the foreign scholar who has most deeply influenced Chinese

scholars in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Conference papers containing his early formulations of the concept of "vulgar Confucianism" and of an "East Asian development model" (a second case of modernization, in addition to the Western one) were published in Chinese (Berger 1984a, 1984b). Berger has attended several conferences in East Asia, and he continues to maintain contact with scholars in East Asia, especially through his Institute for the Study of Economic Culture (Boston University, founded 1985). As to "vulgar Confucianism," he acknowledges its links to the post-Confucian hypothesis, which he has described as follows: "the hypothesis is that a key variable in explaining the economic performance of these countries [Japan and the newly industrialized countries of East Asia] is Confucian ethics--or post-Confucian ethics, in the sense that the moral values in question are now relatively detached from the Confucian tradition proper and having become more widely diffused" (Berger 1988: 7).<sup>6</sup> As to the nature of these values, he gives the following list: "a positive attitude to the affairs of the world, a sustained lifestyle of discipline and self-cultivation, respect for authority, frugality, an overriding concern for stable family life" (Berger 1988: 7-8).

Berger's influence has stemmed mainly from his international reputation and his coining the phrase "vulgar Confucianism." Chinese scholars do not necessarily seek to employ the specific values he lists. In fact, neither of the two scholars we are about to discuss would conceive of himself as a disciple of Berger in any sense. The sociologist Wong Siu-lun (Huang Shaolun 黃紹倫, Hong Kong University), who has researched Hong Kong business practices extensively, in recent years has joined many others in seeking the cultural roots of Hong Kong's economic success. He edited *Zhongguo zongjiao lunli yu xiandaihua yantaohui* (Chinese religious ethics and modernization), the proceedings of the third Seminar on Modernization and Chinese Culture, Hong Kong, June 1988, in which a piece of his own is included (Huang 1991). Roughly the same piece had been previously published in English under the title "Modernization and Chinese Culture in Hong Kong" (Wong 1986). Although Wong does not use the term "Confucianism" in the title of his article, it is in his thesis statement, as follows: "If Confucianism is understood in a broad sense as a cultural ethos, then we may hypothesize that the Chineseness of Hong Kong is causally linked with its industrial performance" (Wong 1986: 307). As for the nature of this cultural ethos, he lists four major elements: "incorporative cosmology, high achievement motivation, familism, and utilitarian discipline" (Wong 1986: 308-309). He exemplifies the first of these, incorporative cosmology, mostly by reference to popular religious practice in Hong Kong. And he indicates its value by saying that "the inherent eclecticism of their cosmology should enable Chinese to become adept borrowers of foreign practices" (Wong

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<sup>6</sup> Berger does not explain what he means by "the Confucian tradition proper," nor does he indicate the starting date of the phenomenon of wide diffusion of Confucian ethics that is "now" occurring, despite the fact that research on this diffusion over the past thousand years or so has already been done.

1986: 309). As for achievement motivation, it is exemplified by émigré Shanghai businessmen who came to Hong Kong, of whom he states: "They treasured autonomy and disliked subjugation, an attitude which was probably rooted in the Chinese cultural ethos" (Wong 1986: 311). He later explains that such individual autonomy is actually encouraged by certain aspects of the Chinese family system, which differs from the Japanese one (Wong 1986: 312). As for familism itself, especially in its relation to business, it can appear as "paternalistic managerial ideology and practice, nepotistic employment, or family ownership" (Wong 1986: 313). Finally, by utilitarian discipline, Wong means self control rooted in a pragmatic, problem solving attitude, including "a tendency among the Chinese to be keenly aware of cost and benefit calculations in both monetary and human investments" (Wong 1986: 319). Despite the existence of this cultural ethos among Chinese, it has served the function of aiding economic performance only recently, according to Wong, for basically the same reason given by proponents of the post-Confucian hypothesis. New institutional arrangements, which are also described by Wong (Wong 1986: 319-3224), have now made it possible for this cultural ethos to realize its potential role in economic development.

Turning to our second author, anthropologist Chen Qinan (Chinese University of Hong Kong), we find a very qualified use of "Confucian culture" in connection with economic behavior. In "Rujia wenhua yu chuantong shangren di zhiye lunli" (Confucian culture and the professional ethics of traditional merchants), he in fact argues that most scholars discussing Confucianism and economic development use "Confucian ethics" when they basically mean Chinese family ethics (Chen 1987a: 59; the article is continued in Chen 1987b). Thus, Confucian culture as discussed by Chen is the family system and its values. According to Chen, this system and its values has changed little over the last one thousand years. In particular, it has continually encouraged its members to work for the glory of their ancestors. But the nature of the careers one could legitimately pursue to glorify ancestors evolved over time, as objective historical conditions changed. In recent centuries, especially in the case of overseas Chinese, mercantile careers became ever more acceptable, and the potential of Chinese to dignify their families through economic success was realized. The similarity of this approach to the post-Confucian hypothesis as discussed in the previous subsection should be obvious. As we will soon see, it also bears links to discussions of Confucianism and economic development that stress achievement motivation.

### **Achievement Motivation**

As early as the 1960s, David McClelland discussed achievement motivation as a primary variable in the relatively greater economic success of Chinese among other groups in Southeast Asia (McClelland 1963), for example, and also presented the results of comparative reflections on achievement in a more global context (McClelland 1966). His work is well known to most of the Chinese social scientists covered in this essay. Basically, he and others believe that it is possible to measure the level of influence and "achievement

motive" has in the culture of a certain social group and to predict that, where its influence is strong, economic growth is more likely to occur. It is related to the post-Confucian hypothesis, especially in the works we will consider here, because the achievement motive in question is presented as belonging to traditional Confucianism but as not manifesting its potential in the economic sphere until Chinese found themselves in situations quite unlike the institutional context of traditional China. We will consider works by an historian, a psychologist, and a sociologist.

Huang Chin-hsing (Huang Jinxing, Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei), sees the historical situation of Confucianism as to a degree similar to that of Protestantism (Huang 1987). In particular, for Huang, it is the *unintentional* way in which Confucianism seems to have aided the capitalist enterprise that resembles the situation of Protestantism as described by Weber. Of course, the historical details are different: the possibility of a significant change in the way Confucian ethics influenced the lives of Chinese merged only in recent centuries, as they came to exist apart from the institutions of imperial China, first by migration to Southeast Asia and later by reform (1905) and revolution (11911) in China. In the lives of people for whom imperial examinations and an official career had become irrelevant, Confucian ethics began to play a more central role in the pursuit of another goal: economic success. Ostensibly, the goal of Confucian ethics had always been "to realize one's virtuous nature" (*cheng de* 成德), so for ethics to be reoriented toward the pursuit of economic success was just as ironic as the supposed role of Protestant ethics--rooted in the hope for salvation--in the rise of Western capitalism. However, Huang warns us, a capitalistic reorientation of Confucian ethics--defined as stressing love of learning, discipline, and achievement motivation--is not enough to assure economic success. The needed socio-historical situation must also contain certain nonmoral factors: capital, managerial systems, technology, and so forth. Although Huang rejects the causal relationship between Confucianism and economic development that he sees in works defending the post-Confucian hypothesis, in stressing need for the kind of new institutional context stipulated by the post-Confucian hypothesis refers, Huang shares a basic assumption with others we have discussed.

The final two works we will discuss have been saved for last for a special reason: each is an entire book that performs a social scientific hermeneutic of Confucian texts and history in the context of commenting on the issue of Confucianism and economic development. Moreover, each has attracted much attention in the world of Chinese social science and beyond. Thus, each serves as an especially interesting example of explicit and influential interpretation of the Confucian tradition by a social scientist. The books in question, already identified in section one above, are by Hwang Kwang-kuo and Zhang

Desheng.<sup>7</sup>

Hwang Kwang-kuo (Psychology, National Taiwan University) is well known for his creative analysis of Chinese behavior using hybrid (Chinese-Western) models, rather than simply depending on Western Psychology to explain Chinese behavior. An example of this in English is his article "Face and Favor: The Chinese Power Game" (Hwang 1987). The work on which we now focus (Huang 1988) builds on his previous work in order to solve the "riddle of the century": Is Confucianism ultimately beneficial or detrimental to East Asian modernization? According to Hwang, this is a riddle the solution of which requires a systematic approach. First, one must answer the question: What is Confucianism? Second, one must analyze the influence of Confucianism's actual influence on individual behavior in daily life from the perspective of Behavioral science. Third, in interpreting Confucian texts one must avoid the traditional scholar's method of "using classics to interpret classics" (*yi jing jie jing* 以經解經), and instead offer interpretations that reach down to the level of personal behavior. Finally, one must test one's interpretations by reference to empirical studies of Chinese behavior patterns today (Huang 1988: i-ii).

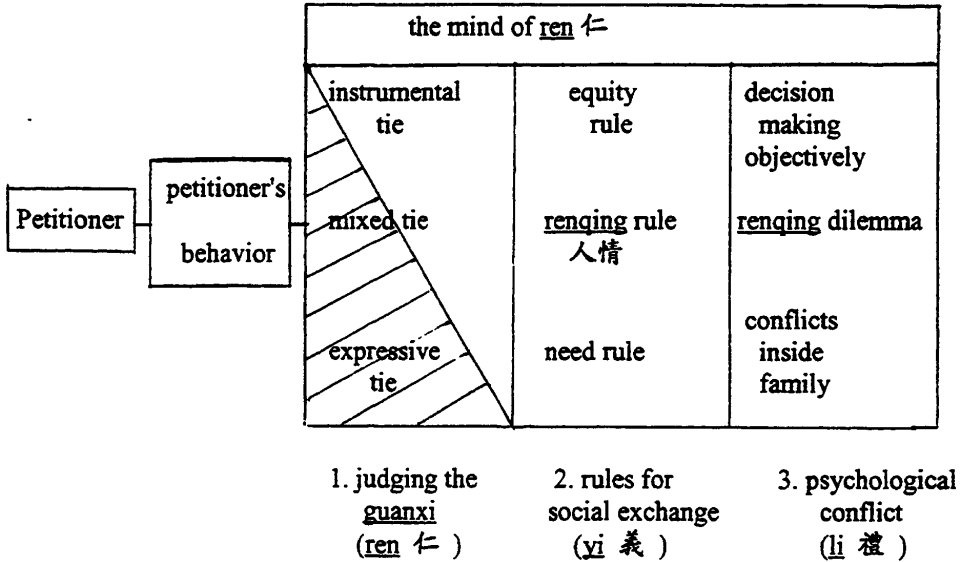
Informed by this advice, Hwang's book has three sections. The first covers the fate of Confucianism at the hands of Chinese and Western scholars in recent decades and presents a chapter length introduction to Weber's views on Confucianism and Protestantism. The second section, the longest by far (over 200 pages) gives Hwang's interpretation of Confucianism or, to be specific, the "internal structure of Confucian thought" (*rujia sixiang di neizai jiegou* 儒家思想的內在結構). The third section is meant to demonstrate that Hwang's interpretation is compatible with empirical studies of Confucianism's influence on Chinese behavior today.

Our first interest here is Hwang's model of Chinese behavior patterns which, developed over the years, play a major role in his recent interpretation of Confucian thought. We begin with the following facsimile of a chart from his book entitled "Model of the Confucian Mind" (Huang 1988: 87).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> First of all, both works have sold well. According to the publisher, which is the same for both works, as of June 1992, Hwang's book had sold nearly all 5,000 copies of its first printing; and Zhang's had done even better, as it was in its third printing, with 3,000 copies for each printing. Hwang's book has been the topic of at least three long review articles (Guan 1990, Zheng 1991, and Lin 1992); and Zheng's book received the 1990 "golden vessel award" (*jinding jiang* 金鼎獎) from the News and Information Section, Administrative Yuan, ROC government.

<sup>8</sup> The English terminology in our version of Hwang's chart comes mostly from his English article, "Face and Favor" (Hwang 1987).

Psychological Process of Resource Allocator



The chart represents the mental process (or mind as a whole, part of which is the conscience-like "mind of *ren*" that is so important for Confucians. The stage of the mental process in which consciousness of "ties" is important is represented by a diagonally divided rectangle to show that, as the petitioner changes from a stranger to a friend or relative (from top to bottom), the criterion of judgement becomes less instrumental and more affective in nature. The chart thus indicates how a person handles a request from someone else by taking into account the nature of the relationship between self and other as well as various rules of social exchange.

In previous work, Hwang has used this model, without reference to Confucian terminology (e.g., *ren*, *yi*, *li*), to explain interpersonal behavior patterns in Chinese society. In doing so, he has given a central role to three justice norms which, in social exchange theory, have been considered universal, and he has explained how these norms need to be modified when used to explain Chinese behavior. In "Face and Favor," he summarized these norms and indicated the necessary modifications, especially in the case of the equality norm, as follows:

The equity rule encourages individuals to allocate resources in proportion to



their contributions. It is primarily activated in economically oriented situations...or when individuals are in a 'unit' relationship, that is, when they perceive each other as role occupants rather than as individuals.... The equality norm dictates that profits or losses be distributed equally among members regardless of their objective contributions. It tends to predominate under conditions of cooperative social harmony.... the need norm of justice dictates that dividends, profits, or other benefits should be distributed to satisfy recipients' legitimate needs, regardless of their relative contributions. It will predominate...when individuals have a very close relationship...or when an individual has an 'identity relation' and empathetic involvement with other people.... While agreeing that these rules of behavior are near universals, I argue that they fall short of capturing the full richness of the behavioral quandaries faced by participants in some cultures.... An example is the Chinese category of *renqing*, which is the focus of this article. A variant of the universal equality rule, *renqing* is much more highly elaborated and more tightly bound up with ideas of reciprocity (*bao* [報]) than it is in many other cultures (Hwang 1987: 945-46).

As Hwang's chart indicates these exchange rules are used by Chinese individuals within a complex process that begins with "judging the *guanxi*" one has with a "petitioner" and ends with psychological conflict that can only be resolved by deciding how to respond to a "petitioner."

Such behavior patterns have long been the focus of Hwang's work. But only in his recent book on Confucianism and economic development has he put them in the context of a thorough hermeneutics of Confucian thought. He feels confident in doing so because Confucianism has, for over two thousand years, "ceaselessly shaped the thought and behavior of the Chinese and already become part of the deep psychological structure within the collective unconsciousness of the Chinese race" (Huang 1988: 18). In fact, he feels confident that he only needs to interpret the documents of pre-Qin Confucianism (the thought of Masters Kong, Meng, and Xun) in order to find the roots of Chinese behavior patterns today.

What Hwang lacks in historical scope he makes up for with his ability to systematize pre-Qin Confucian thought, which he realizes was not a unified philosophical system in its own time. His systematization of early Confucianism is found in chapters five through eight. Chapter five, "The Confucian Way: The Ethical System of Ren, Yi, and Li," explains that the three key moral concepts of the system were connected with the three key pre-Qin Confucian thinkers: Kong (*ren*), Meng (*yi*), and Sun (*li*). It also explains that part of the nature of each concept is an implicit stress on "differentiation" (*chaxxing* 差序性), which is important within an overall system of substantivist ethics. Based on "substantive" rather than 'formal' rationality (in Weberian terms), the system stresses personal relationships

and, moreover, assumes that ethical principles should be interpreted according to the specific nature of the social relationship between self and each different other. Having thus established the centrality of "differentiation," Hwang goes on in chapters six through eight to show that *ren*, *yi*, and *li* are related to the three rules of social exchange from his chart. The overall result is that in facing a "petitioner," a Chinese person will, first, make a *ren*-like judgment of *guanxi*, second select and apply the right exchange rule according to *yi*, and, finally, on the basis of *li* decide on an appropriate response (grant a favor, repay a debt, offer a gift, etc.).

In chapters nine and ten, Hwang discusses, respectively, the traditions of personal cultivation and social service in Confucianism, setting the stage for his focus on the achievement motive in part three of his book. This part consists of one chapter (eleven) on "The Transformative Power of Confucian Thought." This chapter's aim is to provide empirical verification of the role in Chinese behavior today, especially behavior significant for economic growth, of the Confucian values described earlier in the book. The first section of the chapter reviews the themes of Confucian cultivation: being dedicated to learning (*haoxue* 好學), exerting oneself (*lixing* 力行), and knowing shame (*zhichi* 知恥). In the next section, attention is shifted to the achievement motive. The contents of chapters six through eight are summarized and the achievement motive is linked to Confucian ethics by reference to the themes of Confucian cultivation (Hwang 1988: 283-286). Then, in the third section, on the topic "taking up the Way to save the world" (*yitao jishi* 以道濟世), data is given to show that the traditional Confucian motivation to serve and reform society lives on, especially among Taiwan students who return home after going abroad to study (Hwang 1988: 298-304).<sup>9</sup> Finally, he offers this conclusion:

Their motive for returning to serve their country is "to take up the Way to serve the world," to return home to reconstruct their mother society using knowledge learned abroad. In terms of Kant's concepts, what drove them to go to Western countries to study "theoretical reason" was "practical reason" originating in Confucian thought, which also led them to return home to contribute what they studied. In terms of Weber's concepts, the "substantive rationality" of the Confucian value orientation drove East Asian intellectuals to study as well as to spread at home the "formal rationality" that originated in Western culture (which constituted the foundation of industrial capitalism's development), thereby producing the modernization of East Asian countries (Hwang 1988: 304).

<sup>9</sup> Hwang's argument is rather weak at this point since it is based on the attitudes of students who return from abroad, completely ignoring the significance of the fact that the great majority of students who go abroad to study never return. This fact casts doubt on the depth of their motivation "to take up the Way to save the world."

Apart from the heavy use of jargon, from Kant and Weber, for example, there is little that differentiates Hwang's argument from other explanations of economic development which argue that an achievement motive rooted in traditional Confucianism can be redirected toward new goals. The other "Confucian values" for which Hwang offers empirical evidence are also rather standard fare: devotion to family, work ethic, love for education. In other words, it is hard to see how his operative definition of "Confucianism" (the one he uses in explaining its role in economic development) is affected by his long and complex social scientific hermeneutics of pre-Qin Confucian thought. In the end, he too gives us a version of the post-Confucian hypothesis: certain elements of traditional Chinese culture, to which the label "Confucian" is applied, are claimed to serve new and different functions in the modern institutional environment of certain East Asian societies.

The "sociological interpretation of Chinese thought" in Zhang Desheng's book has a much narrower focus than Hwang's interpretation. Whereas Hwang concerns himself with the whole ethical system in pre-Qin Confucianism, Zhang focuses on only one aspect of thought during that period: the concern with social order. Zhang acknowledges that others have already analyzed the Chinese fear of disorder, naming Richard Solomon and Sun Longji 孫隆基. But he claims that there is a task which they have left for him to perform: to seek its origins over 2,000 years ago in the thought and history of the Spring and Autumn, Warring States period. Although other periods in Chinese history have also been chaotic, he explains this period constituted the formative period of Chinese culture, which was determinative for later times. Also, although Confucianism was not the only school of thought that responded to the chaos of this period, it is the most important one, having "controlled Chinese thought and behavior from that time on." Thus, pre-Qin Confucianism is the best place to look for the origins of a Chinese psychological complex due to which "one's face changes at any mention of disorder" (Zhang 1989: 11).

Although Zhang's book claims to provide a sociological interpretation of Chinese thought, it contains much less actual coverage of Confucian texts than Hwang's work. Only in chapter three, "The Confucian Response [to disorder]," which follow two methodological chapters, do we find extensive interpretation of texts. Later chapters cover the response outside the Confucian school (ch. 4), Confucian thought and social control (ch. 5), Confucian ethics and the order complex (ch. 6), Buddhist and Taoist ethics and the order complex (ch. 7), and Confucian ethics and modern China (ch. 8). Since selection is interpretation, we must note what texts and passages Zhang interprets, especially in Chapter three. There and elsewhere he uses a very narrow range of passages from *Lunyu*, mostly ones on *li* (ritual) and *xiao* (filiality). The only other text frequently cited (especially in ch. 6) is *Liji* (Records of rituals). And the only extensive treatment of texts is in a section of chapter three on the normative features of Master Kong's doctrines. There each passage is interpreted according to the assumption that Kong's overriding passion for order can be seen in his concern with personal cultivation and social relations, next to which all other concerns become secondary.

Zhang feels he can make his point especially clear in interpreting *Lunyu* 13:4, a

passage in which Master Kong castigates Fan Chi as a *xiaoren* ("small man") for being concerned about agriculture (Zhang 1989: 69). In Zhang's view, Master Kong responded as he did, not because he looked down on the laboring class, as some have suggested, but because he had his priorities wrong. Thus Master Kong said: "[When it comes to agriculture] I am not as good as an old farmer." And, after Fan Chi left, the Master said: "What a small man is Fan Xu. If one devotes himself to the rites, the people will not dare to be irreverent; if one devotes himself to rightness, the people will not dare to be subversive, if one devotes himself to being trustworthy, the people will not dare to be insincere." Here, we are told, we have a perfect example of Kong's attitude that "if one grasps the key principle, all the details will fall into place." The key principle, of course, is social order. If that can be established, the Master believed, all other problems will be solved. It is for the same reason that Master Kong said: The *junzi* plans for the sake of the Way, not for the sake of eating.... The *junzi* worries about the Way, not about poverty" (*Lunyu* 15: 31). It is also why he said: "Do not worry about [the people] being poor, worry about popular discontent" (*Lunyu* 16:1). Examples like this, Zhang concludes, are enough to prove wherein Master Kong's main focus really lies (Zhang 1989: 70).

Zhang also finds the roots of the Chinese order complex in certain personal features of master Kong's life. For example, his failure to influence leaders in his time aggravated his fear of disorder; and his feelings for ritual were beyond rationality (Zhang 1989: 67).

In concluding chapter three, Zhang explains that Kong, as a child of his time, deeply believed that social order must be built on hierarchy and authority and, moreover, assumed that the family was the ideal society in miniature. For in the family, "despite that each member has a different position and function, all work together for the welfare of the whole" (Zhang 1989: 92-93). Starting from this assumption, Confucians took up "society's familicization" (*shehui jiatinghua* 社會家庭化) as their goal. Their most important accomplishment in this feat of social engineering was success in socializing those in subordinate social roles into willing submission, for which purpose instilling the virtue of filiality was central (Zhang 1989: 93-94).

Apart from Zhang's actual handling of early Confucian texts, for our purposes, the most important feature of his interpretation lies in the argument he gives to justify the study of late Zhou materials in his effort to understand Chinese behavior today. Like Hwang, who assumed that the message of these materials still resides in the Chinese collective unconsciousness, Zhang appeals to psychology to make his case. In chapter six, "Confucian Ethics and the Order Complex," he draws on the old Freudian ontogenic-phylogenic analogy (without using these terms). He explains Freud's theory that a childhood trauma can manifest itself as a "traumatic neurosis" that remains with an individual at a deep level of his/her personality. Then, he explains how this theory applies to China, as follows:

The culture of a society is just like the personality of an individual. The Spring and Autumn, Warring States period was the stage of infancy for

Chinese thought, and the chaos of that period had a traumatic impact on the social structure. Due to this, the Chinese culture that was formed over the next 2,000 years or so harbored a type of "one's face changes at any mention of disorder" neurotic orientation (Zhang 1989: 158).

This orientation, i.e., the Chinese "order complex," is thus manifested in Chinese behavior even today, regardless of any explicit loyalty to the Confucian tradition on the part of specific individuals.

Reaching Zhang's final chapter, "Confucian Ethics and Modern China," one expects that he will explain economic development in terms of political stability, family solidarity, or other variables that seem logically linked to the order complex. However, the focus of this chapter is achievement motivation.<sup>10</sup> Therein Zhang explains that achievement motivation has increasingly become the focus of efforts to explain the role of Confucianism in economic development. He surveys a variety of research reports on achievement motivation around the world, showing that they in fact do not establish that people living in East Asia's economically successful countries have a higher level of achievement motivation than people elsewhere. Nonetheless, Zhang holds onto the hope that future research, especially research concerning the relatively higher motivation of Chinese Americans over their fellow citizens, will help to verify the role of achievement motivation in Chinese economic successes.

In the conclusion to chapter eight, entitled "Confucianism Awaits the Call of History," Zhang finally makes an effort to link achievement motivation to some elements of the previous chapters' discussion of the Chinese order complex (Zhang 1989: 260-263). He says it is linked, for example, to the discussion in chapter three of the Confucian stress on personal cultivation and of Confucian family ideals (as motivation to succeed can be enhanced by the need to glorify one's ancestors). It is also said to be linked to elements of China's shame culture, as discussed in chapter six, since fear of shame leads one to exert effort. Of course, these are all "Confucian" values that have appeared in other works with which we have dealt, leaving us wondering (as in the case of Hwang Kwang-kuo's social scientific hermeneutics): was Zhang's "sociological interpretation of Chinese thought" worth the effort?

### **The Confucian Tradition and the Myth of Confucian China**

Despite the questionable results of their efforts, Hwang and Zhang should be praised for at least trying to ground the "Confucian" values they discuss in materials that have an undisputed place in the Confucian tradition. Among others we have covered, the economist

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<sup>10</sup> A possible explanation for this incongruity lies in the fact that a large section of the last chapter was previously published separately in the proceedings of the third Seminar on Chinese Culture and Modernization (Hong Kong, June 1988). See Zhang 1991.

Hou Chia-chu merits similar praise for his work with pre-Qin Confucian materials. And both Chen Qinan and Huang Chin-hsing must be acknowledged for using an historical approach which, in our opinion, is even more praiseworthy. Both stress the continued impact today of late imperial Confucianism (the elite tradition for Huang, and the popular "Confucian" family system for Chen), which make sit unnecessary for them to postulate the existence of vestiges of late Zhou Confucianism at deep levels of the Chinese psyche. When we say these scholars deserve praise, we also wish to draw attention to the need for further study of the mechanisms by which values embodied in historical Confucian texts and lives become diffused throughout Chinese society, even if we have good *prima facie* reasons for assuming that they did undergo such diffusion.

Other scholars have been more content to accept something on the order of Berger's "vulgar Confucianism," allowing that values commonly sensed to be elements of traditional Chinese culture can be called "Confucian." Among them some feel more strongly than others the need to seek empirical evidence that these values actually are still operative today. Yang Kuo-shu and Cheng Po-shyun are the best examples of this within the scope of this article. Of course, Berger has also felt this need, as witnessed by his founding the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture. Moreover, he has become quite self-critical about using the term "Confucianism" due to an "aha experience" that he had after meeting with anthropologist Li Yih-yuan (Academia Sinica) in Taiwan and, later, visiting a spirit temple in Singapore. What he now calls the "Li hypothesis" stipulates that values associated with the post-Confucian hypothesis may in fact be rooted in folk traditions rather than in any "great tradition," Confucian or Buddhist (Berger 1988: 9).

It seems unlikely, however, that the majority of Chinese scholars working in this area will have a similar conversion experience. The works surveyed in this section of our essay conclusively demonstrate that the myth of Confucian China is alive and well today, at least among many social scientists in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The label "Confucian" is apt to be applied to a whole range of cultural values primarily on the basis that they have a certain Chineseness. As we have seen, these include discipline and frugality, pragmatism, harmony, respect for one's work, reverence for one's family, acceptance of hierarchical social structures, devotion to education, stress on shame and "face," concern for *guanxi* and *renqing*, personal/familial achievement, and so forth. Although this is not an entirely new trend, there is something new about it. The values in question are being linked with the Confucian tradition by social scientists seeking to describe its contribution to modernization, not by modernist critics of traditional Chinese thought and behavior. What does this mean for Confucianism as an evolving moral-spiritual tradition in the modern world? Who speaks for this tradition? Do they wish to join the chorus in praising Confucianism for its role in economic development? to what degree do they allow a place in their tradition for the values of "vulgar Confucianism"? These are among the questions on which we must reflect in section three of this article.

## 3

## Effects on Today's Evolving Confucian Tradition

The intent of this essay is simply to describe rather than to develop views of Confucianism. Nonetheless, at this point, we must commit ourselves to some definition of that tradition which, according to our argument, is being affected by social scientific discussions of Confucianism and economic development. We stipulate, first of all, that like any moral-spiritual tradition, the Confucian one is dynamic, always changing. Unlike many representatives of the tradition, we view it as having no unchanging essence. It certainly honors specific historical texts and lives, but their meaning is found in the written, oral, and behavioral expressions of each new generation of those who interpret the tradition. Thus, we stipulate, secondly, that the key decision to make is defining the tradition at any given time and place (e.g., contemporary Taiwan) is this: Who are its interpreters, or "carriers" (in the Weberian sense)? And, just as we expunge from our definition any notion of unchanging essence in a tradition, we also avoid identifying its "authentic" or "orthodox" carriers, leaving this task to those within the tradition. *Anyone doing the work of interpretation* qualifies as a carrier. The carriers (socially and individually) and their interpretations (in theory and practice) constitute the tradition.

While this seems simple enough as a general principle, applying it to specific cases is a complex task. Weber's work related to this issue is not much help for two related reasons: first, he assumed that one could identify a social stratum that would be "at least predominantly decisive" for a tradition; second, in the case of Confucianism, he said this stratum was traditional China's literati (Weber 1946: 268). Tautologically, yet for the most part correctly, the carriers of the *rujia* (literati tradition) were the *ru* (literati). Today, the *ru* as such no longer exist, and no other group has emerged as the "predominantly decisive" carriers of *rujia* (which, if translated into English as "literati tradition" and applied to contemporary developments, would be an anachronism).

Taking the case of contemporary Taiwan, for example, we see many competing interpretations of the Confucian tradition. There are interpretations from thinkers of the contemporary Neo-Confucian movement and other philosophers, from various governmental organizations, such as the Ministry of Education and the Committee for Chinese Cultural Resurgence (*zhongguo wenhua fuxing weiyuan hui*), from leaders of syncretic religions, such as the Way of Unity (*yiguandao*), and from the social scientists we have covered here. In what follows, we will not be able to consider the mutual influences between these four and all other groups of modern interpreters of Confucianism. We will limit ourselves to two groups of Chinese intellectuals, considering the possible influence of social scientific interpreters of Confucianism, among other relevant factors, on the first group of interpreters just mentioned, whom we will call "Chinese humanists."

Aside from the practical consideration (e.g., explicit interpretations of Confucianism by Chinese humanists are easier to identify and study than those of government officials or

leaders of syncretic religions), the strongest justification for emphasizing this group is their self-professed interest in the Confucian tradition. This means we endorse, to a degree, Wm. Theodore deBary's definition of "Confucianists," when he states: "For our purposes [identifying common elements in the works of relevant Chinese and Japanese thinkers of the 11th-19th centuries] it is enough to identify as Confucianists those who accept the authority of the Confucian classics as providing the most reliable guide to the conduct of life and government" (deBary 1959). We endorse this definition because it advises us to pay special attention to those who have some self-conscious commitment to the Confucian tradition. Yet, despite deBary's own intent to distinguish his approach from that of scholars who view Confucianism primarily in its role as a tool of government, we would want to interpret this definition broadly enough to include those whose "acceptance" of the tradition is not as pure as deBary might stipulate. In other words, we embrace the principle that one should begin with those, such as modern Chinese humanists, who have a commitment to the tradition that is relatively free of ulterior motives or interest in other traditions, yet we believe one should ultimately include those linked to the tradition in ways that are perhaps less direct or self-conscious (social scientists, government officials, leaders of syncretic religions, etc.).

### The Situation of Chinese Intellectuals

Because of our decision to focus on Chinese intellectuals, we wish to make two comments about their situation in recent history. The first is that, especially prior to the 1980s, whether or not a certain intellectual praised or criticized the Confucian tradition was often decided by the line between the two groups mentioned above: social scientists and Chinese humanists. In fact, those we will use below to represent the latter group can, with few exceptions, be called "Confucian" humanists, although those in the former group cannot simply be termed "anti-Confucian" without misinterpreting the complexities of the situation. A fine attempt to explain these complexities is found in Thomas Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*, in which the situation is described in terms that are very well suited for our purposes, with a focus on Taiwan just prior to the time when many social scientists began to evaluate Confucianism positively. According to Metzger:

The scientific May Fourth rejection of the Confucian order...is still very much alive, whether in Mao's Marxism or in the careful research of behavioral scientists like Yang Kuo-shu and Li I-yuan.... Although acutely aware of the need to avoid identifying "modern" personality patterns with peculiarly Western ones, they are forced by the very nature of their disciplinary literature to evaluate China's traditional patterns according to the norms of "modern" behavior formulated by American behavioral scientists like Alex Inkeles, and they often use terms like "authoritarian" and "particularistic" to type traditional behavior traits as pathological or at least undesirable today....[making] difficult



any humanistic attempt to turn back to their tradition as a source of moral values needed in contemporary life (Metzger 1977: 6-7).

Regarding Chinese humanists, he then adds:

Such an attempt, however, has been and is still being made by prominent Chinese intellectuals. Yet their work has also involved a radical departure from tradition. Generally speaking they have rejected institutional Confucianism and Confucian fundamentalism.... [T]he modern adherents of Confucian philosophy have given, perhaps, an unprecedented emphasis to this [false/true Confucianism] distinction, sifting through the impure ore of their past to extract a 'spirit' of morality which could serve for the future (Metzger 1977: 7).

The background of most of the scholars treated in section two of this essay, including Yang Kuo-shu, whom Metzger mentions by name, puts them clearly in the group he identifies as Westernized behavioral scientists. For purposes of this essay, it is important to note that the basic intellectual orientation of this group has been quite different from that of the Chinese humanists who have consistently supported the Confucian tradition.

Our second comment concerns a widespread, perhaps global, shift in the overall thought-world in which modern Chinese intellectuals exist. In our view, this is related to a more specifically Chinese shift away from what Romeyn Taylor calls "cosmic encompassment": the assumption in imperial China that the cosmos constituted the largest and most significant realm of value, within which the state and society (or the integrated state-society, as he sees it) exist as a subordinate realm of value that must maintain itself in accord with cosmic structures and forces (Taylor 1989). In our view, now that the most significant realm of value for almost all national leaders is the economic realm, we can say that ours is the age of "economic encompassment," in which the important forces are perceived to be market forces, not cosmic forces. The irresistible attraction of material betterment has made the development of industrial capitalism and related technologies the *summum bonum* for all nations willing and able to pay the price. Today we see a macabre reversal of premodern societies, in which the scope of economic activity was normally restricted by moral norms and customary taboos expressing the suspicion that profit seeking might undermine both personal morality and social harmony. Modern societies increasingly subordinate non-economic values to economic goals: higher GNP's, better industrial infrastructure, more adequate financial planning, etc. The main national goal, whether in Chinese societies or elsewhere, is no longer to be in harmony with the cosmos; it is to respond deftly to the ebb and flow of market forces.

Within this context, it is not surprising to find that new positive evaluations of the Confucian tradition stress its alleged role in economic development, especially when we

consider the source of these evaluations: social scientists who constitute the most "modernized" type of Chinese intellectuals. Therefore, although there has been a shift in their evaluation of Confucianism, we would be wrong to say they have abandoned those evaluative assumptions which, as Metzger says, they are forced to hold by the very nature of their disciplines. Indeed, it is precisely those assumptions--part and parcel of our age of economic encompassment--that leads them to define and evaluate Confucianism in a way that links it to economic development. Whether this is only a first step in a deeper re-evaluation of the Confucian tradition, considering its intrinsic (moral-spiritual) as well as extrinsic (utilitarian) value, remains to be seen.

### The Reconfiguration of Confucian Values and the Response of Chinese Humanists

Having adopted a view of the Confucian traditional a dynamic entity, and having described our time as the age of economic encompassment, we can now ask: What changes is the Confucian tradition going through in connection with the debate over Confucianism and economic development? What is signified by the tendency to accept more utilitarian criteria in evaluating Confucianism, giving a central place in the tradition's value structure to the "Confucian work ethic" and to commercial enterprise? And what has been the response of Chinese humanists, who over the years have claimed to appreciate the Confucian tradition for its intrinsic value, to re-evaluations of Confucianism by social scientists using utilitarian criteria?

First of all, it would be wrong to see the Confucian reappraisal of labor and commerce (as opposed to the ideal lifestyle of scholar-officials) as something new. Yü Ying-shih (Yu Yingshi), for example, has offered much evidence of the Song and Ming roots of this reappraisal in his stimulating response to Weber's analysis of Confucianism in *Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao lunli yu shangren jingshen* (Religious ethics and the merchant ethos in early modern China). This reappraisal, in Yü's view, involved not only more open Confucian attitudes toward merchants and commercial enterprise but also the development, during the Ming and Qing periods, of a Way of Merchants (*gudao*) that featured a Confucian-style "innerworldly asceticism" (Yu 1987: 147-161). Presumably, what we have, then, is a long-term gradual process of change that is best conceptualized as a *reconfiguration of values*. That is to say, we should understand that the seemingly new values that are central in a tradition today were probably once peripheral to the tradition but, nonetheless, part of it. It is rare, though possible, that entirely new values from outside a tradition will come to hold a central position within a new configuration. It is much more likely that old roots for "new" values can be found within a tradition, thanks especially to the breadth and ambiguity of the ancient sources of most traditions, including Confucianism. Thus, the importance of the recent re-evaluations of the Confucian tradition by social scientists is not their utter newness but their character as somewhat surprising developments which in fact fit well within larger trends: the evolving Confucian reappraisal of commercial enterprise, the

increasingly utilitarian ethos of our age of economic encompassment, and, most recently, the growing empathy among Chinese intellectuals toward their traditional culture.

What does this mean for Chinese humanists? although they are not the architects of the interpretation of Confucianism according to which it aids economic development, to the extent that they accept the role of custodians of the tradition, they will be concerned about the issue. And the issue is bound to be controversial for them. Thus, those Confucian humanists who have joined the debate over this issue, have been quite divided over the merits of the case linking Confucianism and economic development. This can be seen by looking, for example, at their participation in the aforementioned 1989 Conference on Confucianism and Economic Development.

At this conference, the first three papers were presented by well-known Chinese humanists invited by the conference organizers: Tu Wei-ming (Du Weiming 杜維明), Cheng Chung-ying (Cheng Zhongying 成中英), and Charles Wei-hsun Fu (Fu Weixun 傅維勳). Cheng and Tu, acknowledging the works of Berger and Kahn, for example, indicated a willingness to accept the post-Confucian hypothesis, with qualifications, including the idea of a place "post-Confucian" tradition for the values of "vulgar Confucianism" (Cheng 1989: especially 39-43; Tu 1989: especially 70-75). Charles Fu, by contrast, indicated strong opposition to the thesis in question, taking issue with "the common assumption of a causal link between this phenomenon of increasing economic prosperity and the ideological structure of Confucianism" and saying of those who hold this assumption, "their views represent a serious oversimplification of the situation" (Fu 1989: 105). In fact, Fu ended up taking a position like that taken by Winston Davis in his criticism of the "Japan theory," even referring to some of the same Japanese authors Davis had in mind. Fu concludes: "In short, the value-neutral "is" and the value-laden "ought" are intermingled in their approaches" (Fu 1989: 127-128). Speaking from his own normative position as a Chinese humanist, he outlines the features of a "multidimensional" approach to East Asian religions and, then, offers the following advice:

With the above understanding of the multidimensional complexity of Chinese and Japanese religious cultures, we can then put Confucianism in a broader (pluralistic-oriented) ideological perspective and engage in a truly meaningful philosophical quest for the ideological revitalization of this particular tradition. This revitalization has a two-fold task: Firstly a total removal of any negative elements within the tradition that may become an ideological obstacle to the further economic development in East Asian societies; and secondly a creative self-transformation of the tradition in its various East Asian forms, in such a way that it will continue to provide the peoples of East Asian societies with abundant inspiration and ideas in seeking a higher moral and cultural standard for the qualitative improvement of individual and society (Fu 1989: 124).

This passage well exemplifies the moral and humanistic tone which, according to Metzger, typifies the modern Chinese humanists' style of discourse.

Another example of this is found in an article in *Zhishi fenzi* by Harry Hsiao (Xiao Xinyi), another Chinese humanist residing overseas (Victoria University, Canada) who has been involved in the debate over Confucianism and economic development. In the title of his article he poses the question: "What can Confucian thought contribute to economic development" (*rujia sixiang duiyu jingji fazhan nenggou gongxian shenma*)? His answer begins with precisely the kind of distinction between forms of Confucianism which Metzger said characterizes the humanistic approach. Hsiao distinguishes three forms of Confucianism: "Junzi Confucianism" (*junziru* 君子儒), "Imperial Confucianism" (*yuyongru* 樂用儒), and "Feudalistic Confucianism" (*fengjianru* 封建儒). Junzi Confucianism is built around the traditional concept of *ren* mind yet finds itself in accord with modern concerns about pluralism, human rights, and "open society" ideals. Imperial Confucianism has been a mere prop for authoritarian rule right down to recent uses of Confucianism within the "two Jiangs" branch of the Nationalist Party. And Feudalistic Confucianism, which bears a striking resemblance to Confucianism as defined by many social scientists, designates the continuance of the consciousness and habits of conservatives within late imperial Confucianism. It includes elements of patrimonialism, familism, bureaucratism, and authoritarianism. Naturally, Hsiao's own judgment regarding theories on the relationship of Confucianism and economic development are offered from the perspective of Junzi Confucianism, as follows:

The relationship between the two is definitely not a causal relationship. In other words, modern economic development is indeed not the product of Confucianism [*ruxue* 儒學]. The personal cultivation and "inner sagely, outer kingly" *gongfu* 功夫 with which Confucianism is most concerned cannot directly influence economic thinking.... Confucianism has the virtues of discipline and frugality, honor of education, and respect for one's work. These are beneficial factors for economic development. but the greatest contribution that Confucianism can possibly provide for economic development in the future is this: When a crossroad is reached on the road of economic development, and a decision about how to proceed must be made, possibly valuable reflections will be derived from the experience with value orientations in Confucianism (Xiao 1986: 2).

The crossroads Hsiao has in mind are linked to issues of environmental pollution, quality of life, distribution of wealth, and the like.

Other Chinese humanists who have responded to theories about Confucianism and economic development, while still adopting a humanistic approach and not aligning themselves with behavioral science, have been less direct and comprehensive in their

response than Charles Fu or Harry Hsiao. Yü Ying-shih, whose aforementioned book holds a central place in discussions of this issue, has criticized theories linking Confucianism with economic development today for primarily historiographical reasons, rather than due to any objections to the theorists' views of Confucianism. He advocates an approach linking Confucianism and economic activity which is grounded in research into the historical situation of Confucianism as well as into the behaviour, thought, and values of traditional Chinese merchants (Yu 1987: 171-173). Nonetheless, Yü's book is generally regarded as an effort to defend Confucianism against its detractors, notably Weber, by uncovering its potential to aid economic development. As already indicated above, his book does so, above all, by telling the history of Confucianism's reappraisal of merchants and mercantile activity.

An interesting case of the ongoing nature of this reappraisal is found in a recent article by Ts'ai Jen-hou (Cai Renhou), a key figure among Taiwan's contemporary Neo-Confucians and Director of the Graduate Institute in Philosophy at Tunghai University. His article introduces "the contemporary Neo-Confucian view on rightness and profit (*dangdai xinrujia di yiliguan*). He describes this as a view in which "rightness and profit are both realized" (*yili shuangcheng*) in economic life, while distinguished at the level of moral principles. He argues that benefits for business and society as well as for Confucianism can follow from adopting this new view. On the one hand, if rightness serves as a guide in the pursuit of profit, business will benefit in the long run and society will see more examples of successful merchants and industrialists contributing to social welfare. On the other hand, if we can find ways to seek profit that accord with rightness, the Confucian tradition will be taking a step toward solving its problem of putting moral ideals to use in the real world (Cai 1991: 67-69).

Ts'ai's treatment of the Confucian distinction between rightness and profit, while fully within the humanistic style of discourse and based on a better knowledge of Confucian texts and history than is possessed by the economists treating the issue who were covered earlier in this article, yet his final judgment is right in line with their interpretations. Indeed, he has no axe to grind with social scientists who present Confucianism as a source of cultural factors that are useful in economic development. He feels that their willingness at least partly to abandon their anti-Confucian bias and offer positive evaluations of Confucianism follows naturally from the facts of East Asian economic success.<sup>11</sup>

Our final case of response by a Chinese humanist comes from Zheng Zhiming (Chinese Literature, Tamkang University), a less distinguished and younger Neo-Confucian, who is known best for his work on Chinese religion in Taiwan. The main reason for discussing his response is because it is a long review article criticizing one of the books we featured above: Hwang Kwang-kuo's book on Confucian thought and East Asian economic development. Zheng's article, moreover, focuses on the issue of Hwang's implicit definition of Confucianism. Zheng does not challenge the thesis that *renqing*, utilitarian *guanxi*, and

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Interview with Ts'ai Jen-hou at Tunghai University, June 15, 1992.

the like are cultural factors that can aid economic development. but he objects vehemently to the view that they can be derived from "Confucian thought itself" without distorting its "original meaning" (Zheng 1991: 440). The actual source of such cultural factors is not "Confucian thought" but "Confucian society" and "Confucian worship" (*rujia chongbai*), the latter term designating superficial reverence for elements of Confucianism (sages, texts, rituals) without understanding them (Zheng 1991: 444-45). As this indicates, Zheng's criticism of the social scientific approach to Confucianism and economic development is not as thoroughgoing as Harry Hsiao's criticism. Nonetheless, it is based on the same kind of distinction between more worthy and less worthy forms of Confucianism made by Hsiao, the *sine qua non* of the humanistic approach.

### Conclusion

Like other social scientists who have offered new, positive evaluations of the Confucian tradition, in doing so Hwang Kwang-kuo has undergone a major intellectual shift. Some even think of his shift as a conversion.<sup>12</sup> Yet Zheng's response to his book reveals the remaining gap between Hwang and Chinese humanists. In fact, differences between the two scholars encapsulate in a microcosm the larger division between Chinese humanists and social scientists as conceived above, with Metzger's input (defining "social scientists" somewhat narrowly as positivistic and/or behavioristic scholars). Humanists view the individual as a morally autonomous being seeking truth, while social scientists see the individual as a socially dependent being seeking security and gratification. Humanists see the Confucian tradition as the inherited wisdom of the past that the individual should use for personal cultivation and moral insight, while social scientists see the tradition as a source of social norms and behavior patterns. The humanists' interpretive approach stresses the intrinsic (moral-spiritual) value of the tradition, seeks the "original meaning" of texts, and entertains the idea that the texts express objective truth. The social scientists' interpretive approach, by contrast, stresses extrinsic (utilitarian) value, seeks the historical meaning of texts as this bears on the origin of social norms and behaviour patterns, and reduces the "truth" of texts' contents to their positive socio-economic functions.

Neither of these perspectives was new in the 1980s, when Chinese social scientists began to create their positive evaluations of Confucianism. What was new was the flow of social scientific interpretations on a large scale into the existing stream of modern Confucian hermeneutics, with its predominantly humanistic perspective. And, while the utilitarian criteria that entered the stream with these interpretations were also not new, their sudden

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<sup>12</sup> this includes two sociologists whom I formally interviewed, Michael Hsin-huang Hsiao (Xiao Xinhuang 蕭新煌, Academia Sinica, March 12, 1992) and Cheng-shu Kao (Gao Chengshu 高承恕, Tunghai University, June 9, 1992).

influx naturally induced a reaction from some Chinese humanists. Although their reaction followed upon very special circumstances, including East Asia's uniquely rapid economic development in recent decades, it can be compared with certain reactions of religious thinkers in the modern West. These are thinkers who lament what John Hick, for example, calls the displacement of "God" by "religion," which he explains as follows:

This displacement of "God" by "religion" as the focus of a wide realm of discourse has brought with it a change in the character of the questions that are most persistently asked in this area. Concerning God, the traditional question has naturally been whether God exists or is real. This is not a question that arises with regard to religion. It is obvious that religion exists; the important queries concern the purposes that it serves in human life, whether it ought to be cultivated, and if so, in what directions it may most profitably be developed. Under the pressure of these concerns, the question of the truth of religious beliefs has fallen into the background and the issue of their practical usefulness has come forward instead to occupy the center of attention (Hick 1990: 91-92).

The displacement of "God" by "religion" thus signifies the victory of the principle of utility ("practical usefulness") in many modern Jews' and Christians' evaluations of their own traditions. The lesson thus learned can surely be applied to contemporary interpretations of Confucianism as covered in this article. Looking at the other side of the coin, the interpretations of Confucianism covered here teach us that the displacement of "cosmic encompassment" by "economic encompassment" signifies that we are looking at more than the victory of the principle of utility among intellectuals in late twentieth century East Asia. We are looking at the adoption, perhaps globally, of a new set of assumptions about the "world" which call us away from concerns with cosmic forces and structures, and toward concerns with economic forces and structures (the World Bank, the European free Market, the North American Co-prosperity Sphere, GATT, etc.) And perhaps not even a hole in the sky can call us back.

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