



**Guo, Qiyong** 郭齊勇, *Investigations of Contemporary Neo-Confucian Thoughts* 現當代新儒學思潮研究  
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Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, as an ongoing spiritual movement, was once a popular field for academic researches. Nowadays, however, we face a somewhat stagnant state. Maybe it is time for a provisional summarization of previous studies if further advances are deemed necessary. Against this backdrop, scholars interested in this topic will welcome the publication of Guo Qiyong's 郭齊勇 *Investigations of Contemporary Neo-Confucian Thoughts* 現當代新儒學思潮研究. Guo has published numerous works in this field during the past decades. The work under review is "the crystallization of more than thirty years' continuous effort devoted to the field of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism" (Preface, 2). This monograph consists of eighteen chapters, covering in full depth nearly all the important figures emerging in this movement.

In terms of content, this monograph can be divided into four parts. Chapter 1 constitutes the first part; it is both the introduction and conclusion of the following investigations. Readers who wish to get a quick overview of this book might refer to it. Chapters 2 to 13 constitute the second part. The main figures of contemporary Neo-Confucianism—fourteen representatives—have been dealt with respectively therein. These concrete case studies are rich in content and full of inspiration. The third part consists of four chapters (Chapters 14 to 17). This part carries out four thematic investigations which present the historical features of this movement. Chapter 18, as the last part, is an addendum that discusses the principal traits of Chinese culture and its relation to modernity. In what follows I shall first summarize the main ideas of this monograph and then give my overall review.

Chapter 1 draws our attention to the following issues: background, essential characteristics, and specific pattern of this movement. Guo first emphasizes the cultural landscape around the May 4th Movement, that is, the multi-interactive situation that embraces various thoughts such as liberalism, scientism, conservatism, and so on. The rise of contemporary Neo-Confucianism indicates the self-awareness of cultural conservatism, the traces of which can be dated back to the National Quintessence (*guocui*

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國粹) School. Since its emergence, contemporary Neo-Confucianism has quickly developed into a vigorous philosophical movement and has achieved fruitful results during the 20th century. Guo adopts a fundamental framework, namely “Three Generations, Four Groups,” to locate the main figures of this movement. These three generations can respectively be labelled as Neo-Confucianism in Mainland China (two groups, before 1949), Neo-Confucianism in Hong Kong and Taiwan (the third group), and Overseas Neo-Confucianism (the fourth group). This seemingly simple framework will enable us to catch the basic pattern of this movement.

The first group has LIANG Shuming 梁漱溟, XIONG Shili 熊十力, and MA Yifu 馬一浮 as representatives. LIANG Shuming is the initiator of contemporary Neo-Confucianism. Against the currents of Westernization prevalent then, Liang distinctively highlights the true spirit of Confucius and holds that the modernization of Chinese culture must take Confucian traditions into account. In this way, he delimitates the direction of contemporary Neo-Confucianism. Nevertheless, it is XIONG Shili who actually establishes the metaphysical foundation of this movement. Xiong endeavors to reconstruct the Confucian ontology. His ontology regards “primordial creating-force (*qianyuan* 乾元)” or “original mind (*benxin* 本心)” as the ultimate entity of the universe that displays itself via a pair of complementary functions, namely “closing (*xi* 翕)” and “opening (*pi* 辟).” Xiong distinguishes philosophical truth from scientific truth. The former is acquired through “original reason (*xingzhi* 性智),” whereas the latter through “speculative reason (*liangzhi* 量智).” Xiong also insists on incorporating scientific traditions into further development of Confucianism. The case of MA Yifu is quite peculiar. He acts like a hermit and tends to express his thoughts poetically, yet he implies a comprehensive cultural philosophy in his thoughts. At the bottom is his doctrine of “mind-heart” (*xinxing* 心性) that explicates the infinite meaning of “original virtue (*xingde* 性德).” Within this foundation there spring two branches, namely the doctrine of moral cultivation and the theory of Six Arts (*liuyi* 六藝). The former focuses on “eliminating vasana (*kanluo xiqi* 刊落習氣),” while the latter reflects an all-inclusive view of culture. These three representative figures constitute a cultural community which has fostered the perpetual source of subsequent Neo-Confucian thought. Guo also includes ZHANG Junmai 張君勱 in this group. Zhang contributes much in political and legislative areas, yet his interpretations of Confucianism, though rich and inspiring, have not been very influential.

The second group, represented by QIAN Mu 錢穆, FENG Youlan 馮友蘭, HE Lin 賀麟, and FANG Dongmei 方東美, seems more discrete in their thoughts. QIAN Mu is a historian, yet his comprehensive studies of Chinese culture make him an advocate of the Neo-Confucian movement. He endeavors to explicate the fundamental spirit of Chinese history and regards Confucianism as the backbone of Chinese culture. His researches on Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, such as the thought of ZHU Xi 朱熹, have exerted strong influences. FENG Youlan’s work is purely philosophical. By adopting the logical methods of Western philosophy, he raises an ontology based on “principle (*li* 理)” and regards himself as a successor of Cheng-Zhu *lixue* 程朱理學. This philosophical reconstruction is somewhat misleading, yet Feng’s emphasis on negative methodology and his explications of the four levels of living states are full of inspirations and represent the shining elements of Feng’s philosophy of life. HE Lin also works in a purely philosophical way. He incorporates the essential thoughts of German Idealism and thereby establishes his own philosophy of spirit, namely rational idealism (*lixiang*

*weixinlun* 理想唯心論). He asserts that Confucianism constitutes the main stream of Chinese culture and the revival of Chinese culture will consist in the revival of Confucianism. Furthermore, his new interpretations of certain topics, for example, the problems of entity-function (*tiyong* 體用), knowing-acting (*zhixing* 知行), and so on, provide rich guidelines for further studies. Lastly, FANG Dongmei owns a peculiar position in the second group. He holds an open attitude of philosophical thinking. In fact, in his early life he devoted his research to Western philosophy. Only after middle age did he return to Chinese philosophy. Yet his philosophical spirit and interpretations of Confucianism have influenced subsequent generations of Neo-Confucians.

The third group refers to the community composed of TANG Junyi 唐君毅, MOU Zongsan 牟宗三, and XU Fuguan 徐復觀. TANG Junyi establishes his philosophical reputation very early. The starting point of his thought lies in recognizing the transcendence of the moral self (*daode ziwo* 道德自我), which not only constitutes the essence of moral cultivation, but also underlies all kinds of cultural activities. In this way, he constructs an all-inclusive cultural philosophy, the final edition of which is a magnificent mega-structure that explicates the nine stages of living states (*jiujing* 九境) of human existence. Furthermore, his distinguished expositions of Chinese humanism and retrospective discussions (*yuanlun* 原論) in the history of Chinese philosophy are full of inspiration. MOU Zongsan is the most original thinker among the contemporary Neo-Confucians. Mou dedicates his efforts to two main issues, namely, the modernization of Chinese culture and the reconstruction of Chinese philosophy. Concerning the former, Mou first demonstrates the essential differences between Chinese and Western culture, such as being “synthetically rational (*zonghe jinli* 綜合盡理) versus analytically rational (*fenjie jinli* 分解盡理),” and then indicates that the direction of modernizing Chinese culture is to establish simultaneously the spiritual, scientific, and political orthodoxies (*santong bingjian* 三統並建). Regarding the latter, Mou has provided excellent works via incorporating the thoughts of Western philosophers, Kant in particular. His interpretations of Chinese philosophy set new standards for further studies. His philosophical reconstructions, above all, consist in constructing the system of moral metaphysics (*daode xingshangxue* 道德形上學) and the dual structure of ontology (*liangceng cunyoulun* 兩層存有論). These contributions represent the highest level of philosophical thinking in the last century. XU Fuguan adopts an approach more akin to intellectual history. Nevertheless, he also regards the doctrine of mind-heart as the kernel of Chinese culture. He highlights the “consciousness of hardship (*youhuan yishi* 憂患意識)” and regards it as the root of Chinese humanism. He always stands on the side of ordinary people (*shumin* 庶民) and raises severe criticisms against the dark side of traditional politics, for example, the poisoning effects of imperial autocracy. Holding together, these three giants exhibit the strong vitality of Confucian spirit.

The fourth group is composed of five representatives, namely, CAI Renhou 蔡仁厚, YU Yingshi 余英時, DU Weiming 杜維明, LIU Shuxian 劉述先, and CHENG Zhongying 成中英. Only Du, Liu, and Cheng receive systematical discussions herein. Du’s philosophical insights lead to a system of philosophical anthropology which concentrates on the infinite possibility of human existence and thus embraces the dynamic interactions among four dimensions, that is, individual, community, nature, and the Way of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道). His thesis of “embodied knowing (*tizhi* 體知)” represents new advances of Confucian epistemology. Guided by these insights, Du takes an active part in international dialogues. LIU Shuxian succeeds the philosophical approach established

by Xiong and Mou. His philosophical contributions consist in three perspectives. First, he emphasizes the value of interreligious dialogue and greatly contributes in unfolding the religious dimension of Confucianism. Second, he makes further steps in explicating the full meaning of “immanent transcendence (*neizai chaoyue* 内在超越).” Third, his interpretation of “one principle, diverse manifestations (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊)” provides new possibilities for solving the problems of dualism and global ethics. CHENG Zhongying locates his philosophical thinking within the vast horizon of world philosophy. By integrating Western traditions of epistemology with Chinese traditions of value philosophy, Cheng sets up his own philosophical system, namely, ontological hermeneutics. Based on this, Cheng has carried out numerous studies in the fields of epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy of management and thereby reveals the strong vitality of contemporary Neo-Confucianism.

In terms of depth and breadth, this work is by far the most comprehensive research in this field. Guo has a comprehensive understanding of this movement and takes fourteen figures into discussion. It provides a panoramic view of the movement and therefore renders itself an encyclopedic work for future researchers. Considering the selection of subject matter, this monograph also exhibits mastery and ingenuity. For example, Guo emphasizes the poetical dimension of philosophical thinking when discussing MA Yifu’s cultural philosophy. In the case of MOU Zongsan, however, the idea of “new outer kingliness (*xin waiwang* 新外王)” has received detailed discussions. These constitute the merits of this monograph. Nevertheless, there are also some minor defects. The whole research is not very systematically structured; repetitions can be found here and there. These minor defects, however, could be corrected by further revisions. The problem that matters most lies in the following aspect: it signifies no definite direction to transcend the works done by contemporary Neo-Confucians. I would like to finish my review by discussing this problem.

Contemporary Neo-Confucians, as well known, develop their thoughts via continuously interacting with Western philosophy. They have already reached a very high level on philosophical integration, and it will never be an easy task to transcend what they have accomplished. Nevertheless, this task is unavoidable for scholars who endeavor to reconstruct Chinese philosophy. Here two possible directions are worth consideration. Concerning Western traditions, the resources adopted by contemporary Neo-Confucians are still limited. For example, TANG Junyi and MOU Zongsan greatly rely on German idealism. Yet there are other thoughts, such as the phenomenological tradition, which can offer different horizons. Concerning Chinese traditions, new possibilities must be explored. An example is the recent advance in the research of Confucianism in the pre-Qin 秦 period. Actually these two directions should be worked out hand in hand, for both of them draw their ultimate strength from the same resource—the human existence or lifeworld itself. Only by throwing ourselves into the authentic dimension of life and the genuine problems of time and reflecting them in a much deeper way, can we find the way to go beyond contemporary Neo-Confucianism.