

THE FAILURES OF CONTEMPORARY CHINESE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY¹

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PROLOGUE

In the late eighteenth century, the Qing dynasty scholar Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801) announced that the “Six Classics are all Histories.” For two thousand years, the Confucian Classics were publicly called “Sacred Classics,” despite the doubts about their individual authenticity raised by many Confucian scholars since the early empire. Along with the Four Books, they became the literary core of a classical education for elite Chinese males. Moreover, passing the civil service examinations required for becoming an official demanded mastery of the classical canon. In Zhang Xuecheng’s time, however, the Six Classics slowly began to lose their dominant intellectual and cultural position as sacred texts. Instead, the revival of historical studies, both cultural and institutional, gradually gained momentum. Although conceptually still a long distance from later historicism, Zhang’s famous announcement represented an important transition in the evolution of Chinese academic scholarship. In the twentieth-first century, Chinese intellectual history and the history of Confucian philosophy have irrevocably replaced classical studies as the dominant research agendas for graduate education in Chinese thought. Through the influence of Hu Shi, Qian Mu, Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, Wing-tsit Chan (Chen Rongjie), Liu Shuxian, Li Zehou, and Wei-ming Tu (Du Weiming), Confucian philosophy remains the dominant concern among Chinese and Western scholars of Chinese intellectual history despite the recent inroads made in Daoist and Buddhist studies in China.²

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If Zhang Xuecheng lived today, he might say, “The Twenty-five Dynastic Histories are all literature.” We are, I think, in the midst of another transition in historical scholarship that in its broadest significance already represents a major threat to historical studies as we have known them. Many critics of intellectual historians today appeal to postmodern literary criticism as the wave of the future. They question the professional authority and purported truthfulness of intellectual history, declaring (I am paraphrasing here), for example, that “Historians and novelists are indistinguishable”; or, “Facts are unknowable in themselves and all facts are determined by the theories that manufacture them. Just as facts are theory-laden, so all theories are culturally-laden”; or, “Novelists make up lies to tell the truth; historians make up the facts to tell lies.” In other words, postmodernists have dissolved history, particularly intellectual history, into literature, just as two hundred years ago Zhang Xuecheng and others dissolved the Classics into cultural and institutional history. Intellectual historians reply that theirs is a discipline based on objective texts, which in essence are different from the novels and stories whose writers invent them out of their imaginations. Postmodern critics, however, gainsay the claim that studies of intellectual history are objective, instead conflating novels and intellectual history into the same literary stream of consciousness of subjective human creations. Objectivity, as a modern cultural construct, becomes itself an object of analysis and no longer remains the indisputable premise of investigation.³

Such postmodern claims are overstatements, but their decisive critical edge cannot automatically be dismissed by intellectual historians of China who remain convinced that their field is immune from the larger changes in our intellectual fields. At the very least, we have to admit that there are elements in historical writing that closely resemble the novel, such as the nationalistic claims that pervade all national histories in the world’s textbooks of history used in elementary and higher education today. For instance, the elucidation of historical events and persons has close affinities with narrative style—so much so that the historian’s predispositions (such as the tradition of praise and blame in China) and his *problematique* are difficult to separate from the novelist’s crafts of emplotment and characterization. If intellectual historians cannot accept that portion of the postmodern critique of history that hits its mark, then the future advance of an intellectual history of China independent of nationalistic history will be imperiled. Just like classical studies two centuries earlier, contemporary intellectual and cultural studies of China will follow a formalistic philosophic path predetermined by unspoken nativist sentiments in Taiwan and China or glorified by contemporary religious sentiments. In addition, literature, as the truly creative genre, will triumph as the dominant, pluralistic form of intellectual history.

At the very least, cultural historians of China should prepare a reasoned defense of their use of historical evidence and narrative that adequately takes into account the postmodern critique of writing intellectual history as emplotment and adequately preserves the historian’s task as separate but not alienated from the task of literature. Otherwise, out-of-date intellectual historians will find their students increasingly turning to literature as the means to unravel the meaning of historical events. Labeling such practices as fads will not suffice when a field like intellectual history becomes trapped in its own philosophic pretensions and is unable to adapt to

new circumstances. The demise of classical studies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries should remind us of what happens when a scholarly discipline becomes lifeless. Disciplines die not when they are totally refuted, but when they are no longer inhabited. Nor will contemporary appeals to cultural history as a social science that is 100 percent objective do much good. Chinese history on both sides of the Taiwan Straits has already used up its social science capital, revealing a bankrupt national history that dances either to the tune of Marxist social science or that of the Kuomintang. The Republican History projects begun by academics in China and then answered by scholars in Taiwan are but further examples of the poverty of state-controlled Chinese historiography (so-called dynastic history); they were not simply Marxist-Leninist or Maoist in origin, but also products of long-term imperial habits of historical control. The massive effort by PRC scholars under the auspices of the Qing History Institute at People's University to update the 1928 ROC version (there was no PRC then) of the *Qing Dynastic History* is suffering a similar fate in ultranationalist Beijing circles today. Our increasing epistemological vigilance and growing methodological sophistication worldwide have left behind the social science methodologies and the Cold War political context of our immediate predecessors in their wake.

The choices cultural historians of China face in the twentieth-first century are extraordinarily rich and complex. In the current Western postmodern and Eastern postcommunist era, the older methodologies of our predecessors are increasingly anachronistic. But many of the old methodological problems they grappled with remain unresolved despite the changes in the contemporary world to which our historical scholarship must address itself. The legacy of Marxism in cultural history, for example, remains part of the sociology of knowledge approach pioneered by Karl Mannheim and still influential in the contextualization movement today. Mannheim confronted the dangers of sociological reductionism in his *Ideology and Utopia*, but despite his efforts to link intellectual life to its location in society, he and his followers remained too dependent on a class-based analysis of social formations. In the end, ideology remained for Mannheim the possession of the dominant social class; his methodology over-determined the social origins of intellectual phenomena without leaving sufficient space for the relative autonomy of discursive formations and their internal evolution. Nonetheless, his association of utopian ideas with group resistance to the dominant ideology makes it clear that for Mannheim social domination created its own intellectual dissent.⁴

Similarly, teleology remains the chief legacy of Western modernism in contemporary intellectual and social history. Whether in the history of ideas or in the social science modernization narrative, both kinds of historians measure the past according to the yardstick of the present. As the present changes, that yardstick also changes. In an earlier era, when China was visibly economically backward and militarily weak when compared with Western European nation-states, Confucianism was singled out and blamed for that backwardness. Now that China's present is far different from its past, so also the perception of Confucianism has changed; it is now viewed as the facilitator of modernity. In many ways, the measuring process depends on which "present" one uses to measure which "past"—the yardstick chosen at the outset. In the 1950s, we wrote about the reasons for the success of socialism in Russia and China; now we write about its demise. In another few decades we may discover that socialism's obituary, like Confucianism's, was premature.

Modernization itself is not the issue. After the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64), the processes of conscious Westernization in China began; from that period, the historian must make this process an object of analysis at all levels, from the intellectual to the economic. The problem arises when the modernization framework as a conceptual apparatus is applied uncritically to Chinese history before Westernization itself became part of the fabric of the Chinese state and society, and thereby a viable part of the choices made by Chinese agents for change. It is anachronistic to employ upon earlier periods a framework suitable for analyzing historical phenomena in Chinese history after 1860. We wind up in a teleological narrative that reduces historical phenomena to something they never were: steps to or obstacles against the transition to modernity. This positive or negative reading of the Chinese past through the lens of modernization has been our contemporary research agenda for several generations. Postmoderns have successfully exposed the ahistorical biases inherent in this overemphasis on the present (modernity) as the measure for the past. Modernization remains an important object of inquiry in Chinese history after 1860, but it has outlived its usefulness as the overall framework for evaluating Chinese culture and society before the Taiping Rebellion.

Functionalism is perhaps the most important legacy of European structuralism, which has been influential in Western Europe since the 1960s. In European cultural history, Michel Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge" (despite his denials that he was a structuralist) and Pierre Bourdieu's "reproduction" approaches are now widely used to describe and analyze the forms of cultural hegemony employed by elites to disguise and maintain their domination of wealth, power, and prestige in social and political life. Foucault has stressed the hegemony of the state and its modernizing elites in organizing prisons and hospitals in modern Europe for the purposes of control and containment of the common people by the emergent bourgeoisie and its capitalist economy. Bourdieu's reproduction model, in particular, has replaced earlier 1960s stress on social mobility as the key yardstick for measuring the social dynamics of society. Building on Emile Durkheim's pioneering analysis of the role of education in reproducing the existing division of labor inherent in all societies, Bourdieu has given new life to the study of the cultural forms of political and social domination that an earlier generation of "vulgar Marxists" had studied in the light of economic determinism.⁵

The revival of neofunctionalist forms of analysis in contemporary historical sociology, however, raises many problems for the intellectual historian. A functionalist description of cultural events, like its structuralist predecessors, does not deal adequately with the complicated relationship between the intentions of agents and the social, political, and economic consequences of their ideas when put into practice. For Foucault, with some reservations, the institutional consequences of prison and hospital reform in European history implicate all agents who were involved in the process of reform itself, even when their personal intentions were quite different from the historical consequences. Likewise for Edward Said, a follower of Foucault without any of the latter's historical nuances, all Western scholars from Marco Polo to John Fairbank are implicated in the creation of Orientalism, which legitimated the processes of imperialism in Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The actual intentions of those scholars, some of whom were clearly prior to or opposed to Western domination, are irrelevant to the functional consequences.

Such blanket historical scapegoating is the result of the over-determination of the complex relationship between human agency and historical process in favor of the functionalist consequences. Earlier Marxist scholars used ideology to describe the disguised links between high-minded agents and imperialist consequences. Later, existentialists such as Sartre psychoanalyzed the connection and used the concept of bad faith to analyze the discrepancy between ideals and actions.

Moreover, these thinkers' positions have assumed an unchanging, essentialist notion of agency that remains a captive of the freedom of will versus determinism debate that has shackled—ironically, to be sure—Western theorists since the classical Greeks. Nietzsche and Freud's discovery, that clarifying human agency and the forms of human decision making were historical problems genealogically embedded in the larger problem of the biological evolution of human consciousness, has not been taken seriously enough by intellectual history. These essentialist, over-determined accounts tell us more about the methodological presuppositions of the analysts than about their objects of analysis.

For instance, the more Bourdieu's basic assumption of the reproduction of social hierarchies through the accumulation and translation of financial into cultural capital is uncritically applied without distinction to all national contexts, the less it can adequately explain the specific forms such processes take on in particular cultures. Can one argue that cultural capital existed in a society like that of late imperial China, which had no legal concept of intellectual property, or even of economic capital? Bourdieu's brilliant premise of an analogy between cultural and private property, whereby cultural capital is a “disguised form of physical ‘economic’ capital,” is based on his twentieth-century fieldwork in North Africa and is too restricted in historical vision. Accordingly, references to cultural capital in late imperial China—despite the existence of complex markets in the Yangtze and Pearl river deltas, modes of calculation among elites to maintain or improve their economic status, and substantial investment in education by gentry and merchants—must appear anachronistic and misleading to a critical historian. Unfortunately, some of my more thoughtful graduate students at UCLA and Princeton have fallen into this functionalist trap and now glibly describe how the so-called financial capital invested by late imperial Chinese gentry in preparation for the civil service examination system automatically translated into cultural and political capital and the maintenance of a system of Confucian cultural hegemony. We must guard against such crude, mechanistic notions of cultural-cum-political forms of domination of the common people by elites. Instead, we ought to strive for a more sophisticated and historically nuanced understanding of the actual patterns of social and political control in which subordinate groups are actively involved in both their own subordination and their resistance to it.

As soon as we include in our historical perspective the disjunction between formal and applied knowledge, we quickly realize that the forms of resistance and protest employed by subordinates against their superiors take place in a social and political space that is governed more by the situational judgments of daily practice than by the strictures of formal knowledge.⁶ Thus, to privilege the cultural hegemony of medical or prison ideology as in Foucault's writings, or to assume the absolute domination by what is called “Neo-Confucian orthodoxy” in late civil imperial examinations, as some have read into my own work, is misleading.⁷ Just as

hegemony or reproduction, if used uncritically, are over-determinative concepts, so too is the contrary claim of the total autonomy of the agents of formal knowledge under-determinative. More than just autonomous individual choice is involved in cultural creation and transmission; social, political, and economic context do make a difference. As historians we need a new, constantly shifting, middle ground between ahistorical functionalism and free will voluntarism, which will enable us to move back and forth more easily between the cultural forms of domination and individual or group forms of resistance.

CHINESE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AS THE “HISTORY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY”

If for the moment we limit ourselves to Chinese cultural history, we find that what to date has been called Chinese intellectual history usually has been a less technical version of the history of Chinese philosophy. Despite important exceptions, that there have been subjective elements in the prioritizing of Confucian philosophy in Chinese intellectual history—at the expense of Daoism, Buddhism, and Islam, not to mention popular culture or women’s history—is undeniable, even when rhetorically denied.⁸ What I mean by the phrase “history of Chinese philosophy” is the common application to Chinese studies of a simplistic version of the history of ideas approach by the early pioneers of the study of Chinese thought, such as Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, who were influenced by the German *geistsgeschichte* approach to the history of philosophy or by American approaches.⁹ Later, Arthur Lovejoy’s history of ideas approach (worked out at Harvard in his *The Great Chain of Being*) became influential among American-trained scholars of Chinese intellectual history. They thereafter privileged the internal development of ideas as the methodological framework for elucidating traditional Chinese thought and concepts, while overlooking Lovejoy’s own efforts to avoid a purely philosophical approach to intellectual history.

Although there have been welcome Weberian-style changes introduced by Yü Ying-shih in his acclaimed study of the Confucian religious values of Chinese merchants,¹⁰ a simplistic version of Lovejoy’s approach still enjoys such preeminence in Taiwan and the United States that the history of Chinese thought remains largely separated from its social, political, and economic context. The result has been a narrative account of Chinese intellectual history long on philosophy but short on historical or political context. For example, recent accounts of Dai Zhen’s central importance in eighteenth-century Chinese intellectual history, unlike Hu Shi’s pioneering study of Dai’s philosophy and Yü Ying-shih’s valuable follow-up that linked Dai Zhen to evidential research studies, have tended to present an overly simplistic narrative that confines Confucians such as Dai within so-called Neo-Confucianism.¹¹ The Neo-Confucianization of Dai Zhen is now so complete that recent translations of his work into English make very little effort to take into account earlier work on Dai’s philological interests by Yü Ying-shih, among others.. Nor have Dai Zhen’s writings on astronomy and mathematics been given the attention they deserve; instead, we are presented with a stock interpretation of Dai as a Neo-Confucian philosopher who challenged some of the underpinnings of Neo-Confucian discourse but remained in essential agreement with it.¹²

In contrast, the reason why Japanese scholarship on Dai Zhen remains far ahead of its Chinese and American counterparts is obvious; Japanese scholars are not trapped by the “Neo-Confucian agenda.”¹³ Yoshida Jun, for instance, has suggested links between Dai Zhen’s famous accusation that followers of *lixue* (studies of principles) “used moral principles to kill people” and the complex moral dilemmas faced by wives of merchants in Huizhou prefecture, Dai Zhen’s home area. Because their husbands frequently were away from home on business in other provinces, such wives faced social and moral pressures that led to several famous suicides by women who were caught in moral dilemmas brought on by socially perceived personal transgressions. When viewed in this light, Dai Zhen’s famous remarks take on a new social meaning:

The high and mighty use *li* [moral principles] to blame the lowly. The old use *li* to blame the young. The exalted use *li* to blame the downtrodden. Even if they are mistaken, [those in control] call [what they have done] proper. If the lowly, the young, and the downtrodden use *li* to resist, even if they are right they are labeled rebels. As a result, the people on the bottom cannot make their shared emotions and desires [in all persons] in the world understood by those on top. Those on top use *li* to blame them for their lowly position. For those uncountable throngs of people, their only crime is their lowly position. When a people die under the law, there are those who pity them. Who pities those who die under the aegis of *li*?¹⁴

Yoshida Jun’s shift of perspective helps us better to understand how Dai was perceived by cultural radicals such as Tan Sitong (1865–98), who in the late nineteenth century wrote on the gender quandaries of Confucianized women in a patriarchic gender ideology. Discussing the social implications of Confucian morality, Tan had Dai Zhen in mind when he prepared his influential *Renxue* [A Study of Benevolence] as a revaluation of the perennial doctrine of *ren*. Addressing human sexuality, Tan wrote:

Ordinary women, deluded by moral principles [*mei yu lidao*], revere the absurd platitudes of corrupt scholars as if they were inviolable truths. If they ever take a wrong step in life, or are suspected of having an affair with someone, then, because of this, they are seized and even die saying nothing. In the end they become the playthings of others; they are forced to flee; they are sold as goods; they are forced to work as maidservants; they sink into prostitution; and they even cut their throats out of shame and anger. They do not realize that sexual relations between men and women are just the turning of two mechanisms; there is absolutely nothing to be ashamed of, let alone to lose one’s life for. Practitioners of Chinese medicine have a theory that men have three climaxes in sexual intercourse and women have five. This theory is so excellent that it ought to be known by everyone.¹⁵

Intellectual historians of China have rightly defended their discipline against the reductionist strategies employed by social and economic historians. Accordingly, they appeal to the autonomy of ideas from their historical context. Determinism, when applied to the history of ideas—whether according to the standards of Popper’s “vulgar Marxism” or the Mannheim-style “sociology of knowledge”—have both failed to capture the full complexity of ideas in social and political practice

and have missed the cultural aspects of the transmission of social and political power from one generation to the next. Nevertheless, it is equally misguided to leap to the implausible opposite culturalist fallacy that ideas, values, and culture alone are determinative in social and economic life, as some recent champions of Pacific Rim Neo-Confucian ideology have suggested.¹⁶ Reductionism should be critically addressed, but such a position does not substantiate the idea of immaculate conception either—whether in its Judeo-Christian-Islamic monotheistic guise or in its Buddho-Confucian form as the “pure mind.”

In sum, to reduce the complex cultural, social, political, and economic life of the Chinese people to the evolution of Confucian moral ideals or Neo-Confucian philosophy is as misguided an approach as economic determinism. In modern Chinese history, intellectuals have had to react to many important social, political, and economic changes, as they still do today. Such influences are not determinative in any absolute social or economic sense. Likewise, some earlier Confucians such as Wang Fuzhi (1619–92) reacted to the fall of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and the Manchu triumph differently from others such as Gu Yanwu (1613–82) or Huang Zongxi (1610–95). Yet they all experienced an age of turmoil and change, to which they responded in various ways. The historical context did not determine their actions, but it does help us to understand why they wrote what they did. Likewise, in the twentieth century, Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu could not help but be influenced by the failure of republican government in restoring stability after the fall of the Qing dynasty. Yet each reacted differently and chose a different intellectual path to follow. Similarly, Wang Kuo-wei’s suicide was but one idiosyncratic response to the chaos of the early Republic.¹⁷

When restored to its proper discipline of philosophy, the history of Chinese philosophy becomes a valuable record of elite Chinese thought rather than the sole determiner of Chinese intellectual history. The history of ideas approach, in turn, serves Chinese philosophy as one method of reconstructing the internal integrity of Confucian and Neo-Confucian thought that can be compared to Taoism and Buddhism in China. Neo-Confucianism has hitherto been praised by intellectual historians for its philosophical vision as a sophisticated and multidimensional set of metaphysical doctrines and moral teachings, emerging during the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126), and later systematized by Zhu Xi (1130–1200). But outside the domain of its contemporary champions, Neo-Confucianism has also been blamed by social historians for its nefarious political uses as an autocratic state ideology.¹⁸

How doctrine becomes ideology is an important historical question; in raising it, we move from the internal integrity of philosophic positions to the political, social, and economic uses of ideas in particular historical contexts. How ideas inform and authorize action is a question that carries us beyond the domain of so-called pure philosophy and the traditional history of ideas. Instead of interrogating ideas in texts for their universal meaning, we decipher how they reveal the particular contexts of those whose actions were informed and served by references to those ideas. In the contemporary turn from the history of ideas to cultural history, our role as intellectual historians of China shifts from trusting in the ideals of Neo-Confucian philosophy to distrusting their historical manipulations.¹⁹

Neo-Confucian philosophy and political autocracy became dubious partners during the Mongol Yuan dynasty (1280–1368) when, at the urging of Confucian (many of them non-Han Chinese) advisors in 1313, the interpretations of the great Song philosopher Zhu Xi were for the first time made the orthodox guidelines for the imperial examination system belatedly resumed in 1315. This brief partnership in turn led to a long-term political and cultural relationship that was consummated in a formal wedding between Neo-Confucian ideas and imperial state power during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Han Chinese Ming and Manchu Qing emperors, like their Mongol predecessors, believed that the Zhu School provided cultural and political justification for their rule. When emperors selected Neo-Confucianism as the verbal machinery of that rule, they in effect tied the legitimacy of their dynasties to that philosophy and committed the state to its educational propagation in schools and on civil examinations.

Allowing the history of Chinese philosophy to dictate the terms of Chinese intellectual history, however, places unnecessary limits on Chinese cultural history. Such limits are most evident in the single-minded discussions of Neo-Confucian philosophy that continue to dominate the field and keep it behind methodologically when compared with European, American, or Japanese intellectual history. The so-called “unfolding of Neo-Confucianism” research agenda now includes a one-to-one correspondence between the educational theories of Neo-Confucianism and contemporary East Asian capitalism.²⁰ The internalist, history of ideas approach in Chinese intellectual history now suggests that Confucian moral philosophy can determine social, political, and economic change in modern China.

In a curious refraction of Max Weber’s famous linkage between the Protestant value system and the spirit of capitalism, twentieth- and twenty-first-century champions of Neo-Confucianism have argued that Song-Ming Confucianism corresponds in China to a spiritual value system (Protestantism in Europe) that was liberal and conducive to the moral practices undergirding an economic system based on trust, diligence, and stress on education. At first sight, such claims are plausible, but upon closer examination one can see that claimants have frequently focused on the philosophical legacy of the twelfth-century Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi and his *lixue* followers. A stronger case for the bourgeoisification of Confucianism can be made for late Ming times,²¹ but pushing it back to Zhu Xi is the equivalent of European scholars arguing that the spirit of capitalism in the West should be pushed back to the medieval Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–74). Why do so many scholars of Neo-Confucianism entertain this speciously clever teleology, when few Europeanists—other than Catholic purists—would modify Weber’s functionalist analysis of Christianity to include Catholicism in the emergence of the spirit of capitalism? Such historical refractions suggest a hidden agenda lurking in the Neo-Confucian appropriation of Weber’s still-controversial thesis concerning the selective affinity between early modern Protestantism and capitalism in northern Europe—a latent “Zhu Xi-ism” just below the surface in many such accounts.²²

Linking Neo-Confucianism to East Asian capitalism also has become an interesting feature of the new field known as Pacific Rim studies. Some cautionary words about the invention of the Pacific Rim in the late twentieth century are needed, however. Apart from its geographic notation, there was no such thing as Pacific Rim studies in the past. As an academic and journalistic construction, the

invention of the Pacific Rim is reminiscent of the Japanese-inspired invention of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere during the Pacific War (1931–45). Recent appeals to the Pacific Rim gloss over the complex realities of historical development in East Asia for the questionable unity of so-called Pacific Rim Culture. As yet no such unity exists. Perhaps the present nations of the Pacific Rim will develop such a unity in a century or so, but today's Pacific Rim is the neologism of the second stage of Orientalism in Asian studies—or the “New Orientalism,” as many critics have described it.

In its initial stage, Asian studies existed in Western universities as Oriental studies, which included the Middle East, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, and East Asia. This classification was at least useful in getting the discipline started, but in the twentieth century it became apparent that Turkey and China had nothing “oriental” in common, and that this classification represented the ethnocentric epistemological agenda and historical ignorance of nineteenth-century European scholars. Hence, in Western textbooks on China and Japan, nomenclature shifted from the “Orient” and the “Far East” to “East Asia.”

Now, a new generation of orientalists wishes to submerge all that is different into a unified category called the “Pacific Rim.” This homogenization is largely the work of those specializing in contemporary Asian studies, who give short shrift to the long-term social, political, cultural, and economic trajectories of the peoples and societies that have evolved on the shores of the Pacific. To conveniently label them all “Pacific Rim” is simplistic and misleading, just as the “Orient” was a false category for an earlier generation of scholars. Of course, to dissolve the disciplines of philosophy, history, anthropology, literature, linguistics, and sociology into the epistemological category of the “Pacific Rim” also conveniently prioritizes Neo-Confucian studies as the common domain of elite cultural life in these nations. In contrast, one can hardly imagine many scholars taking an equivalent agenda for Europe and the U.S. called the “Atlantic Rim” very seriously; nor would a concept of religion called “Neo-Christianity” be very useful to them.

The invention of the Pacific Rim coincides, however, with cultural and historical amnesia about the twentieth-century fall of the Japanese and Chinese empires, when Confucianism was more dominant in political and intellectual life than it is today. One must also forget that an earlier generation of Chinese and Japanese intellectuals contended that Confucianism stood in the way of modernity and was not its facilitator. Those working on East Asia, having recently emerged from the false category of the so-called Orient, should not be expected to replace it with that of the Pacific Rim so easily, especially when this category has no relevance for historical research generally or intellectual history in particular.

By entering their discipline into contemporary East Asian debates over modernization, historians of Chinese philosophy succeed mainly in politicizing Chinese intellectual history. One must choose sides for or against Neo-Confucianism as a facilitator of modernization. Chinese intellectual history, I would suggest, should not become an intellectual referendum on Neo-Confucianism. Instead it should be a scholarly discipline, perhaps attached to cultural history, where the uses and abuses of ideas in China can be assessed in light of contingent social and political structures undergoing continuous change.

In order to give a precise example of the directions Chinese intellectual history might take, I will reevaluate below the narrative account historians have prepared for the development of New Text Confucianism during the late Qing, which most accounts of the so-called unfolding of Neo-Confucianism during the late empire simply ignore. By reviewing old evidence from my 1990 study of the Changzhou School of New Text Confucianism,²³ I will reply to recent Chinese critics in Beijing at People's University by showing how the study of Chinese thought can be enriched when cultural, social, and political history are used to add new dimensions to our earlier philosophic analysis of Qing Confucianism. I hope I can convince younger readers here and abroad that intellectual and social historians have much to learn from each other. I prefer to call this overlap cultural history, but some others seem to be satisfied that intellectual history per se can be broadened to include such areas of inquiry.²⁴

THE LATE QIANLONG ERA (R. 1736–1795) AND NEW TEXT CONFUCIANISM

The reemergence of New Text Confucianism has been subsumed within a linear historical narrative that has made the 1898 Reform Movement the focus of its analysis. Intellectual historians of modern China quickly learn, for example, that in 1898 New Text Confucianism became the last stand of radical Confucians such as Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao (1873–1929). Earlier New Text scholars such as Wei Yuan (1794–1857) or Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) have usually been characterized, since Joseph Levenson's influential account of modern Chinese intellectual history, as the precursors for late-Qing reformers.²⁵ Linear accounts that organize the New Text historical narrative in neat stages from Kang Youwei back to Wei Yuan and Gong Zizhen uncritically accept modernist assumptions about the key issues and important figures in so-called modern Chinese intellectual history. The roles played by the Changzhou New Text scholars Zhuang Cunyu (1719–88) and Liu Fenglu (1776–1829) usually have been submerged within this narrative.

To avoid the teleological assumptions undergirding current narratives of New Text Confucianism during the Qing dynasty, I have focused on the beginnings of the New Text revival in Changzhou instead of its 1898 ending. My aim was to discover beginnings as beginnings, without the historical teleologies commended by hindsight. It has long been assumed that the story of New Text Confucianism centers on Kang–Liang and the 1898 Reforms initiated under the Guangxu Emperor. It therefore came as a complete surprise when I discovered that opposition between an aging Chinese grand secretary, Zhuang Cunyu, and a youthful Manchu palace guard, Heshen, who gained the confidences of the Qianlong Emperor, was at the heart of the eruption publicly of Gongyang Confucianism in the 1780s within and without the Zhuang lineage in Changzhou. This was despite the fact that recent research shows that as early as the mid-1760s Zhuang had already begun composing a series of texts to delineate the Gongyang classical theories informing the *Springs and Autumns* as annals associated with Confucius.²⁶

Who was Zhuang Cunyu? Normally he appears as a footnote in accounts by historians who are smugly satisfied that Wei Yuan and Gong Zizhen represent the reformist ethos of nineteenth-century China. Who was Liu Fenglu? Usually he is depicted as little more than Wei Yuan and Gong Zizhen's teacher in Beijing.

When the historical documents, genealogies, and manuscripts of the Zhuang and Liu lineages in Changzhou prefecture are examined, however, a scholarly vertigo sets in. Zhuang Cunyu and Liu Fenglu were at center stage in the political world of late imperial China. By comparison, Wei Yuan and Gong Zizhen were marginal figures whose historical importance largely has been determined by a consensus of twentieth-century scholars.

When we move our focus from Kang-Liang in the late nineteenth century to Zhuang-Liu in the late eighteenth, we are able to grasp more fully the implications of the rise of New Text Confucianism during the Qing dynasty. Once we make this change in historical perspective, however, a new range of problems emerges. What was the political context of Zhuang Cunyu's turn to Gongyang Confucianism? What was the social role of the prestigious Zhuang and Liu lineages in incubating the New Text School in Changzhou prefecture? These questions went unasked when the goal was to present the seamless, internal evolution of New Text ideas leading to Kang Youwei.²⁷ The new perspective does not reduce the evolution of New Text Confucianism to Chinese social and political history, but it does enable us to present the eighteenth-century context within which that evolution began. What can we learn when the intellectual history of New Text Confucianism goes beyond the limits of classical studies and the history of Chinese philosophy?

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Zhuang lineage in Changzhou had become a powerful kinship organization, whose strength included high social prestige in local society, considerable political influence in national politics, and scholarly acclaim for a learned tradition of Confucian literati. In the Qing period alone, the Zhuang lineage in Changzhou had a total of twenty-nine of its members attain the highest degree status of *jinshi* (palace graduate). Of these, eleven ranked so high on the triennial palace examination in Beijing that they immediately entered the exclusive Hanlin Academy, which served the emperor directly in his daily governmental tasks. Similarly, the Liu lineage in Changzhou amassed over thirteen *jinshi* degree holders during the Qing period, several of whom also entered the Hanlin Academy. Zhuang Cunyu, for instance, was the *secundus* for the 1745 palace examination; his younger brother Peiyin was the *optimus* for the 1754 competition.

Taken together as an affinally related group of corporate lineages, the Zhuangs and Lius produced over forty-two men who attained high government office in the Qing period. Their prominence in local and national circles peaked during the middle period of the Qianlong reign, when Liu Lun (1711–73) became a minister in the Council of State, the most important executive body in the Qing government, while at the same time Zhuang Cunyu was a Grand Secretary serving in the Ministry of Rites. When Liu Lun arranged with Zhuang Cunyu to have his son Liu Zhaoyang (1746–1803) marry Zhuang's daughter, this was a union of very high local and national significance. It was Liu Fenglu, the eldest son born out of this marriage, who would provide the intellectual leadership for the Zhuangs and Lius in the early nineteenth century.

Strangely, however, after 1780 the Zhuangs and Lius began to distance themselves from imperial politics in Beijing and focus instead on local family matters. Between the death of Zhuang Cunyu in 1788 and the rise of Liu Fenglu

to prominence two decades later, both Changzhou lineages retreated from the national spotlight. Why? Liu Lun's son Liu Zhaoyang, for example, passed the special provincial civil examination given by the Qianlong Emperor in 1784 on his tour of the south. Moreover, Zhaoyang ranked first on the special examination, and the aging emperor was pleased that the son of his minister Liu Lun, who had died in 1773, did so well. Zhaoyang's older brother Liu Yueyun (1736–1808) had earlier passed the *jinshi* examinations with great distinction in 1766 and served as a Grand Secretary after initially entering the Hanlin Academy. Yet Zhaoyang in the 1780s and 1790s never traveled to Beijing to take the metropolitan examinations. Instead he remained in Changzhou with his Zhuang wife and eldest son Fenglu, content to spend his time in teaching and study. Why? Zhuang Cunyu's nephew Zhuang Shuzu (1751–1816), who was raised by Cunyu after the premature death of his younger brother Peiyin, passed the 1780 palace examinations but never held office after returning to Changzhou. He became a private scholar, famous for his Han Learning studies, while he took care of his widowed mother. A case of filial piety, and no more?

The mystery deepens because the timing of the spread of Zhuang Cunyu's turn to Gongyang Confucianism coincided exactly with the beginning of the Zhuang–Liu retreat from court politics in the 1780s. Because Zhuang Cunyu was a close friend and colleague of Agui (1717–97), one of the leading Manchu statesmen in the late Qianlong era, the latter had offered to employ Cunyu's nephew Zhuang Shuzu on his staff in Beijing. Yet Shuzu preferred to take the metropolitan examination to prove himself qualified for high office; when he passed in 1780 he still retired to a life of scholarship. Why? In the 1780s and 1790s, Zhuang Shuzu passed on his Han Learning philology and New Text scholarship to Liu Fenglu, who had first studied as a child with his grandfather Cunyu until the latter's death in 1788. Liu Fenglu's New Text Confucianism, then, was a combined product of Zhuang Cunyu's Gongyang Confucianism and Zhuang Shuzu's Han Learning philosophical scholarship.

The mystery of the Zhuang–Liu withdrawal from Beijing politics in the 1780s became intelligible when I read Wei Yuan's handwritten essays known as the “Guweitang wengao” [Draft essays from the Hall of Ancient Subtleties], collected in the Rare Books Section of the National Beijing Library in the spring of 1983. The editors of the *Wei Yuan ji* [Collected writings of Wei Yuan] had used these documents to compile and publish their widely read two-volume edition of Wei's essays. Included among the handwritten drafts were two versions of the preface that Wei Yuan had written for the 1828 publication of Zhuang Cunyu's collected essays known as the *Weijingzhai yishu* [Bequeathed writings from the Study of Appealing Classics]. In both drafts of the preface, Wei Yuan charted Zhuang Cunyu's career as a “true Han Learning scholar” who had avoided what Wei considered the trivial textual studies of most Han Learning scholars during the Qing dynasty. In only one version, however, Wei Yuan added a politically charged statement at the end of the preface. Wei described how during his last years as a Grand Secretary Zhuang Cunyu served the emperor together with the erstwhile palace guard turned imperial favorite, Heshen, who began in the late 1770s to build a private empire based on corruption and extortion unprecedented since the late Ming dynasty palace eunuchs. Wei wrote that Zhuang and Heshen did not get along, and that Cunyu's

classical studies written during those depressing years were filled with grief and disappointment over Heshen's growing power.

This important document became more meaningful as other evidence began to accumulate concerning the magnitude of the literati's reaction to the Heshen era of corruption, an opposition led particularly by Zhuang Cunyu's Manchu colleague and friend Agui and a coterie of literati from Changzhou including Zhang Huiyan (1761–1802) and Hong Liangji (1746–1809). In the first place, although the editors of the *Wei Yuan ji* also published the draft that included Wei's reference to Heshen, they failed to note that in the actually printed edition of the *Weijingzhai i-shu*, the reference to Heshen in the preface had been strategically dropped. In other words, even in the early years of the Daoguang reign (1821–50), either Wei Yuan had not dared to refer publicly to Zhuang Cunyu's opposition to Heshen, or members of the Zhuang lineage had asked that this delicate matter be excised from the published preface. Upon rereading Zhuang Cunyu's own writings, however, it became clear to me that the political fallout of the Heshen affair was an important clue to deciphering why Zhuang's lineage had increasingly turned to his unorthodox Gongyang studies of the *Springs and Autumns* for classical research. Through the veil of classical allusion, particularly the historical veil of Confucius's praise and blame tradition, which the recent PRC critiques of my findings have underestimated, Zhuang Cunyu had encoded a political critique of his age and his distaste for Heshen and his cronies. These writings, although the Zhuangs easily could have afforded to print them earlier, had remained unpublished for almost forty years after Zhuang's death. The alleged original versions that Zhuang Cunyu began writing as manuscripts in the 1760s under the auspices of the Qing court were never published and have never come to light!

Later, when I reviewed Wang Xixun's (1786–1847) early nineteenth-century discussion of Zhuang Shuzu's career, written after Shuzu's death in 1816 and included in Wang's *Qiezhu'an wenji* [Collected essays of Wang Xixun], the effect that the Heshen affair had on the Zhuang and Liu lineages as a whole became clearer. In the 1780 palace examination, for instance, Zhuang Shuzu's examination paper originally had been ranked among the top group, thus making him eligible for appointment directly to the Hanlin Academy, as his father Peiyin and uncle Cunyu had been. But fearing an additional ally of Agui in the powerful Hanlin Academy, one of Heshen's men in court tampered with the ranked papers before they were presented to the emperor (he normally read only the top three). Zhuang Shuzu's paper was placed below the top group, thereby effectively eliminating him for consideration for appointment to the Hanlin Academy. Shuzu's unusual retirement from politics thus was in part a response to political corruption at court.

Similarly, Liu Zhaoyang's decision to remain in Changzhou as a teacher after passing the special 1784 provincial examination was symbolically powerful. After 1784, Heshen's power increased to the point that his enemies were forced to ponder carefully how they hoped to survive his wrath. Under the circumstances, Zhaoyang's decision not to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious father, father-in-law, and older brother represented not only his own decision but also the collective wisdom of the Zhuang and Liu lineages, who might lose everything—symbolic and material—that they had worked for over the centuries if they openly opposed Heshen and his henchmen. In a time of chaos and corruption, calculated retirement

was a time-honored Confucian tradition, which Zhuang Cunyu had emulated in his own studies of Confucius's *Springs and Autumns*. The Zhuangs and Lius passed on their dissenting turn to Gongyang Confucianism and Han Learning within the protected environment of their lineages until Heshen's death in 1799.

Interestingly, one of the leaders of the opposition to Heshen during the early years of the Jiaqing reign (1796–1820) was the Hanlin academician Hong Liangji, whose famous letter of remonstrance to the new emperor in 1799 almost cost him his life. A native of Changzhou, Hong Liangji had studied as a child in the Zhuang lineage school. In addition, Hong's wife was a Zhuang. Consequently, in the background of Hong's participation in the anti-Heshen faction during the first years of the Jiaqing reign (the Qianlong Emperor was alive until 1799, but in retirement) lay the Changzhou opposition. Hong's famous letter, written after the retired Qianlong Emperor had passed away and Heshen had soon after been forced to commit suicide, contained numerous passages that indicated that the Qianlong Emperor's early advisors had been horrified during the last years of his reign as Heshen built his empire of corruption. It was precisely at the time of Hong's letter, for example, that the Jiaqing Emperor's personal classical mentor, Zhu Gui (1731–1807), had prepared a preface for Zhuang Cunyu's studies of the *Springs and Autumns*.

The political occasion for the expansion of New Text Confucianism into the public arena came with the Heshen affair. In Changzhou, literati from Zhuang Cunyu to Hong Liangji felt compelled to respond to this flagrant betrayal of dynastic legitimacy. One of the responses was Zhuang Cunyu's ongoing turn to Gongyang Confucianism, which he transmitted within his lineage to his nephews Zhuang Shuzu, Zhuang Youke (1744–1827), and Zhuang Shoujia (1774–1828), and to his affinally related grandsons Liu Fenglu and Song Xiangfeng (1776–1860). It is not the aim of this essay to detail the intellectual content of Zhuang Cunyu's Gongyang Confucianism or Liu Fenglu's New Text Confucianism.²⁸ Read in this new political and social light, however, Zhuang Cunyu's writings contain previously neglected levels of meaning that cannot be reduced to claims that Zhuang was making patriotic appeals to the "grand unity" of the late Qianlong era, as has been argued in recent accounts.²⁹ The eruption of New Text Confucianism in the late Qianlong era cannot be described as an act of empty classical rhetoric in which men like Zhuang Cunyu and Liu Fenglu merely glorified the emperor and his reign. Would the Qianlong emperor really have tolerated the public use in the court of an iconoclastic commentary such as the Gongyang to glorify his reign, when it had been used so many times before to critique contemporary politics?³⁰

THE END OF THE MODERNIZATION NARRATIVE FOR LATE IMPERIAL CHINESE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

In my opening discussion, I described some new directions in Chinese cultural history. Others would certainly see things differently. Even if they disagree, however, they still have to come to grips with the challenges of postmodernism and postsocialism and recognize the failure of the study of Chinese philosophy alone to explain the vicissitudes of Chinese intellectual history or the future course of Chinese civilization.³¹ We have been bequeathed a so-called Confucian field of intellectual history weak in studies of late imperial Taoism and Buddhism, reluctant to

entertain the contributions of popular culture, and blind until recently to the role of women and gender in Chinese cultural life. Increasingly, intellectual historians are dissatisfied with the past research priorities of the history of ideas approach, whose practitioners typically have been caught in a Western-inspired modernization narrative at the unspoken, conceptual level of their historical research.

After Karl Marx noted in editorials written in the 1850s for the *New York Daily Tribune* that the mission of capitalism was to destroy traditional Indian and Chinese society, and Max Weber noted the “failure” of Chinese Confucianism to produce capitalism, studies of Chinese intellectual history were initially focused on the supposed failure of imperial China to develop capitalism, produce modern science, or achieve modernization. In the late 1980s, however, scholars began to describe the construct of the Pacific Rim as a Confucian economic success story. Earlier studies of Chinese thought tended either to dismiss premodern Chinese intellectual history, particularly the history of Confucianism, as a dismal exercise in rote learning before the coming of the West. Recent studies, on the other hand, tend to over-emphasize the philosophical ideals of Neo-Confucianism as the cultural basis of modern Chinese liberal historical development. The former explained modern China chiefly in terms of the revolutionary impact of the West but had no adequate answer for how or why the imperial state, its gentry elites, and Confucian orthodoxy survived for so long in their final late imperial forms, from 1400 to 1900. The latter now explain the post–World War II success of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore in terms of Neo-Confucian cultural values that have translated into economic success, but have no explanation for why Neo-Confucian values were tied to an imperial system that irrevocably collapsed in 1911.

We now find Chinese intellectual historians in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore developing a new modernization narrative of China within which they prioritize the role of Confucianism in the twenty-first century. Unwittingly, many of them are continuing a shrewd Confucian agenda first articulated by Kang Youwei a century ago, namely that Confucianism and modernity are compatible. Instead of Kang’s visionary New Text Confucianism, however, his successors appeal to Song Neo-Confucianism as the required cultural system to keep Chinese political, social, and economic development moving on the path to modernity. A century ago Kang was willing to jettison late imperial Neo-Confucianism in the name of Confucian modernism. Today we are told that Neo-Confucian modernism is in the offing in the coming Pacific Century. But until we have an adequate explanation of why Kang and others at the turn of the twentieth century rejected Neo-Confucianism, the revival of Zhu Xi at the turn of the twenty-first remains suspect.

Recent efforts to interpret Wei Yuan as a liberal statecraft scholar are examples of the intriguing linkage in contemporary scholarship increasingly being forged between students of Neo-Confucianism and champions of Pacific Rim ideology. An article I recently was asked to referee, for example, attempted to link Wei Yuan’s nineteenth-century statecraft ideas to his so-called liberal economic vision. In a curious way, Neo-Fairbankian scholarship on Wei Yuan, which now stresses lessening the importance of the Western impact in modern Chinese history,³² has now linked up with the earlier picture of the supposed unfolding of Neo-Confucianism. In this interesting wedding of two research agendas now tying the knot between them in intellectual studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Wei Yuan

thus appears as both a liberal Neo-Confucian and a progressive statecraft thinker. Translations of portions of Wei's edited collectanea *Huangchao jingshi wenbian* [Compendium of Qing dynasty writings on statecraft] present a Whiggish portrait of him.³³ Likewise, William Rowe's portrayal of the eighteenth-century scholar-official Chen Hongmou (1696–1771), though more nuanced, still presents Chen as a liberal, statecraft-oriented Neo-Confucian who represents the "mind of the eighteenth century" in "early modern" China. Betty Peh-T'i Wei presents quite a different portrait of Ruan Yuan (1764–1849), a major scholar-official from the late Qianlong reign to before the Opium War, who disputed many of the metaphysical niceties that underlay Neo-Confucian theories and its ideological hegemony in Qing civil examinations..³⁴

Premodern Chinese reformers and modern Chinese intellectuals unfortunately have served us well as cannon fodder. Loaded down by our own contemporary presuppositions, we have used earlier Chinese scholars as ammunition to support our own unspoken agendas. We still have not put behind us the misleading image of Huang Zongxi as the "Rousseau of China." Nor have we overcome the erroneous image of Yen Yuan (1635–1704) as a Dewey-style American pragmatist. In both China and Japan, Wang Fuzhi remains trapped as the pioneer of materialism in early modern Chinese thought. Things do not get much better in more recent studies: in the 1990s the classical Taoist Zhuang Zhou became a Derridean deconstructionist; and in Pierre Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus*, Li Zhi (1527–1602) appears as a Bourdieu-like anti-academic academic. In the early twenty-first century, Daniel A. Bell has provided us with an alleged "insider's account" of Chinese culture whereby as the People's Republic of China retreats from socialism, it's people are increasingly embracing a new Confucianism as a compelling alternative to Western liberalism. Is that really all there is to it?³⁵

A further example of recent interpretive over-determination in Chinese cultural history is the ongoing debate in American Chinese studies concerning the application of Habermas's notions of a public sphere and civil society to modern Chinese history. Essentially, the debate is over how to define the complex relations between the late imperial state and gentry society (particularly in the Yangtze Delta) from 1600 to 1900. Proponents of a Chinese public sphere argue that the gentry-managerial elite in urban centers in the late Ming period had initiated movement toward an autonomous political and economic sphere vis-à-vis the state. Opponents contend that the use of the concept in Chinese history uncritically applies Habermas's bourgeois civil society in eighteenth-century Europe as the yardstick for Chinese gentry society, thereby missing the unique political and social compromises worked out between the imperial state and its elites beginning in the Song dynasty. These long-term compromises successfully reined in any localist movements toward political autonomy during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties.³⁶

The conceptual distance between a Western notion of "public" versus a Chinese/Confucian defense of "public," however, renders anachronistic even limited claims for a public sphere in late imperial China. For example, anthropologists and sociologists have seen premodern Chinese lineage organizations as a particularistic and divisive feature of gentry society or as an impediment to a Western-style civil society capable of assuming modern political form. But the imperial state's rulers and its Confucian officials saw instead the convergence of kinship ties and public

interests, which were incorporated through the legalized institutionalization of charitable estates, thereby fulfilling the egalitarian ideal of equitable distribution of wealth and resources throughout society. Where gentry political associations based on non-kinship ties during the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties were defined by the state as “private/selfish” and therefore were banned as illegitimate, social organizations based on descent were promoted as “public,” the exact opposite of modern Western nomenclature.³⁷

The reason the imperial Chinese state supported kinship groups as “public” is not difficult to understand. The Confucian persuasion—conceptualized as a social, historical, and political form of daily practice organized around ancestor worship—encouraged kinship ties as the cultural basis for moral behaviors, which were thought to redound to the state’s credit. Consequently, we cannot assume, as advocates of the public sphere in China often do, that there was an inverse correlation between the power of the state and the development of kinship groups. Chinese lineages before 1900 did not develop in private antagonism to the state, but evolved as a result of the public interaction between the state and its elites. This historical phenomenon cannot be properly addressed by applying the Habermas model of a civil society to China. Efforts to finesse this point by arguing that in China the public sphere included family and lineage interests reduce Habermas’s position on public versus family interests in eighteenth-century Europe to pabulum.

For cultural and intellectual historians of China, the public sphere debate requires us to avoid simple-minded linkages between Confucian/Neo-Confucian philosophy and the development of a civil society in late imperial China. The modernist, Westernized tendency to concentrate on individuals in Chinese intellectual history has long obscured the important roles played by family and lineage in China’s cultural history. Intellectual historians cannot isolate Confucian literati from their social setting without losing touch with the *lebenswelt* of those literati. Nor can we afford to neglect the complex machinery of lineage communities in the construction of Confucian cultural values and classical schools of thought. Chinese intellectuals before the twentieth-first century did not construct a vision of their political and social life ex nihilo. Their lives were embedded in larger social structures premised on the centrality of kinship ties. More often than not, cultural resources were focused on the formation and maintenance of lineages for family success in the academic and political worlds.

American scholars of Chinese intellectual history will likely increasingly leave behind the false choices of the postwar modernization narrative that entrapped their predecessors. We have begun the immense task of integrating China’s intellectual with its social, political, and economic histories. This slow process of the historical integration of intellectual life in China with its society and culture is best represented, I think, by late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century studies of Song and Ming Confucianism in which the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts for Confucian thought 1000–1900 were adequately addressed for the first time.³⁸

Of course, much has been left out of these works, particularly popular culture and women’s history, although Dorothy Ko and others have broken much new ground here.³⁹ Increasingly, younger scholars are turning to these important parts of Chinese intellectual history, and they will modify our earlier conclusions.

As we move away from the modernization narrative and its unspoken impact on the study of Chinese intellectual history, which gave prominence of place to the history of Confucian/Neo-Confucian philosophy, new perspectives are needed to guide research and instruction. The old textbooks must not simply be revised or appended, but rewritten. But most importantly, we must continue to train our students well. Postmodern theoretical sophistication is of little use in Chinese intellectual history, if they cannot properly read and decipher a classical text. Linguistic prowess in classical Chinese is wasted if they cannot connect their classical work with the larger problems of the field. They must be taught to challenge the received wisdom of their predecessors, just as they will teach their students to do the same to ours. Faith and loyalty have their uses, but they are limited defenses against historical deception and academic autobiography. In the end, Philip Rieff was right in his *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* when he said: “I, too, aspire to see clearly, like a rifleman with one eye shut; I, too, aspire to think without assent. This is the ultimate violence to which the modern intellectual is committed. Since things have become as they are, I, too, share the modern desire not to be deceived.”

NOTES

1. This essay is based on a paper presented initially at the UCLA Conference on Chinese Intellectual History, Los Angeles, 13 February 1993. This is its first, extensively revised, English-language publication; portions have appeared in Chinese in *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan* [Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies] 12 (1992): 1–25, and have been reprinted several times in China.
2. See, for example, Stephen Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2006.), and Stephen Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety: Daoism and the Birth of Rebirth in China* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2007).
3. See Keith Baker and Peter Reill, eds., *What's Left of Enlightenment?: A Postmodern Question* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001), and Hayden White, *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987).
4. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991).
5. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*; translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972), and Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1993).
6. See Eliot Freidson, *Professional Powers: A Study of the Institutionalization of Formal Knowledge* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988).
7. See Benjamin Elman, “Social, Political, and Cultural Reproduction Via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no. 1 (1991): 7–28. For misreadings see Hilde de Weerdt, “Aspects of Song Intellectual Life: A Preliminary Inquiry into some Southern Song Encyclopedias,” *Papers on China* (Harvard University) 3 (1994): 27, and Kai-wing Chow, “Writing for Success: Printing, Examinations, and Intellectual Change in Late Ming China,” *Late Imperial China* 17, no. 1 (June 1996): 122.
8. See Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1964–74), 5:181; and Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton & Co., 1965), 109–10 (“negation”).
9. For the former, see Wilhelm Windelbandt, *A History of Philosophy*, trans. James Tufts, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1958).
10. Yu Ying-shih, *Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao lunli yu shangren jingshen* [Early Modern Chinese religious patterns and commercial spirit] (Taipei: Lianjing Press, 1987; Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1990).

11. Yu Ying-shih, *Lun Dai Zhen yu Zhang Xuecheng* [On Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng] (Hong Kong: Longmen Bookstore, 1976).
12. Edward Ch'ien, "Neither Structuralism Nor Lovejoy's History of Ideas," *Ming Studies* 31 (1991): 67–69. For new views, see Ming-hui Hu, "Provenance in Contest: Searching for the Origins of Jesuit Astronomy in Late Imperial China," *The International History Review* 24, no. 1 (March 2002): 1–36.
13. Hamaguchi Fujio, "Dai Shin no kōkyō" [Dai Zhen's evidential research], *Akita daigaku kyōiku gakubu kenkyū kiyō* 36 (1986): 17–36.
14. See Yoshida Jun, "Etsui tsoto biki koron" [Short discussion of Chi Yun's random essays from his studio], *Chugoku—shakai to bunka* 4 (1989): 182–86; and William Rowe, "Women and the Family in Mid-Qing Social Thought: The Case of Chen Hongmou," *Late Imperial China* 13, no. 2 (1993): 1–41. For the original source, see Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* [Evidential study of meanings of characters in the *Mencius*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 10 (My translation).
15. My translation. See *Tan Sitong quanji* [Complete works of Tan Sitong] (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 304–5.
16. See William Theodore de Bary, *The Liberal Tradition in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese Univ., 1983); and de Bary, and John Chaffee, eds., *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989). See also my review, "Education in Sung China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 1 (1991): 83–93.
17. Benjamin Elman, "Wang Kuo-wei and Lu Hsun: The Early Years," *Monumenta Serica* 34 (1979–80): 389–401.
18. For differing views, see F. W. Mote, "The Growth of Chinese Despotism," *Oriens Extremus* 8, no. 1 (1961): 1–41; and W. T. de Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1981). See also John W. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1983).
19. See Benjamin Elman, "Where is King Ch'eng: Confucian Civil Examinations and Imperial Ideology During the Early Ming Dynasty, 1368–1415," *T'oung Pao* 74, no. 1 (1993): 23–68.
20. See de Bary and Chaffee, *Neo-Confucian Education*.
21. See Cynthia Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991); and Richard von Glahn, "The Enchantment of Wealth: The God Wutong in the Social History of Jiangnan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51, no. 2 (1991): 651–714.
22. See Benjamin Elman, "Education in Sung China." Review of Wm. Theodore de Bary & John Chaffee, eds., *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage*, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111, no. 1 (January–March 1991): 83–93.
23. Benjamin Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990).
24. See Hoyt Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 1992); and Peter Bol, "This Culture of Ours": *Intellectual Transitions in Tang and Song China* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press 1992).
25. Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969).
26. See Elman, "Qianlong wanqi Heshen, Zhuang Cunyu guanxi de chongxin kaocha" [Reexamination of the relationship between Heshen and Zhuang Cunyu in the late Qianlong period], *Fudan xuebao* [Fudan Journal, Social Sciences] 3 (2009): 59–63, 140.
27. See Wang Fansen, *Gushibian yundong de xingqi* [The origins of the Debates on Ancient History] (Taibei: Asian Culture Co., 1987).
28. Interested readers should refer to chapters 4–7 of my *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship*.

29. See Tang Zhijun, *Jindai jingxue yu zhengzhi* [Modern classical studies and politics] (Beijing: Zhonghua Bookstor, 1989), Wang Junyi, “Zhuang Cunyu fuxing jinwen jingxue qiyin yu ‘Heshen duili’ shuo bianzhe” (Debating the reason why Zhuang Cunu revived New Text classical studies and the theory that it was to oppose Heshen), *Qingshi yanjou* (2007) no. 1.
30. Forthcoming work by Professor Xu Liwang in the History Department at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou will show that Zhuang Cunyu did not dare use the Gongyang interpretations to lecture the Manchu princes in the Qianlong court as part of their required classical studies.
31. See, for instance the recent Pollyannaish presentation in Daniel A. Bell, *China’s New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008).
32. Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984).
33. Helen Dunstan, “Safely Supping with the Devil: The Qing State and Its Merchant Suppliers of Copper,” *Late Imperial China* 13, no. 2 (1993): 42–81.
34. William Rowe, “The Public Sphere in Modern China,” *Modern China* 16, no. 3 (1990): 309–18. See also Helen Dunstan, *State or Merchant?: Political Economy and Political Process in 1740s China* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006); and William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001). Compare Betty Peh-T'i Wei, *Ruan Yuan, 1764–1849. The Life and Work of a Major Scholar-Official in Nineteenth-Century China before the Opium War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 2006). See my review in *The Journal of Chinese Studies* (Chinese Univ. of Hong Kong) 47 (2007): 543–46.
35. Daniel A. Bell, *China’s New Confucianism*.
36. See Rowe, “Public Sphere”; and Philip C. C. Huang, “The Paradigmatic Crisis in Modern Chinese Studies: Paradoxes in Social and Economic History,” *Modern China* 17, no. 3 (1991): 320–21. A number of more recent papers on this topic by Philip Huang, Mary Rankin, William Rowe, and Frederic Wakeman, among others, appear as part of a symposium in *Modern China* 19, no. 2 (1993).
37. See Elman, “Imperial Politics and Confucian Societies in Late Imperial China,” *Modern China* 15, no. 4 (1989): 379–418.
38. See Yu, *Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao luali*; Tillman, *Confucian Discourse*; Bol, “*This Culture of Ours*”; and Elman, *From Philosophy To Philology: Social and Intellectual Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Institute Monograph Series, 2002). For recent work on material culture, see Craig Clunas, *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China, 1368–1644* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), and Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998).
39. See Dorothy Ko’s pioneering *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994), and her *Cinderella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2005).