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Revolutionary Confucianism? Neo-Confucian Idealism and Modern Chinese Revolutionary Thought

Germaine A. Hoston[1]

Abstract

This article explores the relationship between materialism and philosophical idealism in the political philosophy of Marxist revolutionary movements, by illuminating the influence of Neo-Confucian idealism on the sinification of Marxism. Although they had virtually no access to the writings of the young Marx, Li Dazhao and Mao Zedong incorporated idealist philosophical ideas into their sinified Marxism. I argue that three elements of Neo-Confucian idealism contributed to the sinification of Marxism that emerged by the 1940s: (1) acknowledgment of the real existence of the material world as apprehended by the mind-and-heart in Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism; (2) emphasis on human will and consciousness, drawn from Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucianism; and (3) recognition of an autonomous, even decisive role of consciousness and culture in revolutionary change. The resulting sinified Marxism constituted a revolutionary New Confucianism, highlighting the most universal, humanistic, liberative elements in the Chinese philosophical tradition. These community-affirming and spiritually rich elements can be mobilized against authoritarian forces to support the continuing struggle for human rights and democratization within and well beyond China today.

Keywords

Marxism, Li Dazhao, Mao Zedong, Wang Yangming, Zhu Xi, critical theory

What is the relationship between materialism and philosophical idealism in Marxian revolutionary thought? Although Karl Marx developed his dialectical materialism through his critique of Hegelian idealism as *The German Ideology*, the writings of the young Marx and Engels continued to bear the imprint of Hegelianism (Avineri 1972). Those writings were lost until they were recovered in the early 1930s at the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, which had forged strong ties with the German Institute of Social Research (Held 1980). Disillusioned by the failure of socialist revolutions to materialize in Europe and the rise of fascism, the Frankfurt School developed critical theory to explain how European history had diverged so dramatically from the Kantian promise of human freedom. They resolved to reformulate Marxism to address the realities of contemporary capitalism and to repudiate "the transformation of Soviet Marxism into an ideology of state socialist bureaucracy (Antonio 1983, 332)." Georg Lukács, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse incorporated the themes of the nature of reason, truth, and freedom from Marx's idealist roots into their critical theory (Held 1980). Has such a combination of materialism and idealism appeared in Marxian revolutionary movements, and has it succeeded?

For an answer, we turn to China, where the failure of a socialist revolution to materialize in Europe in 1919 had its most profound effects. Even before the 1905 Russian revolution, Western anarchist and socialist thought had been introduced into Japan and China through English translations of *The Communist Manifesto* and Frederick Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific.* Engels's mechanistic presentation of historical materialism was reinforced after the Bolshevik Revolution by Evgeny Preobrazhensky's and Nikolai Bukharin's *The ABC of Communism* (1919) and Bukharin's *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology* (1921), both translated into Japanese and available to Chinese readers as well by 1925.

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These works, which bore no trace of the idealism in the thought of the young Marx, were crucial formative influences upon East Asian Marxists (Hoston 1994, 108–111). Asian activists who studied at the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute were taught an economic deterministic Marxism. Idealism was of concern to them almost exclusively in the debate between Bukharin and Russian philosopher Abram Deborin. During the Yan'an period (1935–1945), Mao Zedong (1893–1976)[1] read "Theses on Feuerbach (Wakeman 1973, 223)," but that brief critique of Ludwig Feuerbach's materialism lacked even a rudimentary explication of German idealism. Given these circumstances, one would not expect to find idealist influences in the sinified Marxism that emerged in that era.

Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that the philosophical idealism of Chinese Neo-Confucianism played a significant role in the sinification of Marxism. This finding relies upon three observations. First, insistent denunciations of Confucianism as feudalistic or "semi-feudal" by Chinese Marxists notwithstanding, the latter invoked Ruist,[2] especially Neo-Confucian, ideas to interpret Marxist theory. Second, it is primarily to such idealist Neo-Confucian influences that the originality of sinified Marxism can be attributed. Recent studies have shown that a mélange of Ruist and Neo-Confucian ideas introduced in Europe by Jesuit missionaries to Gottfried Leibniz and Christian Wolff in the 17th century made significant contributions to German idealism (Hoston 2024b; Schönfeld 2006). Thus, Chinese Marxists had direct access to some Chinese idealist elements from their own intellectual heritage that influenced German idealism, including the notion of totality. Third, despite their disagreements, the competing "Rationalist" and "Idealist" Schools of Neo-Confucianism were in fact both (a) rationalist, because of their common emphasis on Principle/Reason (*Li* 理) as the force governing the universe and (b) idealist, because the mind-and-heart (*xin* 心, a concept that includes both intellectual and affective faculties) was central as either the origin of all reality (in the Idealist School of Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming) or the means by which we cognize it (in Zhu Xi's Rationalist School).[3]

The existing literature on Chinese Marxism emphasizes how Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders addressed the challenges of implementing a socialist revolution in a country that lacked a mature capitalist economy. Their "sinification" of Marxism did not merely expand Lenin's prescription of a temporary role for the peasantry in the Russian revolution; it also ascribed a significant longer term role to that class comprising the vast majority of China's population. Because disillusionment with the Chinese past enhanced the appeal of Marxism in China, consideration of continuities between Chinese Marxism and indigenous philosophical traditions is exceedingly limited. Schwartz's study of Mao emphasizes iconoclasm among CCP leaders (1951), while Schram devotes only a few pages to Ruist, Legalist, and Daoist ideas that might have influenced Mao (1989, 63, 141). Starr offers a thoughtful discussion of Chinese philosophy but draws no firm conclusions regarding its influence (1979, chaps. 1–2); and Wakeman discusses European idealism extensively (1973) but does not identify the connection between Chinese and European idealism or analyze the interaction between idealism and materialism. Nor have any subsequent studies of Chinese Marxism done so, as scholarly interest within and outside China has shifted from the Maoist era to contemporary issues.

This paper breaks new ground, arguing that the following Neo-Confucian idealist themes were incorporated into the sinified Marxism that emerged by the 1940s:

- Acknowledgment of a historical materialism consistent with recognition of the real existence of the material world within Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian idealism alongside its emphasis upon the role of the mind-and-heart in apprehending that world;
- Prominence attributed to human will and consciousness, drawn from Wang's Neo-Confucianism;
- Recognition of an autonomous, even decisive, role of consciousness and culture, with its spiritual elements—deemed secondary "superstructural" features in post-Leninist Soviet Marxism—in the success or failure of revolutionary change.

Together these ideas engendered the imperative of a cultural revolution involving the moral self-cultivation of each individual participating in revolutionary change. Viewed in light of twentieth-century efforts to achieve a synthesis of Ruist and Western ideas known as New Confucianism (*Xiandai xin ruxue*) (cf., Yang 2021), then, sinified Marxism can legitimately be regarded as a revolutionary New Confucianism. Yet the implications of these findings extend beyond Chinese Marxism and indeed well beyond China. As Chinese Marxists elevated consciousness and culture to a central role with substantial autonomy from the socioeconomic basis of society, they diminished the economic determinism of Soviet Marxism. In their more community-affirming and spiritually robust formulations, each individual became a subject with self-consciousness and a shared will to contribute to a global history culminating in a Great Peace (*Taiping*) not unlike the *telos* of freedom and universal peace in Marx's idealist predecessors. At a time when Ruism is being (ab)used to legitimate a resurgence of authoritarianism in China, the fact that Neo-Confucian idealism provided Chinese Marxists with philosophical resources to affirm these

universal, humanistic, liberative values has never been more significant. These elements could be mobilized effectively against authoritarian or fascist forces to support the continuing struggle for human rights and democratization today.

Ruism and Neo-Confucian Idealism

The Chinese philosophical tradition includes both idealism and materialism, but the latter comprised a tiny minority of Chinese philosophers. The materialist tradition dates back to Mozi (470–381 BCE), for whom concrete experience was the source of knowledge. His perspective was expanded by the Legalist school founded by Han Feizi and the Han dynasty philosopher Wang Chong (280–233 BCE) (Feng 1954, 81–82). In the last dynasty, Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692) stressed that only concrete things in the world (*qi* 器) exist. He is hailed today as one of China's greatest philosophers for achieving the apotheosis of Chinese materialism (Chan 1969d; 1969e, 692–94). Yet by far the more dominant intellectual current in imperial China was philosophical idealism as expressed in Zhu Xi's Rationalist School and in a more robust variation in Wang Yangming's Idealist School.

The latter seemed to revitalize Chinese philosophy just as the Ming dynasty was beginning to wane, but it never supplanted Zhu's philosophy as the Socratic legitimating myth of imperial rule since the fourteenth century. Yet even the Qing dynasty seemed to lose faith in it when it abolished the imperial civil service examination system based thereupon in 1905. After the Qing's collapse in 1911 and the descent of the new Republic of China into warlordism, since Neo-Confucianism had been invoked as the foundation for both the despotic patriarchal family and monarchical absolutism, Chinese thinker-activists seeking radical change were left to wonder just how revolutionary Neo-Confucianism could be.

In reality, neither authoritarian patriarchy nor political despotism was the intended outcome of classical Ruism. Kongzi (551–479 BCE), who lived in the chaotic Spring and Autumn period, sought to restore the stability and prosperity of the kings of the Western Zhou era (1046–771 BCE).[4] Kongzi's vision, summarized in the beginning of the *Great Learning*, was of a peaceful order in which love and respect for one's fellow human beings (*ren*, humanity or benevolence) would be the paramount virtue, beginning within the family and radiating outwards to others. To realize this order, "from the Son of Heaven [the Emperor] to the common people, everyone must regard . . . self-cultivation as the foundation of everything (all translations mine, Legge 1971, 357–59)." Mengzi (372–289 BCE), who elaborated Kongzi's political theory, explained that the other virtues of propriety (*li*), justice/righteousness (*yi*), and wisdom (*zhi*) were manifestations of humanity in our relations with others. All individuals have the "beginnings" of these four virtues implanted in them by Heaven, rendering everyone morally equal, endowed with the capacity to become a sage, Mengzi averred (2A:5, Legge 1971, 201–03).

Indeed, Mengzi also articulated a theory of legitimate revolutionary change foreshadowing that developed by John Locke (1632–1704) two millennia later. The ruling Son of Heaven is legitimated by the Mandate of Heaven, awarded to him because of his virtue. Since the purpose of the state is to serve the people by "loving the people" (*qinmin*) (*Great Learning*, Legge 1971, 356), a despot can expect his mandate to be removed if he incurs Heaven's displeasure, as evidenced by peasant rebellions and natural disasters. "'Heaven sees as my people see,'" Mengzi, citing the ancient "Great Declaration," proclaims (5A:5, Legge 1971, 357). A despot who has failed to cultivate virtue in his mind-and-heart then has only himself to blame for losing the mandate (*geming*, *revolution* in contemporary Chinese) (2A:3 and 4A:20, 196, 311; *Great Learning*, in Legge 1971, 374–75). Yet the legitimacy of a revolution is, for Mengzi, as in Locke, conditional: The revolution is successful only if it succeeds (Locke 1973). The Mandate of Heaven doctrine, which remained the Socratic myth in Neo-Confucianism, legitimated the succession of emperors by victorious peasant rebel leaders who, over centuries, had proven their virtue and would inspire Li Dazhao and Mao Zedong to include the peasantry as a revolutionary force in their Marxism (Hoston 1994, 387; Meisner 1967, chap. 11).

These perspectives on revolutionary change were incorporated into the philosophical idealism found in both Neo-Confucian schools, which were influenced by the idealist epistemology of Daoism (Feng 1954, 82) and the Consciousness-Only (*Yogacara*) School of Chinese Buddhism. Thus we can identify in Chinese Marxism not only the historical materialism of Marx and Engels but also elements of an indigenous philosophical tradition justifying revolutionary change that was distinguished by its spiritual epistemology and emphasis on consciousness and will.

There are at least two explanations for the appearance of such influences. One is that Li and Mao—the focus of this study—purposefully incorporated them into their revolutionary thought. Mao, for example, might have utilized Neo-Confucianism intentionally to explain his views in order to make them more readily comprehensible to his Chinese audience. Alternatively, the influence could be unintentional. It is unsurprising that Marxism should have been viewed through lenses infused with Ruist perspectives that had been hegemonic and suffused East Asian civilization for two millennia. Furthermore, the emergence of modern nationalism among Chinese revolutionaries made it difficult for them to repudiate their

philosophical past entirely. After all, there must have been something of value in their culture that rendered the Chinese worthy of the national and social liberation that these thinker-activists sought. National pride and the identification of Chinese*ness* with Ruism encouraged the inclusion of the themes accentuated in Neo-Confucian idealism, which could have the added benefit of remedying lacunae that Chinese revolutionary thinkers identified in Marxism as a Western philosophy shaped by its own capitalist context. Thus, it is argued here that the influence of Neo-Confucian idealism materialized through some combination of both these factors.

Yet how can one prove such influence? One is unlikely to find copious references to Ruist texts primarily because the Chinese did not regard the texts of Kongzi, Mengzi, or other philosophers as "intellectual property" for which heirs merited financial compensation for every citation thereof. There are citations in Mao's *Selected Works* in English and even in Chinese compilations of Li's and Liu Shaoqi's works, but it is unclear whether those notes were in the original texts or were added subsequently by editors. Significantly, Mao's *Selected Works* include almost exclusively references to Western sources, mainly Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. Mao was competing to become leader of a revolutionary movement of global consequence, and his claim to CCP leadership was particularly fraught. Less educated than Li, Chen Duxiu, and Liu, and lacking experience abroad, Mao was contending against the Moscow-educated Russian Returned Students to establish his legitimacy as a revolutionary leader (Schram 1989, 69ff). Thus, even if Mao had been inclined to cite his references consistently, how "revolutionary" would he have seemed if he cited "feudal" texts that legitimated the *ancien régime*? Thus it is less likely that Mao intentionally included such references. Conversely, it would be unreasonable to conclude that the absence of explicit references to Neo-Confucian texts and terms such as *gewu* ("the investigation of things") proves that there was no Neo-Confucian influence on Mao's views. Nevertheless, a reader with expertise on Neo-Confucianism will easily recognize such ideas even without direct references thereto (cf., Wakeman 1973, 238–39).

As for philosophical idealism, in the West it was a philosophical movement dated from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries. The rationalist philosopher Wolff first used the term *idealism* in a typology distinguishing it from materialism in the Preface to the second edition of *German Metaphysics* (Wolff 1747).[5] Both the Rationalist and Idealist Schools of Neo-Confucianism, with their emphasis on Principle/Reason and the mind-and-heart, were at once idealist and rationalist. The two schools represented two different types of philosophical idealism: Zhu's Rationalist School constituted "epistemological idealism," while Wang's school represented "metaphysical" or "ontological idealism." Zhu's rationalist empiricism based on recognition of the reality of material things was reaffirmed by Marxian materialism, while Wang's emphasis on the dispositions of the mind-and-heart involving the will, sincerity, and resoluteness could support efforts to combat the overdetermination of revolutionary change by material factors in Marxism and endow "superstructural" elements of society, such as culture and ideology ("false consciousness"), with considerable autonomy from the economic foundation of society. Below we examine how this occurred in two Chinese Marxist thinker-activists: (1) CCP co-founder Li Dazhao and (2) his leading successor beginning in the 1930s Mao Zedong.

Idealist and Materialist Influences on the Thought of Li Dazhao

Despite the differences between Li and Mao, one can identify the impact of Neo-Confucian idealism in the thought of both men. Ironically, that influence was facilitated by their ambivalence towards their indigenous cultural heritage. Cultural iconoclasm inspired the New Culture Movement that emerged as the imperial regime collapsed, and CCP co-founder Chen Duxiu (1879–1942) was the most iconoclastic of the three. As co-editor of the journal *New Youth*, Chen had faith in China's youth precisely because they were uncorrupted by Chinese tradition (Chen 1965e). He even asserted that if the Chinese nation-state could not serve its people effectively, it might just as well perish along with the Neo-Confucianism that legitimated imperial rule (Chen 1965c, 1:229). Indeed, Chen agreed with liberal philosopher Liang Qichao's (1873–1929) conclusion that the Chinese lacked the suitable "spirit" to establish a democratic republic (Chen 1965a; 1965b, 1:35–38; Chen 1965d, 1:183–84; cf., Liang 1932, 4:47–50, 39–40). Although Chen quoted ancient Ruist texts extensively, his writings were notably devoid of references to Neo-Confucianism.

By contrast, the influence of Neo-Confucian idealism is clearly apparent in Li Dazhao (1889–1927). As one whose formal education had been interrupted by financial hardship (Meisner 1967, 2ff), Li appreciated the Confucian heritage that Chen—who experienced the pressures of being from a scholar-official family—did not. Prior to becoming a Marxist, Li advocated constitutional democracy, echoing Kang Youwei's characterization of Kongzi as a democratic reformer (Kang 2010) and Mengzi's view of the primacy of the people (5A:5, in Legge 1971, 357) as evidence of support for democracy in classical Ruism. Through Li's thought, Neo-Confucian idealism contributed three elements to the

sinification of Marxism: (1) the importance of consciousness in the context of totality; (2) the malleability of the human spirit; and (3) the supremacy of voluntarism over determinism.

Li drew from Zhou Dunyi's (1017–1073) cosmology, a foundational element of Neo-Confucianism, embracing a belief in the unity of the universe extending from a beginningless past into an endless future. According to the *Book of Changes*, a key resource for this cosmology, the universe is in constant flux, which Li interpreted as continual renewal. Li reasoned that each change results in the achievement of a "higher plane" of existence and therefore the universe itself has the resilience of youth (Li 1962c, 1962d, 1962g).

Thus, while Li shared with Marx and Engels a dialectical interpretation of history, Li's dialectic was more consistent with the roots of Neo-Confucian idealism in the *Book of Changes*. In Li's view, the tension between the whole and its parts, between continuity and change, driven by interaction between *yin* (female) and *yang* (male) forces, influenced history through the individual's self-consciousness as part of all humanity, now viewed as the subject rather than the object of history. Here, Leo Tolstoy's Christian influence was also evident, for Li concluded that the true meaning of revolution was that individuals "repent of their sins" and pursue the way (*dao*) of humanity and righteousness collaboratively to defeat evil. Li believed, then, that it was human consciousness, rather than the institutions emphasized by Liang, that constituted the motive force of history. He also endorsed Liang's claim that the cause of China's crisis lay in the Chinese themselves because they lacked a "spirit" that resists cruelty and yields to the rule of law (1962b, 1962e, 6–7).

This spiritual emphasis and the theme of eternal change echoed several strains of Chinese political thought that countered Chen's pessimism. Hence, while Chen denounced embracing tradition in the name of patriotism, Li's reaffirmation of perpetual change allowed him to envision reasons for hopelessness today being transformed into their opposite tomorrow. That prospect was reinforced by the improbable victory of the Bolsheviks in 1917 (Li 1962a), which inspired Li to adopt Marxism as his revolutionary philosophy.

A particularly important factor for Li's embrace of Marxism was the Ruist notion of the virtuous man (*junzi*) aspiring to be in unity with all things in the universe. This would seem to be contrary to Marx's and Engels's emphasis on class conflict as the motor force of history. The crucial point, however, lies elsewhere: The *junzi*'s "ego" was not that of the atomistic individual in classical liberalism but rather part of a single universal ego, a concept derived from the notion of the single Buddha mind in Mahayana Buddhism (Soothill 1987, 136; cf., Fung 1953, 2:360ff). Self-consciousness of such unity of every individual's mind-and-heart with the entire universe was consistent with the Marxian notion of man as a "species being"—an idea articulated in the young Marx with which Li was unfamiliar but undergirded Marx's vision of stateless communism. The Chinese ideal of a cosmic unity "with no beginning and no end" (Li 1962g) engendered in Li's imagination the potential for development of revolutionary consciousness, a unified national will to construct a stateless communist society despite China's socioeconomic backwardness.

Li also found confirmation of Neo-Confucian idealism in Ralph Waldo Emerson's and Henri Bergson's philosophies, especially Bergson's emphasis on the role of "free will" and intuition in *Creative Evolution* (Li 1962f). Li no doubt also saw a confluence between Wang's and Bergson's emphases on the importance of the will and Lenin's voluntarism. Yet Li also anticipated an element that would assume heightened significance for Mao: the malleability of human beings and of their consciousness. This was most evident in Li's refashioning of the Comintern's instrumentalist application of Lenin's theory of imperialism to interpret China's role in the international socialist revolution. Lenin did not anticipate imminent socialist revolutions in China and India, which he regarded as more "backward" than 1905 or 1917 Russia, but he was inspired by the *smychka* (alliance) between the workers and peasants in the Russian revolution. Lenin thus envisaged a similar alliance between the peasant peoples of the East and the proletariat of the capitalist West. Striking dockworkers in Shanghai would provoke economic crises in Paris and Berlin, precipitating a proletarian-socialist revolution in the West, he concluded (Hoston 1994, 31ff).

Li was excited by this imagery, but his interpretation thereof differed significantly from Lenin's. For Li, Western Europe constituted the bourgeoisie of a global capitalist economy, and the peasant peoples of the East were its proletariat (1962g). Accordingly, although the peasantry constituted the vast majority of China's population—the real China, for Li—their international position could endow them with proletarian consciousness, joining Russia, long the "bastion of reaction in Europe" now at the forefront of world history. For Li, consciousness was not determined solely by factors external to the self in the material world. Rather, the key to revolutionary consciousness was, as Wang's Neo-Confucianism emphasized, ultimately the exercise of the will (Wang 2016, 126, 128, 174, 294).

In all these respects, Li reaffirmed key elements of Neo-Confucian idealism, believing that radical iconoclasm might cause such valuable elements of the Chinese tradition to be abandoned. Li saw no irreconcilable contradiction between these indigenous ideas and his allegiance to Marxism. On the contrary, he found therein remedies for lacunae in Marx's original theory such as underestimation of the peasantry and

neglect of intangibles such as consciousness and will. These idealist themes would be elaborated further in Mao's sinification of Marxism.

Neo-Confucian Idealism and the Thought of Mao

> For many years we Communists have struggled for a cultural revolution as well as for a political and economic revolution, and our aim is to build a new society and a new state for the Chinese nation. . . . In other words, not only do we want to change a China that is politically oppressed and economically exploited into a China that is politically free and economically prosperous, we also want to change the China which is being kept ignorant and backward under the sway of the old culture into an enlightened and progressive China under the sway of a new culture.
>
> - Mao, "On New Democracy" (1940) (1965c, 1965e, 340)

Despite the narrative of the rivalry between the Mao and Liu, representing the "red" and "expert" lines during the 1960s Cultural Revolution, careful examination of their contributions to the sinification of Marxism decades earlier reveals that together, along with Li, they produced a version of Marxism influenced by indigenous Chinese thought. However, it was in Mao's writings that the influence of Neo-Confucian idealism was most pronounced.

In the 1920s through the 1940s, Mao penned essays for two purposes: (1) to explain Marxism-Leninism in terms that were understandable to those educated in the Chinese philosophical tradition and (2) to legitimate his aspiration to party leadership by demonstrating his mastery of Marxian theory and its application in China. Those writings were littered with allusions to classical Ruist and Neo-Confucian ideas, attesting to Mao's ambivalence towards the Chinese past. In 1938, he stressed that because of China's backwardness, "[i]t is ... necessary to expose and criticize the ancient philosophical legacy of China (1990, 95)." Just 2 years later, however, he asserted:

> A splendid old culture was created during the long period of Chinese feudal society. . . . China's present new politics and new economy have developed out of her old politics and old economy, and her present new culture, too, has developed out of her old culture; therefore, we must respect our own history and must not lop it off (Mao 1965b, 1965e, 2:381).

Indeed, two decades earlier, Mao had agreed with Li (and Liang) that true change in China must begin with the transformation of Chinese thought. Nevertheless, in response to the teachings of Japanese Westernizing reformer Fukuzawa Yukichi, Mao insisted, "Western thought is not necessarily all correct either; very many parts of it should be transformed at the same time as [Eastern] thought (Schram 1989, 18n.)." When he wrote those words, in August 1917, Chinese hostility to imperialism, both Western and Japanese, in the wake of Japan's 1915 Twenty-One Demands, was intensifying. In rejecting indiscriminate Westernization, Mao, like Li, was drawn to Marxism in part precisely because of its harsh critique of Western capitalism. Moreover, even amidst the cultural iconoclasm of the New Culture Movement, Mao was well aware of how his predecessors seeking radical change had been inspired by elements of Chinese tradition. Mao praised Kang—who, although opposed to revolution, was considerably more radical than he revealed publicly—for his "fundamental principles" (*benyuan*). Kang's New Text School impaired the influence of Neo-Confucianism, which he deemed to have been based on fraudulent texts, but his recasting of *Kongzi as a Reformer* could not have failed to impress Mao, along with Kang's use of the traditional Ruist term *datong* in his posthumously published *Datong shu* [Book on the Great Unity] (1935) to refer to a classless communist society (Schram 1989, 102). Finally, Mao most certainly recognized the influence of classical Ruism and Wang Yangming upon Sun Yat-sen's thought as well (Gregor and Chang 1980).

Not surprisingly then, whether deliberately or subconsciously, Mao availed himself of China's rich intellectual tradition, including both Neo-Confucian schools, particularly when translating Marxist epistemology into Chinese terms. While Mao criticized "idealism," labeling it "a religious doctrine" (1990, 89), his description of *idealism* was inaccurate. He confounded philosophical idealism with a "one-sided" emphasis on ideas to the neglect of appreciation of concrete material conditions, by, for example, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson (1965a).

Mao also exhibited confusion about the nature of metaphysics and its relationship to idealism. In his essay "On Contradiction," for example, he conflated metaphysics, the study of the nature of ultimate origins, with idealism, claiming that metaphysics "is part and parcel of the idealist world outlook." Characterizing it as the dominant trend in European philosophy prior to the emergence of historical materialism, he also conflated metaphysics with evolutionism, asserting, again inaccurately, "The metaphysical or vulgar evolutionist world outlook . . . regards all things in the universe, their forms and their species, as eternally isolated from one another and immutable (1965b, 312)." This particular essay was written to repudiate the influence of the Russian Deborin School, which he described as a nefarious "metaphysical," "idealist" influence within the CCP. Yet he was also

endeavoring to demonstrate his superior, "orthodox" understanding of the role of contradictions in historical materialism (1965b, 318ff).

Interestingly, Mao did not depict Neo-Confucianism as an "idealist" philosophy in either of his seminal philosophical works, "On Practice" and "On Contradiction." Yet four aspects of his views in these essays reflect the influence of Neo-Confucianism on his thought: (1) his interpretation of contradiction and change; (2) his conception of the relationship between particularity and universality; (3) his description of the relationship between theory (or knowledge) and practice; and (4) his emphasis on human consciousness and will.

Regarding contradiction and change, Mao contrasted the "metaphysical view of development" with the correct "dialectical view of development," citing Lenin's "On the Question of Dialectics" (1965b, 311–12). Mao emphasized that the assertion, "'Heaven changeth not, likewise the Tao changeth not' by Confucian philosopher Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BCE)" was emblematic of Chinese "metaphysical thinking (1965b, 313)." Actually, the more ancient *Book of Changes* (9th century BCE) is premised on precisely the opposite claim: that the entire universe is in constant change. This rational view of the universe as dynamic, exhibiting constant transformation, moving in cycles but in an overall progressive direction, infused not only Ruism but Daoism and Chinese Buddhism as well, all three of which contributed to Neo-Confucianism.

To assess its influence on Mao, we can contrast Mao's description of contradiction in dialectical materialism with that of Engels. Mao quoted Engels's explanation of "the universality of contradiction" in *Anti-Dühring* as follows:

> . . . [L]ife consists precisely and primarily in this – that a being is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly originates and resolves itself. . . .

Mao's interpretation reads:

> The universality or absoluteness of contradiction has a twofold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things, and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end (1965b, 316).

Mao's explanation immediately evokes the interaction between *yin* and *yang*, the contradictory yet complementary female and male, passive and active forces described in Zhou's *Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate* as follows:

> "The true substance of the [Great Ultimate and] Ultimateless, and the essences of the Two (Forms) [of *yin* and *yang*] and Five (Elements), unite in mysterious union, so that consolidation ensues. The *ch'ien* principle [Heaven] becomes the male element, and the *k'un* principle {Earth} becomes the female element. The two [material forces] (i.e., the *yin* and *yang*) by their interaction operate to produce all things, and these in their turn produce and reproduce, so that transformation and change continue without end (Fung 1953, 2: 437)."

This cosmology as reinterpreted by Zhu Xi—with the Great Ultimate defined as identical to universal *Li* as a formless, spiritual and not a material, force (Chan 1969a, 589–90)—formed one of the two conceptual foundations of both Zhu's Rationalist School and Wang's Idealist School of Neo-Confucianism and endowed both schools with their idealist character.

We find evidence of the influence of the other key foundation of Neo-Confucianism in Mao's interpretation of the relationship between universal and particular contradictions. This is the notion of Principle/Reason (*Li* 理) that, in Neo-Confucianism, is identical to the Great Ultimate, which is the origin of the universe and governs the operation of everything therein and the relations among all its components. Mao appears to evoke this concept in the following passage, which, as we shall see, closely resembles Zhu Xi's description of the connection between universal Principle/Reason and principle/reason found in discrete objects in the material world:

> "Since the particular is united with the universal and since the universality as well as the particularity of contradiction is inherent in everything, universality residing in particularity, we should, when studying an object, try to discover both the particular and the universal and their interconnection, to discover both particularity and universality and also their interconnection within the object itself, and to discover the interconnections of this object with the many objects outside it (1965b, 329)."

This point is related to Mao's epistemology elaborated in "On Practice." Its subtitle—"On the Relation Between Knowledge and Practice, Between Knowing and Doing"—signals Mao's reliance upon a central tenet of Wang's idealism. Mao begins, in terms firmly within the framework of orthodox Soviet Marxism, by asserting that "[m]an's knowledge depends mainly on his activity in material production," that is, within the context of social "relations of production." Mao stresses that in Marxism, "man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world (Mao 1965d, 295ff)." Marx had contended, "The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that

determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness (Marx 1978b, 4; cf. Marx 1978a, 149)." Mao most likely was unfamiliar with this passage, which appears in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), the prelude to *Capital*. To be sure, there are also clear elements of idealism in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), which Mao did read. It asserts that the communist movement seeks to combat "ideology" in the form of "conservative, or bourgeois conservatism," emphasizes the limitations of the "utopian" socialism of the Owenites in England and followers of Fourier in France, and concludes with the appeal for workers throughout the world to unite. Similarly, idealism is also evident in *Capital* (1867): There the objective is to unveil the real nature of the relations among human beings in capitalist society, which is masked by the "fetishism of commodities." This fetishism causes us to confuse price (exchange value) with real value measured in terms of labor, the sacrifice of human blood, sweat, and tears that creates the product.

Nevertheless, the *Manifesto* emphasizes how "man's ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life." Here, Marx and Engels stressed that ultimately even so-called "'eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc.'" are fragile, ephemeral; therefore, "Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience (Marx and Engels 1978, Tucker, 1978, 489)." One could argue, cogently, that this assertion reflects a defect attributable to their own materialistic socioeconomic context, their tendency to underestimate the power of ideology, religion, intuition, and what Georges Sorel called *myth* (1999, 113, 117–118). By contrast, Mao, like Li, is unabashed in emphasizing the imperative of "mind over matter." As Marxists, they did not go so far as to claim everything is "all in the mind" as the seventh-century Chinese Consciousness-Only School claimed (Fung 1953, 2:299ff). However, for them the spiritual realm accounts for much more than Marx and Engels would concede.

Moreover, in these texts, beyond the claim that the material world is primary and the idea of the dialectic, Marx and Engels provided no other epistemological resources. Therefore, it makes sense that Mao should have relied upon those offered by Neo-Confucianism in describing the development of knowledge as a dialectical process. There are two aspects of Mao's epistemological dialectic, the first relating to the connection between the universal and the particular and the second involving the relationship between knowledge/theory and *praxis*, a central Marxian tenet. With regard to the first, Mao was clearly inspired by Zhu's description of the self-cultivation of virtue through the exhaustive "investigation of things" (*gewu*). Nearly a century before St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) articulated a natural theology premised on the view of God as the source of reason, Zhu defined universal Principle/Reason (*Li*) as the Principle/Reason of Heaven (*Tianli*)—interpreted either theistically or non-theistically—equivalent to the Great Ultimate and the Highest Good (Hoston 2024a). According to Zhu's interpretation of Zhou's cosmogony, universal Principle/Reason combines with matter or Material Force (*qi* 气) to produce individual material things (*qi* 器), phenomena, each of which has its own principle/reason. Zhu describes self-cultivation—what Kongzi called learning the Will of Heaven (*Tianming*) (*Analects* 2:4, Chan 1969c, 22)—as follows:

> As to the exerting of the mind[-and-heart] to the utmost {in self-cultivation}, it is to investigate things and study their principles to the utmost, to arrive at broad penetration, and thus to be able fully to realize the principle (*li*) embodied in the mind[-and-heart] (Chan 1969a, 604).
>
> 25. What sages and worthies call extensive learning means to study everything. From the most essential and most fundamental about oneself to every single thing or affair in the world . . . , everything should be investigated to the utmost. . . . Although we cannot investigate all, still we have to keep on devoting our attention to them in accordance with our intelligence and ability, and in time there will necessarily be some accomplishment.
>
> 29. . . . Although there may not seem to be substantial progress, nevertheless after a long period of accumulation, without knowing it one will be saturated {with principle}and achieve an extensive harmony and penetration [of universal Principle] (Chan 1969a, 610–11, text in braces added).

For Zhu, learning proceeds from studying particular, individual things to identify the principle/reason in them, in order to attain ultimately a comprehension of Universal Principle/Reason, the Way of Heaven.

The resemblance between this and Mao's description of learning is unmistakable. Note how Mao's explanation incorporates the Neo-Confucian notion of *totality*:

> . . . [T]here is always a gradual growth from the knowledge of individual and particular things to the knowledge of things in general. Only after man knows the particular essence of many different things can he proceed to generalization and know the common essence of things {i.e., Principle/Reason} (1965b, 320).

> Th[e] stage of conception, judgment and inference is the more important stage in the entire process of knowing a thing; it is the stage of **rational knowledge**. The real task of knowing is, through perception, to arrive at thought, to arrive step by step at the comprehension of the internal contradictions between one process and another, that is to arrive at logical knowledge. To repeat, logical knowledge differs from perceptual knowledge in that perceptual knowledge pertains to the separate aspects, the phenomena and the external relations of things, whereas logical knowledge takes a big stride forward **to reach the totality**, the essence and the internal relations of things and discloses the inner contradictions in the surrounding world. Therefore, logical knowledge is capable of grasping **the development of the surrounding world in its totality**, in the internal relations of all its aspects (1965d, 298, text in bracess and emphasis added).

Given the absence of direction to this effect from Marx and Engels and the similarity of Zhu's and Mao's terminology, one can reasonably deduce that this formulation was derived from Zhu's epistemology. Mao refers to Principle/Reason obliquely, describing the attainment of "rational knowledge," as understanding "the development of the surrounding world in its totality, in the internal relations of all its aspects."

As for the second aspect of Mao's epistemological dialectic, "On Practice" also demonstrates that Wang's Neo-Confucianism was crucial to his self-described "sinification of Marxism."[6] Mao notes first that Marx stressed, "Whoever wants to know a thing has no way of doing so except by coming into contact with it, that is, by living (practicing) in its environment." That is why "Marxism [itself] could be the product only of capitalist society (1965d, 299–300)." Mao also cites Lenin's assertion of the importance of revolutionary theory to the revolutionary movement, but he emphasizes Lenin's insistence that "'*Practice is higher than (theoretical knowledge),*' for it has not only the dignity of universality, but also of immediate actuality (1965d, 297)."

In China, concern about the relationship between knowledge and practice dates back to Kongzi (*Analects* 1:4; Chan 1969b, 20), and both Neo-Confucian schools agree on Zhu's basic teaching that "[k]nowledge and action always require each other . . . " and "action is more important." Yet Zhu continues, "However, we must first know before we can act (Chan 1969a, 609)." Wang strenuously rebuts that claim, insisting that one cannot possibly know without acting with respect to the object of study:

> [K]nowledge is the beginning of action and action the completion of knowledge. When this is understood, then when only knowledge is mentioned, action is included therein, and when only action is mentioned, knowledge is included. . . . Yet certain people today distinguish between knowledge and action and pursue them separately, . . . believing that they must know before they can act. They will discuss and learn about knowledge first, they say, and wait until they truly know before they implement their knowledge. Consequently, for their entire lives they will never act, and they will also never know. . . . My advocacy of the unity of knowledge and action today is precisely the medicine for that disease (Wang 2016, 1:126-27; all translations from this text mine).

This conflict with Zhu is connected to Wang's metaphysical idealism, which posits that Principle/Reason is identical with the mind-and-heart and that all things originate therefrom. In addition, citing Mengzi, Wang believes that all human beings are endowed by Heaven with innate knowledge of the good (*liangzhi*), which Wang equates with universal Principle/Reason (Wang 2016, 1:261). Accordingly, Wang rejects Zhu's interpretation of *gewu* to mean not "investigation" of external things but rather "correction" or "rectification" of what is incorrect in one's own mind-and-heart so as to return to one's innate faculty of knowledge of the good (Wang 2016, 1:128). This task requires action:

> If one sincerely loves the good known by the innate faculty but does not in reality do the good as we come into contact with the thing to which the will is directed, it means that the thing has not been corrected and that the will to love the good is not yet sincere. (Chan 1969b, 666).

This applies to all knowledge—knowledge of all phenomena as well as of virtues such as justice (*yi*). One cannot know what justice is without actually doing it (Wang 2016, 1:156, 199), any more than one can know an apple without picking it and tasting it, thereby acting upon it and transforming it. Any knowledge claimed prior to action is, therefore, spurious: "Those who are supposed to know but do not act simply do not yet know (Chan 1969b, 669)."

As described by Mao, the dialectical relationship between theory and practice results in the sort of spiral that characterizes the Hegelian notion of the dialectic: Practical experience results in knowledge, which is tested by practice and refined into a higher level of understanding (theory), to be tested by further practice (1965d, 308). Again, Mao observes, "[T]here is always a gradual growth from the knowledge of individual and particular things to the knowledge of things in general. Only after man knows the particular essence of many different things can he proceed to generalization and know the common essence of things (1965b, 320)." This is Zhu's epistemology *tout court*, and the "common essence" is, of course, Principle/

Reason. Thus Mao connects the scientific aspects of Marxism with the idealist aspects of both Neo-Confucian schools.

Yet the most important contribution of Neo-Confucian idealism to the sinification of Marxism lies in Mao's insistence on the importance of human consciousness and will and the resulting relative autonomy of culture. Mao agrees with Wang's observation that the mind-and-heart is not physical, made of flesh and blood (Wang 2016, 1:296), and he denounces those who hold that mistaken physiological view as "vulgar materialists (Mao 1990, 113)." Mao and Liu both recognize the power and potential autonomy of culture as an impediment to revolutionary change and deduce that cultural revolution is a prerequisite for achieving a communist society rather than merely a secondary, automatic effect of socioeconomic change. Marx described changes in the superstructure as occurring "more or less rapidly" "[w]ith the change of the economic foundation," that is, after the revolution (Marx 1978b). By contrast, Mao (and Liu) see cultural change as a prerequisite for socioeconomic change. "Revolutionary culture," Mao writes, "prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed, essential fighting front . . . during the revolution (Mao 1965c, 2:382)."

This insight emerges directly from Mao's voluntarism, which goes well beyond Lenin's emphasis on revolutionary consciousness. Marx and Engels assumed that revolutionary consciousness would arise spontaneously among industrial workers from their experience (*praxis*) working together on the assembly line. In 1902, Lenin repudiated that view, insisting that practical experience showed that "[c]lass political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers (Lenin 1975, 50)." Lenin further loosened the connection between socioeconomic factors and consciousness by entrusting to the *intelligentsia* an important role in nurturing that consciousness. Mao eagerly embraced Lenin's view, and, departing from Stalinist orthodoxy, elaborated and implemented Lenin's decoupling of revolutionary consciousness from socioeconomic class. The Neo-Confucian idealist legacy added a novel dimension to Marxist voluntarism in China because it was precisely the conceptualization of self-cultivation in Neo-Confucianism that inspired Mao to attribute even greater significance to the relative autonomy of consciousness and culture. Of course, in Neo-Confucianism this was conceived in terms of cultivation of Ruist virtues rather than consciousness associated with a particular social class. However, it did inspire for Mao the notion of cultural revolution as a heightened imperative, as the precondition for achieving radical socioeconomic change.

As Mao endeavored to realize cultural revolution in the base areas, he repudiated the persistence of Ruist and Western "bourgeois ideas" alike in the CCP base areas. Yet he did so with the aid of distinctively Ruist concepts. After waves of Chinese youth joined the Communist military struggle against Japan in northwest China, Mao, with Liu, led the CCP's Rectification Campaign in the early 1940s, inspired by the somewhat confusing Ruist notion of the rectification of names. It prescribes that it is not the name of one's role in society that must be changed if one's actions do not reflect that role; rather if one fails to act as a filial son or daughter to one's parents, for example, one must rectify one's mind-and-heart and conduct to be in accordance with the name of one's role as a son or daughter.

Essays penned by Mao, as well as Liu, some drafted expressly for the campaign, were assigned to work groups for study. Although Neo-Confucian influence is more apparent in Mao's writings, Liu's most famous article, entitled "How To Cultivate Oneself To Be a Good Communist," reflects the continuity of this element of sinified Marxism with Neo-Confucian tradition. Praising Mengzi's contention that "everyone can be a Yao or a Shun," Liu asserts that "subjective effort and self-cultivation in the course of revolutionary struggle are absolutely essential, indeed, indispensable, for a revolutionary in remoulding himself. . . . (Liu 1967, 13, 5)." Similarly, Mao's "Reform Our Study," "Rectify the Party's Style of Work," and "Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing" identify obstacles that both bourgeois Western and traditional Chinese cultural influences posed to socialist revolution, finding singular inspiration in Wang's emphasis on "making the will sincere" as the key to self-cultivation (cf., Wakeman 1973, 238ff). This application of the notion of *rectification* more closely resembles Wang's interpretation of *gewu* than Zhu's interpretation thereof as "the investigation of [external] things." As Mengzi, Wang argued, had used *ge* to describe the need to correct incorrect thoughts in the ruler's mind-and-heart (2016, 1: 128), the Rectification Campaign sought to rectify incorrect things in the minds-and-hearts of party members, especially an incorrect class "perspective" (*lichang*). As a materialist, Mao certainly recognized the reality of the material world. However, like Li, Mao did not allow his vision of the possibilities for self-cultivation of revolutionary consciousness to be limited unduly by the context of the economic relations in which they lived. Wang's view, drawn from Mengzi, that human beings are malleable, that everyone can achieve the virtue of the sage kings because every

individual is endowed with the innate knowledge of the good, allowed Mao to exhort party members of all socioeconomic classes to cultivate revolutionary proletarian consciousness. With a sincere will, theoretically anyone could overcome limitations imposed by the material world and become an exemplar of revolutionary virtue.

These themes in Chinese Marxism clearly differentiated Chinese from Soviet Marxist thought. Despite some similarities with Lenin's views, the specific ontological and epistemological content and terminology—such as *rectification*—used are distinctively Chinese echoes of Neo-Confucian concepts. They became the bases for practices premised on idealist faith in the malleability of the human mind-and-heart, consciousness, and will throughout the Maoist period.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the sinified Marxism culminating in the formulation of Mao's thought reflected the persistent influence of Neo-Confucianism in revolutionary China. This finding suggests that the conventional view of Ruism and Neo-Confucianism as an inherently conservative and authoritarian body of ideas is in need of revision. The need is urgent, and the stakes are high because once again this rich philosophical heritage is being appropriated in China to legitimate a form of governance that is in fundamental conflict with Kongzi's original vision of universal peace based on humanity and justice.

Sinified Marxism incorporated the most democratic elements of Neo-Confucianism, especially those based on Mengzi's emphasis on the inherent goodness of individuals, the wellbeing of the people as the *raison d'être* of the state, and the means by which the Mandate of Heaven is to be transmitted in times of rebellion against despotism. These are highlighted particularly in Wang Yangming's Idealist School of Neo-Confucianism. Its emphasis on the unity of knowledge and practice meshed nicely with the prominence of *praxis* in Marxist thought. Finally, the emphasis on the role of the will and the relative autonomy of consciousness in Wang's philosophical idealism endowed Chinese Marxism with a faith in the malleability of human beings that led to advocacy of cultural and spiritual transformation as a prerequisite for socioeconomic revolution, rather than a secondary, automatic consequence of economic change. This perspective diverges sharply from Stalinist dogma and practice, as well as from the decidedly inhumane and unjust methods of governance inherited from Legalist practices revived in contemporary, post-revolutionary China.

Li and Mao incorporated elements of Neo-Confucian idealism into their thought to produce a revolutionary brand of New Confucianism. This claim in no way gainsays Li's and Mao's claims to be Marxian revolutionaries. Rather it underscores the extent to which the integration of Neo-Confucian idealism into their philosophy deployed those elements, heretofore viewed as a conservative force, as integral components of a revolutionary philosophy. The sinified Marxism of Li and Mao represents a fulfillment of the most modern, democratic aspect of Kongzi's original philosophy, which asserts that every individual has the capacity to play an essential role in realizing the ideal order, culminating in the Great Unity (*Datong*) of universal peace.

In Neo-Confucianism, the object of all learning/knowledge and consciousness is the universe as totality. Li and Mao incorporated its emphasis on the mind-and-heart into their Marxism as the medium through which this totality, expressed in the concept of Principle or Reason (*Li*), is apprehended. Unbeknownst to them, these Neo-Confucian ideas had influenced the German idealism to which Marx and Engels were heirs (Hoston 2024b), and their lingering influence was most apparent in the young Marx, from whom Chinese Marxists received virtually no epistemological guidance. Anyone who doubts the Neo-Confucian influences demonstrated here must ask whence these idealist elements could have arisen, if not directly from their own Neo-Confucian intellectual heritage.

Relying upon that legacy, Chinese Marxists restored the vision of totality that characterized Marx's and Engels's idealist predecessors. In so doing, they elevated the mind-and-heart, consciousness, and culture to a central role, endowing all three with considerable autonomy from the socioeconomic basis of society. Ironically, it was on the basis of this incorporation of Neo-Confucian idealism that stubborn traditionalist opposition to the revolution was eroded effectively in the CCP base areas. These theorists' deft integration of idealism into Marxian materialism defied the economic determinism of the Marxism taught by Engels, Bukharin, and Preobrazhensky by attributing to every individual involved in the revolutionary movement a crucial role as a subject with self-consciousness and a will to contribute to that universal history. Their formulations were thus more community-affirming and spiritually robust than those of their European predecessors, with the individual's commitment to achieving that universal history cast as a shared will—*tongzhi* (the Chinese term for *comrade*)—to bring the revolution to fruition.

These implications are not limited to the Maoist past, and the Chinese origin of these Neo-Confucian ideas need not be limitative. Support for philosophical idealism in the West waned in the twentieth century because of its

advocates' failure to respond forcefully to evils such as slavery and the rise of fascism. In light of the combination of idealism and materialism described here, reconsideration of the Neo-Confucian roots of that idealism is in order. If Neo-Confucian ideas long mischaracterized as inherently conservative could animate revolutionary change in the last century, their liberationist promise can illuminate a new path away from ingrained attitudes that perpetuate injustice and misery and towards the universal reaffirmation of human dignity and achievement of peace with justice not only in China but throughout the world today.

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Notes

1. Chinese names appear in conventional Chinese order, with surname followed by given name(s), using Pinyin romanization (unless the individual has elected a different spelling).
2. *Ruism* is the traditional Mandarin term for what Jesuit missionaries termed *Confucianism* based on their Latinized names for Kongzi (Confucius) and Mengzi (Mencius), respectively.
3. These two alternative views of the centrality of the mind are distinguished by Guyer and Horstmann (2023) as two "modes" of (1) ontological and (2) epistemological idealism.
4. Their influence endured another five hundred years (Eastern Zhou), after invasion by Quan "barbarians" from the northwest.
5. The new preface was published a decade after Wolff's "Speech on Practical Chinese Philosophy" as Rector of the University of Halle triggered his dismissal and exile.
6. The term was excised from the excerpt from *On the New Stage* when published as "The Role of the CCP in the National War" in Mao's *Selected Works* (Mao 1969, 171–180).

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