The Study of Confucianism in the late 20th Century – Patterns, Paradigms, and Methodology –

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I. Introduction

As intuitively witnessed, the study of Confucianism in China in the late 20th century has been more active than any other areas of Sinology. It was unimaginable even ten or twenty years ago that the study of Confucianism in China would be given as much attention. It was quite natural that the overall academic and cultural trend of China, at the end of the century (or the 1990s), has been characterized by a boom in national classics or in Confucianism. In fact, the word boom contained a phenomenal meaning, but it surely reflected the general situation that Confucianism, which had been regarded as pedantic learning, has been studied as a universal subject of concern. It is irrelevant to the topic of this essay to figure out why the study of Confucianism has resurfaced and regained its position as a pedantic lesson. In short, it was a result of many factors. As one of the objective factors, Confucianism was free from criticism when China met a new era and moved ahead with a reform plan and an open-door policy. The tendency of reinvigorating traditional culture of China as an ideology in the 1990s provided China’s major leading tradition of Confucianism with room for further development. Besides, the study of China’s Confucianism and neo-Confucianism overseas (especially that of Tu Weiming) has contributed

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greatly in the revival of the study of Confucianism on mainland China.¹
Thus, the Chinese view of Confucianism, after explaining the popularity of Confucian studies in China and the major objective factors which exercised influence over the phenomenon.

II. Two Different Paradigms

The academic trend, position, and patterns of the Confucian study in China in the late 20th century had diversity and abundance which had not been found previously. From the viewpoint of both basic and major academic goals and values, the seemingly complicated and intricate study of Confucianism in China can be categorized within two different paradigms; One, a paradigm from the perspective of history and the other, a paradigm of value.

The paradigm of history regards Confucianism as a historical existence which has become an objective target of study, and proceeds to make diverse researches on Confucianism. Thus, this type of study will have a lion’s share of various types of Confucianism studies on China at the turn of the century. This then became a major symbol of Confucianism’s revival in China.

Some of the most brilliant accomplishments in the study of Confucianism, as a historical object, were the studies of various themes, historical figures, and categories in different academic fields of the 1990s. The themes here included the philosophy of divination, the way of governing with Confucian benevolence, the study of principles, the study of mind, contemporary neo-Confucianism, the bamboo documents of Confucianism found in Guo Dian, the study of Confucian classics and the comparative study of Confucianism. Historical figures who were studied included Confucius, Mencius, Zhu Xi, Wang Yang-ming, Kang You-wei, Liang Shu-ming and Feng You-

¹. With regard to the situations from the fall to the revival of Confucianism in the mainland China, Mou Zhong Jian has finished a comprehensive research on the subject. You may refer his book The Fall and the Rise of Confucianism in the 20th Century (Book I and II). Kongzi Yanjiu (Study of Confucius) 1998, the third term.
The categories here included the heaven and the man, the sacred, virtue, humanity and justice, proprieties and music, principles, the golden mean, harmony, sincerity, mind and nature. Of these, I have endeavored to compare neo-Confucianism in the contemporary period, the bamboo documents of Confucianism found in Guo Dian, the history of Chinese classics study and the comparative study of Confucianism in East Asia. In general, scholars have collaborated on the study of several themes, which have been influential in many areas. Some scholars in China have been more inclined to preserve the totality of Confucianism. Although not a popular trend, others preferred to adopt a macroscopic approach to Confucianism. So, what attracted the attention of scholars was the history of Confucianism from the perspective of a complete history covering all facts of time and space.

Whether it is the detailed study of Confucianism or the general and comprehensive study, the research shows that the historicity of Confucianism has become an objective target of study. We may believe that the era of Confucianism has ended or may hope for a new future of Confucianism. That, however, has nothing to do with Confucianism as a historical existence. Even if the age of Confucianism is over (although I don’t think so), Confucianism which has already existed is still a history. Even if Confucianism would see a new development, it would remain as a history in the flow of time. So, the research of Confucianism as a historical existence focuses on what is the main interest of Confucianism and what is the reason for it. It is concerned with all the facts related to Confucianism and the interrelations among these facts. This is descriptive and analytical. This research usually objectifies the target of study, and tries to face Confucianism from a viewpoint of an onlooker or of those who stand neutral. This research neither regards the study of Confucianism as a means of providing necessary value, nor let Confucianism become a value system or a necessary commentary. This reminds us of the study of old documents and classics and the philologico-bibliographical study of Chinese classics among old Chinese studying practices. This also reminds us of the fact that Hu Shi once discussed the philologico-bibliographical study of Chinese classics in comparison with the scientific method which stresses evidentiary and concrete facts. The academic research of the contemporary era has changed from the trust in the old style (of the traditional school) to the suspicion of the
old style (of the school of speculating old history) and again to the interpretation of old style of Feng You Lan. It, however, will not be a matter of concern if we discard our mere belief and seek for the trust in the old style and for the interpretation of the old style based on actual facts. The problem is the poverty of facts and the belief in mere value. The interpretation of the old style should be based on facts and historical documents. The authentication of the old, based on ancient products unearthed by archaeologists, has now become one of the new tendencies in the study of Chinese history. I do not want to be involved in the dispute over the methodology of the historical study. Some may oppose to historicism and even deny the objectivity of the historical science. But if the study of Confucianism should not cherish historical facts and documents, it would be questionable whether Confucianism would remain as a major branch of science. Fortunately, the study of Confucianism in China in the 1990s has had the characteristic of science in a strict sense of the word.

Now, here appears a problem with a substratified motive for trying to understand Confucianism as a historical existence. Why do we have to study Confucianism? Based on the habitual argument of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, the study of historical Confucianism is fundamentally Confucianism for Confucianism’s sake and does not embody other unacademic requests.\(^2\) This conforms with academic autonomy as a norm of science and, at the same time, becomes academic common sense. For a long period, academic autonomy has become an extravagant desire for Chinese scholars. Such academic reasoning has been recognized as too abnormal. What is interesting is that the standard of measuring abnormality not only has reached the standard of class distinctions but also of the unity of science. For this reason, the very science which generally is characterized by its objectivity has come to destroy said objectivity.

The study of Confucianism in China in the 1990s, from the perspective of academicism, said farewell to the unacademic science (or criticism of Confucius) of the 1980s. It also differed from the unsubstantial

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\(^2\) This does not mean that value and interest have nothing to do with the choice of our research subjects and study items, but suggests that value and interest should not be included in the objects of study.
study of the 1980s, which had culturalism (or cultural boom) as its background. Compared with the studies of the 1980s in China, the studies of the 1990s have become more profound and precise. Major trends of this period included that academic achievements of such masters of classical Chinese Learning such as Wang Guo-wei and Chen Yin-que were cherished, that the history of science became a major concern, and that the academic norm was discussed. Undoubtedly, the period of the 1980s was that of a transition from the unacademic to the academic. One of the major characteristics of this transitional period is that China came to have academic autonomy, free from the collaboration of the politics and academism, and came to emphasize the scientific character, free from social class distinctions and political consciousness.

In his writing, called for the necessity of distinguishing real Confucius from unreal Confucius. His aim was to recover a genuine and authentic figure of Confucius who is more apt to the historical facts, by replacing the image of Confucius of the past, which had been utilized with unacademic and political intentions. Since the 1980s, there also has been a movement of emphasizing academicism for academicism’s sake. There was caution against unacademic elements which intended to enter into the academic area. In other words, the motive of purification has constantly existed in the study of pure science in the 1990s. Meanwhile, there aroused problems of inner principles and inner norms of academicism in the 1990s. For this reason, the study of Confucianism, which had been one of the major academic fields of China in the 1990s, has succeed in coping with real academic motives and academic norms. At the same time, the study of Confucianism played a role in protecting and establishing academic motives and academic norms. The reason for placing much emphasis on academic common sense is because this common sense had a special meaning in China. The study of Confucianism in China and its historicity has become very substantial and meaningful.

In the study of Confucianism in China in the late 20th century, the

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3. Some regard the academic changes from the 1980s to the 1990s as the change from the thinkers to academicians. The problem is whether the 1980s was really the age of thinkers or not.

paradigm of value had an inclination which was different from the paradigm of historicity. The paradigm of value paid attention to the problem of value, the good and what should be. So the relativity of the historicity paradigm can be compared to the relativity of facts and value, the authentic and the good, and what is right and what should be. The paradigm of value in the study of Confucianism means a tendency toward value, and is the start of value, the good and what should be. The paradigm of value saw Confucianism as a potential value and regarded the discovery of a new value as its direct motive and intention. This might have easily aroused confusion. When we find value in the history of Confucianism, the value can still be a historical fact. Such as value has been a kind of value even in history. In other words, the historical value can still be a history and can be exposed through the description of history. The value in history could be a historical paradigm of study. The paradigm of value, however, is fundamentally different from the above context. The paradigm of value not only finds a value in history but believes that it is important and will continue to remain as a value. For this reason, the paradigm of value finds in the history of Confucianism study not only what should be mentioned by the old generation but also what should be of the present. Besides, the paradigm of value wants to change the historical facts, which had not been a value, into a real, direct value, based on the need of the people of today and tomorrow. Let me explain this situation more deeply. I will mention major contents of the value that we have found in Confucianism and have tried to reassess in the 1990s. In an ideal society, there are such values as not only the unity of the heaven and the man which centers round a harmonization and union, but also harmonious consultation, neutralization, harmonizing but not compromising, harmony, peace, righteousness, impartiality, and harmony among all the countries of the world. In a political sense, there are such values as freedom, democracy, human rights, equality, fairness, Confucian politics, and governing with benevolence. On the economic side, there exist Confucian business, management, and the theory of uniting justice and reason. On the ethical or moral side, there are such values as philanthropy, proprieties, sincerity, limitations, eminent virtue, and filial piety and respect. Whether these values are native to the Confucian tradition or are transformed, they all are what should be of the present and the
They also are the norms and the ideal that we should realize and establish. According to the paradigm of value, Confucianism will help solve the problem of not only what is Chinese but also of what is global. The value of Confucianism has an effect on modern times and has a universality for the future. Based on the recognition and prediction of this value, Confucianism has garnered the best reputation and honor during the past century, and at the same time, has taken charge of this unprecedentedly important task during the same period. Although the study of Confucianism’s value paradigm is solemn and serious in most cases, there surely are some exaggerated aspects. Some studies even lost their academic characteristics, and so remained proclaiming the mere value of Confucianism. The academic value of Confucianism also weakened as the voices on value became louder. We, however, can induce the paradigm of value from the factors. The paradigm of value is the value bestowed by Confucianism, and has an entirety which could cover all the characteristics and break away from partial boundaries. Confucian view from the paradigm of value can be called the theory of saving the world with Confucianism. In this context, we can call Confucianism Confucianism of faith.

Since the period of the May Fourth movement, Chinese people freely criticized both tradition and Confucianism. During the Cultural Revolution, they brought a political charge against Confucianism while criticizing it. With the lifting of an ideological ban in the 1980s, China criticized traditional culture and dismissing Confucius. Confucianism suffered denial and contempt, although it differed in degree and patterns, with regard to its value as if it had had an original sin. It was regarded as having no special value and was a major symbol of negation. It was seen as a source of problem and predicament in China, and was conceived as an obstacle for future growth of China. So, it may be a surprise to see the development in the study of the value paradigm under the atmosphere of saving the world through Confucianism. However, it will not be so difficult to understand this situation. China’s policy to promote traditional culture provided a healthy surrounding for the revival of Confucianism as a major Chinese culture, and from the perspective of academic changes, the paradigm of value in Confucianism had the meaning of a watershed during the 1980s compared with the paradigm of historicity. The paradigm of value in Confucianism of
the 1990s appeared as a reaction to the trend of the Chinese academy, philosophy, and culture of the 1980s. Then the major trend of the 1980s was freedom of ideology, openness, pluralism, cultural boom, a study on differences between Chinese and Western culture and on the superiority or inferiority. In a general sense, it was a kind of new enlightenment movement, which was similar to the May Fourth Movement of China. The source and background of the enlightenment came, naturally, from the West. The enlightenment movement regarded the Western value as a central and universal. For this reason, the new enlightenment movement was mainly Western, as was the May Fourth Movement. This also corresponded with an anti-traditional move, and tradition again became a scapegoat for China’s predicament. So, tradition and modernity newly confronted each other. The severe anti-traditional character and culturalism of the new enlightenment movement came to have a more radical style. Intense frustrations on the part of the Chinese intellectuals in the late 1980s have become a major motive for them to objectively reconsider academicism, thoughts and culture of the 1980s. There was an grand objective of promoting traditional Chinese culture. It was natural for the Chinese intellectuals to choose tradition and Confucianism as they had hoped to seek for mutual agreement and alternative and to be free from fretfulness and uneasiness under these circumstances. As a result, there appeared new positions and attitudes as Chinese style, specialization, neo-traditionalism, neo-conservatism and nationalism which, unlike the case of the 1980s, were characterized by the tendencies of Westernization, new enlightenment, modernization, universalism, and new radicalism. Philosophical basis changed from rationalism and absolutism (especially that of Hegel) of France and Germany to empiricism of Britain, and especially to conservatism of Burke and Friedrich A. von Hayek.

I have summed up the changes from the 1980s to the 1990s and mentioned major trends and characteristics, but did not intend to say

5. We can see this trend from the trilogy of Zouxiang Weilai Congshu (Sichuan People’s Press), 20th Century Collection of Works (Huaxia Press), Culture, China and the World (Sanlian Shudian) which has hit the shelves and brought about a sensation. I would like to add that I have not been opposed to the Westernization within a certain boundary. Rather, I want to use the word modernization—modernization in a general sense.
that there were no voices of enlightenment, universalism, and modernism in the 1990s. In fact, the problem is more complicated. Even in the paradigm of value, there is an intention of universalizing the concept of value and faith. Such intention can be found both in the study of relationship between Confucianism and the general ethic, and in a strong desire for relating Confucian view of harmony and grand alliance with globalization and pacifism. Moreover, the utilization of the Confucian value lies in coping with the modernization of Confucian values. Questions concerning the entirety of Confucian values arose from two different angles. One came from the perspective of ideological legitimism, and the other, from liberalistic enlightenment. In other words, the revival of Confucianism itself had two different ideological backgrounds. Legitimism, which itself was part of an ideology, attempted to confine Confucianism within a certain boundary. It regarded Confucianism as an outcome of feudalism under reasoning that Confucianism stressed the social reality. This shows that there exists a flaw in the ideology itself, in this area. In the meantime, this also explains that there is a kind of tension between the revival of Confucian values and ideology. Liberalistic enlightenment does not admit the answer with regard to the modernization of Confucianism’s value paradigm. Liberalistic enlightenment still regards the modernization of the West as a direct resource of Chinese modernization, and endeavors to realize neo-conservatism which could restrain Confucianism. All the aforementioned represent the reactions of the paradigm of value in the study of Confucianism at the turn of the century to academic thoughts and culture of the 1980s, while this explains that we are faced with complex situations of the 1990s.

We have discussed two comparative paradigms of Confucian views in China at the turn of the century. The distinction between the two paradigms is undoubtedly relative. They can be dealt with by researchers. They can also coexist in the same project. There are differences between studying Confucianism with an interest in history and doing it with an interest in value. The former is mainly the description of history and the

latter, the appeal to value. These are two major patterns of Chinese views of Confucianism in the 1990s.

III. Paradigm$^8$ and the Methodology

I have distinguished the paradigm from the methodology in the study of Confucianism. By using the paradigm, I will now summarize the concept and the general view which can be utilized in the study of Confucianism in a more direct and concrete way. By using this methodology, I will epitomize the indirect and general mode of thoughts in the study of Confucianism. What I want to emphasize is that this distinction is very relative. I cannot explain how many researchers of Confucianism and paradigms used in the 1990s. Also it is unnecessary to do so. Those, which have overall impacts, will be noted.

We cannot say that tradition and modernism and post-modernism are the paradigms which have their own principles. Before post-modernism arrived in China, it was modernism or post-modernism that contrasted with tradition. With the introduction of post-modernism in China, tradition came to have post-modernism as its new counterpart. Thus, tradition came to face both modernism and post-modernism. The opinions of Chinese scholars on modernism and post-modernism, as well as on tradition, could not easily conform. (Things may be the same in the West.) In China, modernization is still a major target value.$^9$ For this reason, post-modernism of the West, which was aimed at reconsidering and overcoming the problems of today, is regarded in China as a follow-up value, a sequence of modernism, or a supplement of modernism. It is not a value which is opposed to modernism. Overall, China in the 1990s did not accept tradition and modernism as both extremes that could confront each other and could not agree with each other. Newly created relations of tradition and modernism were not characterized by their confrontation. Here, we can imagine the relation-

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8. This essay uses the term paradigm in two different senses of conception and view.
ship of Confucianism, as a major force of traditional culture, with modernism and post-modernism. For those who studied Confucianism in the 1990s, Confucian tradition is not only a counterpart of modernism and post-modernism, but also a major resource of modernism and post-modernism. Modernism in the study of Confucianism is one of the key words as they are used as the titles of books or essays. Tradition and Modernization, have even become a title of a periodical, and Chuantong Yu Xiandaihuá (Tradition and Modernization) published by Zhonghua Shuju is one of the most influential. When Confucianism is connected with modernism and post-modernism, this is not a problem of the paradigm which utilizes modernism. This is not a problem of rationalizing and justifying the value of Confucianism after finding it and its adaptability to modernism and post-modernism. Substantially, this proves that the harmony of Confucianism and modernism, and post-modernism in a general sense. What is interesting is that, according to the research of Guy S. Alitto, Liang Shu-ming, who represents neo-Confucianism of today, advocates Confucianism on the one hand and expresses anti-modernization on the other. We cannot say that Liang Shu-ming is always in favor of anti-modernization. But one must admit that Liang emphasizes and advocates the value of Confucianism by distinguishing the future image of Confucianism from modernism of the West. Another view is that, even though there is no modernistic value in Confucianism, this does not mean that Confucianism would not admit the opposite or similar kind of value. Thus, this problem embodies certain complicated elements. Even though we may say that Confucianism is different from the values of today or that there does not exist any contemporary value in Confucianism, it does not conclude that we ignore Confucianism. The overall trend of the 1990s saw Confucianism as a major resource of modernism and post-modernism, but did not see it as a counterpart.

The logic of Weber, economic ethic, Confucian business and management can be interpreted as a paradigm which is connected with


the goal of economy and business. The logic of Weber I mention refers
to two theses. One is to see the Protestant ethic as a main factor of
reinvigorating capitalism of the West, and the other, to see Confucian-
ism as a factor to prevent China from developing capitalism on a volun-
tary basis. Weber’s concrete sense of problem is the Protestant ethic and
Confucianism. The two make a diagnosis of why capitalism flourished
in the West and why China failed to develop capitalism, respectively.
Weber’s sense of problem, however, has a general meaning of admitting
the correlations between moral value and ethical view and capitalism
and economy. In the 1990s, several researchers of Confucianism in
China accepted the general meaning of Weber’s logic. They were not
opposed to Weber’s diagnosis on the development of Western capital-
ism from the perspective of Weber’s Protestant ethic. They, however,
refused to admit Weber’s diagnosis on the relationship between the
Confucian ethic and capitalism. They instead, related the Confucian
ethic with the rise of underdeveloped capitalism in East Asia. They
believed that Confucianism played a positive role in it. The fundamen-
tal reason why they conceived the economic ethic and Confucian
business is interpreted as an attempt to combine economy, which seems
irrelevant to morality, which seems irrelevant to economy. By connect-
ing Confucianism and business, which used to enter into the state of
tensions in the past, they tried to make morality, especially Confucian
morality, a norm to bind together economy and commercial activities.
Through this process, they had hoped to overcome immorality and
discredit of economic and commercial activities which used to scar the
people’s heart. Other researchers tend to interpret this problem as a
united paradigm of righteousness and interest. The Analects of Confu-
cius and Abacuses (written by Shibusawa Eiichi 薩整), which I trans-
lated, contains this paradigm. China still attaches greater importance to
this book. Management here refers to economic management. People
try to develop proper resources for the management of a modern econo-
my in Confucianism through the paradigm of binding Confucianism to
management.13

12. Liu Xiao-feng, ed., Economic Ethic and Modern & Contemporary Chinese Society,
Hong Kong Zhongwen University Press, 1998.
13. In the Management Philosophy of Confucianism (Guangdong Higher Education
It becomes most controversial when freedom, democracy, equality and human rights are applied to Confucianism.14 Before the 1990s, Chinese people tended to be against relating such modern political concepts to Confucianism. In the 1990s, however, such trends have weakened. It became a more popular trend to study Confucianism by intentionally adopting these political concepts. With regard to the utilization of the concepts, people were interested in a consistency between Confucianism and the paradigms of them. People also paid attention to the differences and the possible confrontations between the two paradigms.15 When the paradigm of liberalism is applied to Confucianism, it can become not only an angle for viewing Confucianism but also an intention to change Confucianism. When someone suggests Confucian liberalism, one not only expresses another form of liberalism, free from the boundary of a simple paradigm, but also expresses the possibility that Confucianism could transform some liberalistic patterns. Although some people say that Confucianism and the wisdom of contemporary politics collide, it is still an attractive method to view Confucianism by utilizing the wisdom of contemporary politics. I have heard that Sanlian Shudian ساعة® is now editing a special series on Confucianism and Liberalism under the collaboration of Harvard University and Yenching Institute.

The revival of Confucianism in China in the 1990s has the meaning of challenging universalism (to put it more concretely, to challenge the West). Some scholars hope that Confucianism could define its own identity anew with the awareness of traditional culture and value, and could find its own place. For this reason, in the process of reaching an agreement between traditional culture and Confucianism, not only its peculiarities but also its superiority or inferiority could be explained. It could provide Confucianism with the equal rights of participating in conversations. The appeal to traditional culture and value, though different in degree, ignores the descriptive method of western universalism and

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14. This discussion was started from Yan Fu.
15. You may refer Deng Xiao-jun’s, *Confucianism and Democratic Thoughts* (Sichuan People’s Press, 1995), Xiao Bin’s, *Confucianism and Two Concepts of Freedom* (Social Science, 1997, the third term), Chen Han-ming’s, *Confucianism and Modern Democracy* (Tianjin Social Science, 1998).
criticizes the trend of globalization. It emphasized the necessity of nationalism, recognition of the Chinese mainland (or arrogance of Sinocentrism), and cultural relativism. Another seemingly confronting new trend has voluntarily and directly challenged the paradigms of globalization and universalism (universal). Pacifism, a new trend after the Cold War, and ecology have both exerted influences as new paradigms. People used to adopt these paradigms into the study and the observation of Confucianism. As a result, Confucianism showed the patterns of universalism (or universal ethic), pacifism and the ecology. Among others these paradigms reillustrated, the unity of the heaven and the man, harmony, and grand alliance. Continental scholars take a critical attitude toward the clash of civilizations theory of Samuel Huntington. An attitude which is based on the idea that different civilizations can make conversations, understand, and harmonize with each other. Another attitude is to observe Confucianism from the point of universalism. This attitude views that Confucianism has a universal value and cannot be a source of confrontation. The application of universalism and specialism to Confucianism reflects that people search for different forms of the self in Confucianism.

Humanitarianism and humanism of the late 1970s and the early 1980s had a motive of explaining the freedom of human nature and the freedom and value of individuals, in opposition to political dogmatism. Meanwhile, the humanistic spirit and value and humanism of the 1990s acquired a space of existence by opposing economic dogmatism characterized by instrumentalism, utilitarianism, and secularism. Also they sought non-market and non-utilitarian human spirit, human value, and ideal. Such concepts as concern over the ultimate, transcendence, and religion are included in the latter type of consciousness. This type of consciousness has, at the same time, become a paradigm of observing Confucianism. Basically, disputes do not exist in understanding Confucianism with humanism. It becomes complicated when we try to understand Confucianism with the paradigms of the concern over the ultimate, transcendence, and religion. The problem is that these concepts have the Western culture as a background. There exists a big difference in Christian religion and Chinese Confucianism. People, however, have found a way for a solution. It is to endow Confucianism with the general meaning of this paradigm while having a special
meaning of this paradigm, when we try to understand Confucianism with the paradigm of the concern over the ultimate, transcendence and religion. For example, it is like a situation where neo-Confucianism interprets Confucian characteristics of transcendence and religious character with intrinsic transcendence (contrary to outer transcendence) and religious spirit. Understanding Confucianism through using this

16. Let me explain some details about the serious discussions on the relations between Confucianism and religions, which lasted for a long time. In a sense, Confucianism has both religious spirit and religious character. It is hard, however, for us to expect all the people to understand Confucianism as a complete religion today. It is difficult to make people to have a completely same understanding on religion. The question of whether or not Confucianism is a religion could be answered more easily, if we do not confine the concept of religion to that of the existing religious denominations which have an overall impact on all over the world and which officially are recognized by the people as a religion. What I want to emphasize is that some of the major religions familiar to us have a great number of devotees and have been sustained by them until now. Then how about Confucianism? In China alone, we cannot say that Confucianism is a kind of religion that the people believe in, compared with the situations of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Taoism. In China, Confucianism has been called one of the three great teachings along with Buddhism and Taoism. It is not easy to call Confucianism as a religion in a strict sense, like we do Buddhism or Taoism. In the 20th century, nobody takes issue with whether Taoism and Buddhism are religions or not, except a rare case. In case of Confucianism, however, its religious adaptability has been an issue, which makes us think a lot. We regard historical Confucianism as a teaching or a self-righteousness because Confucianism has basically played a role of a political ideology or an education of secular ethic and morality. It is the result of the systematization of Confucianism as an Establishment. Once it loses the support from the Establishment, Confucianism can easily be downgraded as a mere learning or teachings of a school. Thus, we can understand why Confucianism and the study of Confucianism have been rapidly downgraded with the collapse of traditional society and politics in the later period of Qing Dynasty. Kang You-wei insisted that China should adopt Confucianism as a national religion. His intention was to unite various teachings and to restructure the consciousness of Confucian politics and value in the face of the Western learning. Only Confucianism and Confucian school can be regarded as a teaching or an ideology. This is much like the case of Marxism in China. (Of course, Confucianism has a more perpetual history than Marxism has.) I really hope that Confucianism would be recognized as a religion. Then Confucianism
paradigm was one of the most important positions and views of the Confucianism study in the 1990s, whether such a method was universally accepted or not.

Compared with the diversity of the paradigms, the methodology of the Confucianism study in China in the late 20th century did not bear much fruit. The study succeeded in providing a diversity of methods, but it was not so diverse in content. It is hard to find a case where a method is creatively utilized in the study of Confucianism. In this respect, there was a limited number of such typical figures as Hu Shi, Feng You-lan, Zhang Dai-nian. They were equipped with a high standard of self-awareness with regard to the methodology and could typically operate their own methodology. Zhongguo Zhexueshi Fangfalan Fafan (The Methodology of the History of Chinese Philosophy) was one of the precious books on the methodology of the history of Chinese thoughts.

The method of study with the positivistic character of history and objectivity as its motives has come from the scientific method or the positivistic method which were combined with elements of both the East and the West. They included the scientific method, positivism, philologico-bibliographical study, and the method of seeking for the truth based on the reality as it is in the 1990s. This is basically one of the major methods in each division of the studies of Chinese history. One of the major characteristics of this method is the exemplification based on words and discussions. The ground and the evidence mostly come from the documents or the articles which have been excavated. Quotations are aimed at proper reasoning and verification. The degree of quotations differ, but they have the aim of seeking evidence in most cases. They are the way of making a theory and the way of criticism (for example, on lack of ground for certain views). This method is used many times in the study of Confucianism and has given birth to a descriptive study of Confucianism.

will be able to become a religion of Chinese people and the spiritual principle. Unfortunately, that does not fit reality. However, it does not mean that Confucianism cannot become a typical type of a religion eventually, although Confucianism or Confucian teaching had not been a religion in the past. If we would make Confucianism or Confucian teaching a universal religion, we should carry out a consistent ad hoc movement or neo-Confucian movement.
It is the hermeneutics which has different aspects from the above-mentioned positivistic and scientific characters and even is contrary to them. This method refuses to believe that historical texts based on historicism have essential or original meaning, and stresses the structure of understanding, foresight and bias which can be attained through understanding or interpretations. It stresses the function of tradition, authority, history, and language, which are some of the concrete expressions of foresight, in our interpretation. It stresses understanding, experience, interest, historical effect, and harmony of visibility in the process of understanding. In an overall sense, the method of the hermeneutics has the characteristics of relativism. Not all the researchers of Confucianism who are more inclined to the hermeneutics, however, have a special awareness with regard to this method. Their understanding might be too phenomenal. One common characteristic is that they have complaints about the methods of science and positivism, and instead stress the differences between the humanistic science and the natural science. They do not believe that an effective method in natural science does always apply to the humanistic science, but think that humanistic science has its own method. Some call this method a subjective work in comparison with the traditional Song-style studying method and the interpretations of the six classics, thereby distinguishing them from the objective method of Chinese studies. Based on our limited understanding, such a method in the Confucianism study focuses on value, comprehension, compassionate understanding, and openness of the meaning. Researchers of Confucianism who use this method do neither completely do away with the method of science and positivism nor deny objectivity. They are just opposed to the suggestion that this is the only effective method.

The logical analysis or the analytic method represented by Feng You-lan and Zhang Dai-nian of Beijing University have influenced much the study of the history of Chinese philosophy. They are called the

17. This method is based on the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer.
18. Feng Tian-yu, Zhongguo Zhexue (Chinese Philosophy), the seventeenth volume, Yuelu Shushe Press. 1996.
analytic school of Beijing University. The two scholars have achieved outstanding accomplishments by using this method and have passed on this method to others. Some of the most prominent scholars in the field of Chinese philosophy were their direct or indirect disciples. This method delves into the complex elements of Chinese philosophy and thoughts through a step-by-step approach on the concepts of philosophy, boundary, propositions, and systems. This method was well utilized by the study of Confucianism. *Yixue Zhuxueshi* (The History of the Philosophy of Changes) written by Zhu Bo-kun is remembered as one of the successful cases of using the method of Ma You Lan and Zhang Dai Nian. This method is also questioned, though as critics say that the theory, abstraction, logic, and partially the Western analytic method of the West are not apt to the study of Chinese philosophy, which is characterized by intuition and experience. This method was regarded as destroying the whole aspect of Chinese philosophy. As many other methods had relativistic characters, the analytic method was not necessarily a cure-all. The best option is to focus on analytic method itself and to use other methods as supplementary. However we do not deny all these methods.

Finally, let me distinguish the methodology of the sociology of knowledge from that of the materialistic conception of history (or the historical materialism). Represented by M. Scheler and K. Mannheim, the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the society which contains knowledge, conception, world view, and conviction, and stresses that all these are restricted by the social existence. In this context, it tried to come in contact with thoughts and ideas in history. Its concern was the social basis of thoughts and ideology. It sought for social condition and social situation where thoughts aroused. Researchers of Confucianism in China in the 1990s were relatively insensitive to the sociology of knowledge represented by M. Scheler and K. Mannheim. They published the Chinese translation of *Ideology and Utopia* written by Mannheim, which has now become a classic. Most recently, The Sociology of Knowledge by Scheler has been published in China. But not a few researchers of Confucianism in China have been sensitive to Karl Marx’s historical materialism, which was related to the sociology of knowledge. One of the representative figures was Hou Wai-lu who wrote *Zhongguo Sixiang Tongshi* (The History of Chinese
Thoughts) by utilizing the method of historical materialism. His school was called the methodology school of historical materialism. Hou has worked for a house of the Chinese philosophical history affiliated with a history research center at the Chinese Academy Social Sciences. This house, however, has not produced any results which utilized the materialistic conception of history. The three volumes of Song-Ming Lixueshi (A History of Song and Ming Studies of li) published in the 1980s failed to fully utilize the historical materialism. The historical materialism of this school, however, has been politically abused and its fame and vigor damaged. As was mentioned before, people tended to keep their distance from this method. Thus, we could not expect further development in the study of Confucianism using this method.

IV. Problems and Prospects

We have discussed several views on Confucianism in the process of carrying out the study of Confucianism in China in the late 20th century. If we would compare this discussion to a large complexity of the Confucianism study in China in the 1990s, however, such a discussion would not be able to sum up the contents of the study so efficiently. I hope that this discussion will be of some help in understanding the study of Confucianism in China in the 20th century.

20. Let me briefly explain the relationship between Confucianism and Marxism. We cannot openly say that the study of Confucianism in the 1990s was not directed by Marxism. Such a possibility of direction was inherent in the Chinese society. Thus the relationship between Confucianism and Marxism was characterized by its complexity in China. For this reason, some define the situation as three different relations confrontation, coexistence and harmony. (See “The Study of Relationship between Marxism and Confucianism in the 1990s” written by Ruan Qing in Kongzi Yanjiu, 1998. The relationship between Confucianism and Marxism has come to have a special characteristics in China. It was natural to raise the issue under the current surroundings of China. But this is not a universal issue but a special issue. The universal issue deals with how Confucianism of the mainland China could open itself to all the thoughts and culture and how can it have conversations with diverse fields of culture. The relationship between Marxism and Confucianism, which has existed as a specialty in China, is a very delicate problem.
As you know, not only Confucianism’s birthplace of China but also Korea, Japan, and other East Asian countries, which have their own Confucian backgrounds, have established their own traditions of research. Researchers of Chinese classics in the non-traditional cultural bloc of Europe and America, have come to establish their own tradition as long as Confucianism is concerned. Now, at the end of the century, the academic communities of the Chinese classics around the world are attempting to have conversations with each other on the subject of East Asian studies and Confucianism, with a view to present their own academic traditions and characteristics in a broader sense. This will help us understand and know each other. It is as if we examine our tools from time to time in order to get better results in future tests. We can make this a new opportunity to change our study patterns by reconsidering our tradition of study. The Chinese classics’ community of Japan is characterized by minuteness and accurateness in research, while that of the United States by paradigms and freshness. Chinese classics in Europe centers around some specific areas (such as language and literature) to seek a breakthrough. I am sure that Korea has her own tradition of studying Chinese classics, and I do not think that we want to adopt one type or mode of study. Chinese classics in Japan is gaining attention from people in reflecting its own tradition. Mizoguchi Yuzo of the Tokyo school has contributed greatly in this area. The Chinese studies section of Aichi University in Japan is ambitious to challenge the past tradition of Chinese classics in Japan with its own style. Since the 1990s, the Chinese classics communities of Europe and America and Japan have commonly focused on the history of society and the history of culture with regard to the study of Chinese thoughts. They are turning their attention from mere thoughts and ideology to social and cultural conditions, background and interrelations of thoughts, and ideology. Some Chinese researchers have been influenced by the materialist conception of history which states, social existence determines

social consciousness. So, this method focusing on the history of society and culture (or the method of the sociology of knowledge) seems to be familiar to them. Because we cannot tell anything about the most effective utilization of this method that is all that is attainable. Besides, simplification and political consciousness have distorted the method itself and also conquered the objects of study. I hope that the sociology of knowledge would display its exercise in the study of Chinese Confucianism. Also I hope that the study should be firmly established and be equipped with diversity based on new paradigms and methods.

Researchers of Confucianism in China generally tend to be aware of both value and ideal. This situation might have resulted from worries about China’s realities of life, anxiety about a common environment of mankind and China’s own tradition itself. The research of Chinese humanities have almost been specialized. As the specialists of their own fields, they are aimed at attaining academic results which could last long. Chinese scholars, though differ in degree, still regard the philosophies of Socrates and Confucius as two of their main principles. They do not want to distinguish study from practical use completely or divide the facts with the value. For them, enlightenment and the study for practical use in favor of people is a natural extension of study. They think the real learning can be attained after it can contribute to the enhancement of morality. This does not conform with the rationalization and the intellectualism of academicism, a standard set up by Weber. Academicism has already been specialized and become professional and we cannot not revert this trend. This reminds us of that Edward W. Said has attempted to bring the academicism to the amateur period of the past and regarded it as the emotion of life and the wisdom of society which relieve our difficulties in life. The problem is to find an equilibrium between academicism and social concerns. Chinese researchers of Confucianism have not found the equilibrium. Social concerns and value awareness of the people, as I think, is too frivolous and are not used in proper place. We tend to neglect the historical facts from time to time, restrict our sense of problem by focusing on one subject, and constrain our diversity and depth in thoughts. In the 1990s in China, there aroused a boom of Zeng Guo-fan which was characterized by his popular appeal to the public. Zeng’s books, especially those on family-conducted education, was selling like hotcakes. Researchers of Confu-
cianism, however, pretended not to know of these phenomenon although it contributed a lot in spreading the value of Confucianism in a more practical sense. I hope that we should divide the study of Confucianism into several categories in order to acquire better results in the study of Confucianism and Confucian value. Will it be possible for us to divide the study of Confucianism into the basic one and secular one, as we distinguish science from technology? People really expect that the study of the latter type could make the research and value of Confucianism to get more closer to our daily lives. If not, it would be difficult for us to achieve socialization and popularization of Confucianism even though people call for socialization and popularization of Confucianism like they call for the propaganda of political ideologies. Not a few researchers of Confucianism have come to be aware of the problems in this area. The Study of Contemporary Confucianism (affiliated with the International Confucianism Society), of which Pang Pu and Mou Zhong-jian oversee, have announced several projects for this purpose. We will be able to expect further development in the study of Chinese Confucianism in the new era.

Glossary

Cai Shang-si 陳尚生
Guo Dian 郭店
Kang You-wei 康有為
Mizoguchi Yuzo 水口雄次
Pang Pu 龐朴
Sanlian Shudian 三聯書社
Song-Ming Lixueshi 宋明理學史
Wang Guo-wei 王國維
Wang Zhong-jiang 王重江

Chen Yin-que 陳因怯
Hu Shi 胡适
Liang Shu-ming 梁樹明
Mou Zhong-jian 莫重堅
Feng You-lan 冯友兰
Shibusawa Eiichi 斎藤一

A History of Song and Ming Studies of li


Zhang Dai-nian

Zhonghua Shuju

Zhu Xi

Zhu Bo-kun

Zhongguo Sixiang Tongshi

The History of Studies of li in the song and Ming period