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# Confucianism, Community, Capitalism: Chen Lai and the Spirit of Max Weber

Els van Dongen*

Ever since Confucianism rose to the forefront of discussion among sociologists, scholars of religion, philosophers, and area specialists during the 1980s, debates on the topic have been characterized by a central tension between Confucianism as a *moral* project to create a fiduciary community through self-cultivation and Confucianism as a *sociopolitical* argument about the role of values in economic development. [1] The tension between these two forms of Confucianism is not inherent to Confucianism. Rather, it originates in Max Weber's critique of modernity, a critique that was influential in shaping the debate on the role of Confucianism in the modern world. Weber's critique was at the same time concerned with the negative consequences of modernization-as-rationalization—the "iron cage of modernity"—and with the role of religious values in capitalist modernization. Whereas the former leads to the question of how to lead a meaningful life in a rational world devoid of meaning and what values could play a role in this, the latter leads to the question of the instrumental role of values in the process of rationalization. As for the latter, Weber is most famous for exploring this question in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in which he argued that the Protestant ethic—duty, discipline, and rational behavior—had benefited the rise of capitalism.[2]

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[1] In this chapter, I use the term "Confucianism" because it is the term most commonly used in the sociopolitical debates of the late 1970s and 1980s. However, those identified as "New Confucians" make a clear distinction between the terms *ru, rujia, rujiao,* and *ruxue*. For a detailed overview of the difference between these terms, see John Makeham, *Lost Soul: "Confucianism" in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008); and John Makeham, ed., *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003). On the creation of "Confucianism" and the role of the Jesuits in this process, see Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

[2] Although first published in English in 1930, Weber's essays on the topic first appeared in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft* in 1904/1905. The question of the impact of Calvinism and Quakerism on the development of capitalism had already been raised by Werner Sombart in his *Der Moderne Kapitalismus*, vol. 1: *Die Genesis der Kapitalismus*, and vol. 2: *Die Theorie der Kapitalistischen Entwicklung* (Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1902),

The same double-edged role of values in relation to modernity can be found in Weber's understanding of rational action, which could also be based both on intrinsic values and on instrumental motivations. In his *Economy and Society* (1922), Weber outlined the distinction between two types of social action, namely "value rationality" (*Wertrationalität*) and "instrumental rationality" (*Zweckrationalität*). According to Weber, "instrumental rationality" is a type of rational action in which the actor calculates how to reach a certain end. This type of action is present in modern capitalism and in the modern bureaucracy.[3] "Value rationality," on the contrary, refers to an action that is not a means to an end, but that is inspired by "unconditional demands," as Weber calls it. As Weber himself explains the difference between the two types of action, instrumentally rational behavior is "determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as 'conditions' or 'means for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends.'" Value-rational action, on the other hand, is "determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success."[4]

Weber adds that these ideal types are heuristic devices; in practice, however, finding action that can be reduced to only one type of rational action is difficult.[5] For Weber, rationalization and rationalism occur in all world religions, but distinctions are made based on the *sphere* in which they occur and the *direction* rationalization and rationalism take. Instrumental rationalization takes place in the sphere of the world and has a practical orientation; value rationalization not only takes place in the sphere of the "afterworld" (*Hinterwelt*), but it *also* has a practical orientation. We find a theoretical orientation in both the "scientific rationalism" in the world and the "metaphysical rationalism" in the afterworld. Weber argues that in the modern West, scientific and technical rationalism gradually *reject* metaphysical and ethical rationalism; at the same time, an *inclusive* notion of both theoretical rationalism and practical rationalization that includes both scientific and metaphysical rationalism and both instrumental and value rationalization becomes more unlikely. In other words, rationalism becomes scientific only and rationalization turns into instrumental rationalization only.[6]

Debates on Confucianism since the 1980s have manifested these two sides of the Weberian coin—the treatment of values as antidotes against the consequences of the process of rationalization that rejects value rationality and the discussion of values as instruments to rationalization. On the one hand, advocates of Confucianism argued that Confucianism as "value rationality" could be a moral cure against the erosion of meaning and community in a

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but Max Weber was the first to explore the relation in detail. See Günther Roth, "Introduction," in Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by Günther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 72, 77.

[3] For details, see Weber, *Economy and Society*, chap. 2: "Sociological Categories of Economic Action," and chap. 9: "Bureaucracy."

[4] Weber, *Economy and Society,* 24-25. Weber discerned two other types of action, namely "affectual" and "traditional" action. Both of these were situated on a lower level because they were actions based on habit instead of on worldview or choice. See Weber, *Economy and Society*, 4-5.

[5] Weber, *Economy and Society*, 26.

[6] Wolfgang Schluchter, "Einleitung: Max Webers Konfuzianismusstudie: Versuch einer Einordnung," in *Max Webers Studie über Konfuzianismus und Taoismus: Interpretation und Kritik*, edited by Wolfgang Schluchter (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983), 28-30. I thank Tze-ki Hon for bringing this study to my attention.

modernized world built on "instrumental rationality." Thus, some Chinese scholars (such as Chen Lai and Tu Wei-ming) framed their Confucian project as a critique of modernity, defending the free-spirited value rationality against the instrumental rationality of modern industrial society. On the other hand, however, Chen Lai and Tu Wei-ming also made references to the second aspect of Weber's thought, the question of the relation between Confucianism and capitalism, which was a question regarding the instrumental role of values that was in tension with their defense of Confucian values based on their inherent worth. Here, scholars and advocates of Confucianism engaged with Weber's argument that Confucianism had not served the rise of capitalism because of its focus on moral perfection, its lack of asceticism, and its emphasis on education instead of business. This chapter is concerned with the tension between these two positions, one of which involves a defense of the value rationality of Confucianism and the other of which implies the recognition of the instrumental rationality of Confucian values.

To understand why the discussion on Confucianism became prominent among advocates of Confucianism and beyond during the 1980s and the 1990s, we need to consider three contextual factors in particular. First, in mainland China, Deng Xiaoping's program of reform and opening up—which was launched during the late 1970s and which intensified in 1992 with Deng's famous Southern Tour—not only created the conditions for the revaluation of Confucianism but also triggered debates on the relation between tradition and modernity. Second, as a consequence of these changes, the intellectual world was exposed to theories from scholars outside of China on a scale unprecedented in decades. An intellectual frenzy occurred that consisted of an engagement with comparisons of "Eastern" and "Western" cultures and that also engaged in debates on the relation between tradition and modernity and the question of historical continuity. Following this trend during the mid- to late 1980s, both the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989 and the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Incident led to a continued engagement with these themes, both in mainland China and beyond. Finally, the rise of the so-called Four Mini Dragons (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore) led scholars to reconsider Weber's verdict that Confucianism had not benefited the rise of capitalism, thereby engaging with the possibility of a "Confucian capitalism."

This chapter investigates the tension between the moral and the sociopolitical positions in Confucian discourse primarily through the writings of the mainland Confucian scholar Chen Lai 陈来 (b. 1952), a philosopher based at Tsinghua University. However, it also connects Chen Lai's writings with the work of Tu Wei-ming 杜维明 (b. 1940), the "Boston Confucian" who is perhaps the most famous exponent of "New Confucianism" (*xiandai xin rujia* 现代新儒家, *dangdai xin rujia* 当代新儒家, or *dangdai xin ruxue* 当代新儒学).[7] The reason behind this choice is that Tu Wei-ming played a prominent role in the debates in the United States, as well as in introducing the debates in a mainland Chinese context. Tu had linked the criticism of the May Fourth Movement as having been too radical in its rejection of the Chinese past, which spread on mainland China during the early 1990s, to the question of the role of Confucian values in the modern world in a broad sense; he

[7] On "Boston Confucianism," see Robert Cummings Neville, *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000).

influenced Chen Lai's thinking on the matter. In addition, the two scholars were intellectually related: Chen Lai studied with Tu Wei-ming twice. He first studied with Tu when Tu was a visiting scholar at Peking University in 1985, and then when Chen was a visiting scholar at the Harvard-Yenching Institute between 1986 and 1988.[8] However important the connection between both scholars is, looking at Chen Lai's writings *per se* offers us a valuable insight into debates on Confucianism in the light of changes in mainland China specifically. This chapter focuses on Chen Lai's writings from the 1990s because significant discussions on New Confucianism took place in mainland China during this period following the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Incident and the demonstrations on Tiananmen Square in 1989 (for the importance of this period, see Introduction and Tze-ki Hon's introduction and chapter 1 herein).

Additionally, this chapter incorporates analyses and critiques from before and after the 1990s, as well as writings by other scholars, in an attempt to extend the discussion and to ponder the fate of Confucianism in the twenty-first century. This chapter raises the question whether Confucianism can function in two opposite roles. Can it be an antidote against the ills of capitalism and the de-humanization inherent in modernization on the one hand, and a driving force of East Asian capitalism on the other? To some Chinese scholars (including Chen Lai and Tu Wei-ming), the contradiction between the two opposite roles of Confucianism does not seem to be problematic. More interestingly, they tend to speak of the two roles of Confucianism as if they are mutually supportive. Although they claim their view is derived from Max Weber, they do not seem to grasp the subtlety of Weber's two types of rationality and the inherent contradiction between these types of rationality. In a final section, some possible explanations as to why both Tu Wei-ming and Chen Lai do not perceive any contradiction between the two types of rationality will be explored further.

*Confucianism as a Moral Project: The Critique of Instrumental Rationality*

In order to understand the tension between the moral and the sociopolitical debate in the work of Chen Lai, we first need to understand what is entailed in his engagement in the moral project and how this relates to the moral project of the so-called "New Confucians." As Tze-ki Hon's chapter and others in this volume explain, "New Confucianism" is a reinterpretation of the Neo-Confucianism that flourished during the Song (907-1279) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties. Although some advocates trace the movement back to the early twentieth century, Makeham has argued that the movement became a distinct school of thought only in the late 1970s.[9] Whereas Chen Lai does not belong to this lineage, we will see that many of Chen's arguments in fact reflect the concerns of the New Confucians.[10]

The two main schools in Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism were the (1) "heart-mind centered learning" (*xinxue* 心学) of Lu Xiangshan (1139-1192) and Wang Yangming (1472-1529), and (2) the "principled-centered learning" (*lixue* 理学) of Cheng Yi (1033-1107) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200). According to the Lu-Wang school, the universe was identical with the

[8] Chen Lai was also at Harvard in 1997 and in 2006-2007, during Tu Wei-ming's directorship of the Yenching Institute (1996-2008).

[9] See Makeham, *Lost Soul,* 25-53. On the New Confucian lineage and the notion of *daotong* 道统 (interconnecting thread of the Way), see his "The New Daotong," in *Lost Soul*, 55-78.

[10] Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 68.

mind, and the unity between man and heaven was to be realized through the development of the innate knowledge of the good and the native ability to do good. For the Cheng-Zhu school, the principles of the universe had to be grasped through the "investigation of things," which would in turn enable the realization of one's good nature. In spite of the differences between the schools, it can be said that both focus on ethical cultivation.

A core concept from Neo-Confucianism that twentieth-century New Confucians elaborated is the so-called doctrine of "learning of the mind and nature" (*xinxing zhi xue* 心性之学). As Chang Hao explains, for New Confucians, nature (*xing* 性) has to be understood in a metaphysical sense; it implies the belief in inner transcendence. This inner transcendence is connected with the outer transcendence of heaven (*tian* 天); together, they constitute the "unity between man and heaven" (*tianren heyi* 天人合一). Another critical concept is *ren* 仁 (benevolence, humaneness), which is actualized through self-cultivation. Having become an "inner sage" (*neisheng* 内圣), one has to rise above this moral cultivation by taking part in the outer world and by becoming an "outer king" (*waiwang* 外王).[11]

In the 1958 document that has generally been treated as the "manifesto" of New Confucianism, the "Declaration on Behalf of Chinese Culture Respectfully Announced to the People of the World," the authors Mou Zongsan (1909-1995), Tang Junyi (1909-1978), Xu Fuguan (1903-1982), and Zhang Junmai (1886-1969) argued that the core of Chinese culture was the doctrine of *xinxing* 心性 or the "conformity of heaven and man in virtue."[12] They disapproved of the use of external standards to evaluate Chinese culture and criticized the "feverish pursuit of progress" of the West.[13] The authors envisioned a modernization that included both science and democracy and Confucian ethics. The Declaration was hence a plea for the continued importance of Chinese culture in the modern world.[14]

In the works of Tu Wei-ming, we clearly see the concern with self-cultivation, the realization of a moral community, and the continued existence of morality under modernity.[15] Tu is most known for his theory of "the third epoch of Confucianism," which involves the contemporary revival of Confucianism on a global scale after the first epoch of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, and the second epoch of Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism.[16] This is also in line with his theory of a "Cultural China," according to which a Confucian revival from the "periphery" can impact developments in the "center," the People's Republic of

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[11] Hao Chang, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China," in *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, edited by Charlotte Furth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 289-296. See also chap. 6 by Stephen Angle and chap. 5 by Ming-huei Lee herein.

[12] For an English version of the manifesto, see Junmai Zhang, "A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture," in Junmai Zhang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought, vol. 2* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1962), 455-483; ref. from 460, 464. The Declaration was published in the journals *Zaisheng* (Renaissance) and *Minzhu pinglun* (Democratic Tribune) in the New Year's issues of 1958.

[13] Zhang, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2., 476.

[14] On the 1957 Declaration, see chap. 10 by Chan Hok Yan and chap. 5 by Lee Ming-huei herein.

[15] See for example his *The Quest for Self-Realization: A Study of Wang Yang-ming's Formative Years* (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1968); *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought* (Berkeley, CA Asian Humanities Press, 1979); and *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985).

[16] See his *Ruxue disanqi fazhan de qianjing wenti: dalu jiangxue, wennan he taolun* 儒学第三期发展的前景问题：大陆讲学，问难和讨论 [Prospective issues of the third epoch of Confucianism: mainland lectures, questions, and discussions] (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshe gongsi, 1989).

China.[17] Tu Wei-ming has conducted much research on Wang Yangming, which links him to the "heart-mind centered learning" of the Lu-Wang school.

Chen Lai is not a New Confucian in the sense that Tu Wei-ming is. He belongs to a different generation of scholars and his teachers are not all considered New Confucians. In addition, he is much less publicly involved in the New Confucian project than Tu Wei-ming is. However, as a Confucian scholar, he has been a central figure in the revaluation of Confucianism in mainland China. He not only has studied the writings of Zhu Xi rigorously, but he has also written about the thought of Wang Yangming.[18] Like New Confucians, Chen Lai is convinced that core Confucian values can foster community in an environment of increased social rationalization. Chen's emphasis on Confucian values can be read as an engagement with Weber's argument that modern rationality becomes exclusive of value rationality and dominated by instrumental rationality.

In 2006, Chen Lai's *Chuantong yu xiandai: renwen zhuyi de shijie* (*Tradition and Modernity: The Scope of Humanism)* was published.[19] Central themes in this collection include the autonomy of culture versus the politicization of culture, the historical continuity of Chinese tradition, instrumental rationality versus value rationality, and the particularity versus the universality of Confucian values. The collection includes writings on both aspects of the debate over the nature of Confucianism, which is why it is interesting for our purposes. The word "humanism" in the book's title needs to be understood in relation to Chen Lai's interpretation of Confucianism as "a human way rather than a way of the spirits."[20] According to Chen, since ancient times, *rujia* culture has gone through a process of "humanization" and "rationalization" through which magic and religious elements were replaced by the cultivation of spirituality in education and rites.[21] The word "humanism" also refers to the New Confucian understanding of Confucianism as an ethical system in which the main concern is, in the words of Tu Wei-ming, "how we learn to be human."[22]

The main title *Tradition and Modernity* reveals that, especially in mainland China, the Confucian discourse was embedded in a larger debate on the relation between tradition and modernity, a theme that gained importance in the context of the so-called "culture fever" (*wenhua re* 文化热) of the 1980s, the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Incident in 1989, and the revaluation of Confucianism since the 1990s.[23] Before

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[17] See Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," in *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*, edited by Wei-ming Tu (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1-34.

[18] See, e.g., Chen Lai, *Zhu Xi zhexue yanjiu* 朱熹哲学研究 [A study of Zhu Xi's philosophy] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1987); Chen Lai 陈来, *You wu zhi jing: Wang Yangming zhexue de jingshen* 有无之境:王阳明哲学的精神 [The realm of "you" and "wu": The spirit of Wang Yangming's philosophy], (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1991).

[19] Chen Lai, *Chuantong yu xiandai: Renwen zhuyi de shijie* 传统与现代：人文主义的视界 [Tradition and modernity: the scope of humanism], (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2006); henceforth CYX. This volume is a revised and expanded edition of a volume published in 1997 under the title *Renwen zhuyi de shijie* 人文主义的视界 [*The Scope of Humanism*], (Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997)], that included Chen's writings on Confucianism over a period of nearly twenty years (1987-2006).

[20] Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 335.

[21] Ibid., 286-287.

[22] Wei-ming Tu, *Confucian Ethics Today: The Singapore Challenge* (Singapore: Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore, 1984), 4.

[23] On the "culture fever," see Jing Wang, *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng's China* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

the 1990s, China had witnessed decades of "anti-traditionalism" under both the May Fourth Movement (with the exception of a brief return to tradition during the 1930s) and Marxist notions of progress since 1949. Although the criticism of the May Fourth legacy became widespread among intellectuals during the early 1990s, some had already begun to question this legacy during the 1980s.[24] In the context of the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Incident, the May Fourth legacy was scrutinized in a multitude of volumes and conference volumes.[25] Academic journals such as *Dongfang* 东方 (Orient), *Wenxue pinglun* 文学评论 (Literary Review), *Xueren* 学人 (Scholar), and *Yuandao* 原道 (Tracing the Way) published debates on the topic.

Chen Lai's revaluation of the May Fourth legacy corresponds with his overall argument that morality, and Confucianism in particular, is very much needed in modern society. Since the late 1980s, Chen Lai has addressed the issue of the crisis of Confucianism—which he conceives of as both a cultural crisis and a crisis of the belief in values—in a number of articles.[26] Before May Fourth, although Confucianism had been erased from politics and education, it still stood firm in the ethical and spiritual realms. With May Fourth, it also disappeared from these realms; after 1949, its position was damaged fiercely, this time not by liberals but by dogmatism and "extreme leftist false Marxism."[27] In the article "A Propitious New Start," written for *Twenty-first Century* during the winter of 1992, however, Chen Lai describes how, after decades of denial, a shift had taken place: "Confucianism has already passed the hardest time; it has already left the low ebb."[28]

In one of the key articles of *Tradition and Modernity*, Chen Lai addresses the "anti-traditionalism" of the May Fourth era, the Cultural Revolution, and the so-called "New Enlightenment" of the 1980s in an article on "cultural radicalism" (*wenhua jijin zhuyi* 文化激

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[24] See, e.g. Li Zehou's famous 1986 article on the May Fourth Movement in which he argued, among other things, that tradition was a "cultural-psychological structure" (*wenhua xinli jiegou* 文化心理结构), which is why a denial or confirmation of tradition is impossible. Li Zehou 李泽厚, "Qimeng yu jiuwang de shuangzhong bianzou" 启蒙与救亡的双重变奏 [The double variation of Enlightenment and salvation], in Li Zehou, *Zhongguo xiandai sixiangshi lun* 中国现代思想史论 [On modern Chinese intellectual history] (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1987), 7-49.

[25] The revaluation of May Fourth is such a broad topic that it requires a separate study. Some of the main volumes include: Zhou Yangshan 周阳山 et al., eds., *Cong wusi dao xin wusi* 从五四到新五四 [From May Fourth to the New May Fourth], (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban qiye youxian gongsi, 1989); Tang Yijie 汤一介, ed., *Lun chuantong yu fan chuantong: Wusi qishi zhounian jinian wenxuan* 论传统与反传统：五四七十周年纪念文选 [On tradition and anti-tradition: Commemorative literary selections for the seventieth anniversary of May Fourth] (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1989); Li Zehou 李泽厚 et al., *Wusi: Duoyuan de fansi* 五四：多元的反思 [May Fourth: Multiple reflections], (Taipei: Dahong faxing, 1989). For a detailed overview of the May Fourth Movement (1917-1921), see Tse-tsung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

[26] Chen Lai, "Ershi shiji Zhongguo wenhua zhong de ruxue kunjing" 二十世纪中国文化中的儒学困境 [The predicament of Confucianism in twentieth-century Chinese culture] *Zhejiang shehui kexue* 浙江社会科学 1988:3 (May 1988), 26-32; ref. from 30. See also his "Duoyuan wenhua jiegouzhong de ruxue ji qi dingwei" 多元文化结构中的儒学及其定位 [Ruxue and its place in multicultural structures] *Zhongguo luntan* 中国论坛 27, no. 1 (1988): 21-23.

[27] Chen Lai, "Ershi shiji Zhongguo wenhua zhong de ruxue kunjing," 31.

[28] Chen Lai, "Zhenxia qiyuan" 贞下起元 [A Propitious New Start] *Ershiyi shiji* 二十一世纪 10 (April 1992): 10-11.

进主义).[29] In a reference to Max Weber, Chen Lai introduces the concept of "value rationality" *(jiazhi lixing* 价值理性*)*, which he associates with the "cultural conservatives" during the May Fourth era. Those who advocated traditional values during the May Fourth era did so because of their belief in the inherent value of these values. "Cultural radicals," on the other hand, rejected these values based on "instrumental rationality" (*gongju lixing* 工具理性 ), or the reliance on external standards of economic or political usefulness.[30] For this division, Chen Lai draws on Max Weber's distinction between "value rationality" (*Wertrationalität*) and "instrumental rationality" (*Zweckrationalität*), the two types of social action that Weber had outlined in his *Economy and Society.* In an article in which Chen Lai seeks ways to dissolve the tension between tradition and modernity, he explains the distinction between these two types of rationality: "The standard of instrumental rationality refers to taking the efficiency of politics or economics of a certain society as a starting point. The standard of value rationality is taking ethical and cultural values in itself as a yardstick. "[31]

Chen Lai also makes use of Weber's two types of rationality to read the 1923 debate on "Science and Metaphysics," in which the main participants had been Zhang Junmai (1886-1969), Ding Wenjiang (1887-1936), Liang Qichao (1873-1929), Hu Shi (1891-1962), and Wu Zhihui (1865-1953).[32] For Chen Lai, those participants in the debate who argued against scientism, such as Zhang Junmai, were "conservatives" who stood on the side of "value rationality." Advocates of scientism, such as Ding Wenjiang, on the other hand, were "radicals" who had reduced modern civilization to "instrumental rationality." For Chen Lai, "value rationality" does not lend itself to an opposition between "old" and "new": it is continuous. Chen's defense of "value rationality" through his reading of the 1923 debate and his insistence on it being "continuous" clearly reveals the side of the Weber debate in which Confucianism is understood as a moral antidote against the social rationalization inherent in capitalism that is especially important in today's world.

Chen Lai's notion of "value rationality" and his defense of the autonomy of values need to be understood in relation to his conception of Confucianism as a moral system detached from social referents or institutions. This view is opposed to the view of scholars such as Lin Yü-sheng (b. 1934), who argued in favor of the "creative transformation" of Chinese tradition, and Yü Ying-shih (b. 1930), who claimed that modern Chinese thought had witnessed a "radicalization process." For Lin and Yü, Confucianism was tied to concrete

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[29] Chen Lai, "Ershi shiji wenhua yundong zhong de jijin zhuyi" 二十世纪文化运动中的激进主义 [Radicalism in twentieth-century cultural movements] *Dongfang* 东方 1 no.1 (1993), 38-44.

[30] Chen Lai also used the term "functional rationality" (*gongyong lixing* 功用理性) instead of "instrumental rationality" (*gongju lixing* 工具理性). See, e.g., "Huajie 'chuantong' yu 'xiandai' de jinzhang: 'Wusi' wenhua sichao de fansi" 化解 '传统' 与 '现代' 的紧张: '五四' 文化思潮的反思 [Dissolving the tension between tradition and modernity: Reflections on the cultural trend of "May Fourth"] in *Chen Lai zixuanji* 陈来自选集 [Self-selected works of Chen Lai] (Guangdong: Guangdong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1997), 377. In other articles, Chen Lai also employed the terms *shizhi lixing* 实质理性 and *xingshi lixing* 形式理性, which appear to be closest to the original Weberian terms. See, e.g., "Xin lixue yu xiandaixing siwei de fansi" 新理学与现代性思维的反思 [New rational philosophy and reflections on modernity thought] in Chen Lai, *Chuantong yu xiandai* (q.v.), 174.

[31] Chen Lai, "Huajie chuantong yu xiandai de jinzhang: Wusi wenhua sichao de fansi," *Chen Lai zixuanji,* 373-398; quote from 377.

[32] On the debate, see Daniel Kwok Wynn-Ye, *Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900-1950* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1965).

social referents, and it was very much intertwined with social institutions.[33] For Yü particularly, the preservation of intermediate organizations was driven by the fact that these institutions were embodiments of Confucian culture as a living culture. For Chen Lai, conversely, Confucianism cannot be equated with its social amalgamations, as the latter harms its transcendental values.[34] Like Tu Wei-ming, Chen makes a clear distinction between Confucianism as a system of thought and orthodox state Confucianism.

In this context, Chen Lai criticizes the leading May Fourth intellectual and co-founder of the Chinese Communist Party Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), who had reduced Confucian ethics to the "three bonds" (*sangang* 三纲)—the bonds between ruler and official, father and son, and husband and wife—and who had claimed that "advocating respect for Confucius must necessarily lead to an emperor ascending the throne."[35] Chen Duxiu's fierce attack on Confucianism had been directly related to the attempts at revival of the Chinese monarchy by Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) and Zhang Xun (1854-1923), both of whom invoked Confucianism in their political maneuvers. "Radicals" such as Chen Duxiu committed the fallacy of overgeneralization (*yipian gaiquan* 以偏概全): in their assault on Confucianism, they focused on political ethics, family ethics, and sexual ethics, and on the basis of this, they discarded Confucianism as a whole.[36] The argument that Confucianism had been distorted in the process of its practical usage in political and social life is not unique to Chen Lai; Tu Wei-ming also makes a distinction between a distorted politicized Confucianism and everyday-life Confucianism.[37] For both Tu Wei-ming and Chen Lai, then, Confucianism stands for certain values—*ren* in particular—that are detached from social referents.

Tu Wei-ming has engaged on numerous occasions in a critique of the "instrumental rationality" and the quest for world mastery that underlay the "Enlightenment mentality."[38] For Tu Wei-ming, Confucianism has a religious dimension—it is a "religio-philosophy"—and its core element is *ren* (humaneness), which Tu also translates as "human-relatedness."[39] As indicated in the title of Chen Lai's collection of essays, humanism (*renwen zhuyi* 人文主义) is also a focal concern for Chen. For Chen Lai, the virtues that make man human are benevolence (*ren* 仁) and harmony (*he* 和), values that Tu Wei-ming also identifies as the kernel of Confucianism. Chen Lai claims that *harmony* can form an antidote to the exploitation of nature, Huntington's theory of the "clash of civilizations," the distance between people, the anxiety of the individual, and the lack of tolerance and peaceful coexistence between different cultures. As Chen Lai phrases it, "One could say that 'ren' is

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[33] See Lin Yü-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); and Yü Ying-shih, "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century," *Daedalus* 122, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 125-150.

[34] Chen Lai, "'Wusi' sichao yu xiandaixing" "五四"思潮与现代性 [The 'May Fourth' trend and modernity], in *Chuantong yu xiandai: Renwen zhuyi de shijie*, 60-67; ref. from 62-63.

[35] Chen Lai, "Ershi shiji Zhongguo wenhua zhong de ruxue kunjing," 27. Chen Lai referred to Chen Duxiu's text "Fubi yu zunkong" 复辟与尊孔 [Restoration and revering Confucius], *Xin qingnian* [New Youth] 3:6.

[36] Chen Lai, "Huajie jinzhang," 388.

[37] Tu calls the distortions "open attacks" or *mingqiang* 明槍 (the end of the imperial system) and "overt attacks" or *anjian* 暗箭（the May Fourth critique).

[38] Tu Wei-ming, "Huajie qimeng xintai" 化解启蒙心态 [Beyond the Enlightenment syndrome], *Ershiyi shiji* 二十一世纪 2 (Dec.1990): 12-13.

[39] Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 56-57; Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 280.

the representation of Confucian value rationality and the concentrated manifestation of substantive tradition."[40]

In line with the New Confucian agenda, then, for Chen Lai, the renunciation of Confucian values is a result of the rationalization process of modernization that renders all human activities into cost-benefit calculations. To highlight the importance of "value rationality," Chen refers to the American neo-conservative Daniel Bell's criticism of late industrial societies. In his *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976), and relying on Max Weber, Bell argues that in the post-industrial era, capitalism erodes the very virtues that are so important to the "spirit" of capitalism, such as self-discipline, restraint, and frugality. Chen Lai asserts that this criticism can also be applied to China because it addresses the question of "how to establish a humanist environment suited to the modernization project [of late twentieth-century China]."[41]

In his promotion of "value rationality," Chen Lai also invokes Liang Shuming's (1893-1988) concept of *lixing* 理性. According to Alitto, between 1930 and 1949, Liang Shuming focused on the concept of *lixing* instead of *ren* 仁（benevolence）and *zhijue* 知觉. Alitto has argued that *lixing* was for Liang "the normative sense that directs moral action… the sense of right and wrong which makes man human."[42] For Chen Lai, Liang Shuming's concept of *lixing* in some aspects resembles Habermas's concept of "communicative rationality," because it was a "manner of interaction," a "mutual understanding," or a "mentality of mutual connection."[43] This, Chen Lai notes, is like benevolence.[44] Whereas Habermas's theory of "communicative rationality" accords a central role to communication in the establishment of rationality, Chen Lai interprets this communication as a moral concept that connects people and that offers normative guidance, that is, communication is essential to the formation of a community.

Like Chen Lai, Tu Wei-ming also indicates the importance of communicative rationality instead of instrumental rationality in the Confucian education system in particular. Tu finds this especially in the *Analects*.[45] He is concerned with the Mencian tradition of humaneness, with personal cultivation, and with the universality of Confucian values. Tu Wei-ming argues that Confucian morality enables the creation of a "fiduciary community," a community that is not just an aggregate of individuals, but that is based on a relation of mutual trust.[46] Similarly, he emphasizes the importance of communication in Confucianism because of its nature as a "philosophy of mutuality."[47] The relation between the individual and the community under

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[40] Chen Lai, "Rujia sixiang yu xiandai dongya shijie" 儒家思想与现代东亚世界 [Confucian thought and the modern East Asian world], in *Chuantong yu xiandai: Renwen zhuyi de shijie,* 179-187; ref. from 186.
[41] Chen Lai, "Renwen zhuyi de shijie" [The Scope of Humanism], *Dongfang wenhua* [Eastern Culture] 18 no. 1 (1997): 14-20; ref. from 16.
[42] Guy Alitto, *The Last Confucian*: *Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 184.
[43] For a similar view on *ren* as "public domain" and "communicative rationality," see chap. 7 by Lin Anwu herein.
[44] Chen Lai, "Rujia sixiang yu xiandai dongya shijie," 186.
[45] Wei-ming Tu et al., eds., *The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia* (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 1992), 65.
[46] Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 91.
[47] Wei-ming Tu, *Confucian Ethics Today: The Singapore Challenge* (Singapore: Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore, 1984), 9.

the conditions of modernity, then, are central concerns for Tu Wei-ming, as they are for Chen Lai. What we can see from this is that Weber's critique of modernity has inspired this side of the New Confucianism discourse, not only in mainland China, but also through Tu Wei-ming's advocacies in the United States. As will be explored further, however, some differences exist between their advocacies as well, and the specific context of mainland China during the 1980s and the early 1990s played an important role in this.

*Instrumental Rationality and East Asian Development*

Apart from the debate on tradition and modernity in the context of the revaluation of Confucianism, the 1980s also witnessed an upsurge of debates on the role of Confucianism in the modern world in the context of the rise of the Four Mini Dragons. Already in the late 1970s, some Japan scholars had made reference to Confucianism in their analyses of Japan's economic success. In 1978, the economist Michio Morishima employed the term "Confucian capitalism"; one year later, both the Japan scholar Ezra Vogel in his *Japan as Number One* and the sociologist Herman Kahn in his *World Economic Development* also tied Confucianism to Japan's economic rise.[48] Shortly after, scholars also applied the concept of Confucian capitalism to a broader context. For example, in 1980, the China scholar Roderick MacFarquhar wrote about a "post-Confucian challenge." Since then, the East Asian Development thesis has become popular in the United States, and sociologist Peter Berger is one of its supporters.[49]

Ironically, the very same "ideational factors" that had been designated as a hindrance to development in the 1950s and 1960s were now considered to contribute to economic success.[50] For instance, John King Fairbank, operating in the context of post-World War II modernization theories, had famously argued that China had failed to respond to the impact of the West precisely because of a Confucian worldview "of China as central, superior, and self-sufficient."[51] In the field of intellectual history, Joseph Levenson had similarly exposed the rupture between Confucianism and modern life in the well-known trilogy *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*.[52]

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[48] Michio Morishima, "The Power of Confucian Capitalism," *The Observer* (London), June 1978; and Ezra Vogel, *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). See also Vogel's later work, *The Four Little Dragons: The Spread of Industrialization in East Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). The Japan scholar Robert Bellah, a student of Talcott Parsons, had already applied the Weber thesis to Japan in the 1950s. See Robert N. Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957). Another early Weberian approach to Japanese thought is Maruyama Masao's *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū* (Studies on the history of Japanese political thought) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1952); Herman Kahn, *World Economic Development: 1979 and Beyond* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979).

[49] Roderick MacFarquhar, "The Post-Confucian Challenge," *The Economist*, February 9, 1980, 67-72; and Peter L. Berger, "An East Asian Development Model," in *In Search of an East Asian Development Model,* edited by Peter L. Berger and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), 3-11.

[50] Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "Confusing Confucianism with Capitalism: Culture as Impediment and/or Stimulus to Chinese Economic Development" (paper presented at the Third Global Economic History Network Meeting, Konstanz, Germany, June 2004), 5. Tu Wei-ming has also referred to the fact that the very same values were used by the same people to make the opposite argument as "the most fascinating aspect" of the entire debate. See his *Confucian Ethics Today*, 79.

[51] Zurndorfer, "Confusing Confucianism with Capitalism," 7.

[52] Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958-1965).

Despite the irony, scholars and advocates of Confucianism eagerly joined economists, area studies specialists, and sociologists to discuss the role of Confucianism in capitalism. In 1987, Yü Ying-shih expanded the application of the Weber thesis to China by arguing that the connection between Confucianism and capitalism could be traced back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).[53] Contemporaneously, Tu Wei-ming entered the debate by editing several conference volumes on Confucian capitalism.[54] Later, Yü and Tu were also involved in the development of a Confucian ethics course in Singapore.[55]

Of the many publications at the time, the 1991 conference volume *The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia* clearly shows the relationship between Confucianism and capitalism.[56] Conference participants pointed out that in order to solve the tension between Confucianism and capitalism, in the past, scholars had attempted to legitimate profit-making in Confucianism as a way to serve the community and to improve the conditions of the people. In the West, the tension between ethics and profit-making had similarly been resolved by referring to Adam Smith's "invisible hand": profit-making was justified as being part of a larger goal.[57] Here, we can already see that there is a clear tension between the moral debate and the sociopolitical debate, a tension that was being resolved through the argument that profit-making had to be understood in a broader sense as a *moral* project.

At the time, participants in the conference who were advocates of Confucianism, including Tu Wei-ming, resolved this tension through ambivalence: neither did they embrace the relation between Confucianism and the so-called East Asian Development Model wholeheartedly, nor did they criticize or reject it. This uneasy compromise allowed them to be involved with both groups. With regard to the "Weber question" of the relation between Confucianism and capitalism, Tu Wei-ming states that we need to rethink the notion of modernity, as well as the relation between tradition and modernity.[58] Hence, the "Weber question" is central to the discussion of capitalism, but the point is not to focus on finding the counterpart of the Protestant ethic in Confucian ethics, which would be too simplistic. Rather, the question of "Confucian ethics" leads to the question of "alternative modernities," pointing to the fact that the East Asian model has some distinct characteristics, such as the lack of distinction between the public and the private, and the importance of the family and duty.[59]

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[53] See his "Zhongguo jinshi zongjiao lunli yu shangren jingshen" 中国今世宗教伦理与商人精神 [The early modern Chinese religious ethic and the mercantile spirit], *Zhishi fenzi* 知识分子(New York) 2 no. 2 (1985).

[54] See, e.g., Wei-ming Tu et al., eds., *The Confucian World Observed: A Contemporary Discussion of Confucian Humanism in East Asia* (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 1992); Wei-ming Tu, ed., *The Triadic Chord: Confucian Ethics, Industrial East Asia, and Max Weber, Proceedings of the 1987 Singapore Conference on Confucian Ethics and the Modernization of Industrial East Asia* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1991); and Wei-ming Tu, ed., *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Exploring Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[55] For a detailed overview, see John Makeham, "The Singapore Experiment and *Rujia* Capitalism," in John Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 21-41. See also Wei-ming Tu, *Confucian Ethics Today.*

[56] Wei-ming Tu et al., eds. *The Confucian World Observed,* 75.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Wei-ming Tu, "Introduction," *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity*: *Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragon*s, ed. Wei-ming Tu (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 2.

[59] Ibid., 6-9.

Furthermore, Tu Wei-ming *also* stressed that Confucian ethics *were* compatible with the capitalist spirit in many respects. Although he attempted to frame the relationship between Confucianism and modernization in broader terms—such as the recreation of community through the notion of the self as a "center of relationships"—one cannot deny that Tu has endorsed this relation between Confucianism and capitalism in the narrow Weberian sense as well. At a 1982 seminar at the National University of Singapore, for example, Tu discussed the link between East Asian capitalism and the "Confucian ethics."[60] From this, we can see that in the understanding of advocates of New Confucianism, such as Tu Wei-ming, the tension between Confucian values as an antidote to capitalism and the question of whether Confucian values benefited capitalism was not problematic at all. Instead, they considered the question of the role of Confucian values in the modern world to be an extension of the question of the relation between Confucian values and capitalism: both concerned the relation between tradition and modernity.

Why was demonstrating that Weber's argument regarding the relation between Protestant values and the rise of capitalism could be applied to China so important? In order to answer this, we need to understand the historical background of the debate. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber had held that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination had affected the formation of capitalism because mystical contemplation was exchanged for ascetic and this-worldly action. Ascetic Protestantism in particular provided a "systematic rational ordering of moral life as a whole."[61] It was this "spirit" of rational conduct, duty, and discipline on the basis of the idea of the calling that gave rise to modern rational capitalism. In his *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Daoism*, Weber further asserted that "Protestant rationalism" was marked by its "disenchantment" with the world; there was a tension between the rational ethical imperatives of Protestantism and this-worldly irrationalities.[62]

For Weber, Confucianism did not bring capitalism to China because it differed from Protestantism in three critical respects. First, the tension between the ethical demands of Confucianism and this-worldly realities was minimal. For Confucians, "the world was the best of all possible worlds; human nature was disposed to the ethically good."[63] Confucian ethics aimed at an affirmation of and adjustment to the world, and although both Confucianism and Protestantism demanded self-control, the former aimed at the moral perfection of the "man of the world," whereas the latter's goal was to enable man to focus on God's will.[64] Furthermore, in contrast to Protestants, Confucians were not ascetics; they exalted material wealth instead.[65] Like Protestants, they were sober and thrifty, but they

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[60] See Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 30, 34-37.
[61] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 126.
[62] Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, translated by Hans Gerth (New York: Free Press and Collier-Macmillan, 1968), 226-227.
[63] Ibid., 227. Elsewhere, Weber has formulated it as follows: "Completely absent in Confucian ethic was any tension between nature and deity, between ethical demand and human shortcoming, consciousness of sin and need for salvation, conduct on earth and compensation in the beyond, religious duty and sociopolitical reality." Ibid., 235-236.
[64] Ibid., 240.
[65] Ibid., 242.

invested their savings in education, not in business.[66] Finally, relations between people were personalized instead of rationalized; they were based on tradition, custom, and personal favors.[67] Although the Chinese social structure had consisted of elements both suitable and not suitable to capitalism, Weber claimed that the "spirit" of capitalism was lacking in China because of the above-mentioned factors.[68] Nevertheless, Weber considered both Protestantism and Confucianism to be examples of practical rather than theoretical rationalism."[69]

Already during the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. scholars of China criticized Weber's China thesis. They attacked his argument that there was no tension between Confucianism and reality and that Confucianism was "this-worldly" because it was characterized by adjustment to the world.[70] Although Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was translated into Chinese only in 1986, mainland scholars had eagerly studied Weber before that time, and Weber had also appeared in the translation series of the editorial committee *Culture: China and the World*.[71] The topic of the relation between Confucianism and modernization was taken up during the mid-1980s, when many mainland intellectuals went to the United States, where both the writings of Max Weber and Talcott Parsons were in vogue. Already in 1985, Chen Lai recalls, a doctoral dissertation on Weber was completed in China.[72] After the interest in Weber peaked in 1986, the New Confucian discourse changed from a revaluation of Confucianism in China to a debate on the existence of an East Asian development model.[73]

In this context of reform and opening up and increasing scholarly exchange, in combination with the economic rise of East Asia and the "culture fever" of the mid-to-late 1980s, the question of the relation between Confucianism and capitalism arose in mainland China. By applying Weber's "Protestantism thesis" to Confucianism, Chinese scholars refuted Weber's verdict on Confucianism in *The Religion of China*. Like Tu Wei-ming, Chen Lai held that the economic miracle of East Asia formed a serious challenge to Weber's theories on Confucianism: the success of the Four Mini Dragons demonstrated that the notion of a Confucian capitalism was not oxymoronic.

Chen Lai further argued that the debate on Confucian ethics and East Asian modernization did not focus on the "coming into being" (*chansheng* 产生) of capitalism but

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[66] Ibid., 247.
[67] Ibid., 229, 236-237, 241.
[68] Negative structural factors were the lack of an effective monetary system, the lack of politically and militarily autonomous cities, the lack of legal foundations for guilds, and a patrimonial bureaucracy. Other obstacles were the kinship system and the existence of substantive ethical law instead of a rational legal system. Positive elements were the lack of status restriction by birth; free migration and freedom of choice with regard to occupation; the lack of compulsory military service and schooling; and the lack of restraints on trade. Ch'ing-k'un Yang, introduction to Weber, *The Religion of China*, xx-xxviii.
[69] See Wolfgang Schluchter, "Einleitung: Max Webers Konfuzianismusstudie: Versuch einer Einordnung," 26. The difference between them was that Confucianism did not have an ethics of ultimate ends and did not recognize the existence of evil.
[70] See Thomas A. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977). See also the debate that followed in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, Feb. 1980; and Shmuel Eisenstadt, "This-Worldly Transcendentalism and the Structuring of the World: Weber's 'Religion of China' and the Format of Chinese History and Civilization," *Journal of Developing Societies* 1 (1985): 168-186.

[71] Wang, *High Culture Fever*, 66.
[72] Interview with Chen Lai, Beijing, Aug. 10, 2005.
[73] Wang, *High Culture Fever*, 68.

rather on the "assimilation" (*tonghua* 同化) of it.[74] Following Tu Wei-ming, Chen Lai argued that Weber himself had made the distinction between "creation" and "assimilation." Weber states in his last chapter of *The Religion of China* that "the Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism."[75] Although Weber did not specify whether Confucian ethics could play a role in this "assimilation," for Chen Lai, they clearly could, at least in the initial stage.

Here, Chen Lai referred to the Boston sociologist Peter Berger's term "vulgar Confucian ethics" (*shisuhua de rujia lunli* 世俗化的儒家伦理).[76] Whereas Weber had focused on the ethics of Chinese imperial ideology, Berger had analyzed the daily ethics of the commoners. He had concluded from this that daily ethics had indeed played a role in economic development and that the existence of an "East Asian development model" in the Four Mini Dragons confirmed it.[77] Berger's argument, Chen Lai posited elsewhere, in fact addressed an inconsistency in Weber, who had looked at ethical beliefs and attitudes in daily life in the case of Protestantism, but who had analyzed religion instead of beliefs and attitudes in daily life in the case of Confucianism.[78] This is again reminiscent of Tu Wei-ming's distinction between orthodox Confucianism and Classical Confucianism: both Chen Lai and Tu Wei-ming advocate a focus on Confucian ethics as distinct from imperial ideology.

Occasionally, Chen Lai admitted that a cultural explanation of East Asian development was too simplistic. Modernization could not be reduced to economic function, and even if Confucian values had nothing to do with the coming into being and assimilation of capitalism, this did not mean that they lost value in a modern society. Precisely because Confucianism, as a system of thought, focused not merely on economy, Confucian values could exist in a creative tension with the "instrumental rationality" of modern industrial society. Therefore, Chen Lai distinguished between Confucian values as a critique of modern society and the sociopolitical debate on "Asian values," in which these values were turned into "instrumental rationality" to boost industrial production. In a further attempt to justify his participation in both debates, Chen added that political scientists first raised the issue of the role of Confucian values in East Asian capitalism, and not New Confucians.[79] This reveals once more the ambivalence of the position of the advocates of New Confucianism: if it is really more about values in the modern world than about the role of these values in economic development, then why is proving that the values did play a role in the latter, thereby confirming their instrumental role rather than their intrinsic worth, important?

My questioning of the participation of Chen Lai and New Confucians in the Weber debate does not mean that Confucianism must be an abstract moral system unrelated to

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[74] Chen Lai, "Shisu rujia lunli yu houfa xiandaihua" 世俗儒家伦理与后发现代化 [Vulgar Confucianism and late modernization] *Ershiyi shiji* 二十一世纪 22 (April 1994), 112-120 ; ref. from 113. See also "Rujia lilun yu Zhongguo xiandaihua" 儒家理论与中国现代化 [Confucian ethics and Chinese modernization], in *Chuantong yu xiandai : Renwen zhuyi de sjijie,* 188-206.

[75] Weber, *The Religion of China*, 248. Tu Wei-ming also refers to this statement by Weber in his introduction to *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity*, 4.

[76] Chen Lai, "Shisu rujia lunli yu houfa xiandaihua,"112-120.

[77] Berger, "An East Asian Development Model," 3-11.

[78] Chen Lai, "Rujia lilun yu Zhongguo xiandaihua," 195.

[79] Chen Lai, "Rujia sixiang yu xiandai dongya shijie," in *Chuantong yu xiandai: Renwen zhuyi de shijie,* 179-187; and interview with Chen Lai, Beijing, Aug. 10, 2005.

society. Many critics have accused Tu Wei-ming and Chen Lai of focusing only on moral metaphysics at the expense of socio-political institutions. Several chapters in this volume—particularly those by Stephen Angle (chapter 6), Lee Ming-huei (chapter 5), and Lin Anwu (chapter 7)—discuss the tension between ethical (*neisheng*) and political (*waiwang*) Confucianism. A crucial concern regarding Confucianism in the modern world is the question of its compatibility with existing political systems, as exemplified by the discussion on the compatibility between Confucianism and liberal democracy and the foundation of new political institutions as demonstrated in the proposals of Jiang Qing (b. 1953). The crux of the matter is that Confucianism is a system of thought that includes both a moral dimension and a sociopolitical dimension. For instance, the Confucian concept of self-development (*xiushen* 修身) is directly connected to ordering the family, governing the state, and harmonizing with the world.

Chen Lai and Tu Wei-ming would answer that we need to separate the two debates and that we ought to understand both the relation between Confucianism and capitalism in a broad sense, namely as a continuity between past and present, and the relation between tradition and modernity. We can ask ourselves, however, whether this answer is sufficient: When entering the realm of the "Weber question," can we really avoid "Weberizing Confucianism"? [80] If the answer is negative, what does this mean for the future development of New Confucianism as a moral project? On a broader level, this question is part of the argument that Sheng Ke makes in chapter 8 herein regarding the fate of any moral project since the nineteenth century: Given the dominance of rationality and utilitarianism since this time, is not any moral project bound to fail?[81]

*Chen Lai, Max Weber, and the Chinese Discourse on Modernity*

Because the desire to modernize leads to a lack of structural criticism of modernity, leftist critics have attacked both Confucianism and Chinese thought as an unreflective confirmation of a capitalist system. One of the fiercest critics of the Confucian revival has been Arif Dirlik, who describes it as a "manifestation in East Asia of a global postcolonial discourse" that led to the "self-Orientalization of the 'Orientals' themselves."[82] For Dirlik, Tu Wei-ming and other Confucian scholars confirmed the utility of Confucianism for capitalism; their goal was "modernizing tradition." The final result was that "Confucius has been moved from the museum to the theme park."[83] In the same vein, Timothy Brook emphasizes the irony of Confucianism being used both as an antidote against the ills of capitalism and as a driving force of capitalism.[84] Similarly, Zhang Xudong has maintained that the New Confucians' resort to culture was simply a way to revive national politics in the face of the universalism of

[80] The term "Weberizing Confucianism" is taken from Arif Dirlik, "Confucius in the Borderlands: Global Capitalism and the Reinvention of Confucianism," *Boundary 2* 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 267.
[81] For more details on this argument, see the chap. 8 by Sheng Ke herein.
[82] Dirlik, "Confucius in the Borderlands," 230, 273.
[83] Ibid., 267, 273.
[84] Timothy Brook, "Profit and Righteousness in Chinese Economic Culture," in *Culture and Economy: The Shaping of Capitalism in Eastern Asia*, edited by Timothy Brook and Hy V. Luong (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 44.

global capital.[85] Liu Kang has added "regional anticommunism" to "global capitalism" as the ideological and political implications of New Confucianism.[86]

If we look beyond the "global capitalism" criticism, a more fundamental contradiction is clearly at work here, namely the tension between value rationality and instrumental rationality that goes back to Max Weber. Gan Yang had already noted this by arguing that the attempt to prove how Confucian values suited modernization went against the essence of value rationality that Confucians upheld. Does it not, he asked, harm the basic Confucian principle of "learning for oneself" (*weiji zhixue* 为己之学)?[87] Jing Wang has similarly argued that the alliance between Confucianism and capitalism de-legitimated its claim of value rationality, because "Confucianism is no less susceptible to instrumental reason and materialistic motivation on which capitalism is based than capitalism itself."[88] As exposed in the above, instrumentalist appropriations of Confucian values in the service of modernization, be it in the form of an East Asian Development Model, or in the form of the socialist modernization project in mainland China, have challenged the moral project of Confucianism as a search for "authentic existence."

Chen Lai's dilemma was a continuation of the same ambiguity we find in Max Weber. On the one hand, Weber was critical of the "iron cage" of modern rationality. On the other hand, Weber investigated the relation between the role of ideas, mostly those of ascetic Calvinism, and this very rationalization in the form of capitalism. He sought to demonstrate the force of ideas in the rationalization process, a process that was at the same time detrimental to them, which sociologist Daniel Bell later exposed. Weber's "rationalization," then, as Anthony Giddens has noted, has multiple meanings: it refers to the "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) of the world, as well as to rationality to attain both practical and ethical goals.[89] The difference between Weber and the New Confucians, however, was that Weber was not an advocate of Calvinism as a moral value system or the ideas that had played a role in the formation of capitalism. Like New Confucians, he was concerned with the negative aspects of modernization and rationalization. Unlike New Confucians who see Confucianism as a remedy to modern industrial society, Weber did not regard Calvinism as an ideal state of community that would make modern life better.

The reference to both the positive and negative aspects of modernity as expressed in the debate on New Confucianism that originated with Weber was not unique. In German scholarship specifically, the double bind of modernity has received much attention. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, for example, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer have also criticized rationalism and capitalism; in late capitalist modernity, instrumental reason, they argue, has become irrational. However, the Marxist critique in German scholarship would not support the instrumental rationality of Confucian capitalism that advocates of Confucianism

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[85] Xudong Zhang, "The Making of the Post-Tiananmen Intellectual Field: A Critical Overview," in *Whither China?: Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China*, edited by Xudong Zhang (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 44.
[86] Liu Kang, "Is There an Alternative to (Capitalist) Globalization?: The Debate about Modernity in China," *Boundary 2* 23, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 206.
[87] Makeham, *Lost Soul*, 38.
[88] Wang, *High Culture Fever*, 66, 67.
[89] Trevor O. Ling, "The Weberian Thesis and Interpretive Positions on Modernisation," in *The Triadic Chord*, edited by Wei-ming Tu, 66. From Anthony Giddens, *Politics and Sociology in the Thought of Max Weber* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 44.

neglect to deny. In German critique, rationality itself is being denied, which excludes the possibility of supporting contradicting forms of rationality.

Why, then, did advocates of New Confucianism not perceive of upholding both sides of the Weber debate as contradictory? Why did they perceive of the debate on Confucian values for community-building against capitalist individualism and of the debate on the role of Confucian values in the rise of capitalism as part of a single debate on the role of tradition in the modern world? Apart from the importance of the contextual factors outlined above (economic reform, changes in the intellectual world, and the emergence of the Four Mini Dragons), we can also find some answers in the nature of both Confucianism and Chinese intellectual discourse on modernity on a broader level.

As for Confucianism, as Jing Wang notes, Chinese intellectuals do not draw on these Marxist criticisms because they are a "radical critique of reason" that "inevitably leads to the critique of the sovereign rational subject, and, by extension, to a frontal attack on the whole tradition of humanism itself."[90] Chinese New Confucians, conversely, are strong defenders of humanism: their criticism is not directed at the rational subject. In addition, critiques of modernity in China have been ambiguous, a fact attributable to the obsession with "catching up with the West" ever since the nineteenth century. To refer to Chang Hao, it is this preoccupation with China's wealth and power (*fuqiang* 富强) and the "crisis consciousness" (*youhuan yishi* 忧患意识) of Chinese intellectuals that leads to both a critique of modernity in its Western manifestation and an embrace of modernity on another level.[91]

This paradox that has been present in Chinese thought since the late Qing, as Wang Hui convincingly argues in his monumental article on contemporary Chinese thought.[92] As he has summarizes it succinctly: "Indeed, in China's historical context, the struggle for modernization and the rejection of rationalization have proceeded together, something that has produced profound historical contradictions."[93] One can therefore argue that modernity was never truly challenged because it was rejected only in its Western manifestation, accompanied by the desire to modernize. For this reason, Wang Hui described Chinese thought since the late Qing as an "anti-modern theory of modernization" (*fan xiandai de xiandai zhuyi* 反现代的现代主义).[94] Because the discourse was framed within the binaries China/West and tradition/modernity, problems were situated in Western modernity or in Chinese tradition, instead of being regarded as produced by the modernization process itself.[95]

Furthermore, building on the notion that Chinese intellectuals never fully challenged modernity, Thomas Metzger, in his *A Cloud Across the Pacific*, a vast study of moral-political discourse in China and the West, argues that the criticism of Western modernity in Chinese discourse—be it in the form of Marxism, liberalism, or Confucian humanism—has been a criticism of its *societal* aspects, but not of its *epistemological* tenets. The consequence of this,

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[90] Wang, *High Culture Fever*, 76-77.
[91] Hao Chang, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China."
[92] See Wang Hui, "Dangdai Zhongguo de sixiang zhuangkuang yu xiandaixing" 当代中国的思想状况与现代性, originally published in *Tianya* 天涯 (Frontiers) 5 (1997): 133-150; a translation by Rebecca Karl appeared in *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*, edited by Theodore Huters (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 139-187.
[93] Wang Hui, "Contemporary Chinese Thought," 150.
[94] Ibid., 150.
[95] Ibid., 145.

according to Metzger, is that modernity is upheld, without reflecting on its negative aspects, such as "individualism" or "liberalism." For Metzger, this "epistemological optimism" accounts for the difference between Chinese and Western critiques of modernity. The latter is characterized by the attack on reason itself. In the Chinese case, however, "rationality" is never questioned.[96]

Even though we need to be skeptical of Metzger's claim because Chinese intellectuals have engaged with the negative aspects of modernity, we can say that a contradiction is indeed present in this engagement. This contradiction is not restricted to China, but manifests itself in different shapes in those countries affected by Western expansionism and imperialism. One example is the discourse on nationalism in India. Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued that Indian nationalism has been characterized by a desire to distinguish India from the West, but at the same time, Indian modernity must be "combined with an aspiration towards a modernity that can be defined only in terms of the post-Enlightenment rationalism of European culture."[97] The criticism of the fundamental tenets of Western modernity, then, is combined with a desire to overcome this very modernity through an embrace of its structural features.

From this, we can understand why Chen Lai and Tu Wei-ming do not perceive of their advocacies as contradictory. First, as Confucians, they uphold humanism and are not engaging in a radical critique of reason and, by extension, of rationalization and rationality. Second, as participants in the Chinese discourse on modernity, which has been characterized by an ambiguous stance toward modernization from the beginning, there is only one debate for both of them, namely that on the relation between tradition and modernity. The debate is really a question of historical continuity, be it instrumental or not. In addition, the individualism in particular that Chen Lai seeks to counter with a quest for community based on Confucian values is the result of a modernity initiated by the West; it is not an attack on rationality *an sich*. The problem for them does not lie in modernity itself, as Wang Hui notes, which is why the broader question really is how to make Chinese tradition, which has universal significance, matter in a world that has witnessed the consequences of what is in essence a process of modernization the West has initiated. Naturally, the agendas of Tu Wei-ming and Chen Lai also differ here because Tu is a "Boston Confucian" removed from the context of mainland China. This, however, also makes us wonder why the difference in their positions regarding the Weber debate is not greater than it is: perhaps we can blame the conditions of late modernity for this lack of difference.

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[96] Thomas A. Metzger, *A Cloud across the Pacific: Essays on the Clash between Chinese and Western Political Theories Today* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2005), 50-51, 53, 142-143.

[97] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Towards a Discourse on Nationalism," *Economic and Political Weekly* 22 no. 28 (July 11, 1987): 1137.