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Wang Hui

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# The Liberation of the Object and the Interrogation of Modernity

## Rethinking *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*

Wang Hui

*Tsinghua University*

This article, a reflection on the author's tetralogy *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*, focuses on three sets of antithetical concepts—empire and nation-state, rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) and feudal system (*fengjian zhi*), rites/music and institutions—“continuity and rupture” in history and the idea of the trend of the times (*shishi*); and the question of scientific outlook and national knowledge. It argues the importance of liberating the historical world of thought from the position as an object for our observation and transforming it into a perspective from which we can reflect on and observe the modern world of ours.

**Keywords:** *empire; nation-state; rational bureaucracy (junxian zhi); feudal system (fengjian zhi); rites/music (liyue); institutions (zhidu); heavenly principle (tianli); the trend of times (shishi); the Kyoto School; early modernity; all-under-Heaven; ritual China; nationalist knowledge*

Scholars of Chinese history often question the concepts and categories used to describe historical phenomena and the research paradigms related to those concepts and categories. Their criticisms mainly concentrate on two points. First, can one effectively exploit the existing theoretical categories and social scientific paradigms to describe and interpret historical phenomena? For instance, the 1990s witnessed a debate among American scholars of Chinese studies over the question of whether the concept of “civil society” growing out of Western history can explain a similar phenomenon in Chinese history. Second, can one apply Western concepts and paradigms to Chinese historical phenomena? As an example of this point, in my book *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* I questioned the binary of “empire vs. nation-state” in Western thought and challenged its application in Chinese studies. Other scholars have also questioned these two research paradigms, and have

attempted to draw on Chinese traditional categories to interpret historical phenomena. However, in my opinion, simple reliance on traditional conceptions and paradigms is not necessarily effective, because these concepts and paradigms usually take on meaning only in light of modern thinking and theories. Therefore, although one should be careful in the application of existing theoretical categories and social scientific paradigms in Chinese studies, the application per se is unavoidable.

Together with related issues discussed in my book *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*, in this article I explore the question of the methodology of Chinese studies.

### **Three Sets of Antithetical Concepts: Empire and Nation-State, Rational Bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) and Feudal System (*fengjian zhi*), Rites/Music and Institutions**

In my book *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* I discuss three sets of antithetical concepts dealing with political institutions. The first set consists of the concepts of empire and nation-state, which are the products of Western thought. In this regard, the study of Chinese history is dominated by two interpretative frameworks that are different from but closely related to each other. One framework views China as an empire (or a civilization, or a continent) as opposed to, or in contrast to, modern Western nation-states, whereas the second argues that at some point in the past China developed an early nation-state structure built upon a rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*). Though these two approaches stand opposite each other, both are outgrowths of the empire/state binary generated by early modern European thought. To be sure, my criticism of this binary does not simply put aside the concept of empire or state per se, but tries to integrate the features of Chinese history revealed by these two approaches at another level. The second set consists of the concepts of rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) and feudal system (*fengjian zhi*), which are traditional Chinese categories. In all the concrete political interpretations generated by my exploration of Confucianism from the Song to the Qing, I rarely use the concept of empire or state, but often approach my topic from a perspective of the concepts of a rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) and a feudal system (*fengjian zhi*), concepts that were familiar to Confucians and gentry scholars. For example, in my explanation of how “heavenly principle” (*tianli*) came into existence during the Song dynasty, I call for particular attention to the debate among Confucians on the topic of rational bureaucracy

(*junxian zhi*) and the feudal system (*fengjian zhi*), and try to analyze historical change with a view to the internal problems embedded in this debate. Finally, the concepts of rites/music and institutions (the Chinese for “institutions,” *zhi* in the pre-Qin literature, becomes *zhidu* in documents of the dynasties that followed the Qin) constitute the third set. In my examination of the Song dynasty, I talk about the differentiation of rites/music from institutions. Yet, I do not recognize them as two descriptive categories completely different from each other, but rather I discuss their differentiation from the perspective of Neo-Confucianism and the historiography of Song times. In so doing, I argue that this differentiation, which appears to be an objective historical narrative, simultaneously encompasses a historical or value judgment.

Let me begin with the last set. Whereas the Confucians of the pre-Qin period viewed the concepts of rites/music and institutions as overlapping, the Song Confucians divided them from each other, and then advanced the proposition of “the differentiation of rites/music from institutions” to describe history. For the latter, the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou ruled by sage kings (*sandai zhizhi*) constitute a period when rites/music and institutions were equal to one another, while the following dynasties constitute a period when a separation between them gradually emerged. Thus, the differentiation of rites/music from institutions as such became a political topic. This differentiation is closely related to the Song Confucians’ thinking about rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) and the feudal system (*fengjian zhi*), and in particular to their judgments on contemporary politics based on such thinking. This is because they portrayed the ancient feudal system (*fengjian zhi*) in terms of rites/music, but explained the later dynastic states, which were centered on imperial authority and constructed on the basis of a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*), in terms of institutions. The Song Confucians strived to restore in daily life some substantive elements of the sage kings’ regime during the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou, such as patriarchy, the well-field system, the feudal system (*fengjian zhi*), and so on. However, their endeavors cannot be viewed simply as a return to the ancients, but instead can only be comprehended in light of their critical understanding of the standardization of the civil service examination system and rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*). During the Song dynasty, although Confucians opposed the examination system, they did not suggest a revival of the ancient election system (*xuanju zhi*), but tried to improve and set limitations on the former. Although they advocated the ancient well-field system, their purpose was to resist the implementation of the Two Tax system enacted late in the Tang dynasty. They did

not really insist that Song society readopt the well-field system. Although they participated in practices to rejuvenate ancient patriarchy to confront historical trends such as the scattering of genealogies and the steady formalization of political institutions after the Tang dynasty, they did not argue that all political institutions should return to the ancient feudal system (*fengjian zhi*). In fact, their practices here reveal an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) centered on imperial authority. It is thus clear that the Song Confucians' call for returning to the ancients was actually a criticism of the political institutions of the Song dynasty. Moreover, their criticism was not a negation of these political institutions, but a call to reform them by incorporating some elements of the feudal system into rational bureaucracy, based on their judgment on then current social circumstances. In this sense, although the Song Neo-Confucians gave priority to relatively abstract philosophical and ethical categories such as the Way of Heaven, heavenly principle, heart-nature/ mind-nature, and so on, their historical narrative of the differentiation of rites/music from institutions clearly indicates the political thinking embedded in Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, one cannot explicate the political implications of Neo-Confucianism or Song philosophical Confucianism (*lixue*) without taking into consideration the concepts of rational bureaucracy and the feudal system and corresponding historical views. Similarly, one cannot understand why the Song Confucians endeavored to develop the category of heavenly principle without considering this political-historical relationship. The internal historical dynamics for the establishment and deployment of the heavenly principle worldview were clearly laid out via an exploration of the differentiation of rites/music from institutions, a comparison between the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, Zhou ruled by sage kings and the dynasties that followed, and a discussion of the dialectic binaries of "rational bureaucracy vs. the feudal system," "the well-field system vs. the equal-field system," and "the school system vs. the civil service examination system."

As concern over the category of heavenly principle developed among the Neo-Confucians from the Northern Song to the Southern Song, a new form of Confucianism, which was later described as Song philosophical Confucianism, came into being. The category of heavenly principle seems very abstract. Concepts such as principle (*li*), material force (*qi*), heart-nature (*xin*), mind-nature (*xing*), and topics such as "investigating things and extending knowledge" (*gewu zhizhi*), which bear a close relationship with this category, are also much different from the problems that constituted the focus of the Confucians of the pre-Qin and Han-Tang periods. Consequently, today many scholars, who are heavily influenced by modern European philosophy, have

made a philosophical analysis of Song dynasty thought within the framework of ontology, realism, and epistemology. However, in my opinion, such an analytical method itself is external to Song thought; it is an interpretive system based on the concepts, categories, and theoretical frameworks of European philosophy. At the same time, dissatisfied with this analytical method of the history of ideas, many other scholars have tried to generate a social-historical interpretation of intellectual history. This is a very important project. As I have mentioned above, the fundamental categories used to analyze social history are derived from modern social science. For example, the categories of politics, economics, society, culture, and so on, and their classification are outgrowths of modern knowledge and social division. Thus, when placing many historical phenomena within the categories of economics, politics, or culture, we will lose an internal historical perspective and an opportunity to rethink our own knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews from this internal perspective. In my studies, the heavenly principle worldview cannot be seen as a simple, abstract notion. By asking why the category of heavenly principle became the primary category of a new worldview in the Song dynasty (when this category was created), and under what conditions this category was embodied or abstracted in philosophy and thought, I strive to reveal the internal relations between this abstract category and social change. To do so, it is necessary to take an intermediate step: that is, to approach historical change and value judgments among Song Confucians by analyzing the relationship between the metaphysical categories (for example, “heavenly principle”) inherent in Song Neo-Confucianism and the immediate social propositions proposed by Song thinkers.

What merits our concern is the problem of how to establish this relationship. If we simply place categories such as heavenly principle, material force, mind-nature, and topics such as “investigating things and extending knowledge” in an economic, social, or political historical narrative, we will not only reduce these complex conceptual problems to economic, political, or military problems, but we will also neglect the implications of these phenomena—which are now encapsulated by modern scholars in economic, political, military, or other categories—in the ancient intellectual world. Therefore, we should examine these conceptual problems within the framework of a certain worldview, and then explain the phenomena encapsulated in the economic, political, military, or social categories and their relationships with Confucian categories such as heavenly principle from the perspective of this worldview. To do so, my study begins with the historical narratives—in particular, those dealing with the demarcation between the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, Zhou ruled by sage kings and the dynasties that

followed—written by Ouyang Xiu and some other historians. In my eyes, this demarcation is not only an objective historical narrative, but also a historical process deployed within the internal views of Confucianism, a process that reveals the Song Confucians' political ideals. The political, economic, and even military debates among the Song Confucians usually involved the issues of “the rational bureaucracy system (*junxian zhi*) vs. the feudal system (*fengjian zhi*),” “the well-field system vs. the Two Tax system,” and “the election system vs. the civil service examination system.” All of these issues were discussed in the context of the historical narratives of the demarcation between the three dynasties ruled by sage kings and the dynasties that followed (in particular, the Han and Tang dynasties [*Han-Tang zhi fa*]). To be sure, within the framework of modern knowledge, we can explore these issues via the interpretive methods of political history and economic history. However, taking into consideration “the internal views of Confucianism” as I mentioned above, we have to ask what implications are embedded in these issues in the Confucians' historical narratives. Of course, these issues are political, economic, or institutional problems. Yet, from the perspective of Confucianism, the relationship between the antithetical categories in each issue is closely connected to the historical demarcation between the three dynasties ruled by sage kings and the later dynasties as well as “the historical differentiation of rites/music from institutions.” In this sense, the categories of politics and economics are not adequate for interpreting political and economic problems. This is because the issues of the Two Tax system, the well-field system, patriarchy, imperial authority, and the civil service examination system were all deployed within the concept of the feudal system, the ideal of the three dynasties ruled by sage kings, and the internal framework of the theory of the differentiation between rites/music and institutions. Consequently, the implications inherent in these problems are more than what can be disclosed by the so-called institutional problems of interest to modern social science. If we put together the birth in the Song dynasty of the category of heavenly principle and the Song Confucians' worldview, we find that the increasing importance of this category in Confucianism bears a close relationship with Song Confucians' observations on historical change: the three dynasties embodied a world ruled by rites/music, a world where morality/ethics was integrated with rites/music, and the narratives of morality and rites/music were therefore equal to one another. Thus, a noumenon as moral legitimacy beyond the category of rites/music was not necessary in that period. On the contrary, the later dynasties constituted a world where “the differentiation of rites/music from institutions” had emerged. This means institutions as

such could no longer provide the sort of moral legitimacy provided by rites/music and the description of institutions could not equal a statement of morality. Therefore, morality had to resort to a noumenon beyond the real world or the institutions of the world. In addition, this differentiation is also exhibited in the transformation of the category of things (*wu*): in a world ruled by rites/music, things (*wu*) not only embody “everything” (*wanwu*), but also encompass the canons of rites/music. Thus, things (*wu*) and principle (*li*) are completely compatible. However, in the world of the Song Confucians, rites/music had degenerated into institutions that were simply a synthesis of material or functional relations without any moral implication. Consequently, the moral implications of things (*wu*) in a world ruled by rites/music had been erased. And one can reveal principle (*li*) only by the practices of investigating things (*gewu*)—things themselves cannot spontaneously provide any moral imperative.

Therefore, we cannot understand the birth of the concept of heavenly principle without taking into account the Song Confucians’ understanding of historical change. In my book, I particularly analyze the category of “the trend of the times” (*shishi*, 时势), since Chinese (or Confucian) historical consciousness bears a special relationship with this category. A core category of modern Western thought is time, which is linear, teleological, homogeneous, and objective. Nineteenth-century Europe experienced a change in the view of history whereby historical categories became integrated with temporal categories. History was thus imbued with teleology. My criticism of Hegelianism in the introduction to *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* makes this point. The narrative of modern nationalism is also centered on this epistemology of time, which constructs the subject of nation. Thus, the application of the category of “the trend of the times” to the study of Chinese history helps to reconstruct the epistemological framework of the historical narrative. The Confucian consciousness of “the trend of the times” as well as the Western concept of time are related to views of history and to historical consciousness. However, from the perspective of Confucianism, “the trend of the times” is not a linear and objective concept, but a narrative of the natural changes in history and its internal dynamics. Such changes do not follow any particular purpose. The problem of purpose is inherent in people’s search for various values (such as heavenly principle, rites/music, and the sage kings’ regime during the three dynasties) in historical change. These values are thus incorporated into our daily lives and practices. The question of “the trend of the times” became very inward (for example, the concept of “the historical manifestation of the heavenly principle” [*lishi* 理势] embodies this inwardness) and crucial in Song dynasty thought. Aside from the central role this



view of history played in Confucian studies during the Song dynasty, variations of it can be found in Gu Yanwu's and Zhang Xuecheng's studies of the Confucian classics and their historical research.

Like other categories in Confucianism, the category of "circumstances" (*shi*) was developed in the pre-Qin period, long before the Song dynasty. However, both the problem of "the trend of the times" and that of *lishi* had a special meaning in Song dynasty thought. In considering social or historical change, Neo-Confucians particularly discussed the differentiation of rites/music from institutions. They did not simply try to appraise this differentiation, but viewed it as a result of historical change. On the one hand, they praised the rites/music of the three dynasties ruled by sage kings, and on the other hand, they advocated developing the category of heavenly principle. Why, then, was the Song Confucians' appeal for a return to the ancients translated into a call for the abstract category of heavenly principle and incarnated into individuals' moral practices? Without a historical perspective, we cannot discover the connections between the former and the latter. It is noteworthy here that the differentiation of rites/music from institutions is not the Song Confucians' own representation, but my summarization of their various historical narratives. The demarcation between the three dynasties ruled by sage kings and the dynasties that followed is how they basically understood history. Clearly, Qian Mu's and Chen Yinke's opinions about rites/music and institutions in their interpretations of Sui-Tang history exert an influence on my summarization. The context of my exploration of "the differentiation of rites/music from institutions," however, is different from that of their debate. Qian Mu faults Chen Yinke for his analysis that does not divide rites/music from institutions in the Tang dynasty and then assigns to the category of institutions the things belonging to rites/music.

Yet, we must ask whence came Qian Mu's dichotomous binary of "rites/music vs. institutions," since there was not any clear separation between them in the pre-Qin period. On the other hand, we can also question why Chen Yinke integrates rites/music with institutions in his study of medieval history, since they were two distinct categories after the Song dynasty. As we know, Chen Yinke deeply identified with the beliefs of the Song Confucians. Also, he was a historian whose narratives contain his own perceptions of history as well as other historical narratives in ancient China. Thus, it is not a simple problem of historicity to integrate rites/music with institutions or divide them from one another. Of course, many historical writings recognize the differentiation of rites/music from institutions as a historical reality. Although this differentiation is probably necessary in studying the history of

the Northern and Southern dynasties and the Sui-Tang dynasties, both the integration of rites/music with institutions and the separation between them reflect a historical view derived from the Confucians' perception of historical change after the Song dynasty. Why, then, are rites/music and institutions sometimes integrated but other times divided from each other? This dialectic of integration and separation bears an internal relationship with Confucianism, in particular Confucius's representations of the collapse of rites/music, from a perspective of the Confucian tradition. At this level, the differentiation of rites/music from institutions is more than a historical reality; rather, it involved various views of history. This raises the question of from what perspective, within what view, and based on what value system one narrates history. To be sure, although we can describe the differentiation as a historical process, we must keep in mind that this historical process was at the same time a historical judgment from a given perspective. In this sense, both the Song Confucians' practices of restoring patriarchy and the well-field system, and their criticism of the civil service examination system and harsh laws and punishments, encompass an evaluation of the new institutional practices under rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) by the rites/music of the three dynasties. The demarcation between the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, Zhou ruled by sage kings and the later dynasties, and the division between rites/music and institutions, thus have direct political implications. In addition, these implications are laid out within a deep and broad view of Confucianism through the development of the heavenly principle worldview.

In my opinion, we can actually interpret Chinese history from an internal perspective as long as we discuss the development of heavenly principle and the problems encapsulated in the categories of economic, political institutional, cultural, and philosophical history by today's historians from the internal historical perspective of Confucianism as presented above. From such an internal perspective, the problems now simply categorized as economic or political are actually more than economic or political problems in another historical context. For example, the conceptual categories of rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) and feudal system (*fengjian zhi*) constitute organic parts of an internally integrated world of thought in Confucianism. The real world and the changes in it are endowed with significance and can be understood only through this world of thought. This internal perspective has developed step by step in the ceaseless dialogue between ancient and modern times. Methodologically, the dialogue not only provides a tool to interpret modern times by ancient times, ancient times by ancient times, and ancient times by modern times, but also an opportunity to translate this internal perspective into our introspective perspective. By

the demarcation between the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, Zhou ruled by sage kings and the later dynasties, and the differentiation between rites/music and institutions, we can also see the limitations of our own knowledge.

## Empire and Nation-State in Historical Narratives

One may ask why I continue to explore the question of empire and nation-state after discussing the feudal system (*fengjian zhi*) and rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) from an internal perspective of Chinese history in my book *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*. Obviously, the question of empire and nation-state is closely related to the main line of the narrative—that is, an inquiry into “early modernity”—in my book. My question is whether the formation of Song philosophical Confucianism (*lixue*) indicates that an important transition, which can be viewed as “early modern,” took place in society, the state, and the world of thought after the Song dynasty. This question has driven me back to some assumptions about Chinese history made by Japanese scholars more than half a century ago. For example, the hypothesis of a “Tang-Song transition” raised by Naitō Kōnan and the hypothesis of an “East Asian modern age” and “Song capitalism” raised by Kyoto school scholars such as Miyazaki Ichisada, involve exploring the topic of “early modernity” by examining the decline of aristocracy, the development of the dynastic state constructed on a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*), the growth of long-distance trade, the standardization of the civil service examination system, and so on. In particular, Miyazaki Ichisada identifies Song philosophical Confucianism with the ideology of “nationalism” (*kokumin shugi*). My discussion of the question of empire and nation-state contains a dialogue with and a response to the assumptions of the Kyoto school. This is because I analyze the transition of the form of Confucianism by focusing on the relationship between “the establishment of heavenly principle and the development of a dynastical state constructed upon a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*).” The questions that merit our concern here are: In what way is the exploration of “early modernity” related to the problem of empire and nation-state? What is the relationship between the Kyoto school’s hypotheses and this problem?

Eric Hobsbawm once said that if there is a main theme in historical studies since the nineteenth century, it is the nation-state. In addition, we can say that a more fundamental narrative in these historical studies is capitalism. In political economics and historiography after the nineteenth century, all the narratives centered on the nation-state have been constructed by the

antagonism between them and other narratives. The narrative of so-called empire and nation-state directly embodies such an antagonism. The conception of history underwent a crucial transition, which translated history into the history of the subject—that is, the nation-state—in the nineteenth century. At this level, there is no history without the nation-state. Therefore, to say China is not a nation-state, or in other words to say China is an empire, is in fact to say China does not have history and cannot constitute a real subject of history. As opposed to narratives from the perspective of Western modernity, the Kyoto school posits the hypotheses of an “East Asian modern age” and “Song capitalism,” and then reconstructs the internal modern dynamics of Chinese history within the framework of “East Asian history.” I would like to put aside here the political relationship between this school and Japanese imperialism or colonialism. What draws my primary concern is the Kyoto school’s narrative approach: while it constructs a narrative of an East Asian modern age as parallel to the narrative of Western modernity, the point of departure of the former narrative also relies on the pivotal problem of the nation-state. It is thus clear that there will be no narrative of an East Asian modern age without a narrative centered on the nation-state. To be sure, the Kyoto school touches on the problem of Song philosophical Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism. However, it simply views them as the ideology of nationalism. Behind such an understanding is the Kyoto scholars’ interpretation that identifies the dynastic state constructed upon a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*) with the early modern nation-state, or proto-nation-state. In conclusion, when the Kyoto school opposes Western narratives with the notion of an “East Asian modern age,” it does so by constructing a narrative centered on the nation-state and capitalism. This narrative is a reversal of the Western mainstream narrative: whereas Western scholarship portrays China as an empire, a continent, or a civilization, which implies that China is not a nation-state, the Kyoto school posits the hypothesis of an “East Asian modern age” with the help of the categories of “a mature dynastic state constructed upon a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*),” or “nationalism” (*kokumin shugi*).

In this sense, the dialogue and the differences between the Kyoto scholars and me also imply a criticism of the notion of “world history” developed in Europe in the nineteenth century. Briefly speaking, the differences between my arguments and those of the Kyoto school (in particular its representative scholars) on the specifics of the Song dynasty can be summarized as follows: First, in contrast to Miyazaki Ichisada, who identifies Song philosophical Confucianism as “an early modern philosophy” or an ideology of “nationalism” in keeping with his description of the social

transition in the Song dynasty, I contend that Neo-Confucianism and its concept of heavenly principle exhibit a tension and an antagonism between them and the Song social transition. It is through this antagonism that their historical relations underwent change. Methodologically, the Kyoto school is predisposed to social history. Their categories, which are mainly derived from the knowledge system that developing gradually in Europe since the nineteenth century, prevent them from observing East Asian history from an internal perspective. At this level, the fundamental theoretical framework of the Kyoto school and its historical narratives are actually a derivation of European modernity. Otherwise, if the Song dynasty were an “even more Chinese” China than they describe, how can one represent the Song social transition from a Confucian perspective? Also, if the substance of an “East Asian modern age” is early capitalism and a rational bureaucracy similar to the nation-state, the Song Confucians’ historical view characterized by the sharp distinction between “rites/music of the three dynasties and the institutions of the following dynasties” embodies not only their recognition of historical change, but also their resistance to rational bureaucracy (*junxian zhi*) and “early capitalism” (if this concept is really appropriate).

The second point bears a close relationship to the first. Whereas the Kyoto school depicts the “early modern” features of society and the world of thought in the Song dynasty within the knowledge framework of modern Western nationalism/capitalism, my description (for example, my analysis of the dichotomous binary of “empire vs. nation-state”) strives to surmount such a linear, teleological narrative. The Song dynasty as a mature dynastic state constructed upon a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*) in the Kyoto scholars’ analysis makes possible their hypothesis of an “East Asian modern age.” Obviously, the precondition for this approach is the historical relationship between European modernity and the nation-state. Thus, the nation-state constitutes the internal measure of their narratives of modernity. A good case in point is their narratives of an “East Asian modern age.” How should one portray the social structure of the Yuan dynasty, and in particular the social system of the Qing dynasty? The reason I use the concept of “empire” in a restricted meaning is to inveigh against historical narratives that identify modernity with the nation-state—after all, compared with the long history of the category of “empire,” the history of the nation-state is still very short. It is inappropriate, for example, to interpret the Ming-Qing transition as in the mode of the “Tang-Song transition,” or to define the transition from the Qing to Republican China as a transition from empire to nation-state. Otherwise, how can we explain the obvious connection between the Qing and the Republic in regard to such things as the

makeup of the population, the composition of ethnic groups, the extent of the country's territory, and some crucial institutions?

Therefore, when we argue there were some "early modern" components in the Song dynasty, we need a new theoretical framework that is different from the framework of the Kyoto school, one that breaks away from the temporal teleology of modernity and moves beyond nationalism. Some friends once asked about the book's title, *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*: What is "modern"? What is "China"? What is "thought"? And what is "rise"? The phrase "the rise of modern Chinese thought" appears to be very simple, but every part of my book actually challenges the concepts of "modern," "China," "thought," and "rise" in line with common sense. The purpose of my writing was not to generate a book clarifying the origins of modern Chinese intellectual history. What is "rise"? Aside from the implication of "origin" embedded in this term, it can be also understood as "production and reproduction" (*shengsheng*), of "production and reproduction mean change" (*shengsheng zhi wei yi*), which, according to the *Book of Changes*, is a process full of change and development. Accordingly, one could ask: Does the Mongolian Yuan dynasty represent continuity or a rupture if the Song dynasty is supposed to be the beginning of the "early modern age"? Does thought in the Qing dynasty mean a reaction or resurgence if the late Ming is supposed to be the period when early enlightenment began? How can we interpret the relationship of modern China with the Qing dynasty and thought during that period? It should be clear that what I am concerned about are the elements appearing repeatedly in history, rather than any ultimate origin. In the ceaseless changes of history, each dynasty constructed its legitimacy as a Chinese dynasty in its own particular way, which cannot be represented by a linear historical narrative. Therefore, I do not recognize "the rise of modern Chinese thought" as a linear process, in contrast to the Kyoto scholars, who have produced a linear narrative of modern Chinese intellectual history with the Song as the beginning. What I try to develop through my interpretation of such categories as "the trend of the times" (*shishi*) and *lishi* is what may be called a perception framework of history, which is different from temporal teleology and is embedded in the Confucian worldview and epistemology of the time. Moreover, if we take into account Benedict Anderson's argument about the relationship between the concept of time and nationalism, we will have a deeper understanding of the implications of "the trend of the times" in the history of the dynasties and the process whereby each dynasty was replaced by its successor.

With the rethinking of the nation-state system and so-called globalization studies, some problems such as the historical experience of early

empires and the dynamics of the transition from empire to the modern nation-state have been brought back under the researcher's microscope. This has provided an opportunity to reexamine issues such as the state structures and economic systems of early empires and interregional communication within the teleological narrative of modernity. Today two approaches dominate the discussion of empire. One focuses on the problem of globalization—that is, the problem of the so-called post-nation-state. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's book *Empire* (2000) is an influential representative of this approach. The other approach consists of "empire studies" driven by dissatisfaction with or a rethinking of the nation-state system. This approach is embodied in many historians' efforts to rediscover the history of early empires and to transcend the existing predominant narrative approach centered on the nation-state. Here, we can discern the connection between these two—that is, the response to a contemporary crisis and the study of history—but avoid mixing them up. *Empire and Nation-State*, the second volume of my book, is more closely related to the second approach. The purpose of my reexamination of empire is not to strengthen the historical narrative of the nation-state, but to transcend it. Regarding the legacy of early empires, in addition to interregional communications mentioned above, political structures and cultural identities based on multi-ethnicities, self-colonization, centralization of political power, and the complex relationship of empire with the formation of the nation-state, all have drawn scholars' attention.

However, we should not approach these concerns about the relationship between empire and early modernity from the stereotypical dichotomous binary of "empire vs. nation-state." Otherwise, we will be vulnerable to the weakness of the nineteenth-century European historical view, contending that China has no substantive political subject. Here, the pivotal point is not to find or to negate a "nation-state" in Chinese history, but to clarify various concepts and types of polity. In so doing, we can liberate the concept of "state" from the shadow of modern European capitalism and the history of modern European nation-states. As we know, different modern nation-states, including both socialist and capitalist states, have their own political cultures. Thus, any discussion of modern nation-states must involve coming to grips with the problem of distinctive political cultures and traditions. Consequently, to explore pre-twentieth-century states only at an abstract level is inadequate. The Kyoto school portrays the Song dynasty as a mature dynastic state constructed on a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*), which is in fact a quasi-nation-state. Therefore, when the Kyoto school scholars connect such a dynastic state with early modernity, they are

resorting to the dichotomous binary of “empire vs. nation-state” as well as Eurocentrist narratives. To be sure, the Kyoto scholars’ narratives draw a picture of Song China as adversarial to the Western narratives of that period. Yet, both share the same internal relationship between the nation-state and capitalism. A case in point is Miyazaki Ichisada’s argument. Clearly, within the framework of this binary, we cannot imagine any non-capitalist type of nation-state.

Therefore, I emphasize the overlapping relationship between the empire construct and the nation-state, rather than what happens within the dichotomous binary of “empire vs. nation-state.” Since the nineteenth century, virtually all studies on pre-modern history have been framed by the category of the “history of empire.” Take for instance S. N. Eisenstadt’s *The Political System of Empires*, written in the 1960s. This work assembles historical studies of great world civilizations within a Weberian framework, and does so under the rubric of the “political system of empires.” This rubric grows out of the binary of “empire vs. nation-state” in nineteenth-century European political economics. Within this binary, “empire” constitutes all the features that are the opposite of modernity. Although one can say that this binary acknowledges the relationship between empire and modernity, one has to admit that such a relationship can only be handled in a certain retroactive way that is not at all favorable to empires. For example, what is the origin of despotism and authoritarianism in the modern nation-state? Why is the modern nation-state unable to break away from its inherent violence? It is clear that all the symbols of the crisis of modernity will be traced back to the historical relations between empires and the modern world. As a good example, *The Political System of Empires* indicates that nearly all twentieth-century “pre-modern histories” were encompassed within the category of “empire.”

In my volume *Empire and Nation-State*, I mainly discuss the following problems: First, how did Confucianism legitimize the Qing as a Chinese dynasty? How were pluralistic identities and pluralistic political/judicial systems within the empire system constructed? As I point out in the book, on the one hand, an important step taken by the Qing rulers in their exploitation of Confucianism was, by wielding Confucianism, to identify the Qing as a “Chinese dynasty.” On the other hand, the Qing gentry-scholars also exploited legitimate knowledge—that is, Confucianism—to criticize the ethnic hierarchy of the dynastic system. They thus connected some propositions of Confucianism with the problem of equality in a given historical context. Second, what are the historical relations between the empire construct and the nation-state, taking into consideration many important post-nineteenth-century works of scholarship that portray the



empire as opposed to the nation-state? As a response to this question, in my exploration of the study of the Confucian classics and Gongyang learning/doctrines in the Qing dynasty, I emphasize that the empire construct, including the expansion of the tribute system, and the Qing state construct are different aspects of one historical process. In fact, the historical phenomena that are defined as typical symbols of the nation-state, such as boundaries, administrative jurisdictions within those boundaries, and so on, already existed by or began to develop as early as the seventeenth century.

However, these phenomena that arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are not simply elements of a proto-nation-state, but an outgrowth of another political culture and other historical relations. Therefore, on the one hand, we should, for example, examine interregional communications such as the tribute system, the strategy of pacifying “barbarians” (*hefan*), and so on within a framework of the political culture of the dynastic age. On the other hand, we should also take into account these historical phenomena when interpreting why the territorial boundaries, the population, and the regionalism of Republican China (1911–49) and even the PRC (post-1949) largely overlap those of the Qing dynasty. For instance, my book analyzes the overlaps and differences between the tribute system and the treaty system, and investigates the concrete process involved in the application of the Confucian classics to modern international relation. My question is: How was such “imperial knowledge” (that is, the Confucian classics) integrated into a new type of “Confucian universalism” in the wake of colonialism? From the perspective of Confucian studies, my research is an antidote to research methods that examine Confucianism simply within the framework of modern philosophy, concepts, ethics, or academic history. As I point out in the book, insofar as political history is concerned, Confucianism can be understood as legitimate knowledge. Its various forms have complicated relations with the dynastic system and the construction of political legitimacy. Without recognizing this point, we cannot thoroughly comprehend the historical implications of Confucianism.

A friend once asked me why I continue to apply “empire” in my studies, rather than “all-under-Heaven” (*tianxia*), which is usually viewed as more “native” or “Confucian.” As we know, the chapter “All-under-Heaven” (*Tianxia*) of the book *Zhuangzi* provides a universally accepted interpretation of the concept of “all-under-Heaven,” which was also widely used by later scholars. In fact, some scholars prefer to see China as “all-under-Heaven,” rather than a state, with a view to underscoring the particularity of China as well as in reaction to their doubts about the applicability of “nation-state” to China. Yet, although there are some differences between

the concepts of “all-under-Heaven” and “empire,” both explore Chinese history within the dichotomous binary of “empire vs. nation-state.” To be sure, these scholars do make a distinction between China and the nation-state by using the concept of “all-under-Heaven,” yet at the same time they overlook the fact that China’s centralized, unified states were derived from the institutional form—that is, “vassal states”—during the Warring States period. Clearly, these scholars actually embrace the main theme of nineteenth-century European narratives of “world history,” contending that there is no history in China or the East. Thus, while dealing with the concept of “all-under-Heaven,” I decided to keep the concept of “empire” as an important analytical tool. The following points explain this decision.

First, the term “empire” (*diguó*) is not a recent invention, but appears in ancient Chinese documents. However, the concept of empire in these documents does not correspond to the category of empire introduced into China from the modern West and Japan. In the late Qing, the traditional term *diguó* was used to translate the modern category of “empire.” This translation was incorporated into the modern Chinese language, became a part of the historical tradition of modern China, and embodied so-called translational modernity. Thus, the term “empire” gradually became a concept in the genealogy of Chinese thought and knowledge in the wave of nationalism in the late nineteenth century. Inasmuch as the concept of empire is inherent in modern Chinese thought through translation, we cannot recognize it as a loanword independent from Chinese history. Of course, if one can find a more appropriate concept to explore the problems mentioned above, I would like to substitute it for the concept of empire. Unfortunately, so far I have not found such an alternative.

Second, to be sure, the concept of “all-under-Heaven” is closely related to Chinese thinking about the universe, nature, and a world ruled by rites/music, and can be traced back to antiquity. However, we can find counterparts in other civilizations and the worldviews of religions, if we do not simply compare it with the European concept of the nation-state, but with concepts in other historical civilizations. At this level, it is definitely a particularistic narrative of China from a perspective of the nation-state, rather than a result of deep consideration, to argue that only the concept of “all-under-Heaven” can represent the particularity of China. Moreover, the concept of “all-under-Heaven” should not be identified with China as a polity from a perspective of political analysis. It is distinctive from the concept of “state” by its inherent ideals and values, as the line of demarcation made by Gu Yanwu between “*wang tianxia*” (the collapse of all-under-heaven) and “*wangguo*” (the demise of a dynasty) indicates. Thus, if we use “all-under-Heaven” to depict

a given dynasty, or polity, we will easily lose the implications raised by Gu Yanwu and like-minded Confucians.

Third, many scholars have described Chinese political history using the concepts of “the heavenly dynastic state” (*tianchao guojia*), or “the dynastic state” (*wangchao guojia*). To be sure, these two concepts are acceptable. But they are not adequate to explain the differences among the Chinese dynasties, in particular those between the Yuan/Qing and the Song/Ming. Although all four were “heavenly dynastic states” or “dynastic states,” with regard to the size of the territory controlled, the relationship between center and periphery, and their internal political structure, the Yuan/Qing differed greatly from the Song/Ming, although, in line with Miyazaki Ichisada, the latter pair have been defined as mature dynastic states constructed upon a rational bureaucracy (*junxian guojia*) or quasi-nation-states. Thus, how can the Kyoto scholars evaluate the position of the Yuan and Qing in Chinese history, since they equate the Song dynasty constructed on a rational bureaucracy with the beginning of the early modern age? How can they interpret the relationship of the study of the Confucian classics and historiography in the Qing with the political legitimacy of the Qing state, since they identify Song/Ming philosophical Confucianism with the beginning of “nationalism” or modern thought? It is clear that the Kyoto school’s explanations of these two problems are incomplete. In addition, some Chinese scholars also view the Qing dynasty as a rupture in history. For example, they argue that the Manchu invasion resulted in the demise of Ming capitalism or early modernity. The Qing dynasty is thus eliminated from the narratives of so-called modernity.

In my exploration of Gongyang learning/doctrines during the Qing dynasty, I apply the concept of ritual China to the changes in the territory of China, the transformation of China’s political structure, and the inside (Chinese)–outside (barbarians) relationship. In my view, what is crucial is not to prove whether China historically was a nation-state or an empire, but to explicate the particularities of Chinese political culture and how it changed over time. The Mongol and Manchu dynasties share some similarities with so-called empires. However, I do not confine this narrative of empire within the framework of the dichotomous binary of “empire vs. nation-state” and then begin my analysis, but instead strive to illuminate the internal reasons for why the Qing dynasty can be legitimately included in the genealogy of Chinese dynasties. For example, the Qing rulers identified themselves as the legal heirs of a Chinese dynasty by changing the dynastic name to “Qing,” making sacrifices to the talismans of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, taking care of the descendants of the royal families of these two dynasties, restoring the civil service examination in Chinese, making a

commitment to Cheng/Zhu philosophy, adopting the Ming judicial system, and so on. In this respect, the Qing emperor was a Chinese emperor. At the same time, the Qing emperor ruled Mongolia, areas inhabited by Muslims (*Huibu*), Tibet, and some southwestern areas through particular institutions (for example, the Mongol eight banners system, the *Gasha* political system in Tibet, the chieftain system in Southwest China, various tribute systems, etc.). Thus, in Central and West Asia, he was the legal successor of the Mongol khans. Furthermore, he was at the same time the lineage head of the Manchus and responsible for Manchu identity and for maintaining their ruling position. Therefore, the Qing emperor embodied a synthesis of three identities—emperor, great khan, and lineage head. Consequently, such a synthetic imperial authority, and its vicissitudes, made Qing politics very complicated. For example, the Qing government was continuously entangled in the contradiction between imperial authority and the Manchu and Mongolian aristocrats, and in the rise and decline of Han Chinese in the imperial court. Therefore, from the perspective of a synthetic imperial authority, it is not persuasive to argue for the singularity of the Manchus and the inevitability of the establishment of a Manchu state simply due to the efforts of the Manchus to preserve their national identity. Similarly, if we discuss the legitimacy of the Qing dynasty only from the angle of the Manchu-Han relationship, we cannot interpret the repeated conflicts between the emperor and Manchu aristocrats in the early Qing. In my eyes, these conflicts were unavoidable phenomena in the construction of political legitimacy and products of the contradictions inhering in an imperial authority that was characterized by great diversity and change. The concept of ritual China is repeatedly constructed in this diverse relationship.

Here we can see that traditional Chinese concepts such as all-under-Heaven or dynasty cannot clarify the particularities of the political institutions and political culture of the different dynasties, just as the dichotomous binary of “empire vs. nation-state” cannot reveal the features of Chinese political culture. In fact, on the one hand, these traditional concepts constitute the internal elements of modern historical narratives within the framework of modern views of history. Closely related to this interpretive framework of history is the narrative approach centered on the dichotomous binary of “China vs. the West,” which emphasizes that China is characterized by all-under-Heaven, dynasties, and the tribute system, whereas the West is characterized by the nation-state and its formally equal sovereignty. On the other hand, in modern times, colonialists often exploited the dichotomous binary of “empire vs. nation-state” for their own ends. They displaced traditional social and political relationships with the culture of the “sovereign nation-state.” For

example, using conflicts between the natives of Taiwan and the residents of Okinawa as an excuse, Japan invaded Taiwan for the first time in 1874. Making use of the Qing officials' declaration that the Taiwan natives were "people beyond the Qing administration and judicial system" (*Hua wai zhi min*), the Japanese government defended itself with considerable sophistication by arguing that its encroachment on Taiwan and other areas inhabited only by "uncivilized nations" (*shengfan*) was not an invasion of the territory of the Qing. At that time, European international law had already been introduced into East Asia. By exploiting international law, the Japanese government constrained the pluralist political institutions of the Qing created under the concept of "adjusting measures to local customs and conditions" (*cong su congyi*) and the separation inherent in the empire between inside (Chinese) and outside (barbarians) within the category of international relationships among sovereign nation-states. Thus it was that Japan found an excuse for invasion. Therefore, we should pay attention not only to the conflicts between Japan and the Qing dynasty, but also to the conflicts between the principles exploited by Japan and the principles upon which Qing pluralistic social institutions were founded, in particular the various measures prescribed by these two sets of principles for dividing inside from outside and for determining their respective boundaries in practice.

### **Political Legitimacy and the "Continuity and Rupture" of History**

According to a stereotypical argument, Chinese history is continuous while Western history is discontinuous. However, the so-called continuity of Chinese history is just an illusion. It is possible to conjure up this illusion only by failing to take into consideration the problem of transformation—that is, how a conquering dynasty transformed itself into a Chinese dynasty, as I have mentioned above. Actually, because of ceaseless invasions and penetrations of the periphery into the center, ruptures both in terms of politics and in terms of ethnic relations took place repeatedly in Chinese history. Thus, the so-called continuity can only be an outgrowth of continual intentional or unintentional historical constructions: the rulers of the dynasties established by minorities exploited Confucianism (including its various aspects such as Song philosophical Confucianism, the study of the classics, and historiography) to transform themselves into Chinese rulers. These self-transformations raise the issue of ritual China, which is not a ritual or moral issue but a political issue, an issue of political legitimacy. The

reason I use the category of “self-transformation” here is to illuminate the agency in this historical process: the rulers of new dynasties (whether established by minorities or by rebels) incorporated themselves into the historical genealogy, or Confucian orthodoxy of Chinese dynasties, and justified their own legitimacy by orthodox Confucianism.<sup>1</sup> However, such “self-transformation” was only a precondition for the political legitimacy of new dynasties. This legitimacy was finally constructed in what I call a multi-recognition relationship, which implied that “self-transformation” must be confirmed in a given “politics of recognition.” Let me take the Qing dynasty as an example. For many Han Chinese gentry-scholars (as well as some scholars in the surrounding kingdoms), the Qing dynasty did not gain political legitimacy as a Chinese dynasty until the Qianlong regime. To be sure, this does not mean that there was no transformation of the dynasty toward the integration of Manchus with Han Chinese under Kangxi and Yongzheng rule, nor does it imply that conflicts between Manchus and Han Chinese completely disappeared after the Qianlong reign, but it does indicate that the position of the Qing dynasty in the genealogy of Chinese dynasties was not affirmed until that time. Unfortunately, past studies of the Qing dynasty have uniformly ignored this important process of self-transformation. In addition, the reason I repeatedly define the category of “China” has to do with the fact that, along with this process, the dynastic rulers’, the gentry-scholars’, and the common people’s understandings of China were constantly undergoing change.

Here, it is necessary for us to explore historical relations from a new historical perspective beyond the narrative of nationalism. When moving to an exploration of pre-twentieth-century Chinese history, I suggest that in addition to seeking a historical understanding of ethnic and geographical relationships, we also pay attention to two questions: first, the “politics of recognition,” which focuses on the historical construction of political legitimacy, as I have discussed above; and second, political culture, on which so-called self-transformation relied. For example, what was the nature of the political culture that the Qing dynasty exploited to validate its legitimacy as a Chinese dynasty? How could such a political culture incorporate different ethnic groups, populations in various areas, and distinctive religions into a pluralistic and flexible political structure? Obviously, this political culture requires a new type of knowledge different from what I call nationalist knowledge based on the categories of ethnicity, language, and religion. This type of knowledge has its particular concepts and forms. A case in point comes from the study of the Confucian classics. New Text Confucianism declined after the Eastern Han dynasty. Aside from the work of Zhao Fang of

the late Yuan and early Ming period and a few other scholars, New Text Confucianism seemed to disappear completely until the rise of the Changzhou school late in the Qianlong reign. In their investigation of Qing-dynasty New Text Confucianism, scholars of intellectual history and academic history give priority to the Changzhou school, but ignore all the efforts made by the Juchen (*Jin*), Mongols, and Manchus to exploit Gongyang learning/doctrines—in particular the themes of “grand unification” (*da yitong*), *tong santong* (linking together the three dynasties ruled by sage kings), and “dividing inside (Chinese) from outside (barbarians)” (*bie neiwai*)—to construct the orthodoxy of new dynasties.<sup>2</sup> These efforts were embodied in writings by Juchen, Mongols, Manchus, and Han Chinese serving the regimes of the Juchen, Mongols, and Manchus, which were not professional works of scholarship or research articles on New Text Confucianism, but political essays or memorials submitted to the throne. This shows that many themes of New Text Confucianism had already been embedded in dynastic politics and the construction of political legitimacy. For example, when the Jin dynasty fought against the Song dynasty, Jin gentry-scholars and officials strove to legitimize their conquest by the study of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and Gongyang learning/doctrines. During the Mongol conquest of the Song dynasty, the Mongol empire tried to construct itself as a Chinese dynasty: officials in the imperial court debated over whether they should be a successor of the Liao, the Jin, or the Song. After the abolishment of the Taihe laws, Confucians discussed how to use the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to establish a legal foundation for Yuan rule. After the Manchu conquest, the Qing government restored the civil service examination system, administered the examinations in Chinese, made a commitment to Confucianism (especially the teachings of Zhuxi) and, inspired by Gongyang learning/doctrines, constructed its own political legitimacy. Clearly, if there were no such political culture or theory of legitimacy centered on Confucianism, it would be impossible to discuss continuity among the dynasties. Thus, I say the continuity of Chinese history was deliberately constructed.

The above exploration not only illuminates the necessity of examining Confucianism by recognizing it as legitimate knowledge, but also the need to investigate the political practices of the pre-1900s Chinese dynasties in dealing with ethnic relations. Of course, “empire” can be defined as a ruling mode for dominance, or an embodiment of the practices of power relations. However, when nationalist knowledge disvalues traditional legitimate knowledge as outdated, to understand nationalist knowledge and uncover its limitations (in particular its tendency toward homogeneity) it becomes important to review the theory and practice of political legitimacy.

## The Construction and Questioning of Nationalist Knowledge

The dominance of the dichotomous binary of “the East vs. the West” and of “China vs. the West” in the field of Chinese studies came into being historically. However, if we view these binaries as methodologically absolute, we will overlook many important phenomena and important points. For instance, in legal studies, some scholars often posit a dichotomy between the Chinese system of rituals and the Western legal system. To be sure, this is not entirely unreasonable. Nonetheless, it is an oversimplification of China (Does not China have a legal tradition?), as well as an oversimplification of the West (Does not the West have rites and moral education?). To cite another example, many scholars discuss the problem of particularism and universalism at a methodological level. In my opinion, we should of course take into account the singularity of a given historical period or society as the object of our research and criticism of Western universalism. But at the level of philosophy, neither particularism nor universalism works well. This is because all the narratives of so-called particularism embody universalistic particularism, while all the narratives of so-called universalism embody particularistic universalism. These two narrative approaches appear to be diametrically opposed, but are actually interdependent. To a certain extent, what we must do is find the so-called singularity, or singularistic, universalism. Within the framework of singularistic universalism, the pursuit of singularity is not a simple return to particularism, but rather is a laying out of universal implications through singularity as such, and asking why and under what conditions such singularity can be translated into universality.

Let me take the third and fourth volumes of the *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* as an example. These two volumes explore the internal relationship between modern knowledge and the problem of political legitimacy in the twentieth century. One may ask why I focus on knowledge after discussing the relationship between the heavenly principle worldview and rational bureaucracy, the study of the Confucian classics, and the legitimacy of dynasties in the first and second volumes. This is because what I describe in the book is a transformation in worldview, which is related to a certain epistemology, scientific method, and the genealogy of scientific knowledge. For example, I pay a great deal of attention to Kang Youwei’s re-creation of Confucian universalism. The precondition for this re-creation was a new historical recognition that the self-evident relationship between Confucian universalism and the concept of China was no longer beyond doubt. Under this precondition, before one tries to prove that Confucianism is universal, one



must acknowledge that China is a part of the world, and admit that outside China exists a wide expanse not only in terms of geographic space but also in terms of culture, politics, and education. What then can we tell from the connection between this new Confucian universalism and the image of China among many other nation-states? In my opinion, this connection indicates the dependence of nationalism on a certain universal worldview and a genealogy of knowledge. In other words, the birth of this new type of Confucian universalism took place along with, and at the same time as, the birth of China as a sovereign nation-state in a new world system.

The relationship between universalism and the modern nation-state, or nationalism, involves the same logic. Since the late Qing, the knowledge structure of this universalism has been preserved, while its Confucian coat put on by Kang Youwei has been removed. The legitimacy of the modern nation-state is based on knowledge of this universalism and its logic for categorization, while the institutions of the modern nation-state rely on the institutions of this universalism and the division among them. Neither the concept of sovereignty nor the justification made by various political forces for their own legitimacy, nor the historical conception of evolution and progression, nor the rationality of numerous institutions and theories supported by this concept, is independent from knowledge of this universalism. The establishment of modern nation-states is correlated with an anti-historical epistemological framework. Although nationalist knowledge often turns to “history,” “tradition,” “origin,” and so on—that is, to cultural particularism—its basis is this new epistemology and genealogy of knowledge. Therefore, to explore knowledge systems and discourse today is to discuss a new type of political legitimacy. Further, a distinctive feature of nationalism is that it traces back its own origins, which can be ancestor worship or other cultural artifacts. However, these more “noumenal,” “original,” or “particular” forms of knowledge are generated by the new epistemology and its knowledge framework. Thus, what created this new epistemology is not “noumenon” or “origin.” On the contrary, this epistemology of the nation-state per se, which needs its own “noumenon” and “origin,” produced them itself.

However, it is not enough to simply point out this constructed nature of nationalist knowledge or to deconstruct it. While producing its own “noumenon” or “origin,” nationalism also appealed to mass mobilization whereby those with so-called consciousness strove to connect their thinking about the nation’s fate under given “trends of the times” (*shishi*) with the values to which they were dedicated. For example, the Chinese revolution, as a sweeping social movement and as a national liberation movement of unusual scale and depth, encompassed many historical elements aside

from the category of nationalism. Nationalism cannot cover everything about China during the twentieth century. Thus, a criticism and a negation of nationalist knowledge cannot be identified with a simple refusal to acknowledge an extremely abundant, complicated historical process. In addition, I mention the problem of “anti-modernity modernity” in many of my writings including my book. The third volume, *Self-Evident Principle and Counter Self-Evident Principle*, analyzes the thought, particularly the interrogation of modernity, of Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, and Zhang Taiyan. This interrogation was not a questioning of modernity as whole, but rather was inherent in their search for modernity. To be sure, there are great differences in the depth and the ways of thinking of these individual thinkers. For example, Yan Fu approached Western positivism through the teachings of Zhuxi, translated and justified evolutionism through a study of the *Book of Changes* and historiography, and touched upon the problem of freedom in Western thought through the theories of Laozi. However, his translations and interpretations of Western thought constitute a dialogue with, an adjustment to, and a tension with Western thought. Liang Qichao became familiar with Western political and religious knowledge through New Text Confucianism and the teachings of Wang Yangming, translated modern European theory of science, German theories of the nation-state, the philosophy of Kant, James’s pragmatism and his theory of religion, and so on, and introduced them to China. However, his thought also contains a self-reflection on capitalism, utilitarian educational system, and value crisis. Zhang Taiyan is most radical. He provides a systematic criticism of modernity with the framework of the consciousness-only school of Buddhism and Zhuangzi’s theory of seeing things as equal (*qiwu lun*). Moreover, in the fourth volume, I investigate the internal complexity of the community of scientists, and those individuals and groups who resisted the hegemony of scientism, in my exploration of the community of scientific discourse. All of the above discussion shows that Chinese thought on modernity included an interrogation of modernity. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a self-doubting of or self-negation of Chinese modernity.

However, within the framework of “anti-modernity modernity,” not only the community of scientists, Hu Shi, and the May Fourth movement that embody the features of scientism, but also humanists like Liang Qichao, Liang Shuming, and Zhang Junli who argued against scientism, can be incorporated into the genealogy of scientism. Is there a way out for modernity? I argue that modern humanities, which can be viewed as a supplement to scientism growing out of a fight against scientism, are not the answer. Here, I would like to make an explanation of my approach to this problem:

I do not simply view the thinking of these people as a way out, but lay out how their thinking developed—that is, I try to show how the possible ways out of modernity were incorporated into the process of pursuing modernity as a whole. It is also in this way that I deal with Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, and Zhang Taiyan. In the complicated relationship among the thinking of these individuals, I reveal different directions and various possible fields of thinking, as well as individual responses to “the trend of the times.” In fact, I show the diversity itself was a self-reflection on modernity and constitutes thinking of a way out of it. Therefore, I often describe Chinese modernity as “anti-modernity modernity.” We also have to take into account how the basic trend of modern history incorporated these diversities into modernity. Otherwise, the so-called “exit from modernity” will be a very simple problem, which does not require any self-struggle. Here, the way out of modernity is not simple. The self-reflection of the diversity of modernity constitutes one, or a series of, possible directions. To explore the possibilities is my object.

## Notes

1. *Daotong*: When various Buddhist schools developed in China, each of them claimed that the teachings/doctrines of its founder were uninterruptedly passed from one generation to the next. This was called *daotong*. In his fight against Buddhism, Han Yu of the Tang dynasty proposed a Confucian *daotong*. He argued that the most important *Confucian* teaching/doctrine (*dao*) is benevolence (*ren*), which was passed from Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, and the Duke of Zhou to Confucius and Mencius. This *daotong* ended with Mencius. But Han Yu claimed that he himself was responsible for continuing this *daotong*. Song Neo-Confucians also painted themselves into this picture of the evolution of Confucianism.

2. *Tong santong*: *Santong* literally means the orthodoxies of the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, Zhou ruled by sage kings—that is, the black orthodoxy of Xia, the white orthodoxy of Shang, and the red orthodoxy of Zhou. The teachings/doctrines of the Gongyang School argue that these three orthodoxies are actually identified with each other. Thus, the literal meaning of *tong santong* is linking with these orthodoxies. However, it implies that any particular royal family cannot maintain its domination forever, and thus justifies the ceaseless replacement of dynasties by each other. It also calls on each successive ruling family to be kind to the previous one, since it too will be replaced one day.

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**Wang Hui** is a professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tsinghua University. His main publications including *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiang de xingqi* (4 vols., 2004), *Fankang juewang: Lun Xun jiqi* Nahan Panghuang yanjiu (Resisting Despair: A Study of Lu Xun and His Literary World, 1991), *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition* (translated by Theodore Hutner, 2003), *Shisō kōkan toshite no gendai Chūgoku* (Modern China as a Space for Thinking) (translated by Murata Yujiro, Nasuyama Yukio, and Onodera Shiro, 2006), and *New Asia Imagination* (in Korean, 2003).