The Confucian Revival in Taiwan:

Xu Fuguan and His Theory of Chinese Aesthetics

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To my mother

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph deals with the work of Xu Fuguan (1904–1982), who was one of the central representatives of the second generation of the ideational current of Modern Confucianism. The focus of the work is on his theory of aesthetics and, in this context, on his analysis of the Chinese ideational tradition.

The second generation of Modern Confucianism, which includes Xu Fuguan, Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), Tang Junyi (1909–1978), and Fang Dongmei (1899–1977), was concerned with how to reevaluate and adapt the Chinese intellectual tradition to meet the needs of the Chinese modernization process. Most modern Confucians understood modernization as a process of rationalizing the world. In their search for a new philosophical foundation, these Modern Confucians usually focused on the ontological issues they had come to know within the framework of Western ideas and philosophical systems. Therefore, in this study, I will be concerned *inter alia* with examining Xu's theories of Chinese modernization.

In general, Modern Confucians have followed the premise that questions about the inner reality of the cosmos, the substance of being and the absolute, in short, questions that determine the meaning of human life, are essential for the establishment of a new, modern society and the preservation of the integrated, inalienable cultural identity of the Chinese (Rošker 2013, 53). Thus, the ideals of Modern Confucians were not limited to efforts to revive and rehabilitate their ideational tradition. From this point of view, it was clear that they could begin the intellectual process of modernizing

Confucianism only on the basis of its synthesis with the ideas imported from the Euro-American philosophy, since this constituted the cultural background from which modernization actually developed.

In general, the second generation tried to revive their own cultural identity by means of "transplanting the old roots" of Chinese tradition (*Chong zheng jiuxue de genji* 重整舊學的根基),[1] believing that this was the only way to survive. However, this root transplantation did not only serve as a tool to enable their survival (ibid.), but the second-generation representatives sincerely hoped that it could also provide new methods for refining and advancing philosophy and ethics on a global scale. They were convinced that a consistent and precise renewal of the Chinese ideological tradition could lead to the establishment of a new philosophical system of modern Chinese thought that could actively engage in the international ideological dialogues of modern societies.

The central subject of this monograph is the theoretical contributions of Xu Fuguan to the ideational current of the second generation of Modern Confucianism, especially concerning the reinterpretation and reevaluation of the fundamental axiological concepts of original Confucianism, Daoist aesthetics, and modernization of Chinese aesthetics. As the second generation of Modern Confucians is characterized by the interpretation and reevaluation of the fundamental concepts of Chinese ideational tradition through a comparative analysis with Euro-American ideational history, Xu Fuguan also based his interpretation of traditional Chinese aesthetics on a comparative study with European aesthetics. In this segment, his analysis of European aesthetics proves to be generalizing and thus problematic,

[1] All Chinese characters are listed also in the Index.

which is also reflected in his understanding and interpretation of Western modern art.

The central areas of Xu Fuguan's research were philosophy, cultural sociology, literary criticism, and art criticism. He is considered one of the first theorists of Chinese aesthetics and modern Chinese thought. As an excellent essayist, Xu Fuguan is best known for his exceptional knowledge of the development of pre-Qin[2] society, especially its political, intellectual, and cultural characteristics. Because of the wide range of his research areas, Xu Fuguan did not create a philosophical system of his own, as most other Modern Confucians did, so he is relatively unknown in Western academic circles, while he is now the focus of study in Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. The basic methodological approach that determines his specific view of the conceptual development of traditional Chinese intellectual culture and the results of his analyzes and interpretations in this field are undoubtedly very interesting, as they comprise an important contribution to the further development of research in comparative studies.

[2] The pre-Qin period is a technical sinological term referring to the central period of Chinese antiquity, which lasted from the Shang dynasty (1600−1046 BCE) to the Qin dynasty (221−206 BCE).

MODERN CONFUCIANISM

The complex situation in which China found itself at the end of the nineteenth century led to the emergence of new ideational and cultural guidelines that would make it easier to meet the challenges of modernization that were entering China more or less forcibly through Western imperialist forces. Although Confucianism was singled out as the main culprit for China's backwardness during this period, Modern Confucian philosophers saw great potential in the original Confucianism for establishing a moral and ethical system in Chinese society that would be able to fill the void in values and spirituality left in the wake of modernization in societies built on capitalist foundations. The philosophy of the Modern Confucians is therefore not only an attempt to establish new ideological guidelines that would enable China to make the most efficient and successful transition to a globalized modern society, but it is also a project that has the potential to establish a new ethic on a global scale.

The philosophical system of Modern Confucianism encompasses the fields of epistemology, ontology, metaphysics, ethics, morality, philosophical anthropology, and aesthetics.

Most Modern Confucians have grappled with the differences between Western and Chinese philosophy. They looked for a suitable framework to identify the different characteristics of Chinese and Western thought as a basis for interpreting the differences between the respective cultures. As they became acquainted with some of the influential currents in Western philosophy, they attempted to apply their own understanding of it in

interpreting Chinese philosophy and tradition. The reevaluation and reinterpretation of their own ideational tradition and culture were very important in this process. Thus, 20th century Chinese philosophy began with the discovery of Western philosophy and continued with the rediscovery of its own. In the process, of course, it sought ways to reform Chinese culture to meet the demands of modernization while rationally justifying and reconstructing traditional views of heaven or nature (*tian* 天), humanity and morality, and the individual and society. It adopted certain elements of Western philosophy, but also looked for starting points to criticise them. It sought a new interpretation of Chinese philosophy based on methods that combined modern and Western views (Cheng 2002, 375).

In general, they followed the premise that questions about the inner reality of the cosmos, the substance of being and the absolute question, determine the meaning of human life (Rošker 2013, 53). As such, these questions are essential for the construction of a new, modern society, as well as for the preservation of the integrated, inalienable cultural identity of Chinese people. The current of Modern Confucianism emerged from an attempt to establish a synthesis of Western and traditional Chinese thought, and this attempt was defined by the crisis of both discourses (ibid., 75).

Most Modern Confucians emphasised the importance of building a new ontology to serve as the basis for Confucian renewal. Xu Fuguan was actually the only representative of the second generation who believed that metaphysics and ontology were not appropriate tools for understanding traditional Chinese thought, let alone for developing its interpretation, because in his view the pragmatic core of these discourses did not lead to a coherently structured metaphysical system, such as that constructed by the ancient Greek philosophers.

The ideals of the Modern Confucians were not limited to efforts to revive and rehabilitate their ideational tradition. From this point of view, it was clear that they could only begin the intellectual process of modernizing Confucianism on the basis of its synthesis with ideas imported from Euro-American philosophy, since this constituted the cultural background from which modernization actually developed. The efforts of Modern Confucians, however, sprang not only from the desire to find a solution to the problems arising from their own tradition interacting with the modern world but also from the intention to detach this originally foreign ideational tradition, which eventually became entangled in its own philosophical currents (ibid.).

The philosophical movement of Modern Confucianism is divided into three generations. The philosophical content and guidelines of the first and second generations, which are crucial to this monograph, will be discussed below.

The first generation, which emerged in response to the generation of new intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement and, as mentioned above, vehemently opposed the annihilation of the Confucian intellectual tradition, worked between 1921 and 1949.

Its representatives were Liang Shuming (1893–1988), Xiong Shili (1885–1968), Zhang Junmai (Carsun Chang) (1886–1969), Feng Youlan (1859–1990), and He Lin (1902–1992), but in terms of theory, the most important is Liang Shuming and especially Xiong Shili, who was the teacher of the second generation and had a great influence on the life and work of Xu Fuguan.

The second generation, which worked from 1950 to 1995, consisted of Fang Dongmei (1899–1977), Tang Junyi (1909–1978), Xu Fuguan (1903–1982), and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995).

The members of the third generation have been active since 1980, and as the successors of the second generation consist of Cheng Zhongying (Cheng Chung-Ying) (1935-), Liu Shuxian (Liu Shu-hsien) (1934–2016), Du Weiming (Tu Wei-Ming) (1940-), and Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih) (1930-).

Historical background

Modern Confucianism (*Xinrujia* 新儒家 or *Xin ruxue* 新儒學) as a new philosophical current in China began to develop in the early 20th century and emerged after 1958, when representatives of the second generation of Modern Confucians living and working in Taiwan and Hong Kong published their *Manifesto for the Reevalution of Chinese Culture as a World Cultural Heritage* (*Wei Zhongguo wenhua jinggao shijie renshi xuanyan* 為中國文化敬告世界人士宣言). This document defines the main tenets and goals of Modern Confucianism as a new philosophical current that emerged in response to the socio-political situation in which China found itself in the first half of the 20th century.[1]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, China was economically, politically, and psychologically exhausted by the invasion of Western imperialist and colonial powers, and was brought to its knees by the Opium Wars, with the Western powers forcing an economic opening that China itself did not truly desire. Out of this complex situation, new ideas and cultural guidelines emerged to better meet the challenges of modernization that more or less forcefully invaded China from the West. China was thus

[1] The content and meaning of the Manifesto will be discussed within an independent subchapter.

forced to come to terms with Western culture, its technology and ideology. In this regard, the slogan of Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909) in 1898 "Chinese Learning as substance, Western Learning for application" (*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong* 中學為體, 西學為用), which referred to China adopting technology, especially military, from the West while preserving its cultural tradition.

This idea suffered crippling defeat in 1895, when China lost the war with Japan. Before entering the 20th century, China had to admit that it was in a severe cultural crisis. Its cultural identity, which was based on Confucianism as the dominant national doctrine and the backbone of Chinese tradition, thus became the target of criticism and the scapegoat for the given situation. Confucianism was accused of conservatism and dogmatism, and thus of its inability to adapt to the demands of the times, especially with regard to modernization. The crisis of Confucianism began several decades earlier when, under the strict and rigid censorship of Emperors Yongzheng (1723–1763) and Qianlong (1736–1796), it became merely the subject of ossified philological research that suppressed any development of creative ideas (Bresciani 2001, 12).

The first attempt to modernize China had already begun with the Hundred Days' Reform movement in 1898, but was crushed by the conservatives led by Empress Cixi. All subsequent political and military reforms that followed the crushing of the Hundred Days' Reform movement were suppressed, leading to the 1911 Revolution, in which China's tradition was proclaimed as the main culprit for its backwardness. The intellectual and cultural crisis and a serious call for China's modernization peaked among intellectuals with the May Fourth Movement of 1919.

The ideological and political turning point in the context of Chinese modernization is certainly the May Fourth Movement (*Wu si yundong* 五四

運動), which began in 1919 with student protests against unjust decisions made by the Versailles Peace Conference against China, and in the following years ballooned into a massive pan-Chinese movement of the so-called "new intellectuals," who advocated for a radical cultural and ideological renewal of Chinese society.

This movement, whose broad influence is known in Chinese history as the New Culture Movement (*Xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動) and which is often equated by modern theorists with the beginning of the period of Chinese Enlightenment, included both patriotic nationalist elements and sharp criticism or outright denial of Chinese tradition, especially Confucian state doctrine (Rošker 2013, 16).

The prevailing guideline of the new intellectuals was the rapid and most intensive Westernization of China. The cultural figures and intellectuals rejected everything that had to do with the past. This past, however, was synonymous with the Confucian tradition. The prevailing slogan among young intellectuals was "Down with Confucius and his sons!" (*Dadao rujia dian* 打到儒家店) (Bresciani, 2001, 14).

In the midst of these fiery passions, one of the leading intellectuals in China at the time, Liang Qichao (1873–1929), returned to China from Europe. He returned with an unenthusiastic view of Western culture, as not much more awaited him there than the wreckage left by the First World War. Disillusioned with the previously celebrated greatness of the Old Continent, he managed to sow doubts among young intellectuals about the complete Westernization of China. Influenced by Liang Qichao, in 1921 Liang Shuming (1893–1988), a young professor of Buddhist philosophy at Peking University, wrote a book on the *Eastern and Western Cultures and their*

philosophies (*Dongxi wenhua ji qi zhexue* 東西文化及其哲學) that greatly influenced and divided the academic elite.

In his book, he emphasized the position and vision for China's modernization, which was to be realized by learning from Western ideological and cultural systems while preserving the Chinese spirit and outlook on life. He opposed those who advocated the adoption of the Western modern social system, arguing that the introduction of a foreign political and economic system into a completely different social context would not provide a solution for China. For him, modernization should begin with the renewal of the peasant population's spirit. To this end, he established the Institute of Rural Reconstruction in Shandong Province, which became a well-known social experiment in the 1930s, focusing on cultivating community unity, developing technology and science, and eliminating outdated peasant traditions (Lee 1998, 17).

Liang Shuming is considered the first representative of the first generation of Modern Confucianism. According to Bresciani (2001, 14), Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan) (1866–1925) is considered the father or at least the main inspirer of Modern Confucians. Sun Yat-sen was not a philosopher, but a very good connoisseur of Western culture. He wanted to open up new possibilities of development for backwards China through the fusion of Chinese tradition and Western ideas. In doing so, he did not adopt Western ideas unreflectively, but was also able to criticize them through the prism of Chinese tradition, which he respected greatly. He wanted to build China's future on three foundations: Democracy, Ethics, and Science. In doing so, he held that democracy and science were matters for the West and that ethics should be based on a renewed Confucianism. Among other things, he emphasized in the process of China's modernization the importance of the traditional Confucian ideological concept of the "sage within, ruler

without" (*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王),[2] which refers to the ideal of moral rule (Rošker 2013, 54).

The basic characteristics of the First generation

Xiong Shili is considered the main theorist who laid the foundations for the revival of Confucian philosophy. He was a teacher of Xu Fuguan, Mou Zongsan, and Tang Junyi. The theoretical contribution of Xiong Shili, including the establishment of a new cosmological system based on holism, will be briefly discussed in the next subsection. At this point, however, I would like to highlight Zhang Junmai, who was the first to introduce metaphysics into the discourse of Modern Confucianism.

After returning to China in 1923, Zhang Junmai, who traveled through Europe with Liang Qichao, delivered a lecture entitled *Science and Metaphysics* (*Kexue yu xingshangxue* 科學與形上學) at Peking University that angered both Marxists and liberal pragmatists. In his lecture, Zhang Junmai emphasized the view that metaphysics must be the basis for the philosophy of life, since science was not that which could solve the problems of the human mind. On the contrary, the representatives of the aforementioned currents argued that science was the only system of knowledge that can encompass the whole of reality, and not only the physical laws of the universe. According to them, science was that which could prescribe how society should function and develop:

[2] This concept is one of the key conceptual concepts in the political philosophy of Modern Confucianism. The "sage within" is a symbol of the transcendental subject, while the "ruler without" is a symbol of the empirical subject.

> To most Chinese intellectuals of the time, science represented the most convincing and acceptable achievement of Western civilization. They were largely convinced that science and rationality could serve as the most reasonable substitute for the discredited traditional codes of ethics. After a successful tour and series of guest lectures given by the American pragmatist John Dewey in China during this period, most proponents of science irrevocably subscribed to the theories of modern American pragmatism. They were no longer willing to accept philosophies that would be limited to the interpretation of various phenomena of reality, but only those that could also be used as a tool to change them. (Rošker 2006, 131)

The heated debate between the two groups lasted more than a decade. In it, the proponents of science (*kexue pai*) prevailed as the overwhelming majority. The debate is considered very important because it introduced metaphysics into the philosophy of Modern Confucianism.

The demand for the abolition of the so-called ossified and dogmatic Confucianism and the adoption of the Western model of democracy and science, which was supposed to lead China from a backward to a modernized society, thus led to a new rethinking of the role and significance of the Confucian tradition of ideas. Xiong Shili and Liang Shuming were the key exponents who sought to revive and reinvigorate the essence of Confucian philosophy. In doing so, they drew on both the original or classical Confucianism and the Neo-Confucianism of the Song (960–1127) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasties, integrated by Buddhist and Daoist concepts, since Confucianism represented only a rigid system for fulfilling official examinations in which there was no room for creative thinking. Therefore, the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties indeed represents a qualitative leap in the Confucian ideological tradition.

Xiong and Liang argued that Western theorists such as Russel, Darwin, Huxley, Bergson, and even Dewey had failed to create an ethics or metaphysics that met the demands and expectations of Chinese Confucian intellectuals who searched for a deeper truth in Confucian and Daoist metaphysics as well as in Chinese Buddhism. The fact that they both studied Buddhism intensively testifies to the fact that they were searching for a spiritual truth beyond political and social reality. The chaotic and complex reality in which China found itself in the first half of the 20th century led Xiong and Liang to become sincerely concerned about the actual state of society and culture, so they turned back to Confucian philosophy in search of pragmatic solutions. The difference between them is mainly that Liang held that Confucianism as a philosophy can be both surpassed and enriched, so that it is possible to incorporate Western science and democracy into Chinese society and culture. Xiong, on the other hand, saw Confucianism as ontology and cosmology, and thus as self-sufficient. In other words, Xiong sought and focused on the metaphysical dimensions of Confucian philosophy, while Liang devoted himself to the practical or pragmatic solutions that the Confucian ideological tradition offered for the construction of modern Chinese society (Rošker 2006, 166).

General philosophical contents of the second generation's teacher: Master Xiong Shili

A representative of the first generation of Modern Confucianism, Xiong Shili developed the metaphysical component of Chinese philosophical tradition at several levels of epistemology in the philosophy of Modern Confucianism. He is considered a Modern Chinese philosopher who helped erase the prejudice that Confucianism is merely a ethical system, adding a

metaphysical foundation as well as a more dynamic character to it (Yu 2002, 129).

Xiong Shili held that the philosophy of the future would undoubtedly be based on a synthesis of Indian, European, and Chinese traditions of thought. He advocated for the rediscovery of the strongest pillars of the Confucian thought, i.e. the search for those elements of this mentality that could not only help China out of the crisis of that time, but that also represent a specific and valuable contribution to the further development of world philosophy (Rošker 2006, 214).

Although Xiong Shili received no formal education due to family circumstances, he began studying Buddhism in 1920 and two years later began teaching Buddhist philosophy at Peking University. There he became acquainted with Confucian and Neo-Confucian philosophy, which made a profound impression on him, so much so that he turned away from Buddhism. Nevertheless, we find considerable influence of Buddhist thought in his philosophy, especially in epistemology and ontology. In 1932, he published his first work, the *New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness* (*Xin weishi lun* 新唯識論), which is still considered the most complex and sophisticated philosophical system in the philosophy of Modern Confucianism (Yu 2002, 128).

While Buddhist philosophers sharply attacked him as a subversive, his work was regarded by most modern theorists as "an important seed of an original philosophy that could enable the synthesis of Chinese tradition and modern currents of thought" (Rošker 2006, 216).

Xiong Shili was strongly influenced by the oldest classical Chinese work, the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), which led him to question the Buddhist concept of pure illusion. In Buddhist philosophy, the entire phenomenal world is considered an illusion in which there are only changes that form a

cognitive process within the cognitive subject. However, this cognitive subject is also considered illusory. Xiong disagreed and argued that change exists only as change within human awareness, awareness being a part of consciousness and further consciousness existing within the self. Of course, since the self is an illusion in Buddhist philosophy, it is unclear where consciousness is supposed to exist and where knowledge is supposed to come from. Is everything supposed to float in the void (Bresciani 2001, 17)? Xiong drew this question from the *Book of Changes*, which for him was a foundational classic of Confucianism and according to which all phenomena in the world are real and result from the interplay of the binary category of yin and yang. In his work, he makes it very clear that Buddhist epistemology, in his view, does not stand on solid ground (ibid.).

The main reason for his switch from Buddhism to Confucianism was the realization that Buddhism placed too much emphasis on the negative or passive aspects of human character, which therefore prevented the positive and active aspects of leading human life (Yu 2002, 130). He characterized Buddhism as a doctrine of daily decline (*rishen* 日沈) and a philosophy of the dark sides of the human character (ibid.). The opposite is the position of Confucianism, according to which human character is fundamentally good (with the exception of Xunzi, who considers it fundamentally bad), but it consists of positive and negative aspects. The cultivation of human character according to one of the central Confucian virtues, humaneness (*ren* 仁), is a dynamic process of the development of human morality and ethics that is carried out daily, hence Xiong describe Confucianism as a doctrine of "daily renewal" (*rixing* 日性) (ibid., 131).

In this context, Xiong adopts Mencius's distinction between "small" (*xiaoti* 小體) and "big" (*dati* 大體) body, which refers to the heart-mind

(*xin* 心).[3] Both "bodies" refer to human desire and heart-mind, which are both part of the human character. It is the heart-mind that acts in accordance with fellow human beings, while the human desires and passions (i.e. *xiaoti*) are those that human beings must cultivate. To cultivate is not to deny them, but to transform them in accordance with humaneness. This concept is what Xiong calls bodily recognition or the embodiment (*tiren* 體認). It is this concept that had a great influence on Xu Fuguan's discussion of innate human qualities and aesthetics, so we will discuss it in more detail in the chapter six.

Important fact for Xu and other representatives of the second generation is that Xiong Shili in his work *New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness* criticized and rejected the insurmountable division between absolute and unchanging reality (*faxing* 法性) and the ever-changing world of forms (*faxiang* 法像) in Buddhist philosophy.[4] Xiong therefore rejected this theory of separation and introduced the theory of unity, into which he introduced the binary category of essence (*ti* 體) and function (*yong* 用). Essence refers to the original, objective reality, and function to the world of

[3] Heart-mind refers to a cognitive form of the subject's inner life, combining both rational and sensual elements.

[4] This separation of the spheres, however, is not characteristic only of Buddhist philosophy, but is also found in Western philosophy, especially in Plato's philosophy. The separation between noumenon (substance) and phenomenon is reflected in language (separation into subject and verb), psychology (separation between soul and body, mind and feelings), epistemology (separation between opinion and behavior and between sense impressions and rational analysis), and in metaphysics (separation between perfection and imperfection, the eternal and the changeable) (Yu 2002, 134).

phenomena. These two poles differ from each other only on a descriptive level—essence has no physical form, while function has one; essence is hidden, function is realized; essence is one, functions are many, and the like. In fact, according to Xiong, they are united because their existence is mutually interdependent and therefore they cannot exist without one another. Thus, Xiong grounds his cosmological system in accordance with binary categories and with traditional Chinese holism, which is one of the methods of traditional Chinese complementary dialectics existing in all Confucian ideational currents.

Xiong Shili built a specific ethical system from the complementary relationship of essence and function, based on the classical Confucian political theory of the "inner sage and outer ruler" (*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王), which had already served as an ideal to Sun Zhongshan. In this case, the noble person is the one who is inwardly wise, i.e., in the spiritual sense, and the wise ruler outwardly, i.e., in social and political activities. Xiong accused the Neo-Confucian philosophers of the Song and Ming dynasties of being too concerned with the inward aspect of the noble person and too little with his socio-political and epistemological aspects (ibid., 232). According to Xiong, the overemphasis on morality and the neglection of the theoretical and political aspects, led to the regression and crisis in China (ibid.).

The equation of the relationship between the inner sage and the ruler who governs the people with wisdom points to Xiong's ontocosmological paradigm of the unity of essence and function. The realization of the inner sage and the outer ruler is indeed a perfect moral subject who, through the mastery of his passions, attains the moral maturity and wisdom of the ancient sages and actively participates in the social and political matters of his time.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Xiong remained at Peking University, where he taught until he retired. Then he moved to Shanghai, where he continued to research and write. Unlike his colleagues, the communist oligarchy left him alone and did not force him to write Marxist self-criticism and correct his previous theories. Even after 1949, he received financial support from the communist government to publish his works. However, at the beginning of Cultural Revolution he suffered physical violence despite general support. He died in 1968, crushed, despairing, and angry at the realization that Confucianism had once again been struck by disaster.

The second generation of Modern Confucians adopted and developed their teacher's views on the importance of emphasizing the metaphysical and moral aspect of Chinese philosophy in dialog with Western philosophy.

The basic characteristics of the Second generation

The second generation of Modern Confucians operated from 1949 to the mid-1990s. Xu Fuguan and Mou Zongsan retreated to Taiwan from the Mao Zedong regime and its tight control of intellectuals. Tang Junyi moved to Hong Kong, and Fang Dongmei to India and later to the United States. On the first day of 1958, they formally wrote down guidelines for the re-evaluation of Chinese culture and its traditional concepts with theoretical concepts from Western philosophy in the form of the famous *Manifesto for Re-Evaluating Chinese Culture as World Heritage* (*Wei Zhongguo wenhua jinggao shijie renshi xuanyan*), which is still referred to by Chinese theorists as the *Magna Carta* of Modern Confucianist philosophy. The content and significance of this manifesto will be discussed in detail in the next subchapter. At this point, we will outline or illuminate the general

philosophical orientations of the second generation and the fundamental problems with which they grappled.

Within the framework of the second generation of Modern Confucianism, there were two ideational currents, the moral-metaphysical and the practical-cultural. The first current focused on the ontological and cosmological aspects of Chinese philosophy, and developed a metaphysical view of reality to guide human moral life. Methodologically, its proponents started from moral and ethical experiences, which they then expanded into a metaphysical understanding of reality based on the paradigm of the unity of essence (*ti* 體) and function (*yong* 用) (Cheng 2002, 380).

The second current, on the other hand, stemmed from the study of values in the Chinese tradition, whose main aim was to show how Chinese culture should be explored and developed in order to realize a meaningful human existence and create a more culturally rich world. According to Cheng, Xiong Shili and Mou Zongsan belong to the first current, while Xu Fuguan and before him Liang Shuming belong to the second. Tang Junyi, on the other hand, is a representative of a combination of both currents (ibid.).

As Xiong's successor, Mou Zongsan further developed the moral metaphysics of Confucianism in the post-Kantian system of knowledge and existence, and Xu Fuguan shaped the general wisdom of Chinese cultural tradition into a philosophical understanding of life, morality and aesthetics. Based on a deep interest in Chinese morality, Tang Junyi developed an essentialist and at the same time dialectical and metaphysical view of moral rationality (ibid.).

Basic characteristics that are, according to Cheng Chung-Ying (Cheng 2002, 396–400), common to all generations of Modern Confucianism (and modern Chinese philosophy in general) and are most clearly expressed in

the second generation, Cheng[5] summarizes vividly and systematically in the following four common features.

The first feature is the predominant role of the philosophy of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), from which were derived the ontocosmological unity of essence and function, reality and its processes, and the fundamental character of all being. The philosophy of the *Book of Changes* offers an understanding of change, innovation, renewal, revolution, transformation, the creative activities of human being and nature, and transcendence. This philosophy has consistently been a source of knowledge and understanding of reality from Confucius, through Daoism, Neo-Daoism, Chinese Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism, and Modern Confucianism to the present day (ibid.). Its main function was seen as laying the foundations of Chinese ontology and cosmology from which all philosophical schools derived. The metaphysical view found in the *Book of Changes* had a significant influence on Chinese philosophy in the 20th century in all its elements, especially on Xiong Shili and its theory on the inseparability of essence and function and their connection to the creation of life and reality. Such cosmological insight was combined by Modern Confucians with an understanding of human consciousness and moral virtue, leading to the establishment of moral metaphysics as a unique feature of Modern Confucianism.

The second feature emphasised by Cheng is the focus of Modern Confucians on human beings. If change is the basis of reality, then there is

[5] Cheng Chung-Ying is considered a representative of the third generation of Modern Confucianism. Since he is still alive, the question of his categorization is not yet officially valid, since according to traditional Confucian criteria, the categorization of individuals as to which of the Confucian currents they officially belong is decided only posthumously.