

# A Study of The Neo-confucian Mencius View in Chinese Philosophy

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**Abstract:** First, the relevant categories are defined, and the research status is summarized. Then, to the new Confucianism of the Republic of China Mencius view of the formation of the social historical background and political background, do a general exposition. Moreover, the author makes a case analysis of the Mencius view of the three representatives of the newly emerged Confucian school in the Republic of China. Xiong Shili's view of Mencius was formed in the system of "new only knowledge", in which the inner sage and the outer king were promoted simultaneously, which made up Liang's hole in the cultivation of kung fu but failed to specify how to "open up the new". Feng Yulan interprets Mencius' thought mainly in his "Three Histories" and "Six Books" and reveals the other aspect of his philosophical methodology, namely, the return to intuition, by the "negative method". Finally, the author expounds the views of Mencius of other neo-Confucian scholars in the Republic of China (including Zhang Junli, He Lin, Qian Mu, etc.). Through the in-depth study of the concept of Mencius in the Neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China, we can not only master the mental schema of the neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China through its various concepts of Mencius but also see the new orientation and development trend of the concept of Mencius in the Period of the Republic of China through the development of the thinking mode of Mencius in the neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, The new Confucianism, Mencius view.

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## 1. The Introduction

In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Confucianism gradually declined due to the spread of Western learning. As the first stage of modern neo-Confucianism, the neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China advocated "returning to the original and opening up the new", that is, opening up the modern scientific and democratic road with traditional Confucian psychology, which established the continuation ceremony for Confucianism. This paper will take the Mencius view of neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China as the main research object and sort out and elaborate it from the new perspective of ideological history and acceptance of Chinese history and culture.

## 2. The Definition of the Mencius View of neo-Confucianism

Neo-Confucianism after the Republic of China is the modern Chinese Neo-Confucianism in the Period of the Republic of China. He was in the first stage of the "modern neo-Confucianism" group, also known as the "first generation of neo-Confucianism." It is distinguished from the pre-Qin Confucian and distinguish the future with integrated, it refers to the life in the early twentieth century in our country, deeply realized the challenge of Western civilization, and there is a pressing problem of modernity in China, it corresponds to reality that is the way to the main body of Confucianism as the standard, to absorb, integrate, the transformation of western modern social ideological trend and civilization, And strive to find a smooth development route from traditional Chinese social culture to modernity." In other words, modern neo-Confucianism has the characteristics of respecting Confucianism, inheriting traditional Confucianism, inheriting the Chinese national spirit with Confucianism as the orthodoxy, and so on. Li Zehou also holds the same view on

this issue. He advocates inheriting modern Confucianism and carrying forward traditional Chinese ideology and culture represented by Confucius, Mencius, Cheng and King Lu, absorbing and transforming Western ideology and culture, and strives to seek common development of economy, politics and culture for modern Chinese society [1].

Second, the development of the Neo-Confucian View of Mencius

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, China was in the predicament of internal troubles and external aggression, and social chaos also promoted repeated cultural trends of thought. Confucianism, which had been the dominant position of Chinese culture for a long time, was under criticism and censure. The introduction of Western learning also promoted the development and transformation of Confucianism. The May 4th scholars first broke through the supremacy of Confucianism to effectively eliminate the remnants of feudalism, thus spreading the most advanced scientific and cultural construction in the West. After that, it actively returned to the original features of Confucianism and Zhuzi's theory to develop China's indigenous advanced culture without stagnation to create a more suitable development stage for the development of western advanced culture. "May 4th" era of the new culture movement, "should be to promote the vigorous development of Confucian thought a big turnaround", it not only did not break in the theory of Confucius "true essence and true meaning, science", but instead greatly remove the already rigid, bent, and decay of form and matter, the Confucius and Mencius Cheng Zhu's original style and features more prominent. The neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China followed from this.

Feng Youlan regards the concept of "inner sage and Outer king" as the basis of Chinese philosophy, and Chinese thinkers also regard it as the concept of "inner sage and outer king". In The thinking of Confucius, the discussion of benevolence and forgiveness is mainly limited to the inner

sanctity of personality cultivation, while Mencius applies it to the outer king in politics and modern social ethics. 'Compared with Confucius, Mencius' thinking was more suitable for the social trend of the Republic of China. The neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China advocated the restoration of Confucianism under the historical background of the spreading of the west to the east, and Mencius' thinking of internal sage and external king just met their common needs. Therefore, it became their common request to return to the foundation of Chinese traditional Confucianism and to promote the innovation of world scientific civilization and thus formed the thinking program of "return to the foundation and open up new". In fact, not only the neo-Confucianism of the Republic of China but also many scholars of the Republic of China followed this path. Mencius's theory of mind, benevolent politics and humanistic concepts are also the best interface for him to trace back to the traditional culture of Our country or to invoke the Western trend of thought. Therefore, his theory of Mencius is constructed against the historical background of the mutual connection between Eastern and Western traditional thought in China.

(1) General situation of scholars' acceptance of Mencius' thought in the Republic of China

During the period of the Republic of China, Chinese Confucianism gradually declined, and Confucianism prospered. However, Mencius' theory is still a concern, mainly because it is influenced by Western philosophy. Modern Western philosophy, even ancient Western philosophy, focuses on the cultivation of individual subject cultural spirit, "and they happen to have the characteristics of Mencius' thinking itself emphasizing 'heart', i.e., subject consciousness and free cultural spirit, so there is no doubt that there is correspondence and communication. In addition, Mencius's civilian-oriented thinking was consistent with the democratic cultural spirit from the West in a sense, which made scholars of the Republic of China pay more attention to Mencius' thinking. The decline of Mencius' studies can be roughly explored from the following aspects: the publication of the book Mencius, the exposition of Mencius' thoughts in newspapers and magazines, the exposition of Mencius' thoughts in the works on Mencius' studies, and the exposition of Mencius' thoughts in the philosophical works of the academic circle of the Republic of China [2].

(2) The historical origin of the Mencius view of neo-Confucianism in the Republic of China

With the establishment of the republic of China, the new concept of Confucianism Mencius does not happen overnight, despite the pre-Qin Confucianism and neo-Confucianism being the main thought source, but it does not show that the new Confucianism of the republic of China can be directly taken and used and can not show that they are in the process of Chinese modern, first made to the traditional theory of Mencius reinterpretation of the academic community. Before them, some researchers began to realize the value and importance of Mencius' theory to the Chinese nation in the stage of transformation, and their modern researchers, accompanied by the crisis of The Times with internal troubles and external aggression, also reconstructed Mencius' philosophical ideal in modernity: "The bourgeois reformists represented by Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Tan Sitong, on the basis of absorbing the reasonable elements of western political theories, paid special attention to absorbing the reasonable elements from Meng School, and adopted the way of modern literature to develop Meng School's 'micro words

of great justice', to meet the requirements of the reform of the bourgeoisie. However, the bourgeoisie revolutionaries represented by Zhang Binglin and Sun Yat-sen held a more radical view of Mengxue. Of course, there are also differences between Zhang Binglin and Sun Yat-sen: Zhang is a scholar-type revolutionist. He studied Meng School from the perspective of great changes in Chinese history by using the methods of Eastern Chinese script and Confucian classics: Sun Yat-sen, the 'father of the Republic', devoted his life to political activities. He focused on the 'people-oriented' and 'benevolent government' theories of Meng School to serve the bourgeois republic." Since the Republic of China, the concept of Mencius in neo-Confucianism has become more obvious, fluent and in line with the trend of The Times, mainly under the influence of the concept of Mencius in modern Chinese scholars [3].

At the end of the Qing Dynasty, the political environment of the Qing Dynasty became increasingly weak due to the corruption of the feudal system and the growing strength of the people's bourgeoisie, sparking the revolution of The Times. So came the Reform movement of 1898 and the Revolution of 1911. In particular, the Xinhai revolution since 1911 is China's modern national democratic revolution in the true sense. It is with the most powerful political weapon, ending China's increasingly fall of the feudal dynasty. Cleared is rooted in our country for thousands of years of feudal women rule system, forming the People's Republic of China to promote the ideas of the Chinese people's liberation movement. It was a devastating and groundbreaking social change. With the footsteps of the new political movement, great changes have taken place in political economy, education, literature and other fields. The new culture movement launched by Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Lu Xun, Hu Shi, CAI Yuanpei and others, which was "anti-traditional culture, anti-Confucianism and anti-classical Chinese", shook the deep-rooted feudal thoughts to a greater extent. Those intellectuals who had absorbed the advanced Western culture tried to break the seal of Chinese feudal autocratic society and culture, instilled it with the spirit of democratic and scientific society, history and culture, so that the people's thoughts could be baptized and released in an unprecedented way. Thus, came the call of "overthrow Confucius Shop" and the demand of "complete Westernization". On the one hand, it undoubtedly impacts the weak Chinese cultural industry; on the other hand, the positive entry of foreign culture is also inevitable in the phenomenon of square grapefruit round chiao.

This problem, his "the pre-Qin history of students", has concluded that if to accept is not available in the form of organizational structure of the new culture directly from the form, just use alternative forms of suddenly, causing the death of the old society development, it is on the social development of a huge economic losses to people...

Hu Shi did not expect the new culture from the West to replace China's native civilization with domineering images, nor did he expect to follow the path of ancient culture in China. It is expected that Confucianism will return to the standard of work and that there will not be a dominant situation of Confucianism in China after Confucianism returns to its throne. He argued that Confucianism should not be regarded as the only source of spiritual and moral authority in China but should become one of the arguments of a hundred schools of thought in the context of Chinese history. As CAI Yuanpei said in his preface to The General Outline of The History of

Chinese Philosophy, "Neither Confucianism nor Confucianism criticized traditional philosophy in ancient China, but neither Confucianism nor Confucianism. As a Confucian, Xunzi is not the same as Mencius, and the approachable person who praises Mencius is also different from Xunzi. The Han and Song Confucians respected Confucius and hated him. In addition, when his neighbor fought for his sons, he also deliberately mocked Confucius. It is all just anger!" 2. CAI also agreed with Hu Shi's approach: allowing each school to have its own advantages and disadvantages, fairly restoring its real appearance and re-examining each school's theories from an objective and fair perspective [4].

In fact, attention to the theories of the pre-Qin scholars appeared as early as the late Qing Dynasty. According to Hu Shi, from the early Qing dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty, the academic status of the school of Zhuzi had undergone great changes: Scholars study "of the early qing dynasty, the mere classics of an attachment, a reference book", the development to Sun Xingxing, Wang Niansun, Gu Guangqi, yu machine of the king of all the people, already can rival Confucian classics, the ZhangBingLin, sun yiranh, learn more became a major field of study, school "general researchers, promoting zishu emphasize, and often more than Confucianism." 3 Judging from historical facts, although the theory of zizi became popular in the Qing Dynasty, the enthusiasm of these researchers for the study of zizi was more focused on the academic significance of the subset of classics and history, and they did not realize the significance of zizi's theory to the reform of China's social and cultural thoughts. This consciousness of transformation to traditional culture is shaped by special time and environment. However, in the Republic of China, due to the conflicts, collisions and interpenetration of Traditional Chinese and Western cultures, although Confucianism received the attention of many experts and scholars due to its diversity and openness, the rapid development of Confucianism was not as fast as before, and the call of "overthrowing Confucius" even became popular.

In the early 1920s, modern neo-Confucianism emerged as the "third phase" of the development of Chinese Confucianism, which was the opposite of and continued from the "first phase" of pre-Qin Confucianism and the "second phase" of the Song and Ming theories. The pre-Qin Confucianism represented by Confucius and Mencius not only reflected that man could form his moral reason but also established the humanistic concept of the Chinese nation. The Neo-Confucianists of the Song and Ming dynasties denied the Heresy of Buddhism and advocated a return to pre-Qin Confucianism, which had lost its dominant position for hundreds of years. He not only grasped the theme of virtue of traditional Chinese Confucianism but also absorbed the inner mind of the original Buddhist school in China and brought creative influence to the development of traditional Chinese Confucian world theory and mind theory. In addition, the modern new Confucianism, it is about "'May 4th/strong tradition a conservative reaction", "is to had been in China to spread scientific ideological a counteroffensive", "it is to point to in, introduces traditional Chinese Confucianism dealt a blow and significantly after the recession, people in order to restore the traditional Chinese Confucianism, A struggle to consolidate its dominance in modern daily life in China." Compared with pre-Qin Confucianism and The theory of Song and Ming Dynasties, the historical background of

modern neo-Confucianism is more grand and complicated, and the reasons for its formation are clearer and more urgent. Modern new Confucianism and the Song Ming era of China's traditional new Confucianism emphasize "internal saints to open out the king". The difference is that the modern new Confucianism pursuit is "outside the king" of the 20th century; that is, the knowledge of their cultivation of mind no longer serves outside the traditional learning of wang yang-ming. "Internal saints" are not the terms of the category of the autocratic monarchy in China's feudal society. It is the scientific spirit and democratic system imported by the West. His main purpose was to enable traditional Confucian culture to succeed in modern civilization. The basic thinking program of a group of modern neo-Confucians is "return to the original and open up new ideas". "Returning to the original" refers to returning to the essence of China's traditional Confucianism, and "opening up" refers to taking the road of social democracy and scientific and technological development. The foundation of China's traditional Confucianism is also the psychology of Confucianism [5].

In the new Development of Confucianism, written in the 1940s, He Lin predicted the new development trend of socialist culture and education in China according to the trend of The Times: "The entry of Western culture will undoubtedly greatly promote the new development of Confucianism. The entry of Western culture gave Confucianism a historical investigation, a great examination, and a great juncture. Now, it seems that they have both grasped the opportunity of a "magnificent transformation" and planted a "cornered" curse. The victory of the former means that they have grasped the new pulse of the information age: they have mastered both traditional Chinese psychology and modern scientific and democratic society. The latter is the main trouble is that they always get busy starts from "internal saints" to "new outside the king", but "this" and "new" is in each period, each time, each situation of two dimension, how to clear and aptly pointed out that after "return to the" to "open a new" method, and still is a very serious problem.

### 3. The Conclusion

Neo-confucian scholars in the Republic of China interpreted Mencius' theory from their own perspectives and ways: from the perspective of history, politics, realistic humanistic concern, abstract principle of transcendence, or from the perspective of "human feelings". What they have in common is that they grasp the theme of "returning to the original and opening up the new" and mainly expound on the two aspects of Mencius' thought: "the inner sage" and "the outer king". The reason why they pay attention to the interpretation of Mencius' philosophy is that, on the one hand, the part of Western philosophy advocating individual independent will and subjective initiative has something in common with Mencius' theory of mind; on the other hand, it is possible to link Mencius's Chinese population-based theory with Western population-based theory. They also tried to compare Mencius' thought with modern Western traditional philosophy to find the same or a similar development direction, thus becoming the resurrection ceremony of the Chinese nation's thought. However, it must be noted that the ritual of resurrection established by them was not completed in the conventional research field, but they integrated the academic resources of Chongxi and re-established the Confucian system. They also regarded the revival of Confucianism as the basic constitution of the revival of

Chinese civilization and tried to establish an epoch-making traditional civilization philosophy that combined the traditional Chinese civilization thought with modern Western democracy and science.

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