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A Book Review of Jiao Hong and Ming-Qing Confucianism Studies

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Abstract

This is a review article about the book Jiao Hong and Ming-Qing Confucianism Studies, published by Dai Yumin in 2023. This article first outlines the basic content and core viewpoints of the six chapters in this book, which focus on revealing Jiao Hong's philosophical system that combines intuition and knowledge, as well as his role in the transformation of Confucianism in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Then, the article points out the value of this book in breaking the polarized views of Edward T. Ch'ien and Yu Ying-shih on Jiao Hong's philosophy and his role in the transformation of Ming-Qing Confucianism. It suggests that Jiao Hong's philosophy represents an intellectualized form of mind-teaching, and that he was central to the transformation of Ming-Qing Confucianism. However, the section on the textual criticism of Jiao Hong and the Qing Dynasty could be further strengthened. Finally, this article concludes that this is an innovative work in the field of Ming-Qing Confucianism studies.

Keywords

Book review, Jiao Hong, Confucianism.

1. Introduction

Dr. Dai Yumin's book *Jiao Hong and Ming-Qing Confucianism Studies* published by China Social Sciences Press in 2023, focuses on the philosophy of Jiao Hong within the context of Ming-Qing Confucianism. Jiao Hong (1540-1620), a Nanjing-based Confucian scholar in the late Ming Dynasty, became the Zhuangyuan in the imperial examinations in 1589 (the seventeenth year of the Wanli reign). He was the disciple of Geng Dingxiang and the teacher of Xu Guangqi, and was also placed in the "Taizhou School Case" of the "School Cases of Ming Confucianism" by Huang Zongxi. This book is divided into six chapters: the first three chapters explore Jiao Hong's philosophical system, while the last three chapters focus on his role in addressing the transformation of Confucianism in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Jiao Hong's philosophical system encompasses the study of the mind, textual criticism, and his outlook on the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism). In the first chapter, Jiao Hong's concepts of "mind," "intuitive knowledge," and "nature" are described as ineffable ontological existences. Furthermore, he advocates a mind-cultivation practice that takes "absolute belief" as its premise, "intensive contemplation" as its medium, and "intuitive understanding" as its culmination. With "intensive contemplation" as a stage, it becomes possible to transcend the knowledge gained through it and enter the state of "intuitive understanding." On this basis, Jiao Hong's mind-cultivation practice leads to the attainment of the sage's realm, which encompasses both intuition and knowledge. In the second chapter, Dr. Dai examines Jiao Hong's textual criticism, which is fundamental to his emphasis on intensive contemplation and knowledge. Jiao Hong places textual criticism within the context of the sage's realm of Confucianism, viewing it as both a complement to and a methodological guarantee for the intellectualization of the study of the mind. Similarly, his study of the mind establishes an ontological foundation for textual criticism. In the third chapter, Jiao Hong

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advocates the mutual interpretation of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, while opposing the notion of "the integration of the Three Teachings." He argues that the Three Teachings are inherently one and are manifestations of a consistent path. Furthermore, the intellectualized nature of his outlook on the Three Teachings influences his understanding of the sage's realm, breaking through the traditional mode of the sage's realm based purely on intuitive experience.

On the basis of clarifying Jiao Hong's philosophy, Dr. Dai discussed the relationship between Jiao Hong and Ming-Qing Confucianism. The fourth chapter focuses on the relationship between Jiao Hong and the Ming Dynasty Confucianism. While inheriting the traditional position of mind teaching, Jiao Hong also introduced the method of intelligence into it, and created the intellectual model of mind teaching with both intuition and knowledge. This emphasis on knowledge is related to the influence of Jiao Hong by the Ming Dynasty, but unlike the Ming Dynasty, Jiao Hong further integrated the textual criticism into the mind teaching. In terms of the Three Teachings, Jiao Hong not only continued them in the Ming Dynasty, but also introduced the intellectual method into them through the "mutual interpretation". The fifth chapter takes Jiao Hong as the core to review the Qing Dynasty Confucianism. In the Qing Dynasty, Confucians like Yan Yuan, Dai Zhen and others put aside the standpoint of mind teaching and turned to practical teaching, Fang Dongshu, Li Guangdi and others maintained the Song study, and Ruan Yuan reconciled the dispute between the Han and Song dynasties. This shows that the mind teaching is not the Qing Dynasty Confucian attention, Jiao Hong's mind teaching has little influence on the Qing Dynasty. However, Jiao Hong's textual criticism had a great influence on the Qing Dynasty, especially in terms of phonology and the relationship between textual criticism and Confucian teachings. However, Jiao Hong's research is a necessary links to achieve the realm of sage, Dai Zhen did not stick to the bottom line of mind teaching, but the research as a pure intellectual method. In terms of the Three Teachings, Jiao Hong's wisdom was inherited in the Qing Dynasty, and the Buddhist and Taoist schools represented by Peng Shaosheng, Wang Changde and Min Yide did not absorb Jiao Hong's viewpoint. Although the Confucian scholars of the Qing Dynasty adopted Jiao Hong's intellectual approach, they mostly used it to criticize the Confucian scholars of the Song Dynasty and exclude Buddhism and Taoism, rather than continuing Jiao Hong's perspective on the three teachings. This reflects Jiao Hong's limited influence on the Qing dynasty. Chapter 6 summarizes the relationship between Jiao Hong and the transformation of Confucianism in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Dr. Dai turns Confucianism in the Ming and Qing Dynasties to the "single line shift" from the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty into two lines: one is the Ming and Qing dynasties from the mind teaching to the Qi teaching; the other is the Ming and Qing dynasties from the mind teaching to the opposition to it. The shift of Confucianism in the Ming and Qing Dynasties is the result of the convergence of these two turning paths. Jiao Hong's role is to make the two routes converge in the late Ming Dynasty, realizing the shift of gravity between mind teaching and textual criticism.

This book is both a case study of Jiao Hong, a Confucian scholar from Nanjing in the Ming Dynasty, and a macro-study of Confucianism in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Research on the central figure of this work, Jiao Hong, can be traced back to Edward T. Ch'ien's monograph, Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming, published in 1986. This book systematically explores Jiao Hong's philosophy and its transformation of Neo-Confucianism in the late Ming Dynasty. Ch'ien tends to place Jiao Hong at the center of the late Ming intellectual stage, viewing Jiao's mind teaching as the root of the textual criticism that emerged in the Qing Dynasty. In response to Ch'ien's viewpoint, Yu Ying-shih refuted it in a 1988 book review titled "The Intellectual World of Chiao Hung Revisited: A Review Article." Yu argued that the mind teaching and textual criticism were independent within Jiao Hong's philosophical system and that there was no causal relationship between them. Furthermore, Yu saw Jiao Hong as a marginal figure in Ming Dynasty intellectual circles, which was significantly

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different from Ch'ien's perspective. The conflicting views of Ch'ien and Yu constitute a broad framework for studying Jiao Hong's philosophy. Within this framework, there are two focal issues: what Jiao Hong's philosophical system is and what role he played in the transformation of Confucianism from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties. These two questions are precisely what Dr. Dai addresses in his book.

However, Dr. Dai does not agree with the arguments of Ch'ien and Yu. Instead, he proposes a new scheme based on a return to Jiao Hong's philosophical system. Philosophically, Jiao Hong agreed with the stance of the mind teaching starting from Wang Yangming, but his method was not limited to the intuitive understanding of mind teaching. Influenced by textual criticism, he introduced rational elements into his philosophy. In other words, Jiao Hong believed that the realm pursued in philosophy should not solely rely on intuitive understanding but should also be approached through rational methods based on textual criticism. Therefore, the sagely realm advocated by Jiao Hong is one that encompasses both intuition and knowledge. This understanding of Jiao Hong's philosophy represents an innovation compared to the views of Ch'ien and Yu. The second innovation of this work lies in its new interpretation of the transformation of Confucianism from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties. Currently, scholars generally believe that Ming Dynasty Confucianism was dominated by the mind teaching, while Qing Dynasty Confucianism was dominated by practical teaching. The transition from the mind teaching in the Ming Dynasty to practical teaching in the Qing Dynasty was seen as a paradigm shift. Yu saw Jiao Hong's disruptive philosophy as coinciding with the disruption in Confucianism from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties, while Ch'ien believes that Jiao Hong's mind teaching produced textual criticism to bridge this disruption. Based on his exploration of Jiao Hong's philosophy, Dr. Dai believes that Jiao Hong occupied a central position in the transformation of Confucianism from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties. However, unlike Ch'ien and Yu, Dr. Dai argues that Jiao Hong's central position is not the core of a single pathway of transformation from the mind teaching in the Ming Dynasty to practical teaching in the Qing Dynasty. Instead, the single-line shift in Confucianism from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties is decomposed into two threads: the decline of the theory of the mind and the rise of the theory of qi, along with the development of textual criticism in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Jiao Hong was precisely at the core of these two threads of development. This is the second innovation of the book.

This highly innovative work also has areas that need further improvement. Firstly, the exploration of Jiao Hong's textual criticism needs to be strengthened. Jiao Hong was one of the eight famous textual critics in the Ming Dynasty and authored multiple works on textual criticism. Understanding the status and role of textual criticism in Jiao Hong's philosophy is crucial to grasping his philosophical system and his place in the transition of Confucianism from the Ming to the Qing dynasties. Although the author has conducted a relatively comprehensive review of Jiao Hong's textual criticism content, given the richness and breadth of Jiao Hong's textual criticism, the samples selected in this book are relatively small. While these samples can reflect the characteristics of Jiao Hong's textual criticism, expanding and deepening the content of Jiao Hong's textual criticism would enhance the argumentative strength of this work. Secondly, the discussion on textual criticism in the Qing Dynasty in the book can also be further enhanced. Textual criticism is an important aspect of Qing Dynasty scholarship, with numerous textual critics and abundant works. Although textual criticism in the Qing Dynasty is not the main topic of this book, it is an important aspect related to the transition of Confucianism from the Ming to the Qing dynasties. The author has selected phonology and several representative figures to reflect the state of textual criticism in the Qing Dynasty. While the reflected situation is not distorted, the discussion on textual criticism in the Qing Dynasty can be further refined. This would strengthen the credibility of the arguments presented in this work.

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Lastly, this is an academic work that delves into Jiao Hong and Confucianism in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Its academic value lies in taking a path distinct from the experts Edward T. Ch'ien and Yu Ying-shih, addressing the puzzles surrounding Jiao Hong's philosophy, and offering a new mode of understanding for the transformation of Confucianism in the Ming and Qing dynasties, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of both Jiao Hong and Confucianism during this period. Undoubtedly, this is an outstanding work in the field of Confucianism studies of the Ming and Qing dynasties.

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