CHAPTER ONE

THE PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCE OF XIONG

While Mou’s system of thought differs from that of his mentor Xiong Shili (1885–1968) in both form and content, Mou’s basic philosophical orientation was deeply inspired and influenced by Xiong. When Mou read Xiong’s Xin Weishi lun 新唯識論 (New Consciousness-Only Treatise) for the first time in 1932, he admired the writing but did not comprehend very much of it. At the time, he knew a lot about mathematical logic, the process philosophy of Whitehead and the cosmology-cum-moral philosophy contained in the Yi but very little about Foxue, and his understanding of Song-Ming Ruxue was at a superficial and conceptual level.\(^1\) During most of the ensuing years up until his permanent departure from the mainland in 1949, he kept in close contract with Xiong, who was his sole mentor in Chinese thought. Xiong’s Shili yuyao 十力語要 (Selected Letters and Talks of Xiong Shili) and its sequel\(^2\) include altogether seven items of correspondence between them from 1937 to early 1949. Mou’s thought was in a formative stage during this period, and it is amply clear from reading these seven items of correspondence that Mou read Xiong’s writings and put great effort into unravelling, with Xiong’s help, similarities and differences among the streams of Song-Ming Ruxue and between Song-Ming Ruxue and Foxue. Ng Yu-kwan exalts Xiong to being “the first Confucian after Wang Yangming to inherit and promote moral spirituality in general, and moral metaphysics in particular.” According to Ng, Xiong’s metaphysical theory of non-separability of fundamental state/condition and function (tiyong bu er 體用不二), forms the foundation of Xin Rujia thought. Furthermore, he thinks that Mou and the other two of Xiong’s foremost disciples, Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978) and Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903–1982), were “deeply indebted to him [Xiong]

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\(^1\) See pages 4–5 of Mou’s “Xiong Shili xiansheng zhuinian hui jianghua”. Also Mou, Wushi zishu, pp. 44–45.

\(^2\) Xiong Shili, Shili yuyao 十力語要 (Selected Letters and Talks of Xiong Shili), Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1989; and Xiong Shili, Shili yuyao chuxu 十力語要初續 (The First Sequel to Selected Letters and Talks of Xiong Shili), Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1990.
for the cultivation of a sophisticated philosophical orientation and a superior personality. John Makeham highlights the shared conviction among Liu Shuxian, Zheng Jiadong and others that what Mou inherited from Xiong was a spiritual legacy. Makeham also gathers from the writings of these scholars that this spiritual legacy consists in Xiong’s enlightened insights into the moral mind and Xiong’s intense “desire to open up a spiritual direction for the future path of Chinese culture.” On Makeham’s view, Mou and his followers fabricated the spiritual legacy to build lineage and bolster their claim to be legitimate Xin Rujia (the Xin Rujia movement is the subject of Chapter Eight). Mou and his followers did resort to lineage building as a hegemonic device to strengthen their authority, and precisely this suggestion is made in Chapter Seven. Yet, this does not mean that Mou was insincere when he said that he was inspired by Xiong or that he was the person he was because of his having encountered Xiong. This chapter examines Xiong’s philosophical influence on Mou. I begin with a brief introduction to Xiong’s thought and his theory of non-separability of fundamental state/condition and function. Because both Xiong and Mou drew from classical Ruxue and Song-Ming Ruxue and since Mou rarely referred explicitly to Xiong in his philosophical writings, I aim not to ascertain a direct transmission of philosophical thought between mentor and disciple. Rather, I identify five key features or themes that Mou inherited from Xiong and built into his own system of thought. These are eclecticism and syncretism, an unequivocal identification with Rujia, moral idealism, an orientation towards the Lu-Wang Learning of the Mind, and an emphasis on personal verification of a spiritual oneness with the myriad things. I aim to show that Xiong emboldened Mou to engage with Foxue and Kant’s moral philosophy; that Xiong’s unequivocal identification with Rujia, his moral idealism and his faith in Ru ethico-spirituality inspired Mou deeply; and that Xiong’s mentorship was instrumental in orienting Mou’s reading of Ruxue towards the Lu-Wang Learning of the Mind.

5 Ibid., p. 60.
6 Ibid., pp. 58–60.