PART I
During the construction of Chinese modernity, intellectuals have been deeply influenced by traditional thought. On the one hand, this is because intellectuals are the core force of the modernization process; on the other hand, the supposed influence of tradition on modern people is to a large extent brought about by intellectuals’ interpretation and expression of that tradition. One should also note that there is already an awareness of some new problems within modern intellectuals’ interpretation of tradition. Proceeding from this, traditional and modern should be considered not just a dichotomy in which the past influences the present, but rather as connected in a dialectical and continuous process of interpretation and practice. Therefore, modern intellectuals’ understanding and interpretation of tradition itself is a manifestation of the interaction between tradition and modernity.

After the New Culture Movement, Liang Shuming (1893–1988) advocated wholesale acceptance of Western culture. He expected that world culture would turn toward socialism, and he advocated the Confucian attitude toward life as the way of the future. The notions guiding his thought remained fundamentally unchanged through the late 1980s. Liang was one representative of the diverse “progressive” intellectuals of twentieth-century China. He also belonged to the first generation of “new Confucianism” (新儒家), which has represented the spiritual tradition of Confucianism in mainland China since the 1950s. Therefore, Liang’s understanding of Confucian ethics not only represents his individual experience, it also in a sense epitomizes how the Confucian tradition reacted to and shaped Chinese modernity. Philosophers’ conceptual reactions to modernity often foretell events that happen in empirical history, and therefore, concern for those reactions may be more significant than the presentation of empirical phenomena.

In the conclusion of my paper discussing Liang Shuming’s 1975 work, Human Mind and Human Life (人心与人生) I said that “his conviction