Jing, Haifeng 景海峰, and ZHAO Dongming 趙東明, *Hermeneutics and Confucian Thought* 詮釋學與儒家思想
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It is well known that the respected late Professor TANG Yijie 湯一介 (1927–2014) was one of the first intellectuals to raise the idea of “Chinese hermeneutics” and that he did enormous work to foster reflection on Chinese classics and their interpretations. *Hermeneutics and Confucian Thought* 詮釋學與儒家思想, published in Chinese in 2015 and written by Professor JING Haifeng 景海峰 in collaboration with ZHAO Dongming 趙東明, is in continuity with TANG Yijie’s insights. This is not a surprise as Jing, whose Ph.D. dissertation was on the concepts of *tiyong* 體用 in XIONG Shili’s 熊十力 thought, was Tang’s first graduate student. ZHAO Dongming does not directly belong to this intellectual lineage, as he did his Ph.D. with WANG Bin 王賓 on Vico’s historical hermeneutics. However, both authors had an opportunity to collaborate at Shenzhen 深圳 University for several years. This book is the result of a reading group organized by Jing and Zhao on the opus of Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*, translated into Chinese in 1999 by HONG Handing 洪漢鼎 and revised several times since then. *Hermeneutics and Confucian Thought* contains an introduction and three chapters. Jing wrote the introduction and the second and the third chapters, and Zhao wrote the first chapter.

In his introduction, JING Haifeng recalls that at the end of the 1990s a “hermeneutics fever” was occurring in China. Translations of Gadamer and Heidegger, and presentations of Western hermeneutics theories, started to appear. Jing then recalls the impact of TANG Yijie’s article, “Is It Possible to Establish a Chinese Hermeneutical Theory? 能否創建中國的解釋學?” (1998). In the same period, several specialized reviews appeared, for example, *Chinese Hermeneutics* 中國詮釋學 edited by HONG Handing, and *Classics and Interpretations* 經典與解釋 edited by CHEN Shaoming 陳少明 and LIU Xiaofeng 劉

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Jing also mentions the works of several scholars in Taiwan and Hong Kong, such as Liu Xiaogao (劉笑敢) and Li Minghui (李明輝). Jing then makes a first presentation of the history of hermeneutics following Richard Palmer, the American specialist on Gadamer, who was invited by Pan Derong (潘德榮), to lecture in Shanghai 上海 and Hefei 合肥 in 2002. (One important reference for Jing and Zhao is 《詮釋學》, Pan Derong’s 2012 Chinese translation of Palmer’s Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969]). According to Palmer’s perspective, there are five phases in the development of hermeneutics: the origins that are to be found in Augustine and the research of the “correct interpretation” of Greek and biblical texts; the reflection related to the rise of philology and Schleiermacher; the scientific and methodological orientation given by Dilthey; hermeneutics as an activity related to the Dasein in Heidegger; and, finally, hermeneutics understood as the recovery of meaning in rational interpretations of arts, games, symbols, and myths, with Gadamer and Ricoeur. Through all these phases of development, Jing notices that “hermeneutics” experienced two turns: it moved from being a regional science of the interpretation of law, symbols, and classics, to being a general philosophical reflection, and from having an epistemological accent to having a metaphysical reflection. After presenting “Western hermeneutical tradition,” Jing displays how the term “hermeneutics” started to appear in China with the thoughts of Fu Weixun (傅偉勳) and his creative hermeneutics (chuangzao de quanshixue 創造的詮釋學), Cheng Zhongyang (成中英) and his ontological hermeneutics (benti quanshixue 本體詮釋學), Huang Junjie (黃俊傑) who took the Mencius (孟子) as the base of his thought, and, of course, Tang Yijie and his foundation of Chinese hermeneutics (Zhongguo jieshixue 中國詮釋學). When he discusses the possibility of establishing the history of Chinese hermeneutics, and puts it into dialogue with the Western tradition, Jing reaches the conclusion that most of the Chinese traditional hermeneutics theories can be compared to the search for the correct meaning of the Classics, which is the first phase of hermeneutics. For him, it is possible to use Western hermeneutical concepts to read Chinese tradition or, in the opposite way, to use Chinese concepts to contrast with the Western tradition (15). Jing then clarifies the difference between hermeneutics as a reservoir of tools to read and explain texts, and hermeneutics as a philosophical theory, and he places the latter in parallel with the on-going tension in Chinese tradition between Hanxue 漢學 and Songxue 宋學. Jing concludes his introduction by explaining two of his choices: he decides to have a methodological accent in his investigation, and he picks up a comparative framework to foster dialogue between Chinese and Western resources (26).

The first chapter, written by Zhao Dongming, deepens the understanding of the Western tradition as drafted by Jing Haifeng in the Introduction. In the first section, Zhao displays how Schleiermacher’s and Dilthey’s reflections were counter-views of Kant’s investigation on history, especially around the notions of representation and representation of history. In this discussion, Dilthey shaped a concept that has become very important for later thinkers: Erlebnis, translated into Chinese as shengming tiyan 生命體驗. Zhao provides a very clear explanation of this notion as the consciousness of the continuity of life as a subject experiences it (41). In fact, Dilthey’s distinction between code and signification opens the critics to historical rationality: history is not “above” the subject or the result of an integration of different layers of the ego, but a continuity where the subject stands and that needs to be critically analyzed (48).