Chen Huanzhang's *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School*: A Reappraisal

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1. Introduction

Chen Huanzhang (1880–1933), born in Guangdong province, China, was an accomplished Confucian scholar who in 1904 was awarded the highest degree (*Jinshi*) in the imperial state examination system. In 1905 he was funded by the government to study in the United States, where he spent the first two years learning English, entering Columbia University in March 1907. Four years later he completed his doctoral thesis, published that same year by Columbia University Press as *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School* (hereafter *Principles*).

The book came with a foreword by Friedrich Hirth, Columbia University's first professor of Chinese, and a preface by Henry R. Seager, professor of political economy at Columbia, that have been read as "accolades," forming "a positive context for the reader's perception of the book" (Borokh 2020: 530; cf. Wang [2017] 2020: xviii). Reviews

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sounding positive notes also appeared in the *Economic Journal*, by J. M. Keynes, and the *American Economic Review*, by E. A. Ross, with Keynes's review singled out by modern Chinese scholars as a significant badge of merit (Borokh 2020: 531; Yao 2016: 41). More recently, following several translations into Chinese, the first in 2009, the book has been hailed in China for "introducing the West to Confucian economic ideas" (Qi 2018: 235) and for preserving "Chinese traditions" and "enhancing the national self-esteem of the [Chinese] people" (Zou 2016: 554), thereby conforming to the official policy, announced at the highest level in 2016, of alerting the world to China's historical achievements in the development of "economic science" (Borokh 2020: 536–37).

My purpose in this article is to reappraise Chen's *Principles* and its reception by Ross, Keynes, Hirth, and Seager. While it has come to be recognized that Chen was profoundly influenced by his teacher, Kang Youwei (see Pairault 2007; Martynov 2016), I suggest that the extent of Chen's recapitulation of Kang's ideas was far less apparent to his contemporary Western readership, with the notable exceptions of Hirth and Seager. Any claim to originality (of relevance to the award of Chen's doctorate) would lie with the treatment of "economic principles," which, as I argue, was manifestly deficient: the "principles" were mostly of Chen's own fabrication, he betrayed a tenuous grasp of relevant economic doctrine, and he landed himself with the impossible task of supporting key economic aspects of Kang's "Confucianism," involving him in self-contradiction and a tendentious appropriation of source material.[1] As to the contemporary receptions of Chen's work, I contend that the "positive" reviews from Ross and Keynes were directed more at general and incidental features of the book than its stated purpose, while the "accolades" from Hirth and Seager were, respectively, a terse, unelaborated acknowledgment of Chen's "discipleship" of Kang and an unconvincing effort to claim scholarly merit for Chen's work in deference to his participation in Kang's political cause.

The paper proceeds as follows. In section 2, I set out relevant detail from Kang's teachings and writings. In section 3, I document the extent to which Chen's book was derivative of Kang's "Confucianism." In section 4, I appraise various "economic" aspects of Chen's work. In section 5, I reassess the endorsements from Keynes, Ross, Hirth, and Seager. A brief conclusion follows.

1. Pairault (2007) reaches a similar conclusion based on a smaller sampling of Chen's work.

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2. Kang Youwei (1858–1927): The "Modern Sage of China"

Kang Youwei achieved prominence for his radical interpretation of Confucianism and his leading role in the nineteenth-century reform movement, the latter culminating in his advancement to "chief adviser to the 'Son of Heaven' [the Guangxu Emperor]" during the ill-fated "hundred days reform" of June 11–September 16, 1898 (Butcher 1928: 552).[2] He was also a teacher, joining with other reformers in founding a school in Guangzhou (the "grass-roof house among ten-thousand trees") at which he expounded his iconoclastic interpretation of Confucian thought, for which he claimed authority from the teachings of the "New Text" school that had originated in the Western Han dynasty (220 BCE–9 CE).[3]

Kang's characterization of Confucianism included the following. First, he followed New Text teaching in rejecting what was, and remains, the consensual view of Confucius (ca. 551–ca. 479 BCE) as a nostalgic conservative, who sought merely to revive values and practices that he believed to have structured social behavior in earlier times (the Western Zhou dynasty, 1125–770 BCE).[4] An obvious objection, that Confucius is recorded in the *Analects* as representing *himself* as a "revivalist"

2. One of the reforms proposed by Kang was the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, but he knew that this plan would be thwarted by the Empress Dowager Cixi. He therefore advised that Cixi be imprisoned. The Guangxu emperor agreed but was betrayed by Cixi's spies and General Yuan Shikai, who had been instructed to place a military guard around the Summer Palace, where Cixi was in residence. An order was issued for the arrest of Kang Youwei, but he had been tipped off by the emperor and escaped to Japan, aided by the British consul-general in Shanghai. Six reform leaders were executed, including Kang's brother. In an ironic reversal, the Guangxu emperor was himself imprisoned in the Summer Palace, Cixi regained control, and the reform program was abruptly ended. Kang returned to China only in 1913. See Butcher 1928: 559–61. The epithet "Modern Sage of China" in the section head is, according to Butcher (1928: 544), the title "won" by Kang "as the author of a book on Peter the Great and another on the reforms in Japan." The title is rendered "Sage of the Southern Sea" by Gan (2013: 19).

3. According to this school, Confucius had personally written or edited the "Five Classics," these being *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*), *Shangshu* (*Book of History/Documents*), *Shijing* (*Book of Poetry/Odes*), *Liji* (*Book of Rites*), and, considered of particular importance, the *Chunquiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) (Nylan 2001: 17). A sixth "Classic," the nonextant *Yueji* (*Book of Music*), is sometimes added to the list (as by Kang). From the early twentieth century onward, a consensus has built that Confucius did not edit or write anything at all (see, e.g., Fung [1931] 1952: 46; Creel 1949: 106; Needham 1956: 4–5; Nylan 2001: 18). On the New Text school and the adoption of its teachings by Kang, see Fung (1934) 1953: chap. 2, chap. 16 (pp. 673–92).

4. Kang's characterization is from his *Confucius as a Reformer* (1897) and *Forged Classics of the Xin Period* (1891) as summarized by Thompson ([1958] 1975: 17, 17n9). Cf. Hummel 1931: xi.

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("I transmit but do not create. Being fond of the truth, I am an admirer of antiquity" [*Analects* 7.1]), is dismissed with the claim that the passage was either "wholly an interpolation" or an "alternation" to the original text (quoted in Hsiao 1975: 83).[5] Confucius was a forward-looking reformer with new ideas of his own, thus providing sanction for Kang's reform proposals, represented as according with "Confucian" values of timeless relevance (cf. Fung [1934] 1953: 647).

Second, Kang revived the New Text perception of Confucius as an "Uncrowned King," a "being of divine intelligence, who would be a sage-king, a teacher of his age, a bulwark for all men, and a religious leader for the whole world" (from Kang's *Confucius as a Reformer* [1897], quoted in Fung [1934] 1953: 675; cf. Gan 2013: 18). On this basis, he memorialized in 1898 that "Confucianism be established as *guojiao* ("state religion"), Confucius be recognised as *jiaozhu* ("founder of religion"), the year 551 BCE in which Confucius was born to be taken as Year One of China's national history, and a *Kong jiaohui* ("Confucian Association") be organised on an empire-wide basis" (Hsiao 1975: 44–45; cf. Gan 2013: 22), so that people would "respect and believe" Confucian doctrine (as interpreted by Kang) and find "religious sanction for a new concept of progress that would make possible the necessary reforms" (Hummel 1931: xiii).

Third, Kang highlighted (his version of)[6] the "Confucian" doctrine of "Three Ages," with its origin located in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Hsiao 1975: 77; Hummel 1931: xiii):[7]

5. "The *Analects* [*Selected Sayings*] . . . were written by [Confucius's] disciples and by their own followers. . . . This process took place over a long period of generations, possibly centuries, exactly how long is a matter of dispute" (Allan 2000: xii).

6. Kang's most radical departure from the received textual record was in representing the "Three Ages" as a unilinear progression rather than a cyclical process, with the Age of Universal Peace as the *final* historical destination. But that raised a conundrum: if the record had been compiled by Confucius himself, as the New Text school and Kang maintained, why the deception of *inverting* the historical process? As explained by Teng and Fairbank (1979: 148–49), "[Kang] used his scholarship to show that Confucius had actually created the theory of a golden age in the past so as to persuade contemporary rulers to make reforms as the ancient sages had done. Thus, it followed that if Confucius favoured change, all Confucianists, patterning themselves after him, should by no means object to it." In other words, the deception was a rhetorical trick on Confucius's part. Cf. Hummel 1931: xiv; Creel 1949: 101–2.

7. Cf. Kang's statement in the later *Datongshu*: "The sage-king Confucius, who was of god-like perception . . . set up the law of the Three Governments and the Three Ages: following [the Age of] Disorder, [the world] will change to [the Ages, first] of Increasing Peace-and-Equality, [and finally], of Complete Peace-and-Equality" (quoted in Thompson [1958] 1975: 72).

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> Born . . . in the Age of Disorder, [Confucius] proceeded . . . to establish the pattern of the Three Ages, progressing with increasing refinement [from the Age of Disorder through the Age of Approaching Peace] until they arrive at [the Age of] Universal Peace. He established the institutions of these Three Ages, basing himself (initially) on those of his native state [Lu], but stressing the idea of one great unity that would (ultimately) bind together all parts of the great earth, far and near, large and small. (From Kang's *Confucius as a Reformer* [1897], quoted in Fung [1934] 1953: 675, also in Hsiao 1975: 107–8)

Confucius's own teachings and reform proposals were framed for the Age of Disorder, but he had also recorded *some* aspects of the Age of Universal Peace in the *Book of Rites*.[8]

The following passage, from the "The Conveyance of Rites" chapter in the *Book of Rites*, was regarded by Kang as singularly important:[9]

> When the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky; they chose men of talents, virtue, and ability; their words were sincere, and what they cultivated was harmony. Thus men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A complete provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. Males had their proper work, and females had their homes. (They accumulated) articles (of value), disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. (They laboured) with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it (only) with a view to their own advantage. In this way (selfish) scheming was repressed and

8. Also translated as the "Great Harmony," the "Great Commonwealth," the "Grand Course," the "Great Unity," the "Grand Union," and, by Chen, the "Great Similarity or Extreme Peace."

9. The importance of the passage in shaping Kang's understanding of Confucius was explained retrospectively in his *Commentary on the Evolution of Rites* (1913): "When I came to read [the "Conveyance of Rites" chapter] I was greatly moved and exclaimed: 'Herein are to be found the successive changes of the Three Ages of Confucius, and the real truth of his Great Way.' . . . This text represents the esoteric words and true teaching of Confucius. It is a precious record without superior in any country, and a divine recipe for resurrecting all sentient beings throughout the world" (quoted in Fung [1934] 1953: 679; also in Hsiao 1975: 47).

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> found no development. . . . This was (the period of) what we call the Grand Union. (Legge 1885: sec. 1.2, 1:214)[10]

It was the various ideas in this passage—universal love, social provision of care, employment and education, disdain of selfish materialism, and an overriding concern for the collective good—that reappear in Kang's discussion of the Age of Universal Peace in his most celebrated work, *Datongshu* (*Book of the Great Unity*, hereafter *DTS* [Thompson (1958) 1975]),[11] where Kang emphasized his belief that the final age is a global phenomenon, not something that can be limited to one country alone.

But how to reach the "universal" end-state of human progress? Here we encounter a fourth characteristic of Kang's Confucianism, and one that placed him directly at odds with revolutionaries and republicans (Hsiao 1975: 220), the overriding importance accorded to *gradual* reform, with the introduction only of such policies as were deemed suitable to a particular time:

> The (spirit of the) regulations of Confucius is that they must be employed according to the proper period. If, in the Age of dark Disorder, before the influences of civilisation had spread themselves, one were to practice the institutions of Universal Peace, this would certainly result in great harm. But if, in the Age of Approaching Peace, one were to continue to cling to (the institutions of the Age of) Disorder, this too would result in great harm. (From Kang's *Commentary on the "Doctrine of the Mean"* [1900], quoted in Fung [1934] 1953: 683; cf. Hsiao 1975: 86)

According to Kang, China's pressing need was for institutions appropriate to "the Age of Approaching Peace" *and* for direction to "the track

10. The passage locates the "Grand Harmony," or "Great Similarity," *in the past*, whereas Kang presents it as Confucius's ideal *future* state. For one critic, this should have been enough to disqualify Kang's reading: "Particularly questionable is [the] interpretation that the stage of 'Small Tranquillity' precedes that of 'Great Similarity,' since the reverse order is unequivocally indicated in the original text" (Hsiao 1932: 117). But this criticism is nullified if one takes Kang's line that the backward displacement of the "ideal" was a rhetorical trick (see above, n. 6).

11. This work was drafted in 1884–85 and completed in 1902, when Kang was in India (Thompson [1958] 1975: 13–26; Hsiao 1975: 515). According to Thompson, Kang did not teach this material at his school, but it was certainly known to Chen from his possession of the manuscript (see below, near the beginning of sec. 3). Quotations are from the translation of *DTS* in Thompson (1958) 1975.

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leading from Approaching Peace to Universal Peace." Here, however, Confucius's teachings were wanting, "because he was not born at the proper time." But, although Confucius lacked *perfect* foresight, he knew "that 3000 years after him another sage would arise" who would "proclaim the teachings for the Great Unity" and set out the program for attaining that state (from Kang's *Commentary on the "Doctrine of the Mean"* [1900], quoted in Fung [1934] 1953: 684–85). It was Kang who elected himself to perform that sagely role.[12]

Turning to specific areas, Kang revealed in *DTS* that the goal was to replace competitive capitalism with central planning and state ownership of all means of production, thereby eliminating competition, condemned as the "the greatest evil to the public existing in this world" (*DTS*: 258), and its capitalist manifestations of class conflict, widening inequality, periodic crises of under- and overproduction, and the creation of "spurious" goods "which works great harm to everyone" (*DTS*: 217). But that was for the future. For the present, China's urgent need was for industrialization, both to secure the material conditions for national defense and to achieve general prosperity; and those objectives could be met only by disseminating the most advanced knowledge of science and technology and by encouraging the very system Kang had decried: competitive private enterprise.

Kang's thoughts on industrialization were set out in an 1895 memorial and, at length, in his *Essay on National Salvation through Material Upbuilding* (hereafter *Essay*), published in 1905.[13] As he argued in the *Essay*, "The foundation of Europe's and America's strength" lay not in "philosophy and revolutionary freedom" but in the development and application of material sciences, driven by the profit-seeking, competitive activities of private enterprise (quoted in Jiang and Zhang 2006: 63). Given the inescapable reality that China must compete with other countries, it was imperative to "foster the spirit of competition for excellence." But there was no point in looking to government to control the industrialization effort: history had shown that its efforts to promote economic development were inadequate, and it was telling that the world's most successful enterprises were under private ownership.[14] One thing that

12. Cf. Hsiao 1975: 25: Kang "derived his moral courage from . . . the belief that he was a man of destiny, to whom Heaven had entrusted a historic mission."

13. The 1895 memorial is discussed in Hsiao 1975: 302–4, 308.

14. He singled out "the Krupp factory in Germany, and the Armstrong factory in England" (*Essay*, quoted in Jiang and Zhang 2006: 72).

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government should do was shift the focus of education away from classical studies toward "practical knowledge" such as business studies and, above all, the study of material science and technology.[15]

It was Western science that China needed, not "theories of freedom, revolution [and] democracy" (condemned as "poisonous medicines for China" [quoted in Jiang and Zhang 2006: 71]), and, to that end, the responsibility of government lay in financing Chinese students to study abroad and in attracting foreigners to teach in China. Otherwise, government could *facilitate* the development of private enterprise while mostly relinquishing its role as owner and manager.[16] The centrally planned economy of the Age of Universal Peace had become a very distant prospect.

Similarly in the political domain, there would be *gradual* reform from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy and then, by incremental steps, to a direct, participatory democracy with a universal franchise, when "laws and regulations . . . will all [be determined] through universal public discussion . . . [and all] matters will be decided by public vote" (*DTS*: 235). But, for the ideal system of direct democracy, human knowledge must be "profound," enabling individuals to make informed, rational decisions, unswayed by the party and personal and religious allegiances that would come to be seen as characteristics of more primitive times. However, with China not having passed through the stage of Approaching Peace, the realization (and suitability) of direct democracy, along with the centrally planned economy, would "take an age," as Kang noted laconically (*DTS*: 84).

The same applies to the realization of other aspects of Universal Peace, including the abolition of, among other things, state boundaries, gender boundaries, class divisions, the marriage institution, private property, private families, organzied religion, discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, and "boundaries between races."[17] By the time these

15. In an 1898 memorial, Kang had criticized the state curriculum for not focusing on his preferred "Confucian" texts (the "Six Classics"), for not requiring any knowledge of practical affairs, and for compelling students to master the empty formalism of the "eight-legged essay" that was required of them (Hsiao 1975: 268, 270).

16. One notable proposal was that government should provide finance for joint-stock companies. See Hsiao 1975: 304, 312–13.

17. Kang's suggestions for abolishing race boundaries are shockingly different from his other proposals. In the case of gender boundaries, for example, the solution lies in transforming attitudes and practices. For race boundaries, the solution consists in "amalgamation" and "smelting," leaving only the "yellow" and "white" races (*DTS*: 140–41). This would be achieved, ideally (for Kang), through intermarriage with the "higher" yellow and white races

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reforms were completed, however, "the principle of equality will be very obvious" (*DTS*: 99).

It is "the principle of equality" that emerges as the core value in the Age of Universal Peace. According to Kang, it is a value coined by Confucius himself:

> Confucius originated the idea of equality. . . . Hereby caste was completely swept out from Chinese institutions. Everyone became a commoner; anyone could [rise] from common status to be ennobled, to be a minister of state, to be a teacher or scholar; anyone could aspire to official advancement. . . . Verily this was a remarkable accomplishment of Confucius, and he did it two thousand years before [it was done] in Europe. (*DTS*: 135)

A "remarkable accomplishment" perhaps, but not one that had been built upon: "The ideal of equality has not yet been fully realised, and ignorance and weakness follow thereupon" (*DTS*: 135). Hence the necessity of reforms that would guide society *toward* the equalitarian ideal.

But how long would *that* process take? To call it an "age" would be a considerable understatement:

> That mankind should be equal . . . is of course a universal principle. But the inequality of creatures is a fact. Whenever we speak of equality, it is necessary that creatures have the capacity to be equal in abilities, knowledge, appearance, and bodily characteristics before equality can be effected. (*DTS*: 143)

Perfect equality can be realized only with the homogenization of humanity. If so (for Kang), what approximation to "equality" might be possible *before* homogenization?

The question is germane to the Age of Universal Peace itself. Just as Kang identified an Age of Disorder that endured for thousands of years, he also seems to have envisaged an Age of Universal Peace that would itself exhibit suboptimal characteristics over a protracted period. This is especially true in the economic sphere.

(treated as being on a par), except that potential partners from those races are unlikely to mate voluntarily with "extremely stupid and ugly" members of the other races (*DTS*: 148). Kang's solution was to move Brown and Black people as far away from the equator as possible, where lack of warmth, coupled with "improving their food and clothing," would dissipate their racial characteristics over successive generations.

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Citizens would inhabit public housing of a uniform type. But, salaries (and levels of consumption) would not be equal, for although everyone "will have the opportunity to get to the top" in principle, the position they arrive at will be determined by their "worth," itself determined (in part) by their "talent" (*DTS*: 219). Given "the inequality of creatures," however, "talent" is not equally distributed, resulting in the division of workers, and salaries, "into ten grades" (*DTS*: 219),[18] with officials "holding superior positions with higher salaries," even though they will "live just like everyone else" (*DTS*: 220). Moreover, it transpires that competition *for monetary reward* will be introduced to encourage "new books, inventions, theories and techniques," with rewards "given out much more liberally, on a scale divided into hundreds of grades" (*DTS*: 244), although Kang later adds that "wages—although there will be slight disparities—cannot be very disparate" (*DTS*: 242). The evident contradiction in his position—from sanctioning economic *inequality* in an Age of Universal Peace that aspired to eradicate *all* inequality—may have been recognized, even by him.

Whatever its shortcomings, of which critics discerned an abundance,[19] Kang had developed a remarkable body of thought that set out not only China's, and the world's, ultimate destination but also the sequence of reforms that would facilitate its arrival. For a country that had been traumatized and shamed throughout the nineteenth century by foreign intervention—with the Anglo-Chinese Opium War of 1839–42, the imposition of crushing indemnity payments, the appropriation of territory, the forcible opening of the country to foreign trade, and the occupation of Beijing and the disastrous Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, not to exhaust

18. The identification of ten grades may have been inspired by *Mencius* 5.B.2.

19. Including "forced arguments and subjective reasoning," "reading into the mind of Confucius his [Kang's] own Utopian ideals," quoting "as the [exact words] of the Master, ideas which appear in books known to have been compiled centuries after Confucius's time" (Hummel 1931: xii–xv), advancing "fantastic and extreme ideas" (Fung [1934] 1953: 675), using "Confucian" texts as "the playthings of politics and policy, to the detriment of truth" (Creel 1949: 102), and selecting doctrines "that he [Kang] regarded as true (incidentally, those that served his purposes) and ignor[ing] those that failed to meet his approval or requirements" (Hsiao 1975: 73). Perhaps the most stinging rebuke came in 1921 from Liang Qichao (1873–1929), formerly Kang's most celebrated and devoted follower: "To satisfy his desire to be catholic and original [in his scholarship], he did not hesitate to suppress or distort evidence. . . . As a man Kang was totally subjective in myriads of things. His self-confidence was extremely strong; he held [his views] very tenaciously. As for objective facts which did not suit his purposes, he either ignored them completely or insisted on remoulding them to conform to his own view" (quoted in Hsiao 1975: 20). There was also dissent from Kang's racial views, which led one of his self-declared admirers (L. G. Thompson, his English translator) explicitly to distance himself from Kang's position, albeit in a footnote (Thompson [1958] 1975: 57n30).

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the list[20]—Kang had sought to revive national pride and provide a *mostly* Chinese alternative to wholescale "Westernization."[21] China's "principles, institutions and culture" were, he declared, "the most elevated in the world"; among "all countries on earth none is her equal"; the "Chinese civilisation, which is thousands of years old, is actually the foremost on earth"; furthermore, there "is no better science of government than [what is found in] our Six Classics" (Kang 1895, in Teng and Fairbank 1979: 152–53; also quoted in Hsiao 1975: 534). But, if all this were true, why should China have suffered its recent ignominy? Kang's answer was unequivocal: "The cause of China's weakness lies in [doing things] contrary to the principles contained in the Classics" (quoted in Hsiao 1975: 534). Or, to rephrase, contrary to the principles contained in the classics *as interpreted by Kang Youwei*. It was those ideas that had been absorbed and embraced by Chen Huanzhang when he came to write his book.[22]

3. *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School*: The Imprint of Kang Youwei

In the preface to the *Principles*, Chen acknowledged his "greatest indebtedness" to Kang Youwei, from whom he had "obtained a general view of

20. Mention might also be made of the contemptuous treatment of the Chinese, and their culture, in the leading British journals of the early nineteenth century, as with the description of the people as "a mean and semi-barbarous race," distinguished by their "cowardice, uncleanliness, and inhumanity" ("Barrow's *Travels*" 1805: 262), a nation "excessively conceited" in "their opinions respecting their own excellence" ("Weston's Conquest" 1810: 367), a people who were "automatons" ("Chinese Drama" 1817: 397) and "blind slaves of antiquity" ("National Character" 1832: 327), whose philosophy was nothing more than "puerile learning" ("Chinese Drama" 1817: 397), with their "Classics" containing only "trivial remarks, and repetitions, and truisms" ("Chinese Classics" 1834: 97).

21. Identifying the non-Chinese influences on Kang's thought is a moot issue. From around 1880 he became an avid student of "Western learning," but his lack of knowledge of foreign languages severely limited the range and quality of his source material (in Chinese translation) and, especially, his access to primary material. Nevertheless, it seems evident that he became acquainted with, inter alia, "Western" ideas of socialism, communism, political and economic systems, and, as reported by Thompson ([1958] 1975: 50–51), Darwin's theory of evolution. But, from Kang's perspective, recognition that ideas had been *articulated* in the West did not establish their unique place of *origin*. Indeed, it was part of his mission to show that ideas superficially branded as "Western" could be found in Confucian texts and that in some cases these Chinese variants were superior to, and may have predated, their Western counterparts.

22. Chen revealed that he had become "interested in the writings of Kang Youwei" before his attendance at Kang's school in 1898 ("Vita," in *Principles*: 757). It is reported that Chen had come to be regarded by Kang as one of his two most faithful "academic heirs" (the other being Liang Qichao) before he left China (Wang 1997: 21).

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Confucianism" (*Principles*: xii).[23] Subsequently, he reveals that he had obtained from Kang a "duplicate of the manuscript" of *DTS* (*Principles*: 71n). What he does not reveal is the extent to which his work was derivative of Kang's. Invariably, and without explicit acknowledgment, Chen followed the detail of Kang's interpretation of Confucianism, including the argument in the *DTS*, almost to the letter: something that would have been lost on readers who lacked the facility to read Kang's untranslated publications and, in the case of the *DTS*, lost on nearly everyone, because the book was only published, in a heavily redacted Chinese version, two years after Chen's work, with publication of the entire manuscript, also in Chinese, delayed until 1935, some twenty-three years before the appearance of an English-language edition.[24]

Chen's recapitulation of Kang's ideas included the following: the depiction of Confucius as a divine sage-king, who was both the founder of a great religion and a forward-looking reformer;[25] contrary to the report in the *Analects*, Confucius was more than a mere "transmitter" of ancient wisdom,[26] and the seemingly "historical" account of decline from a golden age under the aegis of divine sage-kings to a troubled present was actually a backward projection of *future* ideals and an imaginative "creation of the ancients out of his own mind" (*Principles*:

23. Explicit references to Kang in Chen's 756-page tome are sparse. Following a statement that "Confucius was the founder of his new religion, although incidentally transmitting some elements from the ancients," the reader is invited to *compare* the interpretation with Kang's, rather than being informed that the interpretation *is* Kang's (*Principles*: 30, 30n3). In addition, Chen acknowledges that he is following Kang's selection of "authentic" Confucian literature (*Principles*: 36n1); he praises Kang as "the greatest exponent of Confucius" (*Principles*: 46); he alludes to Kang's "good explanation" in *DTS* of the "Confucian" view of male-female relationships (*Principles*: 70–71); he refers to "details," also in *DTS*, of "how the world is to be united" (*Principles*: 145n1); and he mentions Kang's belief that vegetarianism will be the norm in "the Extreme Peace Stage of Confucius" (*Principles*: 194). But these acknowledgments are as nothing compared with the *unacknowledged* instances of "borrowing" that pervade Chen's work.

24. This being Thompson (1958) 1975. For publication details, see Thompson (1958) 1975: 26–27, 31, 281–82.

25. In conformity with Kang's memorial (see above, sec. 2), Chen adopts a "Confucian" dating convention, and, because the "Confucian" writings (the "five classics") were "divinely inspired," he denominates them as the "Holy Bible" (*Principles*: 23, 23n1).

26. See above, sec. 2. On this matter, Chen offers his own insight as to why Confucius was reported as describing himself as "'a transmitter and not an originator": "These words simply express the characteristic modesty of the Chinese, a quality which Confucius shows in extreme form" (*Principles*: 30).

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28, 30);[27] the elevation of "the principle of the Three Stages," as described in the *Book of Rites*, as "the most important statement of all Confucius' teachings" in its affirmation that the "stage of Great Similarity or Extreme Peace is the final aim [or 'future goal'] of Confucius [and] the golden age of Confucianism" (*Principles*: 19); and the identification of the characteristics of the future "golden age" with equality, abolition of national states, marriage, families, private property, classes, and "artificial rites," and with a democratic world government in which "men of talents, virtue, and ability are chosen by the people, so that the people themselves are the sovereign" (*Principles*: 20).

Chen is at one with Kang in taking the stage of Great Similarity as the goal of human development, but how to get there? Here, again, he dutifully follows his mentor's teaching: reform and progress must be gradual. "Confucian socialism," as he describes the Great Similarity, depends "not upon any revolutionary force, but upon the development of the natural course of things" over an unspecified period (*Principles*: 175). As for political arrangements, "China is going to change her absolute to a constitutional government. As soon as she shall have a constitutional government, she will have a party government. And as soon as she has a party government, she will have party elections" (*Principles*: 93). China would have progressed to a transitional stage on the road to Great Similarity, even though that destination remained far distant, not least because its full realization was contingent upon the development of human nature "to perfection," as with Kang (*Principles*: 175).[28]

On economic reform, Kang is, again, the source of Chen's agenda. On the one hand, "Confucian doctrine is just the opposite" of "the theory of

27. Although "historical" allusions are not to be taken at face value in some contexts, in others, which favor the Kang-Chen interpretation, their historical validity is beyond question: "Confucius is in favour of the inductive method [and] his statements are generally based on historical facts," as with the "Great Appendix" to the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*), which shows that technical invention is the basis of civilization, thus lending "Confucian" support to the economic reform program in Kang's *Essay* (*Principles*: 119, 127–28). The inventions mentioned in *Yijing* (including nets, plows, canoes, and carts) are all attributed to culture heroes and sage-kings, *not* to the "world of competition" among the people that Kang sought to promote.

28. Chen did not inflict on readers Kang's proposals for "homogenising" humanity as a condition for "perfection," but that does not mean he had resiled from his teacher's position. In his "Preface to the Confucian Society," written after his return to China, he included the following in his reform program: "Change the races and colors. Improve the races to create worldwide humanity. The *Analects* calls this 'education knows no boundaries.' When the colors all change, this can truly be called assimilation" (quoted in Gan 2013: 32–33).

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laissez-faire," and "government interference" will be the norm under the "state socialism" of the "Great Similarity" (*Principles*: 168, 174). On the other hand, "we find also that [Confucianism] is in favour of the *laissez-faire* policy" (*Principles*: 175). Indeed, Chen is "sure" that Confucius placed economic progress and "betterment" as the "first item" in his reform program (*Principles*: 96), that he took "technical invention as the basis of economic betterment" (*Principles*: 128),[29] that hostility directed to artisans and merchants was not sanctioned by "true" Confucianism (*Principles*: 412, 459n1, 485, 720), and that Confucius "allows the lower classes to make profit and thinks they ought to do it" (*Principles*: 96). In sum, "what is fitted to the time or condition is the best" (*Principles*: 175), whether that happens to be state socialism or laissez-faire, both with their "Confucian" pedigree.

Chen's position is consonant with the unstated objective of his book, to promote Kang Youwei's "Confucianism" and the political and economic reform program that came with it.[30] His adhesion to Kang's teaching is placed beyond doubt in the book's concluding chapter.

The chapter amounted to a veritable manifesto for Kang's reform program. First, Chen sought to account for China's economic backwardness. Following Kang almost verbatim,[31] any suspicion that the country's retarded development owed anything to "Confucianism" was given short shrift: China "is weak not because she followed the teachings of Confucius, but precisely because she did not truly follow his teachings" (*Principles*: 720).[32] In particular, China had prematurely adopted socialist policies rather than passing through the necessary stage of laissez-faire capitalism; it had cultivated an esoteric and largely useless system of education to the neglect of practical subjects and scientific instruction; it had fostered the perception of a hierarchical class system that deterred the brightest and most intelligent from seeking "improvements" and "inventions" of practical relevance; and it had failed to embark on the emancipation of women, excluding them from "the industrial world" (*Principles*:

29. See above, n. 27.

30. Their political positions were later to diverge, after the 1911 Revolution. See below, sec. 6.

31. See above, end of sec. 2.

32. This position was repeated after Chen's return to China: in a 1912 essay titled "On the Necessity to Advocate Confucian Religion in China Today," Chen wrote, "The reason China is in a decline obviously lies in the deviation from Confucianism" (quoted in Gan 2013: 29).

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721). In short, China had failed to follow the "true" teachings of *Kang's* "Confucianism," but not explicitly identified as such by Chen.[33]

Looking to the future, "China must accept all the good things from the outside world and retain the good things of her own" (*Principles*: 727). But what *were* those "good things from the outside world," given that China had "the best religion," "the highest standard of morality," "the best literature of all kinds," ancient civilizations that bested those of Greece and Rome, and a system of government that was "the best type" before "the modern [democratic] type of government emerged"?[34] Understandably, perhaps, it seems that Chen could not immediately recall *any* "good things," although he had earlier mentioned the one area identified by Kang in which China could, and should, learn from "outsiders": "scientific instruction" in "mining, engineering, chemistry, or commerce," essential to modern industrialization (*Principles*: 720). That aside, it was the "whole school of Confucius"—the *true* teachings and principles of that school, as derived from Kang and expounded by Chen—that provided the lessons for China's "modernisation" (*Principles*: 729–30).

Chen's devotion to Kang's visionary prospectus is reaffirmed in the book's concluding paragraph:

> The future of China is bright. With an uninterrupted history extending over five thousand years, with an intelligent, diligent, prudent, and vigorous people of four hundred million, with an extensive but connected territory of four and a quarter million square miles, with abundant natural resources, under one centralized government, one uniform language, one highly developed religion, one national idea, China will, without doubt, become a strong nation. . . . But China will not injure anyone not Chinese as the western nations take advantage of other people. After China shall be strong, the Great Similarity of Confucius will come, and the world-state will appear. Then the brotherhood of nations will be established, and there will be no war, but perpetual peace. (*Principles*: 730)

A bold prospectus, indeed, and one derived entirely from Kang Youwei.

Whatever originality might be claimed for Chen's work, it was not in propounding the ideas reviewed above, although the generality of his

33. Chen also identifies a problem with "others"—Daoists and Buddhists—whom he indicts with disregarding "material welfare" and acting as the "parasites of society," thereby retarding economic development (*Principles*: 718, 721).

34. Cf. Kang, above, end of sec. 2.

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contemporary Western readers could have been forgiven for thinking otherwise. In the following section, I consider what was, ostensibly, the main purpose of Chen's book: the elucidation of "Confucian" economic principles.

4. "Confucianism": "A Religion of the Economic World"

"Confucius" may not have been "primarily an economist,"[35] but that had not prevented him from articulating a "theory" that encompassed "the whole field of economics," including "economic principles" that had been articulated in modern times (*Principles*: 37, 249, 49). Taken from this capacious body of "economic" knowledge, Chen presents an analysis of value and price, a "productivity" theory of wages, a case for distributional equality, and an argument in favor of laissez-faire. I consider these attributions in turn.[36]

4.1. Value and Price

The *Analects* is said to contain "a true principle of price . . . in harmony with economic principles":

> Zigong [a Confucian "disciple"] asked, "If there were a beautiful piece of jade right here, would you put it in a box and hide it or try to find someone with a good offer and sell it?" The Master said, "Sell it! Sell it! I am waiting for a person with the right offer." (9.13; trans. Chin 2014)

For Chen, this exchange evinces Confucius's understanding that "price is determined by supply and demand" and that "if he keeps it [the jade] in his own hands and waits until the rise in demand, its price must be high" (*Principles*: 425). More prosaically, the "economic" content amounts

35. Bear in mind that "Confucius" is an entity selectively constructed by Chen from the entire "Holy Bible" (the "five classics"), and from other texts, including those attributed to historical figures who were *not* "strict Confucians" when considered helpful to Chen's interpretative cause. The quotation in the heading is from *Principles*: 127.

36. Other attributions include the "general economic principle" of "dividing the productive factors into three," involving the extension of moral "virtue" to cover the skills of the businessman (*Principles*: 294); a perception of "the law of diminishing returns," based on a conflation with finite supplies and an (unfounded) *inference* (by Chen) dressed up as an "implication" (*Principles*: 347, 392, 717); and the bald assertion that "profit" in "ancient times" included "interest, insurance against risk, and wages of management" (*Principles*: 475). Also see below, n. 66.

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simply to an acknowledgment that a piece of beautiful jade *might* command a high price in the event of a "right offer." The articulation of a "*principle* of price" is Chen's own embellishment.[37]

Chen discovers "a very good principle of price" in *Mencius*:[38]

> That things are unequal is part of their nature. Some are worth twice or five times, ten or a hundred times, even a thousand and ten thousand times, more than others. . . . If a roughly finished shoe sells at the same price as a finely finished one, who would make the latter? (3.A.4; trans. Lau 2003)

According to Chen,

> By the phrase "nature of things," on the one hand, he [Mencius] means the utility which can be derived from them, and it is looked at from the point of view of the consumer; on the other hand, he means the cost which has been put into them, and it is looked at from the point of view of the producer. Therefore, Mencius' statement that price is determined by the nature of things is quite correct and conclusive, because it combines the utility element and the cost element. (*Principles*: 427)

Chen had merely imposed his preferred meaning. Using the same interpretative technique, one might claim that the passage reveals Mencius as a budding Marxist: laborers will make "finely finished" shoes only if prices are proportional to the labor-time expended on their production, with differences in "nature" traced to differences in labor inputs. The two interpretations are equally gratuitous and anachronistic, by imputing an awareness of later ideas of which the putative author (Mencius) shows no awareness whatever.[39]

A further Mencian "principle"—that value depends on utility and scarcity—is extracted from the following:

> The common people cannot live without water and fire, yet one never meets with a refusal when knocking on another's door in the evening to

37. Various interpretations of the actual point of the exchange are given by Chin (2014: 136–37).

38. Here, and below, I follow the convention of using italics to distinguish between a person (in this case, Mencius, 391–308 BCE) and a book attributed to that person (*Mencius*).

39. The context of the quoted passage was not a disquisition on pricing but was rather a critique of a competing philosophy—Mohism would fit the bill—on the grounds of its simplistic equalitarianism.

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> beg for water or fire. This is because these are in such abundance. In governing the Empire, the sage tries to make food as plentiful as water and fire. (7.A.23; trans. Lau 2003)

Chen suggests that Mencius treated water and fire as "free goods" possessing "utility" but without "value [in exchange]" because of their "abundance," whereas food is an "economic" good, having "both utility and value, because [it is] limited in supply." He then translates Mencius's point as being that "the sage wants to make economic goods as abundant as free goods" (*Principles*: 423–24), apparently without realizing that such "sagely" wisdom would involve a needless waste of resources by producing food that no one wants to eat.[40] In showcasing *this* as a worthy "economic principle," Chen performs no favor either to himself or to Mencius.[41]

A potentially more substantial instance of Chen's revelation from "the sacred [Confucian] writings" of "the large number of clear anticipations of the accepted economic teachings of today," as Seager (1911: ix) put it in the foreword to *Principles*, is the attribution to Confucius of "a productivity theory" of wages. This is considered next.

4.2. A "Productivity Theory" of Wages

As reported by Chen, the "Confucian" productivity theory maintained that "the amount of wages of the labourer should be according to the product which he contributes" (*Principles*: 483). With John Bates Clark, the author of a *marginal* productivity theory of distribution, being listed first among the "professors and students of Columbia University" from whom Chen had "received many ideas" (*Principles*: xii),[42] the stage was set for a persuasive and informed discussion of this topic. The actual performance was rather different.

40. Seager (1913: 57–58) made the same point somewhat differently: "Why, it may be asked, are not goods which it is a pleasure to create . . . multiplied until they become like superabundant gifts of nature? . . . As the economic man declines to put forth effort that is not rewarded in valuable products, so he declines to incur sacrifice that is not similarly recompensed. This fact limits the supplies of all goods except those which nature furnishes in superabundance."

41. Of course, Mencius was not seeking applause for his grasp of later "economic" reasoning. Rather, in conjunction with a previous passage (7.A.22), he was arguing that a "sage-king" should follow the precedent allegedly set by King Wen of the Western Zhou in enabling the people to provide adequate sustenance for their families.

42. Chen reports that he "did seminar work" with Clark (*Principles*: 758).

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As Chen endeavored to explain,

> According to *Mencius* [5.B.2] and the "Royal Regulations," [in the *Book of Rites*] the standard of wages is something like this: Each farmer tills his own hundred acres, together with some capital such as manure.[43] Yet the products of the farmers are different from each other. They are classified into five grades. The products of the best farmer can support nine persons, and the products of those ranking next to him can support eight. The products of the average farmer can support seven persons, and the products of those ranking next to him can support six. The products of the poor farmer can support only five persons. These differences in their products are due to the fact that their efficiency is various. Yet they serve as the standard for the wage scale of common laborers. The salaries of the common people who are employed about the government offices are regulated according to these five grades. (*Principles*: 489)

Chen gives an unexceptional version of the account in *Mencius*, which differs from the *Book of Rites* in one critical regard. Remaining with the former, the proposition is that quantitative output differences are due *solely* to differences in the *efficiency* of farmers; and, if that is the case, we must take the quality of land, and of anything else that could affect productivity, as relegated to an implicit ceteris paribus compound.

Whatever the "theory" described by Chen may be, it is not a *marginal* productivity theory of wages, if it is a theory of wages at all. What he calls "wages" is, in Clark's terms, the *total* product of a period of laboring activity that should be broken down into a wage share (given by the *marginal* product of labor in the "final" period, multiplied by the total number of periods worked) and the share of "interest" or "rent" (they come to the same thing, for Clark), equivalent to the productive contribution of "capital" (such as land, manure, and tools). In effect, Chen's farmers combine

43. This is a reference to the "well field" system (*tsing tien* or *jing tian* in pinyin). An area of land is divided into nine equal plots, represented approximately by the Chinese character for *tsing/jing* (井), meaning "well." As Mencius explained, "Of these, the central plot . . . belongs to the state, while the other eight plots . . . are held by eight families who share the duty of caring for the plot owned by the state. Only when they have done this duty dare they turn to their own affairs" (*Mencius* 3.A.3; trans. Lau 2003). The system is lauded by Chen "as the most important element in Chinese economic thought and history," because it was "based entirely on the principle of equality" (*Principles*: 497, 531). Pace Chen, whether the system was ever implemented is uncertain (Hu 1988: 71).

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the functions of laborers *and capitalists*, and their total incomes could never set a standard for "common laborers" of comparable efficiency (even assuming a criterion for identifying comparable efficiency)[44] unless they combined the two functions *and* possessed "capital" of equal total productivity to that of the farmers.

Similarly in the *Book of Rites*, where differences in total outputs from lands of equal extent are attributed to differences in the quality of the lands (3.1.4), using the *total* outputs to set a standard for total incomes (*not* "wages") elsewhere could only begin to make sense if nonagricultural laborers also combined the function of capitalists and possessed "capital" of equal total productivity to that of a particular farmer. It seems that these were considerations of which Chen was oblivious. For whatever reason J. B. Clark had earned Chen's praise, it was not to impart even a basic understanding of a "productivity theory" of wages, if that theory is to be understood in its "modern" sense.[45]

4.3. Equality

"Equality is a great principle of Confucius" (*Principles*: 464), Chen proclaimed, following Kang. Yet, it is remarkable that he produced abundant evidence to cast serious doubt on that attribution.

Contrary to earlier pronouncements, that Confucians "always have the socialistic idea in mind" and that "the best thing" for them "is the equal distribution of wealth, while the worst thing is the division of people into the rich and the poor" (*Principles*: 174), it transpires that in "every age and every place, there must be different standards [of living] among different classes, *and this holds in the teachings of Confucius*" (*Principles*: 260; my italics). The "ruling class," or "superior" men, "*should* enjoy high living, while those who stay in the low position ["the common people," or "the governed" class (*Principles*: 632)] *should* content themselves with

44. Assuming a uniform length of working day for *all* laborers, Clark's logic, of which Chen reveals no awareness, suggests that "equal efficiency" would be identified by marginal products of "equal social sacrifice" (marginal *disutility* of effort for a socially "average" laborer): a characteristic of a static "equilibrium" requiring perfect mobility of labor and competition between "employers."

45. Chen claims that the "productivity theory" applies to *all* labor, including the "mental labor" of the "political officer and the moral teacher," these being productive of *utility* rather than material produce (*Principles*: 484–85, 488). But he offers no guidance on how this utility might be quantified.

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low living (*Principles*: 198; my italics; cf. 461–62).[46] Likewise in passages adduced by Chen in support of his "productivity" attribution, the picture that emerges is one of gross *inequality*. Thus, in terms of a "lives commanded" yardstick,[47] the annual income of "common people" is reported by Chen as being on a scale rising from five lives to six, seven, eight, and, for laborers at the top of the scale, nine lives. Then come the scholars, whose remuneration ranges from the value of nine lives to thirty-six lives. The "great officials" receive a salary double that of the highest-paid scholar, while annual payments to ministers and princes go from 144 to 298, and 1,440 to 2,700 "lives commanded," respectively, depending on the size of the state. Last, but certainly not least, the annual income of an emperor is deemed sufficient to support 28,800 "ordinary" lives (*Principles*: 491–92).

Seemingly aware of the challenge to "Confucian" equalitarianism, Chen provided a much-needed clarification:

> By an equal distribution, *it is not meant that everyone should have the same amount of income*, but that everyone should have the same *opportunity* from which he will be enabled to get the same amount of income. (*Principles*: 460; my italics)

In light of the above, it is little wonder that Chen used *Mencius* rather than the *Book of Rites* to support his "productivity" interpretation (see above, sec. 4.2). If inequalities were attributable to the worker's *own* efficiency rather than monopoly ownership of more efficient capital goods (including land), as in the *Book of Rites*, then it remained possible to defend the "opportunity" version of "equality" providing workers had equal opportunities to enhance their "efficiency." And that is the fallback position defended by Chen, who gives the following translation of *Analects* 16.9:

> Those who are born with the possession of knowledge are the highest class of men. Those who learn, and so readily get possession of knowledge, are the next. Those who are dull and stupid, and yet compass learning, are another class next to these. As to those who are dull and stupid and yet do not learn, they are the lowest of the people. (*Principles*: 493)

46. "If the common people can use everything which is used by the ruling class, they will have no respect for their authority, and fight for usurpation. Then society will become disordered, and depend only upon force" (*Principles*: 198).

47. The "lives" are those of the least skilled "common" laborer.

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Even according to Chen's translation,[48] education ("learning") is not the sole determinant of outcomes, with innate knowledge and ability also recognized as a relevant consideration. Letting that pass, Chen infers the following:

> If the unskilled laborer wants to get the wage of the skilled laborer, he must first educate himself to be a skilled laborer. If he wants to get the salary of the manager, he must first educate himself as a manager. . . . In short, from the Confucian point of view, education is the solution of the wages problem, which is the chief problem in the distribution of wealth. (*Principles*: 495–96)

Yet, for "equal opportunity" to be meaningful, there must be equal opportunity to *acquire* the relevant education and skills. Was that part of the "Confucian" heritage?

Chen assures the reader that "freedom of occupation" was a "theory of the Confucians" and was also "the fact in ancient times" (*Principles*: 369–70). However,

> different crafts are hereditary. . . . Since the division of labor is not complete, the technical training is complex, and the secret of the industry is not written out, the artisans usually getting their special training from their fathers. Hence the craft becomes hereditary. This . . . necessarily comes about through specialization of industry, *family education*, and *the careful transmission of secrets*. (*Principles*: 408–9; my italics)

The "fact in ancient times" was not that people had equal access to vocational education. Nor did artisans have any opportunity to retrain:

> The [government] artisans are mostly confined to a single industry for a lifetime. According to the "Royal Regulations" [in the *Book of Rites*] all the public artisans, who serve the government with their particular arts, are not allowed to practise any other thing, or to change their offices outside of their industry. (*Principles*: 409)

For "independent artisans," they, too, "are controlled by the government; their crafts are hereditary . . . [and] they confine themselves to a single

48. In the translations of Waley ([1938] 2000) and Dawson (1993) it is "the common people" who form the "the lowest of the people [as a whole]." Chen's interpretation requires that "the common people" can improve their position through education.

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industry for life" (*Principles*: 410). Chen had demolished his own interpretation: according to "Confucian" literature (the *Book of Rites*) *and* the transmitted "fact in ancient times," equal access to training (and retraining) was a myth.

The same fate befalls Chen's treatment of "class," which had a similar aim of supporting Kang's "Confucian" equalitarianism, now applied to all social strata: "Confucius permitted *anyone* to raise himself to the higher classes" (*Principles*: 717; my italics).

Chen asserts that there is "no social class" under "the influence of Confucius" (*Principles*: 368; cf. 632), although there are what are termed "groups" or "orders." For the most part, this distinction is forgotten, and classes are identified as the "governing class" and the "governed class" (*Principles*: 632), the "higher class" and the "lower class" (*Principles*: 95–96), the class of "honorable men" and the class of "common people" (*Principles*: 461–62), and, in a fivefold disaggregation, the classes of "emperor, princes, great officials, students, and common people," with "common people" including "farmer, artisan, and merchant" (*Principles*: 375).

But where is the evidence to support the "Confucian" proposition that "the higher classes are open to everybody" and that "a man can become one of the appointed people very easily" (*Principles*: 200)? Chen claims that Xunzi had made the point "clearly" (*Principles*: 494).[49] However, although Xunzi does state that "the gentleman and the petty man are one and the same" in terms of "endowment, nature, intelligence, and capabilities" (*Xunzi*: 4.136–37), and that "learning" makes it possible to "go from being lowly to being noble" (*Xunzi*: 7.169–71), he is also insistent that the chances of this happening are vanishingly remote.

Becoming "noble" requires "deliberative effort,"[50] but that is a necessary, not a sufficient, condition. Even if people "had a fine nature and inborn substance and their hearts were keenly discriminating and wise, *they would still need to seek worthy teachers to serve* (*Xunzi*: 23.378–80; my italics). Similarly, "by birth, people are originally petty people. Without a teacher or the proper model, they will seek only benefit" (*Xunzi*: 4.202–4); and, to reinforce the point, "if people lack teachers and proper

49. Xunzi or Xun Kuang was thought to have lived in the latter part of the Warring states period (ca. 312–221 BCE).

50. That "which comes into being through accumulated reflection and training of one's abilities" (*Xunzi*: 22.236).

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models," they will succumb to "robbery," "villainy," "chaotic behaviour," "strange contentions," and "deceit" (*Xunzi*: 8.461–65; cf. 1.6, 23.17–18). But what is the likelihood of the "common people" coming across "worthy teachers"? As Xunzi emphasized, "Everything depends on what you rub up against!" (*Xunzi*: 23.393–94): it depends on who one encounters in a particular social milieu. The "common people" are "extremely foolish, ignorant, stupid and dense" (*Xunzi*: 8.352). They "rub up against" each other, with the result that they "are fit"—they are *only* fit—"to be craftsmen, farmers, and merchants" (*Xunzi*: 8.545–46), as with the "sons of craftsmen [who] *all* continue their fathers' work" (*Xunzi*: 8.505–6; my italics).

Rather than providing "clear" support for the notion that "the higher classes are open to everybody," Xunzi had made precisely the opposite point. The quest for "Confucian" equality had reached a dead end.

4.4. Laissez-Faire

I now consider whether Chen was more successful in supporting his assertion that Confucianism "is in favour of the *laissez-faire* policy," if only when it "is fitted to the time or condition" (*Principles*: 175).

Chen had his work cut out for him, having argued that "Confucian doctrine is *just the opposite*" of laissez-faire,[51] not least because "the majority [of people] have no free hand to take part in competition with the minority,[52] and must be overcome by them," hence the injunction that "self-interest *cannot be* the regulator of economic life" (*Principles*: 170; my italics). But now, it seems, there are times when self-interest (profit seeking) must be "the regulator of economic life." Where do we find Confucian endorsement of this pervasive, profit-seeking activity?

51. Taken to include laissez-faire *capitalism*, which, according to Chen, is antithetical to "Confucianism": "Confucianism seems to go further than modern socialism. There would be no capitalist under either. Under Confucianism, the important means of production should belong to the public" (*Principles*: 543). Furthermore, "Confucian theory" requires that "*the government* should level prices by the adjustment of demand and supply" (*Principles*: 552; my italics); and, in addition, Chen adduces several reasons why farmers should not be subjected to a laissez-faire system: they are "shortsighted and cannot look out for their own interests," their lives would be "controlled by the merchants," and they would be ruined by taking loans at usurious rates of interest (*Principles*: 573–74, 581).

52. The "minority" being "the strong" who "may profit by absolute freedom of competition" (*Principles*: 170).

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"For the exact statement of the *laissez-faire* policy," Chen avers, "we find a general economic principle given by Confucius himself, 'Follow what is the profit of the people, and profit them'" (*Analects* 20.1), a statement commended by Chen as "most general and comprehensive," requiring "no particular explanation" (*Principles*: 175–76). Others might disagree.[53]

Taking Arthur Waley's translation, the "Confucius" character was advising government officials to give people "only such advantages as are really advantageous to them," with "*really* advantageous"[54] signaling a judgment to be determined by the officials, not by the people themselves.[55] Missing from Chen's interpretation is any straightforward evidence that "Confucius" did regard unrestrained, private profit seeking as something that "the people" should pursue.[56] And that is little wonder in view of the overwhelming evidence for the contrary position.

Mencius expressed his view of the effects of profit seeking, and of those who engaged in it, in censorious terms:

> What is the point of mentioning the word "profit"? All that matters is that there should be benevolence and rightness. If [a ruler] says, "How can I profit my state?" and the Counsellors say, "How can I profit my family?" and the Gentlemen *and Commoners* say, "How can I profit my person?"[57] then those above and those below will be vying with each other for profit and the state will be imperilled. . . . [If] profit is put before rightness, there is no satisfaction short of total usurpation. (1.A.1; trans. Lau 2003; my italics; cf. 6.B.4)

53. My own disagreement was first stated in Peach 2019a: 12.

54. Or "*really* beneficial," in Dawson's (1993) translation.

55. Exemplified by Waley ([1938] 2000: 221n1) with the case of a "gentleman" who "promotes agriculture instead of distributing doles and largesses."

56. A striking example of evidence that is not straightforward—singled out by Chen—is chap. 129 in Sima Qian's *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Historian*), titled "The Biographies of the Money-Makers." As I have argued elsewhere, a superficial reading of the chapter, *taken in isolation from other chapters*, might well give the impression that its author was favoring a laissez-faire system, my contention being that he was "constructing his own brilliantly satirical reprimand to an age of selfishness, unbridled desire and wanton extravagance" (Peach 2019b: 188). Even Chen must acknowledge that the "Biographies" concludes on an intriguing note: "At the very end of the whole chapter, [Sima Qian] puts [a] negative answer for the withdrawal of his former statements [i.e., those seemingly in favor of unrestrained laissez-faire]" (*Principles*: 179).

57. *Commoners* is italicized to counter Chen's assertion that "Confucius" exempted the "common people" ("either farmers, or artisans, or merchants") from restrictions on profit seeking that applied only to "higher classes" (*Principles*: 476; cf. 95–97, 214–15, 546).

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As for profit seekers,

> he who gets up with the crowing of the cock and never tires of doing good is the same kind of man [i.e., *virtuous* man] as Shun; he who gets up with the crowing of the cock and never tires of working for profit is the same kind of man as Jie ["a byword for robbers" (Lau 2003: 151n7)]. If you wish to understand the difference between Shun and Jie, you need to look no further than the gap separating the good and the profitable. (7.A.25; trans. Lau 2003)

Mencius's evaluation of profit seekers was echoed by Xunzi, himself the architect of a comprehensive, centrally planned economic system (see Peach 2022), who singled out merchants as the leading species of a disreputable genus:

> To strive for benefit in all affairs, to struggle over goods and wealth, to have no deference or yielding, to act from brazen daring, to commit brutality from ferocious greed, ravenously seeing only benefit—such is the courage of merchants and robbers. (I.68–72; trans. Hutton 2014)

Of course, these are people whose activities one would *not* wish to encourage.[58]

Turning to the *Book of Rites*, it is Chen who adverts to passages that seemingly offer "Confucian" endorsement for the policy of confining artisans "to a single industry for life." There are other passages, which he passes over, that expand on limiting restrictions on the "economic freedom" of artisans: *under pain of death*, they are prohibited from practicing "a licentious ingenuity," that might "dissipate the minds of their superior" or that of "the multitudes."[59] It would be a strange laissez-faire system that erected barriers against geographical and occupational mobility and discouraged product innovation with the threat of capital punishment.[60]

58. According to Chen, "It is obvious that the Confucians recognize the productivity of the merchant, and they are not hostile to him" (*Principles*: 368).

59. See *Wang Zhi* ("Royal Regulations") IV.16, and *Yue Ling* ("Proceedings of Government in the Different Months") I.3.13 and IV.1.17, in the *Book of Rites* (trans. Legge 1885).

60. Other passages declaiming profit-seeking behavior—by the rich *and* the "common people"—are found in the *Gongyang* Commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, described by Chen (following Kang) as essential to understanding "the principles of Confucius at all" (*Principles*: 32), and in other writings attributed to Dong Zhongshu ("the greatest Confucian of the Han dynasty" [*Principles*: 43]). See, respectively, Queen and Major 2016: para. 27.1 of the Commentary and pp. 626, 637.

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Why Chen should doggedly pursue the defense of indefensible interpretations—of "Confucian" support for "equality," class mobility, and laissez-faire—might seem baffling, were it not for his unstated commitment to defend, and promote, the version of "Confucianism," and the reform program, instilled in him by Kang Youwei. It was the attempted defense of economic aspects Kang's "Confucianism," along with the purported discovery of modern "economic principles" in Confucian writings, that constituted Chen's own, distinctive contribution to Kang's teachings, with the "discoveries" amounting to an extension of Kang's thesis, that there was "no better science of *government* than [what is found in] our Six Classics,"[61] to cover *economic* science as well. Yet, when Chen did strike out on his own, the results were of dubious merit: the "anticipatory principles" were largely of his own creation, including attributions that betray a tenuous grasp of even basic "economic principles"; and the defense was vitiated by the tendentious rendition and interpretation of key passages, the failure to acknowledge the existence of "unhelpful" primary material, self-contraction, and, in general, the adoption of a standard of "proof" that could not be less exacting.

5. The Reception of Chen's *Principles*

It seems we have a conundrum: If Chen's work was derivative of Kang's to the extent documented above, and if Chen's treatment of "economic principles" was riddled with problems, what can account for the positive reviews of the book from E. A. Ross and J. M. Keynes, the award of the doctorate from Columbia University (with its requirement for a "dissertation embodying the result of *original* investigation and research" [Columbia University 1907: 167; my italics]), and the "accolades" (as they have been described) that were bestowed on the published work by Friedrich Hirth and Henry R. Seager?

To place the receptions in context, it is not the case that contemporary evaluations of Chen's work were uniformly positive. Far from it. According to T. R. Bullock (1912: 531), professor of Chinese at the University of Oxford,

> [Chen] is indeed too fond of building up a theory on some isolated statement which is too weak to carry the weight of the structure. Also, there are many passages in the Chinese classics, as to the meaning of which

61. Quoted above, near the end of sec. 2.

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> the great critics through all the intervening centuries have never been able to come to an agreement, and many historical and literary points the truth of which is similarly disputed; but Mr. Chen, having made up his mind one way or the other, draws most important conclusions from his interpretation of these passages and facts, without letting the reader know that there is any doubt as to the correctness of the premises.

In a similar vein, J. Dyer Ball (1913: 460–63) judged that "Dr. Chen's quotations are not always . . . to be trusted," and, in general, the book was marred by "misleading" and "extraordinary" statements, the absence of "any qualifying details," and "special pleading" based upon "wrong premises," leading to Ball's coruscating verdict that "if this is the class of book which is issued by . . . Columbia University in their 'Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law' . . . a more careful editorial supervision of these publications is imperative."[62]

The critical reviews came from sinologists, who had not held back in lambasting Chen for the tendentious abuse of the textual material on which his interpretation was supposedly based. Yet, it is noteworthy that they did not pick up on the "Kangian" dimension to Chen's work,[63] nor did they focus on Chen's declared ambition to present "the economic principles of Confucius and his school in a systematic form."[64] In the latter respects, there was a remarkable similarity with the reviews of Ross and Keynes.

Ross (1912: 883–84) commended Chen's book as a "formidable work" of "high and conscientious scholarship" that "will take a unique place in economic literature." But there was also criticism:

> The reverential spirit of the author towards the sacred writings of his race causes him to fail at points where frank criticism and evaluation of Chinese doctrines is in order. He is tender with doctrines and policies that are not only unsound now, but were unsound when they were put forth. No doubt, too, he reads into the cryptic utterances of the sage certain modern distinctions that are not there.

62. Likewise, an anonymous reviewer charged that "Dr. Chen has entirely misapplied the words of the classics to suit his own purposes," with the reviewer deeming it "extraordinary" that "an institution with the prestige of Columbia University should publish such a work . . . without first giving it a thorough revision, eliminating its various inaccuracies, and modifying its exaggerated statements" (Review of *The Economic Principles* 1912: 651–52).

63. Bullock (1912: 458–59) merely states that Chen was "a friend and pupil of Kang Youwei," which was a paraphrase of Hirth (see below).

64. A partial exception is Ball (1913: 458–59), with his understated remark that "Mr. Chen is not easy to follow on the doctrine of *laisser-faire*."

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Readers unacquainted with Ross's *The Changing Chinese* (1911) would have no idea which "unsound" "doctrines and policies" he had in mind, although most things "Confucian" must have been among them.[65] Neither would they know precisely which "modern distinctions" had been imposed on the sage's "cryptic utterances," although there were plenty to choose from. These were matters on which he did not linger; they were discounted as "slight blemishes."

What was it, then, that had earned Ross's admiration? Stated by Ross in very general terms, the positive features included a "compendium of Chinese economic thought," a contribution to "Chinese economic history," "interesting contrasts . . . between the development and civilization of the white race and that of the yellow race," and an account of "a Chinese system of thought that is not only a political economy, but also an ethics and a sociology." The main purpose of the book as given by Chen—the presentation of "economic principles"—had been sidelined, an impression reinforced by Ross's comment that the book is "wider in scope than its title indicates."

Keynes's (1912) review of Chen's "learned and delightful book" was different, at least to the extent that it listed five "principles" that were said to give "the character" of Chen's efforts: the importance of education, making artisans' "rations in accordance with their labours," not allowing land "to be subject to private ownership," not thinking "it wrong to take interest,"[66] and showing "Confucius" to be "an extreme free-trader" in "the matter of tariffs."[67] Then, without further ado, Keynes asserted that Chen's discussion of "principles" was merely to "supply the pretext rather than the

65. Ross had little time for Confucianism. It was a "non-religion" with "little authority outside the learned clan," which stood no chance of providing a moral compass to guide the Chinese through a turbulent future *unless* it incorporated substantial elements from Christianity (Ross 1911: 217–18, 256–57).

66. In support of the claim that "Confucians *justify* the taking of interest" (*Principles*: 474; my italics), Chen had appealed to Confucius's total silence on the subject ("Confucius gives no condemnation of it") and Mencius's apparent acceptance ("he gives no condemnation") of loans to farmers at a rate of 100 percent, later described *by Chen* as usurious (*Principles*: 581). In the case of Mencius, he condemns the ruler for imposing a system of taxation that makes it necessary for farmers to borrow at all (*Mencius* 3.A.3), which seems an odd way of justifying something he evidently deplored.

67. It is true that Mencius and Xunzi—cited by Chen in support of his "extreme free-trader" interpretation—wished to remove obstacles to cross-border trade, such as tariffs between the independent states that existed before China's unification under the Qin. In the case of Xunzi, however, this trade would be subject to the constraint that (quantities of) imported products were consistent with the state's detailed specification of permitted consumption bundles for every social class (see Peach 2022).

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substance" of the book, with the "substance" identified as "contributions to the economic history of China, and . . . the poems and aphorisms of many generations on all topics that can be considered in the widest sense economic," *this* being the material that earned Keynes's praise (587, 584).[68]

The reviews from Ross and Keynes were undoubtedly positive, but the praise was not directed at Chen's elucidation of "Confucian" economic principles. In effect, these reviewers had reconstructed Chen's book, including its authorial purpose, in a manner that was more to their liking, in disregard for, or ignorance of, the exegetical shortcomings (save for Ross's "slight blemishes"). Moreover, as with the sinologists, they seemed oblivious to Chen's true, if disguised, purpose: to embellish and advance Kang's "Confucianism" and his program of economic and political reform. With Hirth and Seager, the position was very different.

Friedrich Hirth, Columbia University's first professor of Chinese, was the author of *The Ancient History of China* (1908), in which he endorsed the orthodox view of Confucius's "applied moral philosophy" as "not so much the creation of his own philosophical mind as the result of his historical studies," with Confucius having "merely voiced views held long before him" (Hirth 1908: 241–42).[69] Hirth was evidently versed in the same "Confucian" literature on which Chen (following Kang) had based his contrary interpretation, an interpretation that was found wanting by Hirth's fellow sinologists. However, while they seemed uncomprehending of Kang's influence, Hirth most certainly was not.

Kang had arrived in the United States in February 1905 and soon achieved almost celebrity status, meeting with mayors and governors "as a matter of course" and with President Theodore Roosevelt on two

68. Keynes was particularly taken with Chen's account of monetary history, the proof "that the separation of the two sexes was not the original plan in China," a "full and very interesting" account of "the *tsing tien* [well field] system of land tenure" (see above, n. 43), discussion of "provisions for the mobility of labour," and "the author's admirable history of Chinese taxation." He also mentions "Confucius's principles of Eugenics" (his description), which is curious because Chen had withheld the chilling detail of Kang's proposals for racial "homogenisation," although he did give an account of the Chinese custom of exogamy (*Principles*: 324–25).

69. Hirth also suggested that the designation of a "Confucian" *religion* was possibly a "gross misnomer, which should perhaps be replaced by some such terms as a doctrine" (237); he judged that Confucius was inferior to Lauzi as a "philosopher" (241); he claimed that "Mo Di's almost Christian altruism was much superior to Confucianism" (282); he described Confucius's "virtue" as "sometimes of a pettifogging and pedantic character" (249); and he claimed that what "Confucius *wrote* is probably confined to editorial work rather than contained in independent compositions" (231; Hirth's italics): all positions that placed his interpretation at odds with Kang's, as rehearsed by Chen.

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occasions, and "receiving breathless coverage in the American press" as he "continued to promote constitutionalism and political reform in China with both Chinese and American audiences" (Larson 2012). Of the many cities he visited, New York was where he spent the most time before his departure from the country in 1907: it was the city in which he had family connections,[70] where he organized two international congresses (1905 and 1907) devoted to his political cause, and where he met Friedrich Hirth.

Kang is said to have visited Hirth "quite often" during his stay in New York (Wang [2017] 2020: xix n27). It is also reported that Kang "was asked [by Hirth] to have the entire work [the *DTS*] translated into English, but this he would not consent to do" (Thompson [1958] 1975: 27, 34n8):[71] a request that strongly suggests an awareness on Hirth's part of the content of the "work" (which he could have gleaned from Chen, who possessed a copy of the manuscript, as well as from Kang himself). But, regardless of the sources of his information, it seems apparent from Hirth's foreword to the *Principles* that he believed himself informed not only of Kang's political activities but also of his teachings.

It was *Chen's relationship with Kang* that Hirth focused on in his foreword. Following the disclosure that Chen was "a personal friend and has been a pupil of Kang Youwei, one of the originators of the modern reform movement and himself a profound connoisseur of Chinese literature," Hirth continued:

> Kang Youwei's moral success among the masses of China was largely due to the fact that, while being thoroughly convinced of the necessity of reform in social and political life, he continued to be an eager adherent of Confucian principles.

Having provided his testimonial to Kang's reformist endeavors, Hirth (1911: vii) pronounced that "Dr. Chen proves a disciple worthy of his great teacher. His enthusiasm for the great sage and his doctrine could not be surpassed," adding that "western readers will find in his book the representation of Confucianism from the purely Confucianist point of view."

70. His daughter, Kang Tongbi, was studying at Columbia University.

71. Thompson reports that "President Wilson was also said to have made the same suggestion in vain." However, as recorded by A. W. Hummel, Wilson's entreaties were not entirely fruitless: "At the close of the World War, Woodrow Wilson requested K'ang Yu-wei to send him a copy of this work [the *DTS*]. The latter . . . complied with this request" (Hummel 1935: 350). It does not seem wildly improbable that a similar request, had it been made by Hirth, would have met with a similar response.

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Hirth had chosen his words carefully. As well as revealing his admiration for Kang, he had given a shrewd and accurate portrayal of Chen's work. The book did, indubitably, establish Chen's credentials as "a disciple worthy of his great teacher." But, for the majority of "western readers," unfamiliar with Kang's teachings, the full import of that terse statement would have been lost. All they could discern from Chen's text was his "indebtedness" to Kang for a "*general* view of Confucianism," not for the detailed indebtedness that was the privileged insight of the very few.

In the author's preface, Hirth was acknowledged by Chen as among those of his "American friends" from whom he had received "many ideas and secured assistance in various [unspecified] ways" (*Principles*: xii). But it was as one to whom his "greatest obligations" were due that Chen singled out Henry R. Seager, professor of political economy at Columbia University, "who made numerous suggestions and corrections throughout the whole book" (xii). He might have added another obligation, for Seager's preface.

As with Ross and Keynes, Seager (1911: ix) praised the book's inclusion of collateral material:

> His [Chen's] discussions of such institutions as the family, marriage, private property, and the position of women have an interest and value quite apart from their relation to the main purpose of that study.

However, unlike the other reviewers, and Hirth, Seager states not only the declared "main purpose" of the book—"presenting the economic teachings of Confucianism"—he also showers plaudits on Chen's presentation. Granted, by adopting "the same order of arrangement that has become usual in English treatises of political economy," Chen risked the "danger" of "creating the impression of a more systematic exposition of economic principles than is to be found in the sacred writings." But, in mitigation, that danger "is much more than outweighed by *the large number of clear anticipations of the accepted economic teachings of today* which it reveals" (my italics).

Seager may not have been a leading economic theorist, but he had written a bulky textbook in which he set out the basic "economic principles" that Chen had failed either to comprehend or to discover in the form of "clear anticipations,"[72] and it seems inconceivable that Seager did not

72. The textbook was *Introduction to Economics*, later revised as *Principles of Economics* (Seager 1913).

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recognize this himself. As a singular example, it was surely obvious that Chen's exposition of the "productivity doctrine" (Seager's description, borrowed by Chen) involved serial failures: to identify the critical "marginal" dimension, disentangle the contributions of labor and "capital," and distinguish between wages and total incomes.[73]

What is it, then, that could account for Seager's praise? Seager (1911: ix) obligingly tells us himself:

> No one can read these pages without becoming convinced that Confucianism is a great economic, as well as a great moral and religious, system and that it contains most, if not all, of the elements necessary to the solution of the serious problems that confront China to-day. That these problems may be speedily and happily solved and that Dr. Chen may take the prominent and distinguished part in the reformation of his country for which his high character and unusual attainments so well fit him is the earnest hope of his American friends.

Seager must have known that the plan of "reformation" in which he and other "American friends" wished Chen to take a "prominent and distinguished part" was the one conceived and promoted by Kang Youwei, and it seems plausible that he was made aware of the details of the program, and of Kang's "Confucianism," by Chen, Hirth, possibly Kang himself, and the American press. On that basis, he would know, and certainly could have discovered, that principal ideas in Chen's book had been taken from Kang without express acknowledgment and that the "main purpose" was *not* to present "the economic teachings of Confucianism" but was rather to embellish Kang's "Confucianism" in the service of Kang's reformist agenda. Yet, acknowledgment of those considerations would have called into question the originality of Chen's doctoral thesis and his book, and there were far higher considerations at stake: to aid Chen in his advancement of Kang's reformist cause, thereby to solve the "serious problems" of an entire nation.

In sum, the conundrum stated at the outset of this section is dissolved. The positive reviews from Ross and Keynes were based on a reconstruction of the book that deflected from its averred purpose and, as testified by critics at the time, from its plentiful interpretative shortcomings; and the "accolades" from Hirth and Seager were directed at Chen's discipleship of Kang Youwei and his reformist agenda, with Seager's valiant attempt to

73. Seager should also have spotted the blunder over free goods (see above, n. 40).

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claim scholarly merit for Chen's book being merely a gesture of support for what was, to Chen's "American friends," a worthy political cause.

6. Conclusion

Regardless of the criticisms that can be leveled at Chen's work, from its artfully disguised recapitulation of another person's ideas to its flawed and tendentious treatment of "economic principles," they cannot detract from what was truly a tour de force:[74] an impassioned effort to portray a "Confucianism" that encompassed *everything*, including "western" economic theory and a program for national salvation. It was, above all, a tribute to the teachings of Kang Youwei, of whom Chen was, as Hirth perceptively remarked, "a disciple worthy of his great teacher," at least in the sense that he had adhered to Kang's teachings without deviation. Where they parted company came later, with their response to the *Xinhai* (Republican) Revolution in late 1911, the very year in which Chen's book was published.

Following the republic's proclamation in January 1912, Kang engaged with but did not participate in the new government, hoping that he might persuade it (among other things) to limit the franchise to those with "personal qualifications" and to reform the polity in favor of a "republic under a titular monarch." In 1917, with his overtures rebuffed, he joined the ill-fated attempt to overthrow the republic and reinstall the Manchu dynasty; that was followed by another, equally abortive attempt in 1923, which marked the end of his political machinations (Hsiao 1975: 249–59).

Meanwhile, Chen worked *with* Republican administrations, even taking the role of presidential adviser, until he, too, became thoroughly disillusioned, decamping to Hong Kong in 1928. Yet, while he differed from Kang in his political choices, he remained faithful to the cause of promoting *their* "Confucianism," founding a Confucian "Society" (or "Church") in Shanghai (1912), a "Confucian Federation" in Beijing (1919), a Confucian university in Beijing (1923) with himself as president, and a "Confucian Institute" in Hong Kong (1929); and, throughout this time, he campaigned tirelessly, if unsuccessfully, for official recognition of *their* "Confucianism" as the national religion.[75]

74. As described by Pairault (2007: 196).

75. For elaborations of Chen's activities, see Wang 1997, Pairault 2007, Zufferey 2007, and Gan 2013.

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As for his book, Chen had hoped to translate it into Chinese (*Principles*: 12), but that never came to pass. It was to be many decades before the translation was undertaken, with the book finding new adherents and a new purpose, not entirely removed from the old one, of fostering national pride, albeit pride in a nation that differed from the one envisaged by Chen and Kang. But, before rushing to judgment on the book's enlistment in a political or ideological cause, it should be recalled that a precedent had been set, and supported, almost a century earlier: at Columbia University, New York.

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