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Neo Mencianism:A Complete Philosophical Analysis

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Neo-Mencianism

A Complete Philosophical Analysis

Western Philosophy · Mao's Philosophical Journey · Marx/Plato's Metaphysical Error · Deng's Correction

Kant · Strauss · Marx · Hegel · Rawls · Nozick · Hayek · Pettit · Institutional Economics

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Dedicated to my lovely girl @西米 CiCi

****Author contribution***: *Based on the foundational writings of Shan Ling, 凌山先生 and dialogue with Artificial Intelligences including Claude, ChatGPT/Copilot, Gemini, Grok etc)*

Abstract

This study presents Neo-Mencianism (新孟儒学) as a comprehensive political philosophical framework that reinterprets modern political economy, distributive justice, and world history through the institutional principle of Tonggong Yishi (通功易事). The framework distinguishes two fundamentally different forms of inequality: natural differentiation (自然分化), arising from differences in talent, effort, and market scarcity, and secondary differentiation (二次分化), arising from the institutional asymmetry of the employment contract. It argues that modern market economies should preserve the former while eliminating the latter by replacing the exchange of labour-power (Yili, 易力) with the exchange of labour accomplishments (Yishi, 易事), thereby transforming employer–employee relations into cooperative partnerships without abolishing markets or private capital.

The study further situates Neo-Mencianism in dialogue with major traditions of Western philosophy. It argues that the framework preserves Hayek's insight into dispersed knowledge and market coordination while rejecting the employment contract as the natural boundary condition of market order; accepts Marx's diagnosis of wage exploitation while rejecting the Labour Theory of Value; extends Kant's Formula of Humanity into the institutional sphere of production; and reconciles Strauss's doctrine of natural right with modern productive justice. At the metaphysical level, it advances the thesis that Marx's distinction between abstract and concrete labour reproduces Plato's priority of universals over particulars, identifying this inheritance as the philosophical root of twentieth century failures of centrally planned socialism.

Finally, the paper proposes a Confucian philosophy of history centred on the transition from the exchange of persons (易人), through the exchange of labour power (易力), to the exchange of labour accomplishments (易事). Within this historical framework, Mao's later political philosophy is interpreted as a return to the Confucian tripartite tradition, Deng Xiaoping's reforms as a practical correction of Marx's metaphysical error through the restoration of concrete market activity, and Neo-Mencianism as the completion of that trajectory through the institutional specification of cooperative productive justice. The study argues that Neo-Mencianism offers a systematic synthesis of Confucian ethics, modern economics, and Western political philosophy, proposing a market-based institutional alternative that seeks to preserve efficiency while eliminating structural exploitation.

Introduction

This document presents a comprehensive philosophical analysis of Neo-Mencianism, the system of thought developed in the foundational writings of 凌山先生 (LS30), *i.e.* four primary texts: the essay on the Confucian interpretation of the contemporary Chinese path distinguishing natural and secondary differentiation; the philosophical analysis of Mencius's 通功易事 and its modern transformation; the dialogue series on secondary differentiation and the definition and content of Neo-Mencianism; and the extended collection of related essays in the 朝歌随笔.

The analysis proceeds in ten sections. Sections I and II establish the internal theoretical architecture of Neo-Mencianism: the two-differentiation framework (natural & secondary), the 易人 / 易力 / 易事 trichotomy, and the macro-historical schema of three civilisational stages (Mediterranean/Atlantic/Pacific). Sections III through V map the framework against the major traditions of Western philosophy: Kant's Formula of Humanity, Strauss's natural right, Marx and Hegel, Rawls and Nozick, institutional economics etc. A dedicated comparative table (Section III-D) presents the three views on wage exploitation — Neoclassical, Marxist, and Neo-Mencian — in their most concise and analytically rigorous form.

Sections VI through VIII trace the philosophical history that Neo-Mencianism interprets: Mao's transition from the Western binary of 东风西风 to the Confucian tripartite of 帝修中, triggered by the empirical catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward; the metaphysical root of that catastrophe in Marx's Platonic error (abstract labour as universal prior to concrete market activity); and Deng's reforms as the partial practical correction of that error. Section IX identifies what Neo-Mencianism adds as the completion of that correction: the institutional specification of 易事 as the contractual form of productive justice in a modern market economy.

The document is intended as a reference synthesis for further development of the Neo-Mencian framework.

I. Theoretical Foundations: The Neo-Mencian Framework

A. Two Forms of Inequality — The Central Distinction

Neo-Mencianism's foundational analytical achievement is the precise separation of two forms of economic inequality that all prior traditions had conflated, producing systematic confusion in both left and right political thought.

Concept	Chinese	Mechanism	Normative Status
Natural differentiation	自然分化	Talent, effort, market scarcity; supply-demand equilibrium (H-O model)	Preserve — 物之不齊，物之情也
Secondary differentiation	二次分化	Monopsonistic wage gap: w* − w' (yqy model); capital's structural power over labour	Abolish — wage exploitation

The Heckscher-Ohlin model (云儿) demonstrates that the equilibrium wage ratio between 力者 and 智者 is determined entirely by supply and demand conditions — not by any intrinsic complexity of labour. A skill producing output worth 20× another needs only to be scarce. This refutes Marx's Labour Theory of Value while preserving the normative critique of exploitation. yqy's monopsony model then formalises that critique precisely: under structural labour-market power, the employer equates marginal labour expense (which exceeds the wage) to marginal revenue product, producing a systematic gap w* − w' that is not a market outcome but an institutional artefact of the employment contract.

B. The Institutional Resolution: 通功易事

Mencius's classical principle 通功易事 — making goods flow, exchanging functions — provides the institutional remedy. The trichotomy of exchange types is the framework's sharpest analytical tool:

Exchange Type	Chinese	Structural Character	NormativeStatus
Exchange of persons	易人	Slavery: person as commodity	Absolutely prohibited
Exchange of labour-power	易力	Wage labour: person's agency directed by employer's ends	Exploitative — abolish
Exchange of labour-Accomplishment	易事	Partnership: co-producer retains residual claim on output	Just — universalise

Under 易事, every participant enters production as a co-owner who contributes capital — financial or labour — and shares risk and residual claims proportionally. The employer-employee hierarchy is replaced by the 自由人联合体 (association of free persons). This achieves 人事合一: the unity of person and their productive activity that classical Confucianism identified in the 自耕农 (yeoman farmer) and that the wage-labour system structurally severs.

C. The Cat-and-Chili Parable: The Wittgensteinian Key

> **The Parable (from Ross Terrill <Mao: A Biography 毛泽东传>):**
> *Mao asked Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai: 'How do you make a cat eat chili pepper?' Liu: 'Pry open its mouth and force it in.' (Mohist: central power, coercion.) Zhou: 'Starve it three days, wrap the chili in fish.' (Yangist: structural hunger creating 'voluntary' compliance.) Mao shook his head. The answer: the cat should not eat chili — the question itself is wrong.*

Liu's method is the Mohist path: the 巨子 figure uses central planning and authority to run society. Zhou's method is the Yangist path: capital employs the 99%, paying wages at the front door while recovering everything through profits, interest, and rent at the back door. Both accept the premise that the cat must eat chili — that exploitation is given and only its method varies. Mao's rejection is a Wittgensteinian dissolution: the correct answer is not a better method of exploitation but the elimination of the exploitative institution (易力) itself, replaced by 易事.

II. 新孟史观: Three Stages of Western Civilisation

Before mapping Neo-Mencianism against individual Western philosophers, its macro-historical framework must be stated. Neo-Mencianism reads world history not as the rise and fall of states or ideologies but as the evolution of what is bought, sold, and exchanged at the centre of civilisation — a typology derived directly from the 易人 / 易力 / 易事 trichotomy applied at civilisational scale.

Two critical observations accompany this schema. First, the West's historical trajectory — striving for absolute individual freedom from the Mediterranean through the Atlantic — cannot resolve its internal contradictions through Western capitalism alone. The Atlantic Era's 易力体系, like the Mediterranean Era's 易人体系 before it, carries a structural contradiction that it cannot overcome from within: it simultaneously depends on and undermines the free agency of those it exploits.

Second — and this is Neo-Mencianism's sharpest historical warning — the Atlantic Era faces a specific risk at its end: that the fall of the 易力体系 (modern capitalism) will not produce the 易事体系 but will instead produce a regression to theocracy or authoritarian collectivism. Just as the fall of the Mediterranean 易人体系 (classical slavery) did not produce modern freedom but the medieval church, the fall of modern capitalism could produce a new 巨子-style centralised power — the Mohist path — rather than the Confucian cooperative future. This is why the institutional specification of 易事 is not merely philosophically desirable but historically urgent.

Historical Era	Core Geographic Centre	System of Exchange	Social Structure & Labour Form	Philosophical Character
Mediterranean Era (Classical Antiquity)	Greco-Roman World	易人体系 Exchange of Persons	Classical Slavery: the human body itself is a commodity bought and sold. The free citizen's leisure is built on the unfreedom of the slave.	The person is wholly a means. No separation yet between labour-power and labour-accomplishments because the entire person is owned. Kant's Formula of Humanity is violated at its most absolute level.
Atlantic Era (Modern Capitalism)	Anglo-American Dominance	易力体系 Exchange of Labour-Power	Modern Capitalism: workers are legally free but must sell their labour-power for wages. The employment contract replaces the slave deed.	The person is formally free but structurally instrumentalised. 易力 constitutes workers as means to the employer's productive ends. Kant's prohibition is violated structurally, not legally. Marx's critique applies here.
Pacific Era (The Coming Future)	East Asia — the Orient	易事体系 Exchange of Labour-Accomplishments	Universal Cooperatives: workers exchange the results of finished labour. The employer-employee hierarchy is abolished. 人事合一 is restored at civilisational scale.	The person is fully an end. 通功易事 realises the 自由人联合体. Kant's kingdom of ends, Marx's association of free persons, and Mencius's 仁政 converge at the same institutional point.

The Material End-Conditions of Each Era: A Historical-Structural Law

A precise historical-materialist observation deepens the civilisational schema: each era ends not only from philosophical critique but from the exhaustion of the specific material precondition that made its system of exchange viable. This is a structural law of civilisational transition, not merely a narrative of moral progress.

The Mediterranean Era's 易人体系 depended on a continuous external supply of slaves — primarily obtained through military conquest. When the Roman Empire's expansion reached its limits and the flow of war-captives dried up, the slave economy lost its demographic foundation. The latifundia became uneconomical; the coloni (tenant farmers bound to the land) replaced the slave as the dominant labour form; and the Mediterranean Era gave way to the feudal-ecclesiastical order of the medieval world. The system did not collapse because of moral

enlightenment alone — it collapsed because the material precondition (an inexhaustible supply of 易人) was exhausted.

The parallel for the Atlantic Era is structurally exact and historically urgent. The 易力体系 of modern capitalism has depended, since the Industrial Revolution, on access to reservoirs of low-cost labour-power outside the core capitalist economies. This took successive forms: slave labour in the colonial plantation system (a residual 易人 within the 易力 era); mass immigration of peasants dispossessed from agrarian economies; colonial labour in extractive industries; and most recently, the integration of China, India, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe into global supply chains, providing vast pools of cheap manufacturing and service labour that maintained the wage-suppression condition on which Western corporate profit margins depend.

As these external labour reservoirs are progressively exhausted — through rising wages in China and other emerging economies, through the political backlash against globalisation and immigration, through automation displacing routine labour — the Atlantic Era's 易力体系 loses its material foundation in exactly the same structural sense that the Mediterranean Era lost its slave supply. The system faces a crisis not only of moral legitimacy (which Stiglitz, Rawls, and Neo-Mencianism all document) but of material reproduction: the boundary conditions that made 易力 economically sustainable are narrowing.

The Philosophical Paradox of the Pacific Era:
The West's historical telos — the realisation of the Association of Free Persons, the kingdom of ends, the non-dominated republic — is achieved not by the internal development of Western liberal capitalism but by its absorption into a Mencian economic framework (通功易事). The Pacific Era is the completion of the West's own deepest aspiration through a Chinese philosophical instrument. This is what 吾儒自足 means at civilisational scale.

III. Neo-Mencianism Through the Lens of Western Philosophy

A. Kant: Menschheit als Zweck an sich selbst

The Formula of Humanity and 易力

Kant's second formulation of the Categorical Imperative — 'Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only' — is one of the most precise Western lenses for the critique of wage labour. Under 易力, the worker's rational agency is purchased and directed toward ends the employer defines. She does not author the purposes to which her labour is applied. This is not a contingent feature of bad employers; it is the structural form of the employment contract, which pre-assigns the direction of labour to the employer as a condition of exchange. Even the most benevolent employer operates within an institutional arrangement that constitutes the worker as a means.

易事 repairs this structurally: every labour contributor becomes co-author of the productive enterprise, restoring their standing as an end. The parallel with 人事合一 is precise: Kant says do not separate the person from their rational ends; Mencius says do not separate the person from the fruits of their productive activity. Both are formulations of the same underlying intuition at different levels of abstraction.

Universalisability: 易事 Passes, 易力 Fails

The first formulation — universalise your maxim — confirms the analysis. The employer's maxim under 易力 ('appropriate the structural gap between marginal product and wage through monopsonistic power') cannot be universalised: if every agent adopted it simultaneously, cooperative production would collapse. 易力 survives only as a parasite on the productivity it exploits. By contrast, the 易事 maxim ('enter productive relationships as co-partner, sharing risk and residual claims proportionally') is universalisable — it constitutes the legislation of a kingdom of ends.

B. Leo Strauss: Natural Right and the Confucian Resolution

Strauss and 自然分化: Convergence

Strauss's central project in Natural Right and History was to recover a transhistorical natural standard against which political arrangements can be judged — against Weber's value-neutrality and historicism, both of which lead to nihilism. Neo-Mencianism shares this anti-relativist commitment: the 易力 contract is not just because workers 'voluntarily' accept it under structural coercion (三天不吃饭). A contract entered under structural hunger is not a manifestation of natural right but a violation of it.

Strauss's natural right framework strongly supports 自然分化. Suppressing natural endowment differentials — the Mohist/Soviet path — is, in Straussian terms, the imposition of a conventional standard against the natural order. 物之不齊，物之情也 maps precisely onto classical natural right: the inequality of things is natural, and a just regime must acknowledge rather than suppress it.

The Sharpest Question: Are Human Capacities Naturally Unequal?

A more precise and sharper issue connects Strauss directly to 自然分化: the question of whether inequalities in human capacities have a natural basis or are entirely social products. This is where Strauss and Marx are in most fundamental conflict, and where Neo-Mencianism's position is most clearly Straussian.

For Marx, inequality of capacity is the result of the division of labour and therefore a social product, not a natural datum. The 1844 Manuscripts and The German Ideology argue that under capitalism's enforced specialisation, the worker is reduced to a fragment of a human being — a one-sided, stunted capacity. Abolish the division of labour, abolish capitalism, and equal, rounded human capacities will emerge and flourish. The inequality we observe is historically produced and historically reversible: it is not nature but society that makes one person more capable than another.

Strauss challenges this directly. In Natural Right and History (p. 167), he poses the question that Marx's framework cannot answer: 'But does inequality not have natural roots?' This is not a rhetorical question for Strauss — it points to the classical natural right tradition's insistence that human beings are naturally differentiated in their capacities for virtue, wisdom, practical reason, and productive skill. In his 1957 course on Plato's Republic (Leo Strauss Center, University of Chicago), Strauss develops this point in connection with Plato's tripartite soul and the natural basis of the city's functional differentiation: the philosopher, the warrior, and the artisan are not interchangeable social roles arbitrarily assigned by the division of labour, but expressions of naturally different capacities that a well-ordered city must acknowledge and cultivate rather than suppress.

> **But does inequality not have natural roots?** *— Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History, p. 167*

This is the Straussian basis for 自然分化. If human capacities are naturally unequal — if the cognitive worker (智者) and the physical worker (力者) differ not because capitalism has stunted one and developed the other but because natural endowments are genuinely differential — then the Heckscher-Ohlin wage differential between them is not a social injustice to be eliminated but a natural fact to be acknowledged. The H-O model's demonstration that wage differentials track factor scarcity, not exploitative extraction, is the economic formalisation of Strauss's

philosophical intuition: 物之不齊，物之情也 is the Mencian statement of what Strauss recovers from Plato's Republic.

The implications for the 儒-杨-墨 typology are direct. The Mohist/Soviet path's suppression of wage differentials is not merely economically inefficient — it is, in Straussian terms, a violation of natural right, an attempt to impose artificial equality upon naturally differentiated capacities. The Cultural Revolution's attacks on experts, intellectuals, and specialists — 臭老九 (stinking ninth category) — are the most vivid historical expression of this Mohist violation of natural differentiation. Marx's premise (inequality is social, therefore reversible) licensed this assault; Strauss's counter-premise (inequality has natural roots) would have forbidden it.

Neo-Mencianism's position is precisely Straussian on this point: the H-O model demonstrates that 自然分化 reflects the natural scarcity of different productive capacities, and any political programme that attempts to suppress this — whether through forced collectivisation, wage uniformity, or Cultural Revolution-style attacks on expertise — violates the natural order of things. The Mencian formulation 物之不齊，物之情也 is the classical Chinese statement of Strauss's 'inequality has natural roots' — and it arrives two thousand years earlier through direct moral phenomenology rather than through the laborious recovery of classical texts against modern historicism.

C. Marx, Hegel, and the Western Left

Diagnosis Accepted, Foundation Rejected

Neo-Mencianism accepts the wage exploitation phenomenon — yqy's w* − w' under monopsony is the precise economic core of 二次分化 — while rejecting the Labour Theory of Value that Marx used to ground it. 云儿's H-O analysis demonstrates that relative values are determined by supply and demand, not intrinsic labour content. A skill producing 20× output need only be scarce, not inherently more complex. Neo-Mencianism retains the normative conclusion (exploitation is real and must be abolished) while replacing the falsified positive foundation. The conclusion survives the collapse of the original theoretical ground — as Rawlsian liberals kept egalitarian conclusions after abandoning utilitarian foundations.

The Hegelian Dialectic of Free Labour: Accepted

Stage	Historical Form	Philosophical Character
Thesis 正	自耕農 / Yeoman farmer	人事合一: person directly owns fruits of labour
Antithesis 反	雇佣劳动 / Wage labour (易力)	Person severed from accomplishments; alienated labour
Synthesis 合	自由人联合体 / Association of free persons (易事)	人事合一 restored at social scale through partnership

The synthesis is not the abolition of private property through revolution but the replacement of the employment contract through institutional reform — a more specific and tractable target than Marx's prescription, while achieving the same philosophical goal of restoring human wholeness in productive life.

D. Three Views on Wage Exploitation: A Comparative Table

The following table, drawing on the comparative analysis, provides the clearest single map of where Neo-Mencianism stands relative to the two dominant Western economic traditions. It is the economic core of the entire framework expressed in its most concise form.

The table reveals Neo-Mencianism's precise philosophical position: it borrows the neoclassical mathematical definition of exploitation (w* − w' under monopsony) — accepting the rigour of marginalist economics — while sharing Marxism's normative conclusion that the wage system is structurally unjust. But it diverges from both on the solution: neither enforce competitive markets (neoclassical) nor abolish them (Marxist), but reform the contractual structure within the market from 易力 to 易事. This is the 中庸之道 in its most precise economic expression.

Feature	Neoclassical Economics	Marxism	Neo-Mencianism
Root cause of exploitation	Market failure: monopsony or lack of competition. Exploitation is an anomaly, not a systemic feature.	Capitalist ownership of means of production. Exploitation is the very foundation of all profit — built into the system.	Separation of worker from their final accomplishments (人事分离). The employment contract (易力) is structurally defective at formation, independent of market power.
Nature of the wage system	Fair and efficient under perfect competition. The wage equals marginal revenue product in a competitive market.	Inherently exploitative. Labour-power is sold as a commodity; surplus value is extracted every working day.	Unequal by design: it trades labour-power (易力) instead of finished labour-accomplishments (易事). The structural asymmetry persists even under competitive conditions.
Formal definition of exploitation	Worker paid less than marginal revenue product (w < MRP). Formalised by monopsony theory: MLE > w.	Extraction of surplus value: worker produces $200, receives $100 wage; capitalist pockets $100 surplus value.	Adopts the neoclassical formula (w* − w' under monopsony) but reframes it: the gap is not a market imperfection but an institutional artefact of the 易力 contract itself.

Ideal labour-capital relation	Employment contract based on market supply and demand, corrected by anti-monopoly enforcement.	Abolish employment; workers collectively own the means of production; no market pricing of labour.	Cooperative partnership (合作关系): labour counts as human capital; residual claims shared proportionally between financial-capital and labour-capital contributors.
Solution	Enforce anti-monopoly law, increase competition, targeted minimum wage regulation to restore competitive balance.	Overthrow capitalism entirely; eliminate market mechanisms; place means of production in workers' hands collectively.	Legalise and generalise profit-sharing based on labour's true market value (通功易事). Reform the contract — not the market, not through revolution.
Market preserved?	Yes — the market is the solution.	No — the market is abolished.	Yes — the market aggregates concrete productive knowledge (Hayek's insight accepted). Only the contract type changes.
Private capital preserved?	Yes — capital ownership is legitimate.	No — private ownership of means of production is abolished.	Yes — capital deserves a return. But profit must be split proportionally between financial-capital and human-capital (labour) contributors.

E. Rawls, Nozick, and a Third Position

With Nozick, Neo-Mencianism agrees that natural differentiation arising from voluntary market transactions is just — the Mencian basketball star is the Nozickian basketball star. With Rawls, it agrees that background conditions can render apparently voluntary contracts structurally unfair. The key argument: at the moment of signing an employment contract, neither party knows the market outcome of their collaboration (Knightian uncertainty). Yet the contract pre-assigns all upside to capital and all downside to labour before any information is available. This is not a voluntary exchange between equals but a structurally coerced choice made under institutional hunger. The Rawlsian parallel: justice requires fairness under genuine uncertainty — not just formal consent. But where Rawls works from not knowing one's social position, Neo-Mencianism works from not knowing the market outcome. Different veils, identical structural logic.

F. Hayek: The Extended Order, Boundary Conditions, and the Confucian Correction

Hayek's Extended Order is Institutionally Conditioned — Not Metaphysically Prior

Neo-Mencianism's most original engagement with Hayek goes beyond the standard knowledge-problem acknowledgement. The 2003 essay 哈耶克 PK 马克思：让一部分人先自由起来 develops a precise and underappreciated critique: Hayek's 'extended order' (扩展秩序) is not

the spontaneous, a priori, sacred free order he claims. It is bounded by institutional boundary conditions that define the permissible structure of human-human relationships — and those boundary conditions are a human, normative choice, not a natural given.

The catfish argument makes this vivid. Under slavery, the slave-owner faces the classic principal-agent problem: the slave has every incentive to minimise effort. The owner's solution — allowing industrious slaves to accumulate savings toward self-purchase — is itself a spontaneous market mechanism. Both parties respond rationally to incentives; price signals coordinate their behaviour; the market 'discovers' an equilibrium. This is Hayek's extended order operating perfectly within the slave economy. Yet no one would call it a free order. The boundary condition — that humans can be owned — determines the entire character of the spontaneous order that operates within it.

The transition from slave-labour extended order to wage-labour extended order (capitalism) is not the discovery of a more natural spontaneous order but the replacement of one boundary condition with another: 易人 (exchange of persons) replaced by 易力 (exchange of labour-power). Hayek treats the wage-labour boundary condition as if it were the natural terminus of spontaneous order — as if it were not itself a normative choice about what may and may not be exchanged. This is precisely the error Neo-Mencianism corrects: 易事 (exchange of labour-accomplishments) is simply the next boundary condition, one that better realises human freedom within a market economy.

> **这一秩序并不是所谓自发的……这一秩序是受到一些原则或曰边界条件的限制……边界条件就是该秩序对人与人关系的限定。** *This order is not so-called spontaneous… it is constrained by certain principles, or boundary conditions… the boundary conditions are precisely that order's definition of the human-human relationship.*

The essay identifies its position in the history of political philosophy with precision: where Hobbes derives order from authority, Locke from contract, Smith from markets, Hayek from spontaneous evolution, and Foucault from power structures, Neomencianism's position is that order comes from institutional boundary conditions, and those boundary conditions come from norms governing human relationships. This is a distinctively Confucian institutional theory — it emphasises relationship-norms (人与人关系的规范) rather than individual rights or spontaneous emergence as the foundation of social order.

G. Yang Zhu, Liberalism, and Stiglitz's Political Capture: The Yangist Path's Logical End

From Yang Zhu to Neoliberalism to Oligarchic Capture

The essay “杨朱、Liberalism 与 Stiglitz 的政治捕获” (June 2026) extends the Yangist path analysis to its logical terminus, drawing on Stiglitz's empirical research to show that the Yangist

deviation does not merely produce wage exploitation but — in the absence of the Confucian 立中 (establishing the mean) corrective — inevitably produces the systematic capture of the state by capital.

The philosophical logic is precise: Yang Zhu's 为我 (for-self) — the doctrine that one would not pluck a single hair even to benefit the world — is the philosophical core of classical liberalism and its neoliberal successor. It presents itself under the banners of individual freedom, market efficiency, and limited government. But without the Confucian corrective mechanism of 立中, the 为我 principle generates a systematic dynamic: capital, acting rationally in its own interest, uses its economic resources to shape the political rules that govern economic activity. The result is not free markets but rigged markets — not Adam Smith's invisible hand but an invisible fist reshaping the rules of the game.

Stiglitz's empirical documentation across multiple works — The Price of Inequality, People, Power, and Profits, and Globalization and Its Discontents — provides the Western scholarly evidence for what Neo-Mencianism identifies as the structural endpoint of the Yangist path: through lobbying, campaign finance, the revolving door between regulators and regulated industries, and think-tank influence, capital elites systematically capture regulatory agencies, legislative processes, and even monetary policy. The results are precisely specified: tax systems skewed toward capital (capital gains taxed below labour income); post-2008 financial deregulation benefiting 'too big to fail' banks; antitrust law rendered ineffective against technology and financial oligopolies; and globalisation operating as a capital 'escape valve' — offshoring and tax havens used to threaten states into race-to-the-bottom competition that further erodes labour bargaining power and public finances.

Zhou's Method as the Yangist Path's Highest Stage

This analysis connects directly to the cat-and-chili parable at the framework's centre. If Liu's method (force) represents the Mohist path — overt coercion — then Zhou's method (starve the cat three days, wrap the chili in fish) represents the Yangist path in its most developed form. The Stiglitz-documented system of political capture is Zhou's method at civilisational scale: workers and citizens make apparently voluntary choices (accept the wage, vote for the candidate, buy the product) within a system whose boundary conditions have been shaped by capital to ensure that surplus is continuously extracted. The freedom is real at the level of the individual transaction; the exploitation is structural at the level of the system.

易事's Convergence Theorem: The Structural Solution

The Stiglitz essay articulates 易事's long-run distributional consequence with precision: under the 易事 system, political capture loses its economic foundation. Capital can no longer use wage-labour contracts to appropriate residual value systematically, so the incentive to invest

heavily in political rule-shaping is correspondingly reduced. The long-run income distribution under 易事 converges to a steady state determined by the scarcity distribution of productive factors — 自然分化 — rather than by residual appropriation rights.

This convergence theorem is philosophically significant: it means 易事 does not promise equality of outcomes (which would be the Mohist error) but equality of standing — the elimination of the institutional asymmetry by which one party to the productive relationship appropriates the surplus generated by the other. 自然分化 remains; 二次分化 is structurally eliminated. Oligarchic political capture, which depends on 二次分化 for its economic foundation, loses its material basis.

H. Institutional Economics and Republican Non-Domination

Principal-agent theory (Alchian, Demsetz) correctly identifies that under wage labour, workers have incentive to shirk, necessitating costly monitoring. Under 易事, workers are residual claimants on their output — incentive alignment is perfect, monitoring costs approach zero. Alchian-Demsetz use this to justify hierarchical firms with monitor-owners. Neo-Mencianism reaches the opposite institutional conclusion: if genuine incentive alignment requires workers to be residual claimants, generalise the partnership structure universally. The Huawei joint-stock model, 胖东来, and ESOP research provide empirical confirmation.

The closest single Western characterisation of Neo-Mencianism is Philip Pettit's republican theory of non-domination: freedom requires not merely absence of interference (Nozick) but absence of domination — no structural dependence on another's arbitrary will. The wage worker is dominated not by direct coercion but by structural dependence on capital's terms. 易事 eliminates this domination by making every labour contributor a co-partner with symmetric standing. The Stiglitz analysis adds a further dimension: under political capture, even the formal political freedoms of liberal democracy become instruments of domination — the citizen votes, but the rules of the game have already been set by those with the resources to shape them. 易事 addresses domination at its economic root, not merely at its political surface.

IV. The Three-Path Framework: 儒 · 杨 · 墨 as Universal Typology

Dimension	Mohist/Soviet/墨道	Yangist/American/杨朱之道	Confucian/NeoMencian/儒家中庸
Inequality stance	Suppress all differentiation	Accept all differentiation as just	Preserve natural; abolish secondary
Labour model	Collective obligation; state assignment	Wage labour 易力; employment contract	Partnership 易事; cooperative contract
Surplus distribution	State appropriation	Capital extraction (wages front door; profits/interest/rent back door)	Proportional to contributed labour-capital
Legitimacy	巨子 authority; coercive uniformity	Market outcomes + formal electoral consent	得乎丘民 — free labouring people's support
Kant assessment	Violates persons-as-ends through state coercion	Violates persons-as-ends through structural employment	Realises persons-as-ends through 易事
Strauss assessment	Violates natural right through forced levelling	Partly respects natural right (自然分化) but silent on productive justice	Extends natural right to productive sphere via 通功易事
Cat parable	Liu: pry open the mouth	Zhou: starve three days, wrap in fish	Mao: the cat should not eat chili
Historical example	USSR; Great Leap communes	United States; global capital	Aspiration: China's middle path

V. Mao's Philosophical Journey: From Western Binary to Confucian Tripartite

A. The Great Leap Failure as Philosophical Catalyst

Neo-Mencianism identifies the precise historical-causal sequence that led Mao from the Eastern Wind / Western Wind binary to the 帝修中 Three Worlds theory — and it begins not with geopolitical calculation but with catastrophic empirical refutation.

The Great Leap Forward (1958-62) was the fullest implementation of the Marxist-Leninist economic programme on Chinese soil: radical collectivisation into People's Communes, abolition of private household plots, suppression of rural markets, centralisation of grain allocation, and the campaign to make labour directly social (abstract, planned, universal) rather than mediated by market exchange (concrete, particular, local). The philosophical premise was the Platonic-Marxist one: the universal (planned social labour, the commune) is more real and more rational than the particular (household plots, local markets, individual productive knowledge). The result was catastrophic famine.

The failure forced a rethinking at multiple levels simultaneously. At the economic level: the Soviet model of rapid collectivisation and central planning was demonstrably broken — not merely in execution but in conception. At the political level: if both the Soviet model (Mohist path, forced collectivisation) and the American model (Yangist path, capital extraction) were wrong, what was the correct third path? At the philosophical level: the Western philosophical framework that had provided the theoretical ground for the Great Leap — Marx's Platonic metaphysics of abstract labour — had to be questioned at its root.

The Causal Chain:
Great Leap Failure (1958–62) → empirical refutation of Soviet/Mohist economic model → rethinking of both Soviet revisionism and the Western Marxist framework → Sino-Soviet split deepens → 东风西风 binary becomes untenable → search for a non-Western philosophical standard → return to 王霸之别 → 帝修中 Three Worlds Theory (1974) as Confucian tripartite framework applied to world history.

B. The 东风西风 Framework (1957): Still Within Western Philosophy

The 1957 speech to Soviet students frames the world in the binary of Eastern Wind vs. Western Wind — socialist bloc vs. capitalist bloc. The conceptual structure is entirely Hegelian-Marxist: history as the dialectical struggle of opposed forces, with one necessarily prevailing. The Sputnik reference is telling — technological-material superiority (productive forces) will determine which wind wins. This is still the terrain of historical materialism.

Crucially, it remains a two-world framework. China is one element within the socialist camp, not a philosophically distinct third position. The normative standard is still Western: which mode of production represents the more advanced stage of historical development? The criterion of judgement is borrowed from Marx's philosophy of history, not from Confucian moral philosophy.

C. The Transition: Why the Binary Became Untenable

After the Great Leap failure exposed the Soviet model's fundamental defects, and as the Sino-Soviet split deepened through the early 1960s, the East/West binary collapsed from within. If the Soviet Union had itself become 'revisionist' — had betrayed the socialist project and was moving toward capitalism through a different institutional form — then the Eastern Wind was no longer genuinely socialist. China could not locate itself within an Eastern Wind led by a power that embodied the Mohist path's worst features.

This forced a philosophical question of the first order: if both the US and the USSR represent wrong paths, by what standard are both wrong? The Marxist-Leninist framework cannot supply this standard — it was the framework shared (in theory) with the Soviets. To condemn both superpowers from a single vantage point requires a third standard not derived from either. The 朝歌随笔 states this with precision:

> **毛在反帝反修之后，已无西方哲学学术可依，回到了王霸之别，回到了儒家政治哲学。**
> *After Mao proposed anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism, he had no Western philosophical resources left to draw on. He returned to the distinction between the Kingly Way and the Hegemonic Way — returned to Confucian political philosophy.*

D. The Three Worlds 帝修中 Framework (1974): The Confucian Tripartite Structure

Mao's Three Worlds Theory — US and USSR as First World hegemons, satellite states as Second World, developing nations as Third World with China as natural ally — has a dual-layered structure that Neo-Mencianism decodes:

Surface Structure	Deep Philosophical Core	Mencian Parallel
US as First World hegemon	杨朱之道: extreme individualism, capital extracts through 易力; wages at front door, profits/interest/rent at back door	Yang Zhu: 为我 / for-self; no ruler
USSR as First World hegemon	墨道: centralised coercion; 巨子 leadership; collective uniformity; prying open the cat's mouth	Mozi: 兼爱/universal love enforced = 尚同 / coercive uniformity
China / Third World	儒家王道: Kingly Way; opposes both hegemonies; neither coercion nor capital extraction	Confucius-Mencius: 执中 / holding the mean; 仁政 / benevolent governance

帝修中 (imperialism-revisionism-China) maps exactly onto 杨墨儒 (Yang-Mo-Confucian). The surface structure — geopolitical alignment — serves the function of 王道 rhetoric, claiming moral high ground against both hegemons through the Mencian principle of 距杨墨. The deep structure is a civilisational philosophical judgement: both superpowers have entered wrong paths, and China's mission is to embody the Confucian middle way.

E. Mao as 儒学三期 — and the Remaining Limit

The 朝歌随笔 proposes a specific periodisation: Confucianism Period I (先秦) — philosophical foundation (Confucius, Mencius); Period II (宋明理学) — metaphysical consolidation (Zhu Xi); Period III (毛儒) — political application at civilisational scale. 'Confucius was the uncrowned king (素王); Mao was the sage-king (圣王).' The formula: 内圣从夫子，外王从主席 — inner sageness from Confucius, outward kingship from Mao.

But Mao's practice remained limited by the Platonic-Marxist metaphysical inheritance he had intellectually moved beyond at the level of political philosophy but not at the level of institutional design. The Cultural Revolution's 割资本主义尾巴 campaigns — suppressing household plots, rural markets, and local productive activity — operated from the very Platonic premise that abstract social labour (the universal) must supersede concrete market activity (the particular). The Great Leap failure had taught the lesson once; the Cultural Revolution repeated the error in a different register. Mao correctly identified the two deviations (杨 and 墨) but could not specify the institutional form of the third path.

VI. Marx's Platonic Metaphysical Error — The Root of Mao's Limitation

A. Marx as Plato's Best Student

Neo-Mencianism's deepest philosophical claim concerns the structural root of why Mao's correct political framework produced incorrect economic implementation. The 朝歌随笔 states it with deliberate paradox:

> **吊诡的是，在马克思的理论根基处，却正深刻揭示他是柏拉图形而上学的最好的学生。**
> *Paradoxically, at the very foundation of Marx's theory one finds the clear revelation that he was Plato's best student in metaphysics.*

The paradox is acute because Marx believed he had overturned Platonic-Hegelian idealism, setting Hegel 'right-side up' by replacing the primacy of the Idea with the primacy of material conditions. Yet at the level of his foundational economic category — the distinction between abstract and concrete labour — Marx reproduced the Platonic Form/particular duality in materialist dress.

Structural Level	Plato	Marx
Universal (the real substance)	Forms / Ideas: eternal, universal, perfect archetypes	Abstract labour: homogeneous human energy, the 'substance' of value, stripped of all qualitative specificity
Particular (the appearance)	Sensible objects: imperfect, changing copies of Forms	Concrete labour: specific, qualitatively different activities (tailoring, weaving, carpentry) producing use-values
Relation	Particulars participate in / imperfectly instantiate Forms	Concrete labour is the phenomenal expression of underlying abstract labour substance
Epistemological move	Ascend from sensible particulars to grasp the universal Form	Penetrate through concrete market phenomena to grasp the abstract labour content of value
Ontological priority	Forms prior to and more real than particulars	Abstract labour prior to and the substance underlying concrete labour

The structural isomorphism is exact. Crucially, Marx aligned himself with Platonic ontology (universal prior, particular derivative) rather than Aristotelian ontology (universal immanent in and not prior to particulars). This is philosophically significant because Aristotle's approach to value — which Marx praised in Capital — was actually closer to the supply-and-demand analysis that Neo-Mencianism endorses through the H-O model.

B. The Policy Disaster: Abstract Universal Destroying Concrete Particular

What makes Marx's version of the Platonic error especially consequential is that labour — unlike Plato's static Forms — has inherent dynamism. Abstract labour generates surplus value, accumulation, contradiction, and historical motion. The Platonic structure (universal/particular) injected with Hegelian dialectical movement produces a system of extraordinary intellectual power: philosophy, historical materialism, and political economy forming, in the 朝歌随笔's phrase, 'a perfect unity that captivates with its brilliance.'

But the metaphysical foundation carries a fatal policy implication. If abstract labour is the real substance of value, then the path to a rational socialist economy is to make labour directly abstract: to strip away the contingent, particular, local, spontaneous forms of concrete economic activity and replace them with socially planned, universally organised production. This is the philosophical logic of 割资本主义尾巴 — 'cut the tail of capitalism':

The Metaphysical Logic of 割资本主义尾巴:

Private household plots, rural markets, petty trade, local barter — these are all concrete particular economic activities driven by individual initiative and local knowledge. From the Platonic-Marxist standpoint, they are the phenomenal residue of the commodity form (the 'tail') that must be abolished to realise genuinely social, abstract, directly-planned labour. To suppress them is not mere political brutality; it flows from a philosophical conviction that the universal (planned, social, abstract) is more real and more rational than the particular (spontaneous, individual, concrete). The Great Leap famine is the catastrophic empirical consequence: abstract labour cannot plant rice at the right moment; a peasant with local knowledge of soil and weather can.

C. The Hayek Parallel — and Where Both Hayek and Marx Fall Short

Friedrich Hayek's critique of central planning — the knowledge problem articulated in 'The Use of Knowledge in Society' (1945) — identifies exactly this failure mode from the opposite philosophical direction. No central planner can aggregate the dispersed, particular, tacit knowledge that markets coordinate through prices. The Great Leap famine is the knowledge problem made concrete and lethal.

The 朝歌随笔 notes that Hayek is one of two people who correctly predicted Soviet collapse — the other being Mao himself. Hayek predicted it from the Yangist direction (defending spontaneous market order), Mao from the Confucian direction (critiquing Mohist suppression of 自然分化). Both diagnoses are correct. But neither provides the complete answer:

Thinker	Correct Insight	Fatal Limit
Marx	二次分化 (wage exploitation) is real and must be abolished	Platonic-Marxist metaphysics leads to suppressing the concrete market activity (自然分化) that actually generates productive knowledge → famine
Hayek	Market price mechanism aggregates dispersed concrete knowledge; central planning cannot replace it	Defends 自然分化 but packages it with acceptance of 二次分化 — cannot see that 易事 preserves market efficiency while eliminating exploitation
Mao	Correct Confucian political framework: both US (杨) and USSR (墨) are wrong paths; 距杨墨 is the standard	Remained institutionally hostage to Platonic-Marxist economics; 割资本主义尾巴 repeated the Great Leap error
Neo-Mencianism	Preserve market aggregation of concrete knowledge (defend 自然分化, resist Platonic abstraction); simultaneously abolish exploitative contract structure (eliminate 二次分化 through 易事)	The remaining theoretical debt: full constitutional specification of 自由人联合体

VII. Deng's Reform: The Practical Correction of the Platonic Error

A. What Deng Actually Did — and Its Philosophical Meaning

Deng Xiaoping's reforms — beginning with the household responsibility system (家庭联产承包责任制) from the Xiaogang village experiment (1978) — are, from the Neo-Mencian perspective, the practical correction of Marx's Platonic metaphysical error. By returning land-use rights to individual households, permitting surplus sale in markets, and rehabilitating price signals, Deng restored the concrete particular (household production, local knowledge, market exchange) against the abstract universal (directly social labour, planned communes).

From a Platonic-Marxist standpoint, these reforms look like 'restoring capitalism' — bringing back the concrete particular that abstract social labour was supposed to supersede. This is precisely why Mao's Cultural Revolution left called Deng a 'capitalist roader' (走资本主义道路当权派). From the Neo-Mencian standpoint, Deng's reforms correct a metaphysical error by returning to concrete reality — to 物之情也, the nature of things, which abstract stipulation cannot alter without catastrophic consequence.

The 自耕農 Parallel

The household responsibility system restored the classical Confucian form of 人事合一 in the agricultural sector. Peasants working their assigned plots, retaining the fruits of their labour, exchanging surplus products in markets — this is 易事 in agricultural form: the worker retains the accomplishments of their labour rather than selling labour-power (易力) to a collective that alienates the product. The 自耕農 (yeoman farmer) is the classical Confucian form of 人事合一, as the 朝歌随笔 repeatedly emphasises:

> **自耕农是自由人古典形式。资产阶级革命对其是个否定。自由人联合体乃否定之否定。**
> *The yeoman farmer is the classical form of the free person. Bourgeois revolution negated this. The association of free persons is the negation of the negation.*

B. Deng as Heir to Mao's Confucian Framework

Neo-Mencianism insists on the continuity between Mao and Deng at the philosophical level, even while marking the discontinuity at the economic-institutional level. The 朝歌随笔 is explicit:

> **邓对毛三个世界理论的全盘接受。邓对毛这一思想的继承，是共和国的历史一脉相承的根本原因。** *Deng's complete acceptance of Mao's Three Worlds Theory. This inheritance from Mao is the fundamental reason for the historical continuity of the People's Republic.*

Deng accepted the political-philosophical framework (Three Worlds, 反帝反修, 距杨墨) while correcting the economic implementation. He inherited Mao's Confucian political philosophy while shedding the Platonic-Marxist economic metaphysics that had distorted Mao's practice. The 当代中国道路的儒学解释 document summarises this:

> **邓（邓小平模式鼓励自然分化，抑制二次分化）是这一道路的卓越继承者。** *Deng — whose model encourages natural differentiation and suppresses secondary differentiation — is the outstanding heir of this path.*

Deng's Pragmatism as Anti-Platonic Epistemology

Deng's famous maxim — 'it doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice' — is, at the philosophical level, a rejection of Platonic abstraction in favour of concrete outcomes. The black-or-white cat maxim is an anti-Platonic principle: do not let universal abstract categories (socialist vs. capitalist, abstract labour vs. commodity) override the judgement of concrete, particular results. This is the Mencian spirit of 权 (weighing concrete circumstances) over rigid application of abstract universal principles. The cat catches mice — this is 物之情也, the nature of things.

C. What Deng Did Not Complete — Neo-Mencianism's Remaining Task

Deng's correction was real but partial. Restoring household agriculture and rehabilitating markets eliminated the most catastrophic expression of the Platonic-Marxist error. But the

dominant form of productive organisation in the industrial and service economy remained 易力 — wage labour under the employment contract. The structural gap w* − w' (yqy's formulation) continued to operate across the urban-industrial economy, constituting 二次分化 as a systemic feature of the reformed but not fully transformed system.

Neo-Mencianism identifies the completion of Deng's correction as the remaining task: replace 易力 with 易事 as the dominant contractual form of productive life across the economy. The Huawei joint-stock model (华为虚拟受限股), 胖东来's employee profit-sharing, and ESOP structures in both Chinese and Western firms represent partial, spontaneous movements toward 易事 without yet constituting a systematic institutional transformation.

VIII. The Complete Architecture: Three Levels of Error and Correction

Level	The Error	Historical Source	The Correction	Agent
Metaphysical	Abstract universal prior to concrete particular; value grounded in abstract labour substance	Plato → Marx: Theory of Forms reproduced as Labour Theory of Value	Supply-demand H-O model: values determined by concrete supply/demand; 物之情也 as natural order	云儿 / yqy / Neo-Mencianism
Political-philosophical	Binary East/West dialectics; socialist vs. capitalist; one wind must prevail	Early Mao (东风西风 1957); Western historicism; Marxist-Leninist framework	帝修中 Three Worlds: Confucian tripartite 距杨墨; 王霸之别 as the transhistorical standard	Late Mao (post-Great Leap)
Economic-institutional	Suppression of concrete market activity; abolition of household plots and local markets; 割资本主义尾巴	Mao's Great Leap / Cultural Revolution; Platonic-Marxist metaphysics applied to policy	Deng's reforms: household responsibility, market rehabilitation; restoration of concrete productive knowledge	Deng Xiaoping (1978+)
Contractual-institutional	Wage labour (易力) retained as dominant productive form; 二次分化 continues structurally	Deng's reform incomplete; employment contract not yet replaced	易事: replace employment contract with partnership contract; generalise residual claimancy for all labour	Neo-Mencianism: task ahead

The intellectual lineage thus runs: Mencius (philosophical foundation) → Mao (correct political framework: 距杨墨 at world-historical scale; transition from Western to Confucian standard triggered by Great Leap failure) → Deng (partial economic correction: restore concrete market activity against Platonic-Marxist abstraction) → Neo-Mencianism (complete institutional specification: 易事 as the contractual form that eliminates 二次分化 while preserving 自然分化 and the market's aggregation of concrete productive knowledge).

IX. The Original Contributions of Neo-Mencianism

A. The 易人 / 易力 / 易事 Trichotomy

The distinction between exchange of persons, exchange of labour-power, and exchange of labour-accomplishments is cleaner and more institutionally operational than any comparable Western framework. It locates the specific contractual defect (易力) that generates exploitation without relying on labour value theory, and points directly to the institutional remedy (易事) without requiring social revolution or the abolition of markets. This is the framework's most practically consequential contribution.

B. Knightian Uncertainty as Contract Critique

Using fundamental uncertainty (not calculable risk) to argue that wage labour is institutionally pre-determined — rather than a market outcome — is a subtle and underexplored argument. At the moment of the employment contract, neither party knows the market outcome of their collaboration. The contract pre-assigns all upside to capital and all downside to labour before any information is available. This transforms the critique from distributive justice (after-the-fact redistribution) to contract justice (the contract itself is defective at formation). It answers the standard objection that 易力 is 'voluntary': it is voluntary only in the same sense that the cat voluntarily eats the chili-wrapped fish after three days of starvation.

C. The Productivity Argument: Justice and Efficiency Unified

Neo-Mencianism argues that 易事 systems are not merely more just but more productive: perfect incentive alignment under residual claimancy eliminates monitoring costs and shirking simultaneously. Abolishing 易力 is not a sacrifice of efficiency for equality — it is a potential Pareto improvement. This directly defeats the standard 'efficiency objection' to socialist arrangements, and the Huawei / 胖东来 / ESOP evidence provides empirical support.

D. The Metaphysical Diagnosis: Marx as Plato's Best Student

The identification of Marx's fundamental error as metaphysical rather than economic — the reproduction of Platonic Form/particular ontology as abstract/concrete labour — is the framework's deepest philosophical claim. It explains why Soviet-style socialism consistently failed (the concrete particular — local knowledge, household production, spontaneous markets — was suppressed in the name of abstract universals), and it explains why Marx's correct normative conclusion (exploitation must be abolished) must be separated from his falsified positive foundation (Labour Theory of Value). This separation is what makes Neo-Mencianism 'Marxism 2.0': retaining the diagnosis, replacing the pathology.

E. 吾儒自足 — The Confucian Philosophical Immunity

Confucian philosophy, and Mencian philosophy in particular, is structurally immune to the Platonic error that contaminated both Marx and his heirs. The starting point of Mencian ethics is not a universal abstract Form but a concrete relational response: the alarm felt when seeing a child about to fall into a well. The universal (仁) emerges from and through the particular experience, not prior to it. Applied to economics: Mencius's market analysis begins from concrete exchange (通功易事 — the carpenter, the weaver, the farmer exchanging their concrete particular products). The principle 物之不齊，物之情也 is a generalisation from concrete market reality, not a universal abstraction imposed upon it.

Western philosophy arrived at convergent conclusions (Marx's alienation, Anderson's relational equality, Pettit's non-domination, Rawls's fairness under uncertainty) through contested and theoretically expensive paths over two and a half millennia. Mencius arrived at converging conclusions through direct moral phenomenology and careful institutional analysis. The convergence — across two thousand years and ten thousand miles — is itself the argument for 吾儒自足.

Conclusion: The Philosophical Achievement

Neo-Mencianism is simultaneously a political philosophy, a philosophy of history, a theory of productive justice, and a diagnosis of Western metaphysical error. Its achievement is to unify these levels into a coherent framework with a single institutional target — replace 易力 with 易事 — that is at once philosophically grounded, historically informed, and practically specified.

The framework resolves the central confusions of modern political thought: the left-right confusion that conflates 自然分化 with 二次分化 and therefore cannot distinguish legitimate market outcomes from structural exploitation; the Marxist confusion that correctly diagnoses exploitation but grounds it in a falsified theory and prescribes a remedy (abstract social labour) that kills by suppressing the concrete productive knowledge that feeds people; and the liberal confusion that correctly defends market spontaneity but cannot see that the employment contract is an institutional artefact that can be reformed without destroying market efficiency.

The great historical narrative that Neo-Mencianism tells runs: the Great Leap failure was the empirical refutation that triggered Mao's philosophical transition from Western binary to Confucian tripartite framework — from 东风西风 to 帝修中, from historicist dialectics to 王霸之别. Deng's reforms corrected the economic implementation by restoring the concrete particular against Platonic-Marxist abstraction. Neo-Mencianism completes the correction by specifying the institutional form — 易事 — that fulfils what both Mao's framework and Deng's reforms pointed toward but did not fully achieve.

The formula is:

> **从尧到毛 — From Yao to Mao** *establishes the 道统 (normative orthodoxy): the Confucian tradition of 仁政 and 距杨墨.*
>
> **邓继承而修正 — Deng inherits and corrects** *restores the 器 (institutional implementation) by defeating the Platonic-Marxist suppression of concrete market knowledge.*
>
> **新孟儒学完成之 — Neo-Mencianism completes it** *specifies 易事 as the contractual form of the 自由人联合体 in a modern market economy.*

Where Kant provides the formal prohibition on instrumentalisation, Mencius provides its material instantiation and institutional repair. Where Strauss recovers natural right against historicism, Neo-Mencianism extends it from political constitution to productive contract. Where Marx correctly diagnoses exploitation but grounds it in a Platonic error that produces famine, Neo-Mencianism retains the normative conclusion on a sound empirical foundation. Where Deng corrects the Great Leap error by restoring concrete market activity, Neo-Mencianism completes

the correction by specifying the cooperative contractual form that eliminates 二次分化 without suppressing 自然分化.

The deepest philosophical claim remains: Confucian thought, grounded in concrete relational moral phenomenology and the analysis of concrete market exchange, is structurally immune to the Platonic error that distorted the entire Western tradition from Plato through Marx to the Great Leap. This is not a claim of cultural superiority but a claim about philosophical structure: a tradition that begins from concrete human relationships and concrete productive activity cannot be seduced by the abstraction that destroys what it claims to perfect.

> **郁郁乎文哉，吾从周。** *How rich in cultural splendour! I follow Zhou. — Confucius*

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C. Kant

[12] Kant, Immanuel. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten [Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals]*. 1785. The Formula of Humanity (second formulation of the Categorical Imperative): 'Handle so, daß du die Menschheit sowohl in deiner Person, als in der Person eines jeden andern jederzeit zugleich als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel brauchst.' Standard English edition: Mary Gregor trans. (Cambridge University Press, 1997). Cited throughout Section III-A

[13] Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft [Critique of Practical Reason]*. 1788. Background for the Formula of Universal Law and the kingdom of ends (Reich der Zwecke). Standard English edition: Mary Gregor trans. (Cambridge University Press, 1997). Relevant to Section III-A analysis of universalisability

D. Leo Strauss

[14] Strauss, Leo. *Natural Right and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953. Central argument: recovery of classical natural right (Plato, Aristotle, Cicero) against Weber's value-neutrality and historicism. Key passage cited in Section III-B: p. 167, 'But does inequality not have natural roots?' — the direct challenge to Marx's claim that inequality of human capacities is a social product of the division of labour rather than a natural datum. Primary reference for Sections III-B and the 自然分化 / human capacities analysis

[15] Strauss, Leo. *Plato's Republic: Lecture Course, University of Chicago, 1957*. Unpublished lecture transcripts, Leo Strauss Center, University of Chicago. Contains Strauss's most revealing treatment of natural inequality of human capacities in connection with Plato's tripartite soul and the natural basis of the city's functional differentiation. The philosopher, warrior, and artisan are naturally differentiated, not arbitrarily assigned social roles. Available at: https://wslamp70.s3.amazonaws.com/leostrauss/s3fs-public/Plato%27s%20Republic%201957.pdf — also accessible through the Leo Strauss Center digital collection. Cited in Section III-B. Available at: https://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/courses/

[16] Strauss, Leo. *The City and Man*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964. Background for Strauss's reading of Platonic political philosophy and the classical account of the best regime. Relevant to Section III-B's discussion of Strauss's limit: classical natural right theorising political justice but not productive justice

E. Marx, Hegel, and the Western Left

[17] Marx, Karl. *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Band I [Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I]*. Hamburg: Verlag von Otto Meissner, 1867. Source for the Labour Theory of Value, the

abstract/concrete labour distinction, and the theory of surplus value. Standard English edition: Ben Fowkes trans. (Penguin Classics, 1990). Cited in Sections III-C, VI, and the comparative table in III-D

[18] Marx, Karl. *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte [Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844]*. Written 1844, published 1932. Source for the theory of alienated labour and the Hegelian dialectic of self-realisation through productive activity. Relevant to the analysis of 人事合一 as the Hegelian synthesis in Section III-C. Standard edition: Martin Milligan trans. (Lawrence & Wishart, 1959)

[19] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Phänomenologie des Geistes [Phenomenology of Spirit]*. Bamberg: Joseph Anton Goebhardt, 1807. Background for the master-slave dialectic and the structure of self-realisation through labour. Relevant to the 正反合 analysis of free labour in Section III-C. Standard English edition: A.V. Miller trans. (Oxford University Press, 1977)

[20] Plato. *Republic (Πολιτεία)*. c. 375 BCE. Background for the Form/particular ontological structure whose reproduction in Marx's abstract/concrete labour distinction is the central argument of Section VI. The allegory of the cave (Book VII) is the paradigmatic statement of the Platonic universal-as-more-real-than-particular doctrine. Standard reference: G.M.A. Grube / C.D.C. Reeve trans. (Hackett, 1992)

F. Rawls, Nozick, and Liberal Political Philosophy

[21] Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971; revised edition 1999. The veil of ignorance and the difference principle. Compared to Neo-Mencianism's Knightian uncertainty argument in Section III-D: parallel structure (fairness under uncertainty) with different veils (social position vs. market outcome)

[22] Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974. The Wilt Chamberlain argument defending 自然分化 arising from voluntary transactions: if everyone voluntarily pays the basketball star, the resulting inequality is just regardless of its pattern. Directly incorporated into Neo-Mencianism's affirmation of 自然分化 in Section I and compared in Section III-D

G. Institutional Economics and Republican Theory

[23] Alchian, Armen A. and Harold Demsetz. *'Production, Information Costs, and Economic Organization'*. American Economic Review 62(5), 1972, pp. 777–795. Principal-agent analysis of the firm: workers' incentive to shirk under wage labour necessitates monitoring by owners. Neo-Mencianism accepts the diagnosis but reaches the opposite institutional prescription (generalise residual claimancy rather than create hierarchical monitors). Cited in Section III-E

[24] Knight, Frank H.. *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921. Distinction between calculable risk and fundamental (Knightian) uncertainty. The basis for Neo-Mencianism's argument that the employment contract assigns risk asymmetrically at a moment of genuine uncertainty, making it defective at formation rather than merely unfair in outcome. Cited in Sections I and III-D

[25] Pettit, Philip. *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Theory of non-domination as the core value of republican freedom: freedom requires not merely absence of interference but absence of structural dependence on another's arbitrary will. Identified in Section III-E as the closest single Western philosophical characterisation of Neo-Mencianism's institutional goal

H. Economics: Hayek, H-O Model, Monopsony Theory, and Stiglitz

[26] LS30 (凌山先生). *哈耶克 PK 马克思：让一部分人先自由起来 [Hayek vs. Marx: Let Some People Be Free First]*. Written 2003, published 2007. The foundational Neo-Mencian critique of Hayek's extended order (扩

展秩序): demonstrates through the Barzel slave-economy analysis that Hayek's spontaneous order is not metaphysically prior but institutionally bounded by the boundary conditions defining permissible human-human relationships. The essay distinguishes slave-labour extended order from wage-labour extended order — both are Hayekian spontaneous orders with different boundary conditions — and implies that 易事 represents a third, superior boundary condition. Primary source for Section III-E. Available at: https://neomencianism.org/2007/12/20/%e5%93%88%e8%80%b6%e5%85%8bpk%e9%a9%ac%e5%85%8b%e6%80%9d/

[27] LS30 (凌山先生) / Copilot AI commentary. *Copilot AI 评论新孟儒学'马克思 vs 哈耶克'一文*. 2026-05-19. Copilot's philosophical positioning of the Hayek essay: 'Order comes from institutional boundary conditions, and institutional boundary conditions come from norms governing human-human relationships' — identified as a Confucian institutional theory with an independent theoretical position in the history of political philosophy, distinct from Hobbes (authority), Locke (contract), Smith (markets), Hayek (spontaneous evolution), and Foucault (power structures). Primary source for Section III-E. Available at: https://neomencianism.org/2026/05/19/copilot-ai-%e8%af%84%e8%ae%ba%e6%96%b0%e5%ad%9f%e5%84%92%e5%ad%a6%e9%a9%ac%e5%85%8b%e6%80%9dvs%e5%93%88%e8%80%b6%e5%85%8b-%e4%b8%80%e6%96%87/

[28] LS30 (凌山先生) / Grok AI analysis. *杨朱、Liberalism 与 Stiglitz 的政治捕获 [Yang Zhu, Liberalism, and Stiglitz's Political Capture]*. 2026-06-05. Extends the Yangist path analysis to its logical terminus: Yang Zhu's 为我 → classical liberalism → neoliberalism → systematic political capture of the state by capital (Stiglitz). Identifies Zhou's method (starve-three-days fish-wrapped chili) as the highest and most hidden stage of the Yangist path. Derives the 易事 convergence theorem: long-run income distribution under 易事 converges to steady state determined by scarcity distribution, not residual appropriation rights. Primary source for Section III-F. Available at: https://neomencianism.org/2026/06/05/%e6%9d%a8%e6%9c%b1%e3%80%81liberalism%e4%b8%8estiglitz%e7%9a%84%e6%94%bf%e6%b2%bb%e6%8d%95%e8%8e%b7political-capture/

[29] Hayek, Friedrich A.. *'The Use of Knowledge in Society'*. American Economic Review 35(4), 1945, pp. 519–530. The knowledge problem: dispersed, tacit, local knowledge cannot be aggregated by central planners; price mechanisms perform this aggregation spontaneously. Accepted by Neo-Mencianism as correctly diagnosing the Great Leap failure (Section VI-C) while critiquing Hayek's naturalisation of the wage-labour boundary condition — his failure to see that 易事 would preserve the market's knowledge-aggregation function while eliminating the exploitative contract structure

[30] Hayek, Friedrich A.. *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960. Extended treatment of the spontaneous order (扩展秩序) as the foundation of free societies. The source of Hayek's claim that market order is a priori and self-organising — the claim that LS30's boundary-conditions argument directly contests

[31] Stiglitz, Joseph E.. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012. Empirical documentation of how economic inequality produces political inequality through campaign finance, lobbying, and the revolving door. Cited in Section III-F as Western scholarly evidence for the structural endpoint of the Yangist path: political capture of the state by capital

[32] Stiglitz, Joseph E.. *People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2019. Argues that contemporary neoliberalism has deviated severely from the idealised neoclassical competitive market, evolving into a distorted system of power and capital concentration. Cited in Section III-F

[33] Stiglitz, Joseph E.. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002. Analyses how globalisation operates as a capital 'escape valve' — offshoring and tax havens used to threaten states into

race-to-the-bottom competition that erodes labour bargaining power and public finances. Cited in Section III-F as the international dimension of political capture

[34] Barzel, Yoram. *Economic Analysis of Property Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Property rights analysis of the slave economy, including the 'catfish effect' mechanism by which owners permit some slaves to purchase freedom to increase overall labour incentive. LS30's 2003 essay uses Barzel's framework to demonstrate that Hayek's extended order is institutionally bounded, not metaphysically spontaneous. Cited in Section III-E

[35] Heckscher, Eli and Bertil Ohlin. *Heckscher-Ohlin Model of Factor Proportions*. Based on Ohlin, Bertil. Interregional and International Trade (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933). The H-O framework is applied by 云儿 in LS30's dialogue series [3] to demonstrate that wage differentials between 力者 and 智者 are determined by supply and demand conditions (factor scarcity) rather than intrinsic labour complexity, thereby refuting the Labour Theory of Value while preserving the normative critique of exploitation

[36] Robinson, Joan. *The Economics of Imperfect Competition*. London: Macmillan, 1933. Foundational analysis of monopsony (single-buyer labour market power). The monopsony model formalised as MLE > w, producing the wage gap w* − w', is applied by yqy in LS30's writings [2] as the precise economic measure of 二次分化

J. Mao Zedong and Chinese Political History

[37] Brenner, Robert. *'The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism'*. New Left Review 104, 1977, pp. 25–92. Classic analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in terms of agrarian class structures and the dispossession of peasants as the precondition for a free (易力) labour market. Background for understanding the boundary-condition transitions between civilisational eras analysed in Section II

[38] Autor, David H., David Dorn, and Gordon H. Hanson. *'The China Syndrome: Local Labor Market Effects of Import Competition in the United States'*. American Economic Review 103(6), 2013, pp. 2121–2168. Empirical documentation of how China's integration into global supply chains suppressed Western manufacturing wages — the most important single academic study of the labour arbitrage mechanism that has sustained the Atlantic Era's 易力体系 since the 1990s. Cited as background for the end-condition thesis: as this arbitrage closes through Chinese wage convergence, the Atlantic Era loses its material foundation in the same structural sense that Rome lost its slave supply

[39] Mao Zedong (毛泽东). *'On the Ten Major Relationships' (论十大关系)*. Speech delivered April 25, 1956. Early evidence of Mao's rethinking of the Soviet model following the failure of rapid collectivisation. Background for the transition analysed in Section V

[40] Mao Zedong (毛泽东). *Speech to the Moscow Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties*. November 1957. Source of the 东风压倒西风 ('East Wind prevails over West Wind') formulation. The binary Western philosophical framework from which Mao subsequently transitions. Analysed in Section V-B

[41] Mao Zedong (毛泽东). *Theory of the Three Worlds (三个世界划分理论)*. Articulated in conversation with Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, February 1974, and systematised in subsequent speeches. The 帝修中 tripartite framework analysed as the transition to Confucian political philosophy in Section V-D. For full text see: Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Foreign Languages Press

[42] *Great Leap Forward (大跃进), 1958–1962*. The collectivisation campaign and its famine consequences: estimated 15–55 million excess deaths (scholarly estimates vary widely). Identified in Section V-A as the

empirical catalyst for Mao's philosophical transition from 东风西风 to 帝修中. Key secondary source: Dikötter, Frank. Mao's Great Famine (London: Bloomsbury, 2010)

[43] Deng Xiaoping (邓小平). *Household Responsibility System (家庭联产承包责任制)*. Initiated following the Xiaogang village experiment, Anhui Province, 1978; nationalised 1981–83. Analysed in Section VII as the practical correction of Marx's Platonic metaphysical error: restoration of concrete market activity (household plots, local markets, price signals) against the Platonic-Marxist suppression of the particular in favour of the abstract universal

K. Online Resources: LS30 Neo-Mencianism Website

The primary ongoing repository of Neo-Mencianism's developing literature is the author's website and associated blog:

[44] LS30 (凌山先生). *LS30 新孟儒学 [LS30 Neo-Mencianism] — Official Website*. Comprehensive repository of all Neo-Mencian writings including philosophical essays, dialogue records, and AI commentary. Contains all articles cited in Section A above. Available at: https://neomencianism.org

[45] LS30 (凌山先生). *LS30 WordPress Blog*. Earlier writings and cross-posted materials including the 朝歌随笔 series. Available at: https://ls30.wordpress.com

Ethical Approval and Informed Consent.
This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Data Availability
Data sharing is not applicable to this research as no data were generated or analysed.

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