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Abstract: Jing Hengyi (1877–1938) was an educationalist of the Republic of China period who rose to prominence as principal of the Zhejiang Provincial First Normal School in Hangzhou. He became known for his promotion of *renge jiaoyu* (“personality” or “character” education) and his efforts to reform China’s traditional education system. Jing’s philosophy of education was informed by both native and foreign moral and pedagogical theory; this study will examine the influence of foreign ideologies on his thought. Like many of his contemporaries, Jing studied in Japan in the years following the First Sino-Japanese War and encountered Western learning entirely through the spectrum of Japanese translation and interpretation. He would later credit Yoshida Seichi (1872–1945), his ethics professor at the Tokyo Higher Normal School, as an inspiration. Yoshida was a European-educated philosopher and a major figure in early twentieth-century Japanese educational discourse. It will be argued that Yoshida’s moral philosophy, particularly his understanding of the concept of *jinkaku*, exerted a significant impact on Jing. In addition, the German pedagogical trend of *Persönlichkeits-Pädagogik* (personality education), which Jing learned of through the work of Nakajima Hanjirō (1871–1926), will be explored.

Foreign Antecedents of Jing Hengyi's Educational Philosophy

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Introduction

The following study focuses on the educational philosophy of Jing Hengyi 經亨頤 (1877–1938), a prominent educator of Republican China. Born in Shangyu, Zhejiang, Jing received a classical Confucian education as a youth. In the momentous year of 1895 he left his hometown for cosmopolitan Shanghai where he was taken under the wing of his uncle, Jing Yuanshan 經元善 (1841–1903), a well-known businessman and philanthropist who was acquainted with the leading reformist politicians and intellectuals of the day. In 1900, after signing a telegram criticizing the Empress Dowager Cixi, Jing and his uncle were forced to flee Shanghai and sought refuge from the Qing authorities in Macao and Hong Kong. He came back to Shanghai in 1902 and in early 1903 moved to Japan, where he would spend the better part of eight years before eventually graduating in 1910 from the Tokyo Higher Normal School. After returning to China he took a position in Hangzhou at the Zhejiang Two-Level Normal School, later renamed the Zhejiang Provincial First Normal School, becoming its principal shortly after the establishment of the Republic of China.

Under Jing's leadership First Normal emerged as one of China's foremost progressive educational institutions. It was among the earliest schools to introduce reforms such as teaching vernacular Chinese in the classroom and allowing student self-government. Many teachers and students of the school during the time Jing served as its principal would go on to significantly impact the course of Chinese cultural and political history. Jing personally taught a weekly ethics class to all First Normal students and additionally served as president of the Zhejiang Provincial Educational Association. In both of these capacities as well as in essays published in educational periodicals he steadfastly promoted *renge jiaoyu* (人格教育, "personality" or "character" education), the ideology with which he would come to be closely associated. Despite his importance in the history of modern Chinese educational thought, Jing has to date received scant attention from scholars outside China, with mentions of him limited mainly to biographical works on his students and other notable Zhejiang figures of the period.¹ The most detailed information on Jing Hengyi currently available in English is to be found in a noted study of Shi Cuntong 施存統 (1899–1970), a student of Jing's at First Normal who later became a founding

1 See, for example, Geremie Barmé, *An Artistic Exile: A Life of Feng Zikai (1898-1975)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 28-29. The other two famed Zhejiang educators of the Republican era, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) and Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟 (1886–1964), have received considerably more scholarly treatment.

member of the Chinese Communist Party.² The investigation of Jing's educational principles in this work was unfortunately limited to a small selection of his speeches, with the conclusion reached that his pedagogic aims were closely tied to political nationalism.³ I find this to be an inaccurate reflection of Jing's understanding of the purpose of education.

Based on analysis of his numerous essays and other writings, particularly those from his last years as principal of First Normal, Chinese-language scholars have put forth more comprehensive interpretations of Jing Hengyi's brand of *renge jiaoyu* over the past several decades. In the most recently published book-length biography of Jing, two full chapters are devoted exclusively to the subject.⁴ Information on his ideological influences, however, is consistently vague. It is generally remarked in the Chinese academic literature that Jing "adopted a wide range of domestic and foreign progressive educational ideas" as he "opposed the old feudal education that restrained individuality and destroyed *renge*."⁵ Some researchers do specifically acknowledge the origins of *renge jiaoyu* in Germany, making the observation regarding the "indirect character" of its dissemination in China that "this theory did not enter China directly from Europe and America, but did so by way of Japan."⁶ But typical of most intellectual histories of this era, Japan is merely recognized in passing as the transmission point where Chinese learned of new/modern ideas from the West before introducing them to China. The degree to which these ideas may have been adapted by the Japanese as they endeavored to express them in their own language is ignored entirely. This is a particularly glaring omission in this case, as the word *renge* itself was a Japanese invention (*jinkaku*), one of many neologisms coined by Meiji intellectuals to translate previously unfamiliar Western vocabulary.⁷

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- 2 Wen-hsin Yeh, *Provincial Passages: Culture, Space, and the Origins of Chinese Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 73ff. The author refers to Jing by his courtesy name (字), Jing Ziyuan 經子淵.
 - 3 Ibid., 85, 179.
 - 4 Dong Yukui 董郁奎, *Yidai shibiao: Jing Hengyi zhuan* 一代师表: 经亨颐传 (A Generation's Moral Exemplar: The Life of Jing Hengyi) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2007), 80-113.
 - 5 Lü Shunchang 吕顺长, *Qingmo Zhejiang yu Riben* 清末浙江与日本 (Late Qing Zhejiang and Japan) (Shanghai: Shanghai gujie chubanshe, 2001), 113.
 - 6 Zhang Bin 张彬 and Peng Caiju 彭彩菊, "Xifang renga jiaoyu xueshuo zai jindai Zhongguo de chuanbo he yingxiang" 西方人格教育学说在近代中国的传播和影响 (The Dissemination and Influence of Western Personality Education in Modern China), *Jiaoyu tansuo* 教育探索 (Education Exploration) 162 (2004): 65-67. Also see their follow-up article, "Xifang renga jiaoyu xueshuo ji dui dangqian jiaoyu gaige de qishi" 西方人格教育学说及对当前教育改革的启示 (Lessons from Western Personality Education for Current Educational Reform), *Jiaoyu lilun yu shijian* 教育理论与实践 (Theory and Practice of Education) 25.11 (2005): 1-3.
 - 7 The importance of deconstructing such neologisms was demonstrated in Lydia Liu's landmark study, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). Other scholars have since further explored how Western constructs made their way into contemporary Chinese consciousness, creatively investigating the sociocultural implications of linguistic history. See Michael Lackner, Iwo Amelung, and Joachim Kurtz, eds., *New Terms for New Ideas: Western Knowledge and Lexical Change in Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) and Michael Lackner and Natascha Vittinghoff, eds., *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), among others.

Origins of *jinkaku*

The two-character compound word *jinkaku*, made up of the *kanji* for “person” (*jin* 人) and “status/rank” (*kaku* 格), was first used in the late 1880s to translate the continental European concept of a “legal personality” in the context of the Meiji government’s efforts to create a modern civil code and judicial system. Early uses of the term have also been found in Japanese discussions of Western religion and psychology from the early 1890s.⁸ Yet even if he was not the first to use the word, the individual most associated with the invention of the philosophical concept of *jinkaku* is Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1856–1944), the preeminent moral philosopher of the Meiji period who was also responsible for coining the modern Japanese words for ethics (*rinri* 倫理) and morals (*dōtoku* 道德). Inoue was taught the Confucian classics as a child in Fukuoka and studied English in Nagasaki before moving to the capital and attending the newly founded University of Tokyo, where he would graduate in 1880 and become assistant professor in 1882. In 1884 he left for Germany, studying at Heidelberg and Leipzig, where he was affected by the prevailing trends in late nineteenth century German philosophy (idealism) and politics (nationalism). After taking up the post of professor of philosophy back at Todai in 1890, he became the principal architect of Japan’s “national morality” (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道德), exerting immense influence over Meiji educational policy.

Inoue claimed to have come up with *jinkaku* as a translation for “personality” at the prompting of fellow philosophy professor Nakajima Rikizō 中島力造 (1858–1918), another important name in Japanese moral discourse around the turn of the century. Nakajima lived in the United States and earned a doctorate from Yale before returning to Tokyo in 1890 to teach at Todai around the same time as Inoue. He is notable for introducing to Japan the works of British philosopher Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), whose thought became fashionable during the late Meiji period in spite of the fact that his ideas were largely misconstrued by the Japanese.⁹ Nakajima, inspired by Western idealists like Green, promoted the philosophy of “personalism” (*jinkakushugi* 人格主義), a spiritual system of ethics which clashed with utilitarian theories popular in the early Meiji period as well as with the Inoue’s national morality. He argued that Japan should jettison the “Chinese style” of moral education in favor of a “Western style” model incorporating the cultivation of *jinkaku*.¹⁰

Hence by the time Jing Hengyi arrived in Tokyo in 1903, *jinkaku* was already established as a formative concept of the emerging discipline of ethics in Japanese academia. In the highly influential periodical *New People’s Miscellany* (新民叢報), which was being published in neighboring Yokohama at the time, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) began utilizing this new

8 Kyoko Inoue, *Individual Dignity in Modern Japanese Thought: The Evolution of the Concept of Jinkaku in Moral and Educational Discourse* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001), 24–31.

9 Hirai Atsuko, “Self-Realization and Common Good: T. H. Green in Meiji Ethical Thought,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 5.1 (1979): 107–136.

10 Richard M. Reitan, *Making a Moral Society: Ethics and the State in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 86–92.

vocabulary in his calls for reform of China's moral and political institutions. Through Liang's writings, *rengé* entered into the debate among Chinese students over national character and the reasons for China's perceived weaknesses vis-à-vis the West. In Tokyo Jing studied at the Kobun Institute, one of the many preparatory schools set up to cater to the large influx of students from China; here they were taught Japanese and other subjects to ready them for entering proper universities. The Kobun Institute, founded by longtime supporter of Chinese educational reform Kanō Jigorō 嘉納治五郎 (1860–1938), was attended by several future Chinese cultural luminaries, most famously Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), who would later work with Jing for a short time in Hangzhou.

In 1906 Jing enrolled at the prestigious Tokyo Higher Normal School, also headed by Kanō. He started out studying physical chemistry but changed his major to mathematical physics within a year. He later recalled, however, that hard science was not what most absorbed him at this time: “To be honest, it wasn't a subject the average science student paid much attention to, but I was especially interested in the ethics classes taught by professor Yoshida Seichi, so in addition to attending his lectures, I bought all of his books on ethics for reference. This is one of the greatest sources of consolation of my entire life.”¹¹ Back in China during the summer after graduation, when he was asked unexpectedly by the Hangzhou Education Office to teach an ethics class himself, he based his lecture notes directly on Yoshida's writings.¹² This was the beginning of Jing's career as an ethics teacher and as he himself put it, “the roots of my thought.”

Yoshida Seichi and Personal Idealism

Yoshida Seichi 吉田静致 (1872–1945) was an important thinker of his time who has been largely overlooked by historians. A native of Iiyama, Nagano, he was sent to Europe in 1899 as a Ministry of Education foreign researcher, having graduated from the University of Tokyo (then Tokyo Imperial University) the previous year. He spent three years studying philosophy in Europe, first in Germany and later at Cambridge in the United Kingdom. Appointed professor at the Tokyo Higher Normal School immediately upon his return to Japan in 1902, he became a prolific author of academic philosophy books as well as moral training (*shūshin* 修身) textbooks for middle school students. Regarding Yoshida's influence on pre-WWII Japanese education, one of his former students wrote in a retrospective article that “it is not an exaggeration to say that in the degree to which his singular ideology was deeply engraved in the minds of countless Japanese citizens, he was unmatched by any scholar since the Meiji

11 Jing Hengyi 经亨颐, “Hangzhou huiyi” 杭州回忆 (Memories of Hangzhou), in *Jing Hengyi ji* 经亨颐集 (The Collected Works of Jing Hengyi), eds. Zhang Bin 张彬, Jing Hui 经晖, and Lin Jianping 林建平 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2011), 198–199. This work will hereafter be cited as *JHYJ*.

12 Yang Changji 楊昌濟 (1871–1920), who attended the Tokyo Higher Normal School around the same time as Jing, also used Yoshida's works as teaching materials at the Hunan First Normal School in Changsha. One of Yang's students was the young Mao Zedong 毛澤東 (1893–1976), who apparently copied Yang's translation of Yoshida's *History of Western Ethics* by hand. See Liyan Liu, *Red Genesis: The Hunan First Normal School and the Creation of Chinese Communism, 1903–1921* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 197 n 64.

Restoration.”¹³ As an “official scholar” he has been seen alongside Inoue Tetsujirō as representative of the national morality movement,¹⁴ although a cursory comparison of *shūshin* textbooks found him to offer “a more egalitarian view of *jinkaku* than Inoue” as well as “a more active view of the need for respect for *jinkaku*.”¹⁵ Yoshida’s early works, such as *Lectures on Ethics* (倫理學講義, 1903), were heavily indebted to Thomas Hill Green and Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920).¹⁶ Starting with *Essentials of Ethics* (倫理學要義, 1907) he began to develop a more original system of moral philosophy.

It was during the period that Jing Hengyi was a student at the Tokyo Higher Normal School when Yoshida first declared his advocacy of “personal idealism,” translated by him as *jinkakuteki yuishinron* (人格の唯心論). He remarked that while he initially subscribed to the absolute idealism of Thomas Hill Green, he later rejected it in favor of personal idealism, echoing a challenge launched against absolute idealism in England by Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison with the publication of *Hegelianism and Personality* in 1887.¹⁷ Since absolute idealism takes an infinite being as the starting point for explaining the universe, all human action can ultimately be traced back to the absolute. Only personal idealism, by taking the individual as a starting point, allows for human responsibility for action and thereby for moral judgments of human behavior and character.¹⁸ For Yoshida, personal idealism is a human-centered doctrine, or *jinponshugi* (人本主義), of which the concept of *jinkaku* is a critical component. Yoshida uses *jinkaku* in many different contexts and his formulation of it is difficult to encapsulate. By first examining his use of the term in direct translations of Western authors we can ascertain the original concept on which it was based. Yoshida translated the following passage by Scottish philosopher William Wallace (1844–1897), who succeeded Thomas Hill Green as White’s Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford.

13 Yamada Takao 山田孝雄, “Yoshida Seichi hakushi no hito to shisō” 吉田静致博士の人と思想 (The Person and Thought of Professor Yoshida Seichi), *Seishin-Kagaku* 精神科学 (Science of Mind) 1 (1962): 46.

14 Hirai, “Self-Realization and Common Good,” 117–118.

15 Inoue, *Individual Dignity in Modern Japanese Thought*, 45–46.

16 For a recent survey of Yoshida’s earliest writings, see Takahashi Fumihiro 高橋文博, “Yoshida Seichi no shoki no ronri shisō” 吉田静致の初期の倫理思想 (Ethical Thought in Yoshida Seichi’s Early Stage), *Shūjitsu daigaku daigakuin kyōikugaku kenkyūka kiyō* 就実大学大学院教育学研究科紀要 (Bulletin of the Graduate School of Education, Shujitsu University) 2 (2017): 49–67.

17 The debate between personal and absolute idealists in the UK is very relevant here. For an overview, see W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 356–376.

18 Yoshida Seichi 吉田静致, *Rinrigaku engi* 倫理學演義 (Commentaries on Ethics) (Tokyo: Tokyo Hobunkan, 1913), 98–106.

<p>Personality, in short, is a quality of the human being that expresses his moral nature. And the moral nature of man lies in his being subordinate to a general law, or being a member of a community, in which he forms an integral part and performs a function. Or, personality, like morality, only belongs to man in so far as, though a physical individual, he is implicitly universal.¹⁹</p>	<p>吾人の道徳的性質を表出する所の特質が即ち人格と言はれるのである、而して斯かる道徳的性質は實に社會の成員であると云ふことにあるのである、人は社會を充全ならしむる部分を成し社會に於ける職能を遂ぐるものである、人は一面に於ては生理的個體ではあるが、内含的には普汎的であると云ふ點に於て人格と言はれることになるのである、斯くの如きは人間に於てのみ認められる所の特色である。²⁰</p>
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Wallace was best known as an interpreter of Hegel and his definition of personality here is patently Hegelian. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel writes: “Personality [*Persönlichkeit*] implies that as *this* person: (i) I am completely determined on every side (in my inner caprice, impulse, and desire, as well as by immediate external facts) and so finite, yet (ii) none the less I am simply and solely self-relation, and therefore in finitude I know myself as something infinite, universal, and free.”²¹ Wallace would elaborate on this, noting “the true personality and the true individuality of being is something which presupposes for its completeness the social state – the organic community.”²²

Firmly rooted in this philosophical construct from the European idealist tradition, Yoshida expands on its conceptual contents within the milieu of early twentieth-century Japanese moral discourse. He delineates three defining characteristics of *jinkaku*: self-consciousness, self-direction, and self-development.²³ Self-consciousness (自己意識), or self-awareness (自覚), is the recognition of one’s own subjectivity. “Maintaining a unity of one’s experiences,” Yoshida says, “is an attribute of *jinkaku*.” The ability to link past experience with the present and to take action with regard to future contingencies is unique to humans. Animals, on the other hand, live only in the present, driven by immediate impulses. Humans are therefore the only self-aware beings. Since humans act with awareness of the potential future states their activities may lead to, human action has moral significance. In this way self-consciousness entails moral responsibility. When people set goals for themselves and take action in order to achieve them, they exhibit self-direction (自己活動). The root cause of such action lies entirely within individuals themselves and cannot be traced back to any external force. Self-direction is closely related to the idea of free will. Finally, self-development (自己発展) refers to actions taken in view of realizing the ideal self. Within human beings there rages a constant battle between the ideal self and the habitual self. Realization of the ideal self requires conquest of the habitual self

19 William Wallace, *Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 266.

20 Yoshida, *Rinrigaku engi*, 1256-1257.

21 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 37.

22 William Wallace, *Prolegomena to the Study of Hegel's Philosophy and Especially of His Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 250.

23 These are Yoshida’s original English renderings. See *Rinrigaku engi*, 126-131.

– this can be achieved by means of self-sacrifice (自己犠牲) or self-denial (自己否定).²⁴

Through self-development, perfect *jinkaku* is gradually approached.

Yoshida demonstrates familiarity with the work of a wide range of Western philosophers ancient and modern, devoting special attention to the major philosophical debates of the nineteenth century. He roundly dismisses the utilitarian and hedonistic theories of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) but saves perhaps his harshest criticism for Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Yoshida contends that Spencer’s “evolutionary hedonism” constitutes a denial of human agency, viewing the individual as a mere passive responder to pleasure or pain. In Spencer’s moral theory the driving force of human behavior is society; because motivation has an extraneous source, individual moral responsibility is nonexistent. As such Yoshida categorizes Spencerian ethics as “suicidal” and accuses him of “ignoring the value of *jinkaku*.”²⁵ He also opposes the application of Darwinian biological precepts to the social and political realms and calls Spencer’s vision of a future ideal society “comical.”²⁶

According to Yoshida, the introduction of Western civilization to Japan brought with it an undercurrent of this immoral utilitarianism.²⁷ Moral education that facilitates the nurturing of *jinkaku*, he argues, is needed to combat it. Yoshida expresses support for “liberal education” as described by American idealist educator Herman H. Horne (1874–1946) and loosely translates from Horne’s *Philosophy of Education*:

A liberal education emancipates individuality, sets free personal powers, and widens the human outlook. It is characteristic of the education that liberalizes the human spirit that it be non-professional and non-technical. [...]	自由的教育は、人の諸能力を自由に動かせ人の見識を廣くする者である。而して其特色とする所は非職業的にして非實科的である。 [...]
The pursuit of any study for its own sake widens the personality of the student to cover the new territory; the pursuit of any study for the sake of applying it narrows the personality of the student into the channel of action. ²⁸	自由的教育は或特殊の直接の實利を目的とせずして、百般の知識によりて人格を修養することを主眼として居る。 ²⁹

Jing Hengyi and *reng jiaoyu*

It is opportune here to transition to Jing Hengyi, as his *reng jiaoyu* was popularly known as a “non-professional and non-technical” alternative to the vocational education touted by

24 Yoshida Seichi 吉田静致, *Rinrigaku yōgi* 倫理學要義 (Essentials of Ethics) (Tokyo: Tokyo Hobunkan, 1907), 318-322.

25 Yoshida, *Rinrigaku engi*, 497-500.

26 Ibid., 1032-1034.

27 Ibid., 885.

28 Herman H. Horne, *The Philosophy of Education: Being the Foundations of Education in the Related Natural and Mental Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), 245-246.

29 Yoshida, *Rinrigaku engi*, 923.

Huang Yanpei 黄炎培 (1878–1965) of Jiangsu during the first decade of the Republic of China. This is also how it was introduced to later generations of Chinese readers by Cao Juren 曹聚仁 (1900–1972), one of Jing’s students at First Normal who became a journalist in Shanghai and Hong Kong, in his widely read and still frequently referenced autobiography: “What exactly is *rengé jiaoyu*? It wasn’t until much later that it became clear to me. *Rengé jiaoyu* is non-utilitarian education.”³⁰ While this is of course a gross oversimplification, Jing was indeed critical of instruction centered around employment preparation and the training of specific job skills, calling it “near-sighted.” He referred to this strain of pedagogy as “lottery education,” equating using vocational education with the goal of the people’s livelihood in mind to buying lottery tickets with the goal of becoming rich, adding “no one can achieve wealth and stability without *rengé*.”³¹ Jing repeatedly insisted, however, that the two theories should not be viewed in opposition to each other, but as complimentary: “Occupations are necessary for the establishment of society, while *rengé* is required to maintain society.”³² In “The Union of Education and Industry” he furthered this point metaphorically: “If the country were a tree, education would be its roots and industry would be the soil; if the country were an animal, education would be its bones and industry would be its flesh.”

In Jing we also find apprehension that the “aggressive appropriation of foreign civilization” has led to the “collapse of morality” in China.³³ He repeatedly critiques “naturalism” (自然主义), by which he at times appears to refer specifically to Social Darwinism. “Other creatures act merely in order to survive, with the result of their struggle being the ‘survival of the fittest’ [...] this can absolutely not be applied to mankind.” Human motivation cannot be reduced to an animalistic desire to survive because humans possess higher goals and ideals. Nor can the achievements of civilization be said to have resulted from passive responses to the natural environment; they are rather the fruits of active application of human reason. Conscience is realized by the individual, “not some controlling force outside of humanity.” Morals too are determined by people and are therefore ever-changing throughout history; there are no timeless, objective standards for moral judgments. “So-called philosophical truths,” Jing asserts, “are dependent on human goals.” He calls this *renbenzhuyi* (人本主义).³⁴

Since Jing tirelessly advanced the notion that the development of *rengé* was the highest aim of education and the standard for a full life, it is important to carefully consider how he understood this nebulous concept.

30 Cao Juren 曹聚仁, *Wo yu wo de shijie* 我与我的世界 (My World and I) (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlian shudian, 2014), 167.

31 Jing Hengyi, “Zuijin jiaoyu sichao” 最近教育思潮 (Recent Trends in Educational Thought), *JHYJ*, 59.

32 Jing Hengyi, diary entry for March 7, 1917, *JHYJ*, 436.

33 Jing Hengyi, “Jiaoyu yu shiye zhi jiehe” 教育与实业之结合 (The Union of Education and Industry), *JHYJ*, 37.

34 Jing, “Zuijin jiaoyu sichao,” *JHYJ*, 44.

<p><i>Renge</i> is the model of conscience, the container of morals. In a circular jar, water is circular; in a square jar, water is square. The realization of conscience and morals closely follows that of <i>renge</i>. [...]</p>	<p>人格者，良心之模型，道德之容器也。孟圆水圆，孟方水方。人格实现之如何，而良心与道德亦如影随形而俱改。 [...]</p>
<p><i>Renge</i> is on the one hand independent, individual; on the other hand it is cooperative, societal. These two aspects are mutually realized and development gradually proceeds. Society exists for the sake of <i>renge</i> and <i>renge</i> exists for the sake of society.</p>	<p>人格者，一方面为自立的，个人的，他方面为协同的，社会的；相互实现，渐渐发展者也。为人格而有社会，为社会而有人格。³⁵</p>

Jing's exposition of *renge* here reveals clear conceptual continuity with *jinkaku* as it was used in late Meiji ethical discourse and "personality" as it was originally expressed in Western idealist philosophy. The social state is in every case the precondition for the realization of individual morality. But this does not imply connotative equivalence between the terms. When used on its own in Japanese, the character *kaku* has strongly hierarchical implications of "status" or "rank" – it has been argued that in his early uses of the term, *jinkaku* was for Inoue Tetsujirō an elitist construct, a quality able to be possessed only by those in the upper strata of society with both virtue and academic learning.³⁶ The Chinese *ge*, on the other hand, more often connotes physical shape or form. Hence *renge* in Jing's elegant metaphor above evokes "the human form" – the corporeal container of morality. In a way this seems to be a more apt translation for the idealist "personality" than *jinkaku*, with its (deliberate or otherwise) connotations of "human status/rank," even though the word was imported to China from Japan. This irony may perhaps be explained by the fact that Inoue Tetsujirō, like many Meiji intellectuals, was himself educated in the Chinese classics.³⁷

As principal at First Normal and later at Chunhui Middle School in Shangyu, Jing recruited some of China's most illustrious cultural figures as teachers and both schools became known as bastions of progressivism under his stewardship. His efforts promoting physical education as well as art and music education have been recognized as pioneering by Chinese educational historians. He believed strongly in the importance of cultivating the aesthetic sensibilities of students; at First Normal extracurricular clubs were formed for the study of the subjects as diverse as vernacular poetry and literature, Western painting, and the traditional Chinese art of seal cutting, of which he had been fond since childhood. He stressed that art is necessary not merely for aesthetic appreciation but also for the spiritual formation of *renge*.

³⁵ Ibid., *JHYJ*, 45. English translation is mine.

³⁶ Inoue, *Individual Dignity in Modern Japanese Thought*, 13.

³⁷ See Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, "Katō Hiroyuki and Confucian Natural Rights, 1861-1870," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 44.2 (1984), 491: "When Katō and other mid-nineteenth century Japanese thinkers translated Western philosophical concepts, they used character-compounds found in Chinese classical texts or else devised neologisms based on classical Chinese diction. In this way, Japanese thinkers might unwillingly carry over tacit assumptions and mental associations from the Confucian tradition."

Jing held that the fostering of *rengue* would lead to “a state of spiritual harmony” in China, declaring *rengue jiaoyu* to be “the only way to save the country.”³⁸ The future of China is a constant theme throughout his writings, as it was for the majority of Chinese intellectuals of the period. Yet even if at times his views seem to converge with those of the famous May Fourth iconoclasts, he more often expresses less radical opinions regarding the role of nation-states. “Why do nation-states exist among mankind? Previously it was said that because of war, nation-states were needed to protect territory. But now it is recognized that nation-states are needed for the sake of education.” Jing explains that historically nationalism has been two-dimensional, with nations fighting to expand the territory under their control. What is now needed, he argues, is a shift to a three-dimensional understanding of the nation. If two-dimensional nationalism were to be replaced by three-dimensional nationalism, nation-states would no longer compete with each other over physical territory, but instead over abstract ideals. The responsibility for territorial expansion through military force would be superseded by a responsibility for cultural expansion through education.³⁹ Jing joined the Nationalist Party in 1924 and became increasingly active in party politics during the second half of the 1920s, often at the expense of his educational duties. Objectively, though, his political career was largely unremarkable. “I don’t understand politics; I originally joined the *Guomindang* so I could study and research, but it turned out that the more I studied and researched the less I understood,” he confessed in a 1930 essay. “I want to solemnly declare that I joined a revolutionary organization for the sake of education, not for politics.”⁴⁰

It is also worth mentioning that Jing was far from alone in promoting *rengue jiaoyu* during the Republican era. Many other educators argued that *rengue* cultivation should be an essential feature of educational reform, particularly in Zhejiang, where “more emphasis was placed on moral education than in any other Chinese province during the first decade of the Republic.”⁴¹ Cai Yuanpei, perhaps the most influential educationalist of the day and the first Minister of Education in the Republican government, was another prominent advocate of this pedagogical approach. Cai was also among the first to apply *rengue* retroactively to the canonical thinkers of the Chinese tradition, writing in his *History of Chinese Ethics*, for instance, that for Confucius, *ren* (仁) embodied “the highest *rengue*.”⁴² Cai furthermore begins his summary of the thought of

38 Jing, “Zuijin jiaoyu sichao,” *JHYJ*, 61.

39 Jing Hengyi, “Dongxueguan yu shidai zhi lijie” 动学观与时代之理解 (Dynamic Education and Understanding the Times), *JHYJ*, 95.

40 Jing Hengyi, “Yuefa yu jiaoyu” 约法与教育 (Law and Education), *JHYJ*, 177-178.

41 Ogawa Yui 小川唯, “Guomin geming shiqi Zhongguo de lishi yu jiaoyu – guanyu 1927 nian Zhejiang daxue chengli guocheng” 國民革命時期中國的歷史與教育 – 關於 1927 年浙江大學成立過程 (History and Education in Nationalist Revolution Era China – Regarding the 1927 Foundation of Zhejiang University), in *Dongya shijiao xia de jindai Zhongguo* 東亞視角下的近代中國 (Modern China from an East Asian Perspective) (Taipei: Guoli zhengzhi daxue lishixi, 2006), 172. This article includes a list of essays related to *rengue jiaoyu* published by Jing and his contemporaries.

42 Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, *Zhongguo lunlixue shi* 中国伦理学史 (The History of Chinese Ethics), in *Cai Yuanpei quanji* 蔡元培全集 (The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), vol. 1, 477.

Qing scholar Yu Zhengxie 俞正燮 (1775–1840) as follows: “What is the difference between savage and civilized peoples? The answer: the weight given to the idea of *renge*.”⁴³ This direct application of a neologism coined in late nineteenth century Japan (as a translation of a Western philosophical construct) to the premodern Chinese canon presents problems of its own requiring separate analysis. Interestingly, Cai Yuanpei’s survey of Chinese philosophy, which he based on earlier works by Japanese scholars Kimura Takatarō 木村鷹太郎 (1870–1931) and Kubo Tokuji 久保得二 (1875–1934), was composed while he was studying abroad in Leipzig, the home of several canonical figures of Western philosophy.

The Legacy of *Persönlichkeits-Pädagogik*

While Jing Hengyi first encountered the concept of personality (as *jinkaku*) as a student in Tokyo, it is evident that he later became aware of a specific pedagogical trend that arose around the end of the nineteenth century in Germany known as *Persönlichkeits-Pädagogik* (personality education). The trend was introduced to East Asia by Nakajima Hanjirō 中島半次郎 (1871–1926) with the publication of *Jinkakuteki kyōikugaku no shichō* (人格的教育學の思潮) in 1914. Nakajima, who was originally from Kumamoto, graduated from the Tokyo Senmon Gakko in 1894; in 1900 he was hired as a professor at the same school, which would be rechristened as Waseda University two years later. From 1906–1909 he worked as a teacher in Tianjin at the Beiyang Normal School, afterwards publishing a short treatise on educational relations between Japan and Qing China. In 1910 he went to Germany in order to undertake research on the German education system and the latest developments in pedagogy. He spent over a year there, visiting various universities, meeting with educational theorists, and gathering materials. Although *Persönlichkeits-Pädagogik* was just one of many schools of thought he investigated, it was the one he felt would most benefit Japan. *Jinkakuteki kyōikugaku no shichō* attracted significant attention in Japanese academic circles and was widely discussed in both Japanese and Chinese periodicals. Yang Changji recounts reading a *Yomiuri Shimbun* article about this book in his diary and shows basic familiarity with its contents.⁴⁴ Although Jing makes no particular mention of Nakajima, his synopsis of the fifteen tenets of *renge jiaoyu* in his 1917 lecture on “Recent Trends in Educational Thought” is taken directly from the concluding chapter of *Jinkakuteki kyōikugaku no shichō*.⁴⁵

Supporters of the trend in Germany were students and followers of the then popular philosopher Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926). Eucken, whose philosophy was given the appellation “new idealism” (*Neuidealismus*) as it was seen as an extension of that of Kant and Hegel, gained international fame after winning the 1908 Nobel Prize for Literature. Nakajima analyzes the

43 Ibid., 581.

44 Yang Changji 杨昌济, *Dahuaazhai riji* 达化斋日记 (Dahua Studio Diary) (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1981), 32.

45 Jing, “Zuijin jiaoyu sichao,” *JHYJ*, 54-55. Compare with Nakajima Hanjirō 中島半次郎, *Jinkakuteki kyōikugaku no shichō* 人格的教育學の思潮 (Personality Education Thought) (Tokyo: Dobunkan, 1914), 574-578.

work of five authors whom he deems the leading voices of *Persönlichkeits-Pädagogik*: Gerhard Budde (1865–1944), one of whose lectures Nakajima personally attended at the University of Jena, Oskar Kästner (b. 1872), Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869–1966), Ernst Linde (1864–1943), whose 1897 book⁴⁶ was responsible for bringing the term *Persönlichkeit* into fashion, and Hermann Itschner (1873–1922).

The fifteen tenets of *Persönlichkeits-Pädagogik* outlined by Nakajima, and translated word for word by Jing Hengyi, expound a philosophy of education distinctly grounded in philosophical idealism. Man, though a product of nature, is not controlled by natural forces, instead possessing an inner spiritual life endowing him with freedom and setting him apart from the rest of the natural world. Education should be directed towards the nurturing of this inner spirit to promote individuality and creativity. The overarching goal of education is not the transmission of information; students should be prepared to proactively apply their knowledge and abilities in society. But rather than training students to suit the needs of society, teachers should endeavor to educate individuals who are able to develop society and the nation on their own terms – individuality and talent must not be obliterated in sacrifice to the nation-state. In modern times the rapid advances of material civilization have outstripped those of spiritual civilization, with the result for the masses being the descent into a life driven by desire, a mechanical, convenient existence. The antidote for this aberrant condition is the reaffirmation of personality. Naturalistic theories of humanity must be rejected precisely because they ignore the importance of personality, the quality that separates humans from animals perpetually in conflict with each other in a Darwinian struggle for existence.

Paraphrasing Nakajima, Jing comments that “*rengē jiaoyu* is a philosophical viewpoint with so-called ‘new idealism’ as its core.” The philosophy of Rudolf Eucken was appealing to educationalists of the day looking for a remedy to the spiritual damage engendered by capitalist industrialization, an issue they felt was unsatisfactorily addressed by, for example, John Dewey’s pragmatism. “In our modern era it is by the value we attach to personality and spiritual individuality that we attest our belief in man’s intrinsic independence, and show that we do not regard him as a mere link in the chain of causes and effects,” writes Eucken. “It is, of course, of the utmost importance to free the concepts of personality and individuality from the vague ambiguities which cling to them today, causing us to regard as a natural endowment that which can be acquired only through experience of a world-context.”⁴⁷ For all the stress he places on individuality, Eucken is very much opposed to radical individualism. The fragmentation of society resulting from industrialization and rationalization must be resisted – the inner spiritual individuality necessary for higher moral life is not inborn, nor can it be attained by isolated individuals. Again we find that the emergence of personality is dependent on membership in a greater community, a “world-context.”

46 Ernst Linde, *Persönlichkeits-Pädagogik* (Leipzig: Richter, 1897).

47 Rudolf Eucken, *Christianity and the New Idealism*, trans. Lucy Judge Gibson and W. R. Boyce Gibson (London: Harper, 1909), 13.

But what qualifies as a world-context? The celebrated German novelist Thomas Mann (1875–1955) was another exponent of the idea of *Persönlichkeit* as “an inward spiritual life.”

In addition to inward personhood, however, the nation, or the “emergence of nationality from religious elements, the national idea as a religion,” also takes precedence over the political and social dimensions of man. Because the Absolute cannot be politicised, writes Mann, it is important to follow Kant and separate and distinguish spiritual, national life from the political sphere and to speak not of democracy, but of *Volksstaat*, or the ethnic nation, the community that shares an ethos. The solidarity of all such spirits is itself, however, not a product of the mind, but, rather, solidarity that emerges “organically” from the homogeneity of the form of being.⁴⁸

Within this framework, “Western democracy is seen as an atomistic ‘aggregate of individuals’ and juxtaposed against the German concept of *Nation*, which is ‘a folk community composing a unity,’ the ‘deliberate organisation of something transcending individuals,’ to which single individuals, who are *Persönlichkeiten* (who have cultivated personhood), belong as parts.”⁴⁹ In pluralistic “Western” societies like the United States, the absence of a spiritually unified *Volksstaat* precludes the possibility of the development of *Persönlichkeit*. Such societies have fallen victim to the ruinous forces of industrial capitalism. The domination of the free market has corrupted the inner life of individuals while ethnocultural pluralism has destroyed all semblance of a truly *national* community.

Educating *Persönlichkeiten*, then, is a spiritual rather than political undertaking. “The education of the *Nation* or *Volk* was not understood to be totalitarian education by the state, but, rather, as the fertile ground for *Bildung*, the spiritual formation of integrated, cultivated personalities who would orient themselves to the *Volk* community.”⁵⁰ Instead of the political demands of the government or the economic demands of the market, education must be geared towards the spiritual demands of the *Volksstaat* because only here can *Bildung* be achieved. It is the duty of the educator to preserve the native traditions of the *Volk* and ensure that they will be maintained by ensuing generations. The unity of the greater community realized within the individual personality serves as both a gateway to higher moral and spiritual life as well as a safeguard against the rampant commercialism and materialism of “the West.”

A analogous discourse to this one is readily found in Japan’s national morality ideology. Just as the *Volksstaat* was understood as separate and distinct from the political sphere, the *kokutai* (国体), Japan’s eternal, unchanging national essence centered on the emperor, was often seen in contrast to the *seitai* (政体), the impermanent system of political administration. The latter, of course, pales in importance in comparison with the former. The concept of the *kokutai* was central to moral education in the Empire of Japan; in the Meiji *Imperial Rescript on*

48 Daniel Tröhler, “The Discourse of German *Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik* – A Contextual Reconstruction,” *Paedagogica Historica* 39.6 (2003): 766.

49 Ibid., 767.

50 Ibid., 770.

Education, the *kokutai* is singled out as the fountainhead of Japanese education. The integrity of the *kokutai* is therefore indispensable for the development of *jinkaku*.

Towards a Particularistic *rengē*

In early 1918 Jing Hengyi returned to Japan, this time as the leader of a group of Zhejiang educators on an observation tour of Japanese schools.⁵¹ The delegation visited the Ministry of Education and numerous educational institutions throughout the country, finally returning to China by way of Korea. While in Tokyo, Jing stopped by the campus of his alma mater and there reunited with Kanō Jigorō, who spoke to him regarding “the relationship between general education and national education.” Jing would later describe the “absolute nationalism” he felt characterized Japanese education at the time.⁵² Soon after this tour, Jing published an essay entitled “China’s *rengē*,” his most direct and in-depth exploration of the topic.⁵³

One of the difficulties in understanding the precise meaning of *rengē*, according to Jing, is confusion over its conceptual scope. Is *rengē* a shared possession of all human beings? Or does it suggest a “character” that varies according to nationality or even one that distinguishes every individual? Jing answers this question firmly.

Each nation has its own unique characteristics, that is to say, each nation has its own <i>rengē</i> . [...]	一国有一国之特色，即一国有一国之人格。 [...]
Although China is poor and weak, lagging far behind Europe and America in terms of material progress, it possesses unique spiritual attributes that we must treasure and maintain. [...]	我国虽贫弱，物质文明之进步固不及欧美诸国，而精神上则有世界所无之特色，不可不珍重保持。 [...]
Alas, ever since European trends have made their way to the East, utilitarianism is touted at the expense of morality, familism is considered restrictive while individualism is championed [...]	慨自欧风东渐，以道德主义为虚悬，而盛倡实利主义，以家族主义为拘囿，而极吹个人主义 [...]
But the one fundamental feature of Chinese thought clashes with utilitarianism and individualism: that is morality and familism, or collectivism.	而我国思想上唯一的根本之特色，却与实利主义个人主义相抵触，所谓道德主义与家族主义，合而为团体主义。 ⁵⁴

Jing’s demarcation of the explicative range of *rengē* in this piece appears at first to be a significant departure from his earlier definition of a “container of morals” setting the human species apart from other creatures of the natural world. It might also be seen as a clarification rather than an inconsistency – the previously ambiguous “society” necessary for *rengē* is now simply specified as the “nation.” Furthermore, the full embrace of the classic tropes of the

51 The entire tour is described in fascinating detail in Jing’s diary. See *JHYJ*, 440-448.

52 Jing Hengyi, “Shicha Riben jiaoyu suogan” 视察日本教育所感 (Thoughts on My Observations of Japanese Education), *JHYJ*, 72-75.

53 Jing Hengyi, “Woguo zhi rengē” 我国之人格 (China’s *rengē*), *JHYJ*, 66-71.

54 Ibid., 66-67. English translation is mine.

China/West binary (spiritual vs. material civilization, individualism vs. collectivism) marks this essay as more typical of New Culture Movement discourse than any of his other writings.

He goes on to argue for a synthesis of traditional Chinese familial ethics with the new individualist trend from the West. “Collectivism and individualism both have their strengths and weaknesses. I certainly do not totally oppose individualism nor stubbornly cling to collectivism, but simply oppose the harms of individualism and support the benefits of collectivism and wish to combine the benefits of each.” China’s “new *renge*” should thus be the fusion of the Chinese “collective spirit” (团体精神) with Western “individual development” (个人发展).⁵⁵ In this equation, the “collective spirit” is ostensibly the source of morality, the bedrock of harmonious social relations, with “individual development” being a seemingly equivocal concession to the limited benefits of tolerating a certain degree of individualism. It could certainly be argued that Jing does not contribute much by way of originality here to the discussion on the future of Chinese culture on the eve of the May Fourth Movement. Indeed, countless other intellectuals presented similar and often more sophisticated schemes for ushering China into the modern age. Yet it is noteworthy that unlike many of the more mainstream voices of the day, Jing is concerned far less with China’s political integrity as he is with its moral integrity. The motivation underlying his “nationalism” is less a desire to achieve the utilitarian aims of a “rich country and strong military” than an anxiety over the spiritual implications of a civilizational model in which these very aims are prioritized.

My intention is not to provide an exhaustive scrutiny of the thought of Jing Hengyi, for any such attempt would require much greater attention to the Confucian ethical heritage that undoubtedly shaped his outlook to a significant degree. What I do hope the preceding analysis demonstrates is the value of tracing the historical trajectories of Western concepts and ideologies that reached China through Japanese mediation. Doing so might allow for alternatives to commonly accepted narratives of China’s intellectual Westernization during the first half of the twentieth century. Considering Jing Hengyi’s interpretations of *renge* and *renge jiaoyu* alongside their prior incarnations in the West and Japan permits a more nuanced understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of his thought. From its earliest formulations, the concept of personality was untenable without reference to the “organic community.” Just as *Persönlichkeit* depended upon the framework of the *Volksstaat*, the fostering of *jinkaku* could only occur within the sacred realm of the *kokutai*. Even in the ethical system of Yoshida Seichi, based as it was entirely around the moral development of the self-aware, self-directed individual, *jinkaku* presupposed the *kokutai* for its completeness. While *personality* explicitly indicated a physical individual who was at the same time universal, this universality was implicitly delimited by ethnocultural boundaries in early twentieth-century moral discourse. For those who advocated an educational paradigm focused around the development of personality, the community that allowed for its cultivation had to be preserved and protected from the destabilizing immorality endemic to Western capitalism. Whatever its political ramifications, the primal concern at the

55 Ibid., 69-71.

core of this paradigm was not the wealth and power of nation-states, but the potential for individuals to express their moral natures within them.