



## Preface to the Revised English Edition

This book attempts to clarify and reconstruct the moral basis of social work. Against the mainstream current of doing social work with the technical-rational outlook, we argue that value constitutes the very core of social work. It is with this solid foundation of moral concepts that social work techniques are reconstituted. Our thesis is “social work as moral practice.”

In recent years in the field of social work in the Western society, there have emerged a number of alternative schools that stress the importance of value. In the kind of social work as moral practice that we advocate, a distinctive purpose is to examine the limitation of the “non-judgmental” attitude of social workers and to explain the importance of first-person value involvement in their job. Social workers’ personal moral beliefs and value judgment not only form a basic condition for the interpretation of the client’s problem, but persist in directing their assessment of and intervention in the client’s situation. We would like to point out that social workers need to learn how to take personal value judgment properly into account in their understanding of the client’s situation. Consequently, the so-called social work professional knowledge includes a personal conception of moral knowledge that is realized as a certain moral code or conception of good in practice. With such practice, social workers will gradually develop a perspicacious perception of human life and the dilemma besetting humankind. The “practice wisdom” so highly rated in

the profession is in reality the accumulated knowledge of the moral practice of individual social workers. It is something too often ignored by academics in social work and even front-line workers.

If the thesis of this book is accepted, then social work education cannot be just the passing on of a set of skills or models of techniques. Nor is it just instruction in some kind of know-how, or using some theories to explain human problems and dilemmas. Social work education will mean some form of inculcation of moral knowledge. That is because one's value system, personal character and moral discipline are interactively tied to knowledge formation. From this angle, the academic tradition established in the West over the past two hundred years, especially the development that isolates moral practice from theory construction, has grave limitations. However, the theories that are taught in social work education in the West at present took shape and developed in the soil of such an academic tradition. Contemporary social work knowledge gives scant attention to the substantive content of moral practice, because personal moral practice or value involvement has always been excluded from the arena of accepted wisdom. This neglect is also present in the theories and models of techniques advanced by some alternative schools of social work which emphasize the importance of value. The reason is that many scholars are confined by the Western academic tradition and cannot see beyond it.

The view of social work as moral practice adopted by this book is founded on the moral practice or value involvement initiated and experienced first-hand by social workers. The Confucian tradition in China sets great store by the outlook that moral practice is an important constitutive condition for social and humanity knowledge. Our understanding of this view of knowledge enables us to see in stark contrast the lopsided view of the Western academic tradition and the limitations that tradition has imposed on the development of the practice-oriented knowledge of social work. From Europe, beginning in the 1960s in the twentieth century, there emerged in philosophy and social theories the philosophy of hermeneutics. This school of thought points out that there is an internal connection between value involvement and knowledge construction. From our point of view, what hermeneutics signifies is that some Western scholars have begun to change course on the issue

of moral practice. The “strong thesis of value involvement” as explicated in Chapters 1 and 2 of this book is mainly built on the theoretical viewpoint of hermeneutics. It attempts to establish the importance of first-person value involvement in both the construction of social knowledge and in practical social work. Chapters 3–6 to varying extents apply the theoretical framework of the first two chapters to the conducting of empirical research. They are about cancer survivors, a mentally ill patient in a half-way house, community development, and social work management.

The authors worked at various times in the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Since 1990, our research team has endeavored to develop a theoretical framework based on critical hermeneutics. With what we had developed, we carried out social theory construction, empirical social research, and research on various aspects of social work. The six chapters collected in this book bring together the main results of this body of research carried out in different stages and in different domains spanning more than one decade. The following is a road map of the series of research involved and the route of our adventure.

Early in 1993, we published three articles in Chinese, which were subsequently compiled into a book, *Pipan Quanshi Lun Yu Shehui Yanjiu* (Critical Hermeneutics and Social Research). The first article explicates the theoretical tenets of critical hermeneutics. The second article deals with a person who was a mentally ill patient but has recovered. The third article is an empirical research on community development. In the following years, we embarked on an empirical study into aspects of Chinese society and culture. We developed a conceptual framework that fuses Chinese traditional familism and Western concepts of individual autonomy and of women’s liberation. We made a comparison between Chinese and Western concepts, taking to heart their similarities and differences, and from this set up valid concepts as reference points with which to launch onto an in-depth description and critique of social phenomena and human behavior. In 1998, we published a Chinese monograph, *Hunying, Xingbie Yu Xing: Yige Dangdai Zhongguo Nongcun De Kaocha* (Marriage, Gender, and Sex in a Contemporary Chinese Village). The cultural studies up to this stage, coupled with social theories,

provided us with a more solid standpoint to examine the wider question of the relationship between theory and practice in social work today.

In 2001, the leader of our research team, Professor Sun-pong Yuen, published a long article in Chinese. It is titled “Zhishi Yu Shijian: Rujia Xueshui, Zhexue Quanshixue Yu Shehui Gongzuo Zhi Keneng Qihe” (Knowledge and Practice: A Possible Integration among Confucianism, Philosophical Hermeneutics and Social Work). In this article, he combined the Confucian tradition and the Western hermeneutical tradition: the former is a tradition that has evolved with the quest for the knowledge of virtuous living as its main goal; the latter stresses the paramountcy of moral practice. This merging creates a perspective from which one can understand why, in social research and people’s daily interpreting activities, the research and the interpretation are premised on the researcher or interpreter’s concomitant moral practice. This article further explains the significance of moral practice in social work. It argues that the value judgment of social workers is the indispensable foundation for their adequate interpretation of the client’s problem as well as effective intervention. As such, social workers cannot assume a value-neutral attitude towards the client’s problem and see things from a technical-rational angle, as urged by the mainstream viewpoint. Quite the contrary, they should approach the situation in the first person and make a moral assessment of the client’s value system to ascertain its reasonableness. Clearly, such a view of the social worker’s role clashes with the principle which has so far dominated the profession, the principle of client self-determination. In 2003, Professor Yuen published another Chinese article called “Qianglie Jiazhi Jieru Lun Shiye Xia De Shehui Gongzuo Shijian” (Social Work Practice from the Perspective of the Strong Thesis of Value Involvement). It analyzes in depth the underlying postulates of the theory of knowledge that informs “client self-determination.” The critique of value autonomy as a product of Western secular thinking is built on the results of the author’s years of research into social theories and the cultural research of the earlier stage.

In 2004, the work of our research team for the past decade and more put down firmer roots. On the one hand, our Chinese book, *Marriage, Gender, and Sex in a Contemporary Chinese Village*, was expanded by two chapters that form an epilogue, the fruits of more field work research in

the five years between 1998 and 2002. An English expanded edition was published by M.E. Sharpe in 2004. On the other hand, in the same year, we edited and updated the various social work papers mentioned already, and added two new ones, one about cancer survivors and another about social work management, and published the collection in Chinese as *Quanshi Quxiang De Shehui Gongzuo Shijian* (Reconstitution of Social Work: Towards a Moral Conception of Social Work Practice). This book draws together the various findings we made in our research in social work, in different domains and at different levels of abstraction. We redefined the relationship between theory and practice in social work. We clarified and substantively expounded the indispensable moral basis of social work practice. In all the publications on social work, this might be the first book that systematically combines social work and hermeneutics. We started the English translation of the book a few years ago, and some chapters have undergone revision in the process. Today we are glad to see the translation published and distributed by World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd. We are pleased to share our findings and our claims with the English-speaking public.

Lastly, we thank the Hong Kong Polytechnic University for subsidizing various research projects reported in this book. In particular, we thank Professor Diana Mak for her unstinting support of the research team throughout the years. The publication of this book, in both its original Chinese and this English translation, owes much to her. We would like to record our grateful thanks to her for her part in all of this.

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## Preface to the Chinese Edition

At the beginning of the new millennium, social work in its present form seems to have reached a critical crossroads between surviving and perishing. That does not mean that in the short term, the practice of social work, either in society or academia, will be abolished. What the statement purports to predict is that social work researchers and practitioners, in particular practitioners, are gradually losing faith in the theories underpinning social work and in the efficacy of the applications of intervention models. This lack of confidence is especially evident at present when managerialism is in the ascendancy.

Whether as an academic discipline or a profession, social work shows great inadequacy in its very nature. Social workers deal with various problems stemming from human predicaments and sufferings, yet social work, unlike ancillary caring professions, does not define clearly the scope of its concern. It appears to encompass all the various aspects of human predicaments and sufferings. Even without deep theoretical probing and just reflecting on our daily experience, the causes of human dilemmas and sufferings, especially those arising from human relationships, are both complex and wide-ranging. They involve factors that are difficult to articulate. It is difficult to think of any discipline, knowledge or methods that can effectively solve the varied and intricate problems of human relationships. The conclusion one draws from this understanding is that social work is a profession fraught with extreme difficulties. The kind of subject knowledge a social worker learns in college can only be a first step in the understanding and alleviating of pain and suffering. Seasoned social workers understand that there is an enormous gap between the

knowledge about social work gained in college and the conditions of the real world.

Social work academics are well aware of the gap. However, they often harbor a misunderstanding of the nature of social phenomena and the way to study them. They are constrained by so-called “rigor” in the rules of academic discourse. They have to follow the formal procedures of academic publishing and they are always casting an eye on the academic status following publication. As a result, many concrete circumstantial factors that should have been taken into account are neglected. The majority of social work researchers strive to describe and explain human predicaments and sufferings with the aim of obtaining generalities and comprehensiveness. The result is an over-reliance on systematic analysis to simplify or rarefy social problems, even to the extent of distorting them, with unproductive results. Partly because of this, the results of academic social work studies are often divorced from reality, and the guidelines provided by such studies prove impracticable.

In general, mainstream social work research in the West follows the methodology of a positivist view of social science which approaches the construction of theory and intervention models from a technical-rational angle. It reduces the dilemmas and sufferings born of human relationships to matters of technicality, and encourages practitioners to maintain a stance that is value-detached and non-judgmental when going about their practical work. Such an approach shows two characteristics of the modern time: first, an orientation to social work study that is based on the paradigm of natural science, and second, the dominant ideology of modern society, that is, respect for the principle of self-determination.

Technical-rationality and the principle of self-determination seem to have become unquestionable notions of modern people and the guiding principle of their actions. For them, technical-rationality represents a peak in the development of human cognition; it enshrines the objectivity of knowledge and truth. Modern people think that they have been cleared of the fog of the religion and morality of the past, and from the ensuing objective value-detached vantage point, can now coolly view external nature and society and the inner world of the self. They believe that only by doing so can they correctly apprehend natural phenomena and control them. Isn't the material culture of the modern world

a testimony to this belief? The question is, can society and the inner world of humankind be understood with the same attitude?

From technical-rationality and objectivity of knowledge is derived the principle that factual statements and value judgments are two entirely separate things. Factual statements can be objectively verified, but value judgments are seen to be subjective perceptions indicating one's likes and dislikes without an objective or rational basis. The principle further holds that if one is to obtain objective knowledge about society and humans, including an accurate understanding of the predicaments and sufferings besetting human relationships, then one should abandon, as best as one can, one's own values in order to undertake the task of understanding problems and providing solutions. To modern people, the above "belief" not only indicates an attitude to be adopted in research, it also indicates an epistemology that has no value involvement. Therefore, this "belief" itself belongs to the realm of objectively verifiable factual statements.

On the other hand, once one accepts the sharp demarcation between fact and value, then the corollary is that no subjective conclusions in the form of a value judgment can be validly deduced from objective factual propositions. But then a logical conclusion would seem to present itself. Since value is subjective and not objectively verifiable, it follows that there is no objective basis on which we can judge the correctness of value beliefs. Such a conclusion is the epistemological basis of value relativism and of cultural pluralism held by most modern people. From this comes the dominant value principle of the modern age: respect for another person's self-determination. However, this line of reasoning leads to a paradox of modern society. Modern people make use of the factual statement "Factual statements cannot lead to value judgment" to produce the value principle of "Respecting individual self-determination." This is of course not a valid deduction, yet curiously enough, this value principle derived from an amalgam of a certain view of knowledge and a certain value belief has become a universally accepted belief of the modern time. What is even more curious is that modern people ignore the value belief part of the deduction and insist, consciously or unconsciously, on the objectivity and impartiality of cognitive pursuits. We may perhaps explain the phenomenon in this way. In recent centuries, science and technology have advanced at a tremendous speed, and they have

brought into existence a dazzling material culture. This implants in modern people the conviction that natural science is the paradigm of all knowledge. They ignore what some contemporary philosophers have pointed out, namely that natural science is constituted with an aligned theoretical or value component. They are so dazzled by its practical value that they believe firmly that such knowledge is objective and value-neutral. Furthermore, they view and judge the constitution of the social sciences and humanities according to that paradigm. This misunderstanding leads to serious and misguided consequences for the social sciences and humanities. Scholars attempt to view and understand the structure of social phenomena and the nature of social science through the spectacles of natural science; they fail to see the value component in them. This deficiency is especially prevalent in the field of social work. Scholars and practitioners in general treat social work theories, intervention models and skills as no more than technical matters, thus omitting or avoiding the most important constituent — the essential moral element.

The discussion above also demonstrates clearly that modern people do not exclude moral beliefs. In fact, respecting the rights of others or the rights of the clients to self-determination is a dominant value belief of modern society, but this very belief exposes at the same time the deficiency of the research of social science and social work mentioned before. As mentioned earlier, the principle of self-determination has a lot to do with a value-detached conception of knowledge and rationality. Since fact does not entail value, and value cannot be objectively verified, that seems to imply that individual value choices cannot be objectively judged as right or wrong, true or false. Therefore, we should allow individuals to make their own value choices. This in short is the argument advanced in favor of value relativism and cultural pluralism. We can see that modern social and humanities inquiry into value issues, no matter which schools the authors owe allegiance to, seems to be deliberately avoiding substantive, concrete issues of morality and focusing on a non-substantive abstract discussion of procedural justice. The reason appears to be that substantive moral matters belong only to subjective value standards pertaining to individuals or particular societies. They have no objective or rational basis. They are matters of choice to be made by the people concerned. On the other hand, procedural justice emphasizes only the abstract principle of

individual self-determination, and does not involve substantive value content. But the question is whether the so-called procedural justice is itself a value belief? Does this principle not involve substantive value orientations, postulates about the traits of human nature, and the relationship between people and society? If one reflects on these questions, one can see that they reflect the pattern of development of Western society in the past two hundred years, and of the Western conceptions of individualism and ideology. Along with the development, there have been layer after layer of misunderstanding, and from that comes the idea that social knowledge and social research should imitate the paradigm of natural science. A concomitant result is a view of social work practice and research that emphasizes technical-rationality and value detachment.

The idea of “empowerment” emphasized in social work exemplifies to a certain extent the above state of affairs. This idea, so dear to social work practitioners as a guideline to practice, is rooted in the deep structure of modern Western culture. It points to a way of carrying out practical work without intervening in the client’s subjective value choices. Practitioners work to affirm and reinforce the self-confidence and attitude of the client and so to overcome problems and sufferings. But they do their best to avoid influencing the client’s value choices. This method shows the dominant value belief of modern society and a view of social and humanities knowledge filtered through the technical-rational perspective. On the one hand, there is the belief that individual values should be self-determined. On the other hand, suffering is unconsciously regarded as something existing like any natural phenomenon, an objective entity outside of humans and imposed upon humans. Therefore, a successful way of dealing with it is to strengthen the self or one’s own choice and to overcome it like any physical obstacle, and in so doing overcome any difficulties. This way of doing things dovetails with the know-how of the mainstream society. It reduces social and personal happenings, including the predicaments and sufferings in human relationships, to the level where a technical-rational approach can cope. From this perspective, social work research and practical operations likewise do not involve moral beliefs. What is required is to understand, analyze and intervene with a value-detached attitude. Following this line of reasoning, we see that modern people are tied by the ideology, view of knowledge and

value system that they consciously or unconsciously advocate. They can only comprehend human activities, and dilemmas and sufferings from the technical-rational angle. Consequently, when they face sufferings from sources such as aging, sickness and death, they seem to be at a loss for words and the right attitude with which to deal with such predicaments. In other words, modern people can only deal with the predicament of existence from a single and biased viewpoint. This viewpoint is more clearly reflected in the theory of positivism than in any other school of thought. It shows the limitation of the conception of social work derived from the mainstream technical-rational approach of the West. We, the editorial authors, are of the opinion that one of the serious deficiencies of the limitation is failing to acknowledge the moral element in social work. This is what led to the crucial question of the survival of social work as asserted at the beginning of this introduction.

One of the key problems with social work is that it is not clearly defined. How differently do social workers deal with human dilemmas and sufferings compared to workers in other caring professions? What is distinctive about social work theories and intervention models? Quite a number of intervention models in social work are borrowed from other social sciences, especially psychology. Strangely, when theories or intervention procedures from other disciplines are borrowed into social work, they often become simplified or distorted. Scholars and practitioners concerned fail to answer the question about how social workers deal with human predicaments and sufferings differently from workers in allied disciplines or what is distinctive about social work. We believe that one of the main reasons is that they have either ignored or lack a proper understanding of the moral basis of their discipline.

One of the main purposes of this book is to clarify and construct the moral basis of social work. We advocate the conception of "social work as moral practice." One big difference between this conception and the positivist view of social work is that we think the job social workers are engaged in is itself a moral practice. As social workers try to understand the situation of the client, construe the problem in a certain way, and apply an intervention model to the task, they are involved together with the client in certain moral beliefs or value judgments. Social workers do not, as positivists would have us believe, take a value-free attitude in

dealing with the client. If social workers ignore the moral component in their practice, they are ignoring the most important part of their work.

This book consists of six chapters.<sup>1</sup> The first two chapters together make up a theoretical inquiry. Chapters 3–6 extend the theoretical analysis to empirical research. In the first two chapters, Sun-pong Yuen combines critical theory and hermeneutics to put forward arguments for a “strong thesis of value involvement” and uses it to examine the nature of social work. He points out that holding onto relevant beliefs about moral values and putting them into effect will form a strong foundation for the improvement and development in social work skills. In the four chapters based on empirical research, the authors deal separately with four different areas of research: a person recovering from mental illness, a couple recovering from cancer, community development and the management of social work. They demonstrate how to conduct research employing concepts from critical theory and hermeneutics. The conceptual framework adopted and the thick description achieved can offer pointers and examples about the degree of deep understanding of the clients that can be achieved in social work practice. The following is a survey of the chapters.

In the first and second chapters, “Towards a Hermeneutic Conception of Social Work Practice (1)” and “Towards a Hermeneutic Conception of Social Work Practice (2),” Sun-pong Yuen expounds “the strong thesis of value involvement” which is based on critical theory and hermeneutics. He points out that any understanding entails value involvement on the part of the interpreter. There is no objective understanding. Mainstream social work is heavily influenced by positivism. In its very attempt to build up an understanding that is value-neutral or objective, social work loses what constitutes its core — its moral element. The two chapters are divided into four sections. The first section outlines the myths of the positivist view of social work. It examines the inadequacy of positivist social work, as well as the misunderstandings about social work harbored by researchers and social workers of that persuasion. The second section introduces “the strong thesis of value involvement” and delineates the moral requirement of social work practice. It explicates the notion of “social work as moral practice.” The third section analyzes value involvement and the principle of self-determination and their

corresponding social contexts. It points out that the principle which most social workers subscribe to, "client self-determination," is in fact closely tied to the idea of value detachment which is emphasized by the quite narrow positivist view of knowledge. From this viewpoint, the author further examines the relationship between the principle of self-determination and the pattern of development of secular society. Placed in the wider context of societal development, the principle of self-determination is examined to see how it has become modern society's ideology and the main guiding principle in social work. The fourth section reemphasizes the importance of value involvement. It argues for the thesis that "Moral beliefs form the main foundation of social work skills." Once this thesis is established, the moral foundation of social work becomes clear. The author then explores the relationship among understanding, self-interpretation and social work skills, in order to reveal the close relationship between value-embedded interpretive understanding and social work skills in practice.

The third chapter, "A Hermeneutic Study of the Mentally Ill 'Self'," is a discussion that attempts to link up the question of "What is understanding?" with the constitution of the self in people who have mental problems. Mary C.K. Fong points out that with such mental cases, one of the things that are problematic, whether for medical staff, social workers, relatives or ordinary people, is that they find the affected person's actions difficult to understand. The phrases used to describe such actions, so-called "mad" or "mentally abnormal or disordered," denote some actions which go against the norm or where the rationale for them is not clear. Medical models are based on a positivist view of knowledge and hold that symptoms of mental illnesses can be traceable to physiological matters such as genes and explainable by them. The author tries to approach the question from a hermeneutical angle and employs concepts like "rationality," "intelligibility," "self-interpretation," "moral predicament," and "fusion of the investigator's perspective and the actor's perspective," to build up a hermeneutical framework in an attempt to explore how the constitution of the self takes place in people with mental problems. She also deals with the situation of these people outside the physiological domain by examining the psychological, social, cultural and self-concept layers. These aspects of the situation are exactly those that a social worker will

encounter when trying to understand the client. The case study portion of the chapter shows how to define the client's problem from a hermeneutical standpoint. This points the way to a method of achieving deep understanding different from that derived from the causal model.

Wai-ying Chan in Chapter 4, "The Meaning of Cancer from a Hermeneutic Perspective," treats cancer as an "existential situation." This interpretation is unlike that which treats cancer purely as a "disease." The two views differ in the way they understand the relationship between people and cancer. An existential situation sees "body" as one of the basic conditions for understanding the world; it is not only a physiological functioning center. Chan points out that the bodily changes that are brought about by cancer not only impact a patient's daily routine, they also affect his/her customary comprehension of the world and self-interpretation. Ultimately the patient's way of life undergoes a change of meaning for him/her. The chapter begins with a few popular models of viewing cancer and some of their limitations. Using a hermeneutical analysis of terms like "meaning," "language," "emotions," "self-interpretation" and "existential situation," the author weaves a conceptual framework with which to understand and describe the import of cancer. In the case study portion of the chapter, the author makes good use of thick description, a method often used in hermeneutical social research, to describe the medical history of a cancer-stricken couple, and in so doing, highlights their unique existential situation and deeper significance.

The fifth chapter is "Critical Theory and Community Development." There, Yuk-ying Ho and Kun-sun Chan utilize the concepts of "communicative rationality" and "communicative action" to discuss the rational basis of community development. Community development emphasizes as its aim the "consciousness raising" process of its clients. This aim is different from the research angle adopted by mainstream social research of determining the relationship between means and ends. This chapter depicts and interprets the predicament of social workers engaged in community development. The predicament is seen as generated by the tensions and contradictions inherent in the relationship formed by the aims of intervention, code of practice and the limitation of objective circumstances. The authors show how the aim of "consciousness raising"

itself involves strong value judgment and moral orientation. The predicament of the social workers and the tensions and dilemmas concerned appear unsolvable because, among other reasons, social workers only stress communication models that are tactical. They ignore or avoid discussing issues of value beliefs and moral practice with their clients. The analysis of the authors shows that this is the result of the emphasis on client self-determination and non-judgmental approach in social work. The reliance on a strategic mode of communication also leads easily to the loss of the heuristic objective of community development work.

In the last chapter, Chapter 6, "The Moral Basis of Social Work Management," Kun-sun Chan writes a response to the tendency for managerialism to gain dominance in the mainstream of thinking about social work management. Managerialism puts emphasis on improving the administrative efficiency of social work agencies and providing quality social service. Chan points out that this is "equating social service and social work with commercial transactions" as well as "treating clients as customers." It neglects the distinctive moral character of social work. Based on the thesis of this book that "Social work itself is moral practice," Chan examines such value-loaded terms as "client self-determination" and "empowerment" in order to find the moral component of social work. He further shows how managerialism gradually reduces social work to a matter at the technical level. Finally, by making use of mental rehabilitation institutions as objects of study, the chapter ends by describing how social workers of different ranks cope under managerialism. In so doing, the author reveals the moral element in social work management. The analysis and discussion in this chapter point to a new direction in social work management that sees social work as moral practice.

The authors of the six chapters were at one time or another teachers and researchers in the Department of Applied Social Sciences of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. For a number of years, a group of staff and research students in the department has been working to develop a theoretical framework based on critical theory and hermeneutics for theory construction, empirical investigation and social work research. This book represents one of the main products of that endeavor. We would like to thank the Hong Kong Polytechnic University for funding our various research projects. In particular, we would like to state on record

our deep appreciation of the encouragement and help given by Professor Diana Mak, department head for more than a decade during which much of our work was carried out. Without her, we would not have reached the present state of development and research. This year, Professor Mak will retire from her post. We would like to mark it by expressing our deep respect for her and dedicating this book to her.

The Editors  
February 16, 2004

## Note

1. The first chapter of this book “Towards a Hermeneutic Conception of Social Work Practice (1)” and the second chapter “Towards a Hermeneutic Conception of Social Work Practice (2)” together form a revised merger of two previous papers: “Zhishi Yu Shijian: Rujia Xueshui, Zhexue Quanshixue Yu Shehui Gongzuo Zhi Keneng Qihe” (Knowledge and Practice: A Possible Integration among Confucianism, Philosophical Hermeneutics and Social Work), *Shehui Lilun Xuebao* (Journal of Social Theory) 4, no. 2 (2001), 259–331; and “Qianglie Jiazhi Jieru Lun Shiye Xia De Shehui Gongzuo Shijian” (The Nature of Social Work Practice from the Perspective of the Strong Thesis of Value Involvement), *Shehui Lilun Xuebao* (Journal of Social Theory) 6, no. 2 (2003), 203–280. The third chapter “A Hermeneutic Study of the Mentally Ill ‘Self’” and the fifth chapter “Critical Theory and Community Development” first appeared in *Pipan Quanshi Lun Yu Shehui Yanjiu* (Critical Hermeneutics and Social Research), ed. Sun-pong Yuen (New Jersey: Global Publishing Co., 1993), 97–156, 55–95. These chapters are the result of revisions by the authors.