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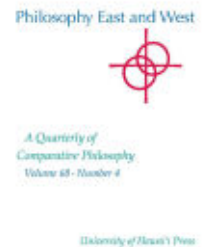
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## CHINA'S PARTICULAR VALUES AND THE ISSUE OF UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE: CONTEMPORARY CONFUCIANS AMIDST THE POLITICS OF UNIVERSAL VALUES



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Referring to James Legge's translation of the *Liji* 禮記, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy's justification for legalizing same-sex marriage was based on the statement, "Confucius taught that marriage lies at the foundation of government."<sup>1</sup> Justice Kennedy universalized and applied Confucius' comment in a way that Confucius would never have imagined it would be. Yet, Justice Kennedy's universalization fits into a legacy of Western utilizations of the wisdom of the ancient Chinese sage. Although in recent history many Europeans and North Americans regard universal values as a challenge to other societies to reform, it is important to remember that, in the eighteenth century, Europeans looked to China for universal values to reform European society. In response to Louis XV's inquiry about how to improve France, his advisor François Quesnay responded: "Sire, you must moralize the French with the public spirit of the Chinese." As Frederic Wakeman (1937–2006) reflected, "At that time Confucian China seemed to embody many of the positive values which Europeans felt they lacked."<sup>2</sup> For example, in François Quesnay's *Despotism in China*, and Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*,<sup>3</sup> China was held up as a mirror to inspire reforms and advances in Europe; thus, Europeans felt free to idealize Chinese realities to better serve modernization projects in Europe.

It might be helpful for both Westerners and Chinese to keep this history in mind because the recent history of China's struggles with Western "universal values" (*pushi jiazhi* 普世價值) is thus just one stage of historical development; moreover, the West might in the future struggle with ways that the Chinese transform universal values into new paradigms or models of a more modern and equitable society. China and the West will surely continue to interpret one another's texts and values in ways that surprise us. The present study explores several specific and interconnected Confucian efforts to wrestle with the issue of universal values in the context of the evolving Communist Party/State's conflict with universal values in order to illustrate and analyze their interactions.

Even though the Communist Party/State has almost always taken a critical stance toward American political culture and values, tensions over universal values have not been constant. Since the late 1970s, receptivity to such Western values has fluctuated with heightened intensity; moreover,

there has been a wide and diverse spectrum of views both within and beyond the Communist Party. Overall, in recent decades, Confucianism has increasingly become an integral component of Chinese debates over universal values. In sweepingly general and simplified terms, Confucian advocates can be roughly categorized into three major orientations: some conservatives, like Jiang Qing 蔣慶, focus on restoring ancient customs and even to a degree condemn modernity (especially, but not exclusively, its Western “liberal” variety); others, like Chen Ming 陳明, seek to blend Confucian values into a Westernized modern life and even call for a Confucian civil society and civil religion; and those more mindful of the Party, like Gan Yang 甘陽 with his turn in recent years to integrating the thought traditions of Confucius, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping, utilize Confucianism to strengthen the Party’s ideology.

There has also been a diverse range of conceptions and usages of “democracy” and “Confucianism” that have projected the fundamental relationship between these two traditions as either conflictive, compatible, hybrid, or critical. In 2012, Fred Dallmayr and Zhao Tingyang 趙汀陽 published a co-edited volume of essays that provides a lucid array of such perspectives on Confucianism and Western values, but also on the New Left, that retains much of the Party’s skeptical hostility toward both Confucian and Western political thought.<sup>4</sup> From my perspective as of this writing in early 2017, one particularly striking turn in Chinese political thought is that the rich diversity—including some advocating human rights—of the first dozen years of the twenty-first century has become notably (but not totally) reduced in the years since the publication of that volume and President Xi Jinping’s 習近平 rise to power.

Against this backdrop, I will explore a strand of the Confucian revival that has largely escaped notice in the West and will therewith provide a case study of the rise and decline of its discussions of values of universal significance in order to open another window on the changing environment for universal values. Besides illuminating selected aspects of the intellectual landscape, I hope this exploration will enhance our awareness of the diversity of contemporary Confucian thought and also set forth some reflections on both its potential and its limitations.

### *Advocacy for Master Zhu’s Family Instructions in Light of China’s Evolving Political Culture*

Although the *Zhuzi jiaxun* 朱子家訓 (Master Zhu’s family instructions) was preserved in some family records and eventually published in the early seventeenth century and again in the early eighteenth century, the *Family Instructions* received scant attention until 1996. The World Federation of Chu Family Associations (Shijie Zhu Shi Lianhehui 世界朱氏聯合會—hereafter WFCA) made public the *Family Instructions* by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–

1200) and facilitated their inclusion in a widely circulated modern edition of his works.<sup>5</sup> The WFCA also began to promote the *Family Instructions* within the Federation to Zhu lineage members who had been unaware of the *Family Instructions*. For instance, the 1996 *Newsletter* published five testimonial essays praising the compatibility of *Master Zhu's Family Instructions* with modern society.<sup>6</sup> Yet, this publication avoided philosophical or political issues probably because the Federation had no legal standing in China or elsewhere. After someone alerted authorities that this illegal organization appeared to be engaged in questionable activities, security officials from Beijing twice in the late 1990s interrogated the WFCA's secretary-general, Zhu Jieren 朱杰人, but ultimately did not press charges. Although WFCA leaders had fruitlessly sought legal status in several Asian countries, it was only when Dudley Gee (Zhu Puzhao 朱普照) registered the WFCA with the Arizona Corporation Commission in 2001–2002 that the group gained a sense of legality. Still, the Chinese government remained suspicious of the WFCA. Government and Party officials did not accept invitations to participate in ceremonies in 2000 marking the 800th anniversary of Zhu Xi's death.

A turn in political culture in 2001 provided an opening for the WFCA when PRC President Jiang Zemin 江澤民 declared a joint approach, "governing the country by law and with virtue," and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued the "directive outlining implementation of moral construction of the citizens." A WFCA academic conference and magazine cited Jiang's declaration and the Party's directive as grounds for promoting *Master Zhu's Family Instructions* as a way to contribute to the Socialist Construction of the nation and "our country's reforms." One professor at a university engaged in training Communist Party cadres even suggested that the *Family Instructions* could help the Party avoid corruption—if cadres heeded Zhu Xi's warning "not to acquire wealth that does not accord with what is fair." Although the published papers marked a significant enhancement of positive public attention to *Master Zhu's Family Instructions*, the authors also spoke of the feudalistic "origins," "dregs," and "color" of Confucian family instructions and of the need for them to be criticized and rectified by the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, all the papers were delivered by local Party/State officials (either active or retired). Still, the WFCA cleverly held the conference and published their magazine embellished with the calligraphy and photograph of Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (1909–2004), an eminent Peking University philosopher who was renowned for his expertise on both Chinese Marxism and Confucianism.

Indeed, that turn in political culture followed China's signing of the Millennium Declaration by all member nations of the United Nations, which reconfirmed that universal values, such as freedom, equality, and tolerance, were "essential to international relations in the twenty-first century."<sup>8</sup> In this vein, the 2008 Beijing Olympics espoused "one world, one dream";

moreover, a group of Chinese intellectuals signed the “08 Charter” (*Ling ba xianzhang* 零八憲章) endorsing universal values as being crucial to China’s reforms and progress. One of the high points of this embrace of universal values came in 2010 when Politburo member Qin Xiao 秦曉 delivered a commencement speech at Tsinghua (Qinghua) University urging students to side with universal values.<sup>9</sup> The WFCA leadership was aware of this uptick in the perceived legitimacy of international cooperation and the openness to discuss universal values; moreover, crucial leaders made notable moves in that direction.

In contrast to the 2002 magazine’s acknowledgment of the feudal origins of the *Family Instructions* and the values therein, as well as the magazine’s emphasis on the need for such feudalistic traditional values to be rectified by the Party before traditional values could assist the Socialist construction of the Chinese nation, the WFCA’s founding and emeritus president, Zhu Changjun 朱昌均 (K. Chu Chang-kyun) (1921–2012), proclaimed a different vision at the WFCA’s Sixth Assembly of Delegates in October of 2005. Zhu Changjun declared a universal perspective: “*Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* were not intended or prepared only for the Zhu family, but also prepared for the people of the whole world.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the international nature of the WFCA also extended to a more inclusive, global, or universalistic perspective. In a special 2009 magazine celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the WFCA, the entry on *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* did not repeat any of the reservations brought up in the 2002 magazine about the feudalistic origins and content of the *Family Instructions*. Instead, the 2009 publication championed Zhu Xi’s relevance for the contemporary world. With an implicit universal penchant, the article asserted that people should bring Zhu’s spirit and methods into the modern world to revive traditional wisdom and to revitalize creativity within tradition.<sup>11</sup>

A high point in the promoting of *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* occurred in Malaysia in 2010. On July 3, at the Xiao’enyuan 孝恩園, a large Chinese cemetery in the hills outside Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian Chu [Zhu] Family Association held a public dedication of a massive marble stele on which the *Family Instructions* were inscribed in Chinese. The executive president of the Xiao’enyuan Foundation, Wang Chenfa 王琛發, explained that he erected the stele to draw public attention to the *Family Instructions* for educational purposes. For accessibility to a wider audience, Wang also provided an English translation, which was inscribed parallel to the Chinese text.<sup>12</sup>

At this ceremony, Zhu Jieren’s speech commented on the larger significance of *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* on the marble stele; for instance, the *Family Instructions* “provided people a fundamental bottom line for what constitutes being a person,” as well as guidance for becoming a civilized, moral individual:

This is an extraordinarily clear and executable red line; if you transgress this line, you do not deserve to be considered a “person.” What is more, *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* even admonish us on how we can become an ethical person, a noble person, a cultivated person, and a civilized person. They teach us the virtues of tolerance, forgiveness, self-restraint, intellectual modesty, and even to be strict with regulating oneself and lenient in dealing with others, and thus manifest Chinese culture’s matchless broad-mindedness and outstandingly special view of values.<sup>13</sup>

Thereupon, Zhu Jieren directly raised the issue of universal values and the international relevance of the *Family Instructions*:

For a long time, Western culture has incessantly propagated and pursued what it labels “universal values,” that is, “democracy,” “liberty,” and “human rights.” To be sure, these are a kind of “universal values.” However, does our Chinese nation have “universal values” to contribute to humanity? I believe *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* possess fundamental value perspectives for universally held views regarding human relations, self-cultivation, morality, society, and personhood. *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* have been public for only a little over twenty years, but have quickly been approved and accepted by the broad masses of [our] society and simultaneously disseminated to various parts of the world and praised as the life code of the Chinese people—which is altogether ample evidence that the values in *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions* possess universal significance.<sup>14</sup>

Given the sensitivity in China to Western claims that human rights and democracy are universal values to be adopted globally, Zhu Jieren’s statement extended a significant, but measured, recognition.

Although he stopped just short of providing a resoundingly positive answer to his own question of whether or not China could contribute something (i.e., *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions*) to universal values, his statement could easily be read as implying that such was indeed the case. He came quite close when he declared the “values” in *Zhu’s Family Instructions* to be of “universal significance” and to “possess fundamental value perspectives for universally held views regarding human relations, self-cultivation, morality, society, and personhood.” Zhu Jieren’s goal of making the *Family Instructions* globally accessible as human values is also evident in his arranging for a more universalized English translation, as well as translations into other languages, including German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Malay, Arabic, Korean, and Japanese.<sup>15</sup>

We could regard Zhu Jieren’s speech as the logical conclusion of the keynote speech in 2005 of the WZFA’s founding president Zhu Changjun; nonetheless, Zhu Jieren was surely influenced by the relative openness to universals during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Such comparative openness was evident in China’s becoming a signatory to the UN’s Millennium Declaration of 2000, the one-world theme of the Beijing Olympics of 2008, and most explicitly in Political Bureau member Xiao



Qin's speech at Tsinghua in 2010. However, Zhu Jieren's explicit praise was only for the "universal significance" of Zhu Xi's *Family Instructions*, leaving implicit the extensions to "universal values." As the astute editor of a major Chinese publishing house, he had experience perceiving the lines between what could be said and what could be printed; moreover, he was probably cognizant of the backlash from ideologues within the Party to calls for "universal values" by such people as the ones who signed the 08 Charter.

### *Increased Hostility to Universalism in the Xi Jinping Era*

In the wake of the PRC leadership transition to President Xi Jinping in mid-November 2012, the Party/State's hostility to universal values noticeably increased. This shift was most evident when Liu Qibao 劉奇葆 became the head of the Publicity Department, which oversees propaganda. A notice was sent to "higher schools" about "seven prohibited discussions" (*qi bujiang* 七不講); moreover, after Zhang Xuezhong 張雪忠, a teacher at the East China University of Politics and Law, released the contents of the notice to news media, he was fired for betraying state secrets. Some news outlets and websites, especially in Hong Kong, published the list of topics in May 2013.<sup>16</sup> The prohibition included universal values, civil society, civil rights, the Communist Party's historic mistakes, the class of influential officials and bourgeoisie, and an independent judiciary. Although one Chinese administrator at a national university in Shanghai told me that he had never heard of this list, an administrator at another major university in China confirmed knowing in detail about the list and participating in discussions about it at his university. Many Chinese friends are reluctant to discuss the list, and some assert that it was a limited and temporary measure.

In Liu Qibao's public statements, he apparently avoids addressing the prohibited list itself; however, as in his famous article in *Qiu shi* 求是 (Seek the truth), he champions the superiority of China's model of Socialism with Chinese characteristics and condemns earlier efforts to ape Western developmental models, which have proven to be flawed.<sup>17</sup> Compared to Liu's article, Xi Jinping's speeches about Confucianism generally project broader and more glowing, but generalized, endorsements.<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, President Xi's most important speech on universal values strikes a militant tone in his projection of foreign powers using "universal values" to subvert China's ideology; moreover, some comrades within the Communist Party have thus been duped into serving as "trumpeters of Capitalist ideology":

Within and beyond the nation various antagonistic powers always seek to cause us to change our flag and banner, and their strategic point is precisely to attempt to cause us to cast aside our faith in Marxism and discard our belief in Socialism and Communism. And even some of our comrades within the Party,

who haven't clearly perceived the hidden agenda therein, think that since Western "universal values" have endured for several centuries, why shouldn't we acknowledge them? Accepting them won't entail any great loss to us, so why insist on becoming so stubborn? Such people revere Western theories and slogans like the Golden Rule, and thus unwittingly become trumpeters of Capitalist ideology.

An even clearer example of the militant struggle is evident later in this 2016 speech:

In the contemporary era, main currents and counter-currents exist at the same time, progressive and backward elements are intertwined, so trends of thought in society rage in diverse confusion. I have said that there are, roughly speaking, three zones of thinking and public opinion: a red zone, a black zone and a gray zone. The red zone is our principal front, which must be defended and maintained; the black zone is mainly a negative creature, always wishing to brandish a shining sword and to cut down those under its control; the gray zone is our major area of contention, which must be changed into a red-colored zone.<sup>19</sup>

Repeatedly in the speech to the Party's Central University, he reminds the student cadres that "the Party is the university's surname" and thus has priority claim explicitly to their political loyalty and perhaps implicitly to their (Confucian) family identity as well.

Such statements by leading Party officials provide a small window onto a Party policy that set the tone of the political culture in which grassroots Confucian intellectuals work. In that context, Zhu Jieren has opened a dialogue with a self-identified "Contemporary Confucian" (*Dangdai Rujia* 當代儒家) group of young philosophy professors from universities in Beijing and Shanghai regarding the issue of universal values. Such discussions by public intellectuals might provide us with an additional vantage point for not only understanding trends within a wing of the Confucian revival but also for clarifying some of the intellectual underpinnings of, and conflicts within, the Party's simultaneous promotion of the Chinese version of socialism and condemnation of universal values.

The group of young philosophy professors had a series of freewheeling discussions at Fudan University in Shanghai to explore what was wrong with "universal values." After the transcript was edited, it was published as a book, *He wei pushi? Shei zhi jiazhi?* 何謂普世? 誰之价值? (What's called universal? Whose values?).<sup>20</sup> Although the subtitle means "Contemporary Confucians Discuss Universal Values," it is actually a hostile dismissal of "universal values" as simply an ideological tool for Western domination and subjugation of the world. The book points out that all values are historically conditioned and rooted in a particular culture; hence, the contributors proclaim that Western notions of "universal" values have inherent tensions and contradictions, which have caused problems when imported into China.



These Contemporary Confucians also strongly criticize the “New Confucians” (*Xin Rujia* 新儒家) of Hong Kong and Taiwan for first accepting Western universal values as the basis for discussion with the West. The New Confucians are presented as passive and hopelessly defensive and thus incapable of either thinking critically about Western values or setting forth the inherent integrity of Confucian values. (Of course, readers of *Philosophy East and West* will be aware that such characterizations of the New Confucians of Hong Kong and Taiwan are unfair. For instance, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 [1909–1995] sought not merely to find “equivalences” to Western values and concepts, but rather “to use Kant’s framework to suppress Kant’s limitations in ways that reveal the theoretical weight of Confucianism.”<sup>21</sup> However, I doubt I need to digress to defend the New Confucians.) As a large and sophisticated civilization, China has its own values; therefore, the book’s authors assert that before entering into dialogue with the West, China must first attain a firmer grasp of its own Confucian texts and ideas in order to establish its own system and discourse. Only after gaining a better understanding of the historical and cultural basis of “universal values” and a clearer grasp of what China’s values are, could Chinese engage in a meaningful dialogue with the West and create a workable fusion of civilizations and values.

The book appears to owe much of its understanding of universal values and Western mentality to Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, available in Chinese translation since 2002.<sup>22</sup> The authors’ impressions of the West’s aggressively confrontational stance and hostile strategy on universal values rely heavily on an arch-conservative Euro-American-centric perspective that many Western intellectuals regard as simplistic and problematic. The Chinese book’s authors do not appear to be aware of Huntington’s political agenda or the complexity of Western evaluations regarding his work. Huntington’s and the Fudan group’s condemnations of Western universal values were generally in line with the Party’s stance. Although the original conference was held at Fudan about twelve months before Liu Qibao blacklisted universal values, hostility to universal values had long predated Liu Qibao’s injunction; moreover, the book from the Fudan conference was first published in 2013 during the height of the prohibition against universal values.

What might be surprising about the book’s attack on universal values is that its premise—all values are historically contingent, that is, have evolved in particular places and times and thus are conditioned by particular cultures and histories—is extended to its logical conclusion to explicitly include not just Confucian values but even the principles of Chinese Marxism as relative only to China’s particular historical development. This line is somewhat surprising considering the countless Chinese in the twentieth century, confident in what was regarded as the objective science of Marxism, who sacrificed their lives for world Communism and heralded Chairman Mao’s thought as crucial to hastening liberation around the world.

These Contemporary Confucians appear to be abandoning earlier assumptions about the universal validity of both Confucian values and Chinese Socialism (including those of the May Fourth Movement and Chinese Marxism) in favor of valuing both Confucianism and Socialism primarily for the particularity of being Chinese. Some might argue that the standpoint of the young Contemporary Confucians merely extended the Party line of “Socialism with Chinese characteristics” to its logical conclusion. However, my outsider’s perception makes me wonder why the censors did not block publication on the grounds of the book’s implicit challenge to a foundational assumption of Chinese Communist political culture as objective and scientific and thus possessing a kind of universal validity. Moreover, the book even includes passages where participants poked fun at the Party. My sense of the tension or gap between a key part of their standpoint and the Party line was reinforced when I was told that the press had to defend its publication of the book in the face of objections from censors.

Zhu Jieren not only approved of his university’s publication of the book, but also wrote a review that was printed in various places and ultimately served as the Preface to the slightly revised 2014 version of the book. His review highlights his agreement with the book’s claim that China needs greater democracy but less freedom, because excesses of freedom have disordered China and provided occasions for foreign interventions. He also lauds the authors: “This is probably the first time [Chinese] with such boldness and assurance set forth Confucian views of values and put them on a par with Western views of values and, with absolutely no hesitancy, proclaimed the excellence and historical rationality of Confucian values. With this, they have already manifested consciousness of, and self-confidence in, Chinese culture.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, Zhu Jieren’s review/preface sheds light on his thinking about universal values.

While reading the original 2013 version, I was surprised that Zhu Jieren was so enthusiastic about a book that apparently reduced Confucian universality to its particular historical and cultural context and that by implication undermines his case for the universal significance of *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions*. For instance, his characterization of all of the Fudan conference philosophers as having obtained their Ph.D. degrees in the West enhanced his grounds for praising them for having such courage in counterattacking Western universal values. However, in my private conversations with Bai Tongdong 白彤東 of Fudan University, he disclosed that he was the only participant whose Ph.D. was from a foreign university. Although Professor Bai’s correction might seem trivially minor, loyalty to one’s teachers is an important traditional Chinese virtue; hence, Zhu Jieren’s misimpression about where the young philosophers were taught might raise doubts about his estimation of their boldness and self-confidence, and perhaps even questions about the implication of their ideas for his own advocacy of the universal significance of the *Family Instructions*.

In conversations with Zhu Jieren regarding the issue of the negative implications for his own cultural agenda of the stand taken by young Contemporary Confucians, Zhu Jieren replied that he was aware of gaps between their perspective and his own, for example their narrow focus on ancient Confucianism in contrast to his efforts to expand appreciation for Zhu Xi. Still, Zhu Jieren expressed a desire to build cooperation based upon common ground; moreover, such attention to common ground is crucial in an environment of diversity and divergence in Confucian perspectives and groups in contemporary China. In his admiration of the fervor and outspokenness of the young philosophers, Zhu Jieren organized a discussion meeting of senior scholars of Confucianism to reflect on the young philosophers' perspective and to help the younger group.

In a more recent essay,<sup>24</sup> Zhu Jieren draws—more explicitly than the young philosophers did—on the Chinese translation of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*. He easily surmises that Huntington's image of a colossal confrontation between the West and Asia reflects the pervasive American worldview, or at least the U.S. government's strategy for global dominance. Yet, Huntington's presentation of American "universalism" as "hypocrisy," "double standards," "false," "immoral," and "dangerous" is actually a bitter partisan attack on "multiculturalism" in the United States;<sup>25</sup> moreover, his narrative and claims are designed to bolster an extreme U.S. domestic and foreign agenda, an aggressively mono-cultural agenda that runs counter to what many Americans would consider America's core values. Huntington's hostile account of universalism and multiculturalism is apparently regarded by important Chinese intellectuals, even one with universalistic leanings like Zhu Jieren, as a candid and objective presentation of the West's evil intentions, as well as America's moral and ideological bankruptcy. Such reliance upon a radically right-wing theorist is unfortunate because these Chinese public intellectuals thus reduce American perspectives to the most confrontational segment of American opinion and thus increasingly ignore the larger spectrum of American views of values. For instance, Zhu Jieren repeats Huntington's criticisms of Americans for losing sight of the fact that values are products of historical and cultural evolutions contingent upon particular times and places;<sup>26</sup> thus, having apparently taken Huntington's diatribe as a factual account, Zhu Jieren does not look further to see that American intellectuals are generally mindful of the historical contingency of values.

Setting forth his specific example of how ideas evolve toward universal significance, Zhu Jieren elaborates on how Zhu Xi's reflections on earlier discussions of rituals and relationships in family and society enabled him to transform traditional rules into eloquent expressions of general norms conforming to the coherent patterns or the Dao of a harmonious culture. Through such synthesis, elevation, and transformation of instructions for the family, Zhu Xi "could cause their 'universality' to become a formal possibility."<sup>27</sup> Summarizing, he declares:

What I propose here is not “universal values,” but “universal significance.” Expressing myself this way is to clarify that I do not intend to force the Chinese people’s perspective of values upon anyone, but only to explain that this Chinese view of values possesses universal significance, so it can perhaps supplement Western universal values and give those who proclaim Western universal values something beneficial to reflect upon.<sup>28</sup>

Zhu Jieren has not abandoned the need for some values to be universal and explicitly rejects the characterization that he is an opponent of universal values *per se*; however, he also insists that the “universal” must be seen as conditioned by place and time.<sup>29</sup>

Altogether, Zhu Jieren’s essay, along with his review/preface and his actions during the early Xi Jinping years, suggest that his championing of Zhu’s *Family Instructions* as having universal significance as fundamental values should be seen as attempting to place Confucian culture on at least a par with Western culture, rather than simply continuing the New Confucians’ search for equivalences with Western values. His more impassioned language, such as his angry complaint against haughty Westerners who are unwilling to acknowledge anyone else’s values as universal, suggests that his frustration over Westerners’ lack of receptivity to the *Family Instructions* was a factor in his enthusiastic embrace of the young philosophers’ theme of the ideological hypocrisy of Western notions of universal values. Especially after decades during which May Fourth intellectuals in general and Chinese Communists in particular suppressed Confucian values, Zhu Jieren is receptive to allying with those with whom he perceives considerable common ground. The same strategy is evident in his enthusiasm about Xi Jinping’s endorsement of Confucianism. Zhu Jieren privately remarked that it is refreshing to hear a Communist Party official unequivocally praise Confucian culture, instead of mixing faint praise with continued harsh criticism of its “feudal dregs.” A positive example would be Xi Jinping’s keynote speech to the International Confucius Association’s convention in Beijing where he enthusiastically endorsed Confucianism for its contribution to global peace and harmony.<sup>30</sup> Zhu Jieren also pointed to how Xi Jinping’s strong endorsement of Confucianism during a visit to Qufu had largely been ignored by China’s media because of continued opposition, within the Party’s leadership, to Confucianism. Thus, in the context of Xi’s effort to enhance respect for Confucianism within the Party, Zhu Jieren, even as university professor and editor, says he is not overly concerned about the Xi administration’s injunction against universal values.

### *Chen Lai’s Synthesis Culminating in Confucian Humaneness*

In previewing my draft on Zhu Jieren’s and the Fudan group’s perspectives on universal values in the wake of the rise of Xi Jinping, Zhao Jingang 趙金剛, a scholar at the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Social

Sciences in Beijing, suggested to me that the publication of his mentor's book in the summer of 2014 demonstrates that the current atmosphere is not as hostile to discussions of universal values as it is usually perceived from abroad. Specifically, besides approving of Chen Lai's 陳來 book, *Renxue benti lun* 仁學本体論 (Study of the essentials of humaneness), authorities have reportedly praised Chen Lai's approach to discussing universal values. Moreover, the Party has also published Chen's related articles in the *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (Guangming daily) and the *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 (People's daily).<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Chen Lai is not only the head of China's national association of philosophers and a Tsinghua University philosophy professor and the director of its Guoxueyuan (National Studies Institute), he is also the philosophical advisor to the WCFA and has cooperated closely with Zhu Jieren on a range of projects—for example, heading the national association for studying Zhu Xi's philosophy and hosting the international conference to mark the 880th anniversary of Zhu Xi's birth. Thus, Chen is far more connected to Zhu Jieren and the WCFA than are the young philosophers who met at Fudan. Chen was also the prized student of Zhang Dainian and, as a graduate student, worked as an assistant to Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) at Peking University.

Somewhat similar to his two major mentors, Chen Lai here bridges between a new interpretation of the history of Confucian philosophy and the Chinese Marxist ideology of the current era. Both Feng Youlan and Zhang Dainian had little success influencing twentieth-century ideology; however, some of their views—including their conviction that revitalized Confucian concepts could supplement and enhance Chinese Marxism—have eventually had an impact and (according to some Chinese friends) have even filtered into textbooks. Thus, Chen's venture into contemporary political culture as a philosopher/theorist might have been inspired by his reflections on the experiences of his two principal mentors.

In addition to my almost three dozen years of personal friendship with Chen Lai and my admiration for his diverse erudite publications, especially those on Zhu Xi, I found aspects of his recent book to be intellectually noteworthy. In the current political environment where Chinese particularistic characteristics are lauded and universals are highly suspect, it is impressive that Chen has set forth a synthesis of Confucianism and Marxism in terms of their projected universalities. For example, his portrayal of freedom, equality, and justice as universally desired goals or values is grounded in Confucian morality; therefore, he is able to propose his case for linking these three values to the political ends of Chinese Socialism and the common good of society, rather than through a Liberal Western discourse on rights. As such, his projected synthesis has a significantly universal character and is thus more than simply a reflection of the current political focus on Chinese characteristics. Professor Chen is widely regarded as the foremost specialist on Confucian philosophy in China. I am merely an

intellectual historian; however, I perceive some problematic aspects in his grand project and thus have an obligation to report to my friend and to those concerned about the global issue of values.

Chen sets forth an account of the evolution of the concept of *ren* 仁 (glossed variously as humaneness, benevolence, humanity, and consummate person or conduct) from the ancient Confucian Classics through the imperial period to the modern period, which seeks to demonstrate that this Confucian virtue is the essential foundation of Confucian thinking and values throughout time. For instance, Confucians classically projected humaneness as unifying and representing the four cardinal virtues: humaneness; doing one's duty and what is just; behaving with decorum or according to proper ritual practice; and wisdom. Han Confucians under the influence of the worldview of the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行), added the virtue of trustworthiness (*xin* 信) (represented by the Earth phase or agent within processes). Thereby, humaneness was seen as expressed through the seasonal phases of the other virtues. Han Confucians also focused on *ren* as love; however, Zhu Xi's synthetic definition emphasized that *ren* was the "principle of love" (*ai zhi li* 愛之理) and thus a norm inherent in the cosmos and in human nature and not merely an expression of one's feelings or actions toward other people and things. Ultimately, Chen's account of the ascent of *ren* justifies his own philosophical move to establish *ren* as the foundation of universal values: humaneness, freedom, equality, justice, and harmony.<sup>32</sup> Of course, "harmony" (*hexie* 和諧) is also a twenty-first-century Chinese Marxist slogan or goal for society (but rooted in the earlier Confucian term). While sharing the Chinese Marxist ideal of harmony as the culminating goal, Chen has set the Confucian essential virtue to represent the foundation and cohesiveness of values. The three key "universal values" of freedom, equality, and justice are thus sandwiched between Chinese Confucian essence and the Chinese Marxist utopian social goal. In this sense, there appears to be an implicit claim that these "universal values" are also Sinicized or fused into Chinese values.

In subsequent sections of the chapter where he discusses these three key values, Chen Lai makes a case for seeing Chinese roots within Confucian texts for the expressed values of freedom, equality, and justice. On the one hand, it is true that he does acknowledge that although in theory the Confucian advocacy of humaneness does not negate freedom, equality, and justice, these values are not central issues for Confucianism, which is centered instead on personal integrity and public ethics. Yet, he asserts that Confucians expect social structures and leaders to use liberty, equality, and justice as central concerns and to work toward a diverse and interactive cultural structure that will satisfy the developmental needs of China's social culture.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Chen seeks to persuade the reader that these three "universal values" are a legacy of the Chinese Confucian tradition and thus not merely an import from the West; moreover, these values became



even more clearly articulated by numerous modern thinkers, ranging from Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) to Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山) (1866–1925), and including even philosophers at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, in their engagement with Liberal Capitalist values from the West. For instance, Chen cites Cai Yuanpei's interpretation of the French Revolutionary slogan, "liberty, equality, fraternity," in Confucian terms: "liberty" is said to be what Mencius meant by not being corrupted by riches or disoriented by poverty; "equality" is what Confucius meant by not extending to others what you do not want for yourself; and "fraternity" is "universal love" (*bo ai* 博愛), or the Confucian virtue of *ren*.<sup>34</sup> Although many might regard such moves as merely another effort to identify Chinese equivalents for concepts and values widely ascribed to, and borrowed from, the West, Chen does not adopt this interpretation.

This synthesis of Confucian, universal, and Marxist values is projected as having advantages over Western programs of universal values. For example, *Ren* is the basis of a "monistic" system that unifies and orders a "diversity" that is manifested both in the other four Confucian virtues and in the global values of equality, freedom, and justice. Chen Lai contrasts his system with that of Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997) who, on the one hand rightly opposed the suppression of one cultural system by another, but on the other hand erroneously assumed that harmony among different cultures required a presupposed mono-culturalism. Yet, Chen claims that it is not inconsistent when he himself promotes the special status of Confucianism in the world, but rejects attempts to impose mono-culturalism on China.<sup>35</sup> It appears that Chen wants to insist that China's concept of humaneness can embrace the global because the Chinese concept of humaneness is the essential foundation of all values, but he still wants to reject claims that the Western universalistic value of democracy should apply to China as well. Indeed, it is striking that Chen includes freedom, but not democracy, within the values included within his Sinicized system of values. This stands in sharp contrast with Zhu Jieren and the young philosophers at Fudan because they regarded China as needing more democracy but not more freedom. Indeed, they regarded freedom as an imperialist demand and a strategy that was causing disorder in China. In Chen's discussion of Berlin, it is also noteworthy that Chen presents himself as regarding cultural conflicts or clashes as much less inevitable than he perceives in Berlin's and other Western approaches.

Presenting Western values as based on conflict, in contrast to the Chinese focus on cooperative government and harmony, runs through Chen Lai's characterization of the opposition between Western and Chinese values. Chen highlights the view that the central principle of Liberalism is the priority of individual rights, and that there is a moral and political demand that the state must respect individual rights. However, he goes on to assert that in the mainstream Western view, the state's duty and

responsibility is so one-sided that there are no obligations required from citizens in their dealings with society, family, or the state. Thus, apparently conflating human rights and individual rights, he concludes that the West's obsession with protecting individual rights ignores the individual's responsibilities to society. In contrast to the West, Confucians advocate the common good of society, social duty, and virtue for the benefit of the public good. Chen proclaims the stark choice: "duty and rights are in conflict, so we have to decide which one is the foundation: duty or rights."<sup>36</sup> Although his system prioritizes humaneness over duty, Chen here reverts to the more common contrast between the grounding of Chinese social organization in one's duties on the one side, and North American demands for individual rights on the other. Of course, he again returns to prioritizing humaneness: "The principle of humaneness, the spirit of ritual practice, the consciousness of duty, and the priority of society are the opposite of individualism."<sup>37</sup> Grounded in the principle of humaneness, governing is distinguished from conflict politics, and the Confucian way of governing (*wangdao* 王道) is different from the imperialistic world order. Chen also pronounces a litany of Confucian priorities in contrast to the West: "humaneness above all, duty before rights, obligation before freedom, group over individual, harmony over conflict, and unity of heaven and humankind over division between masters and itinerant workers."<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, Chen asserts that because there are such huge differences between Chinese and Western values and priorities, Chinese values are the requisite complement to remedy the inadequacies in Western values. To develop his point about the role for Confucian values in rectifying Western values, Chen briefly utilizes Roland Robertson's *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Sage, 1992) as a backdrop for asserting that East Asia also has universality with its different historical background, so Western scholars should acknowledge a "diverse universalism." In the first stage of modernity, the transformation of Western culture had a special character or role; however, according to Chen, in the current second stage, the West might well return to the West, e.g., to its earlier historical status relative to Asian civilizations.<sup>39</sup>

Instead of demonstrating how such values as liberty, equality, and justice are actualized or evident in the policies and institutions of the PRC, Chen uses the Singapore model of "Asian values" to implicitly support his case that the Chinese value system can encompass such modern values. Although he acknowledges that what Lee Kuan Yew 李光耀 (1923–2015) heralded as "Asian values" also incorporated some Western values, especially the use of democratic means to respect the rights of individuals, Chen emphasizes that the core of Singapore's values is Confucian. These include the following: society and nation are more important than the individual; the basis of the nation is the family; the nation should respect the individual; harmony is more beneficial to social order than conflict; religions should mutually assist

each other and peacefully co-exist. While acknowledging that Singapore, as a somewhat Confucianized society, prioritizes society and the common good over individual rights, he also portrays Singapore as relying on democratic means and respect for individuals to protect human rights. Many intellectuals in the West regard Singapore as falling far short in its protection of human rights; thus, Chen's utilization of this example perhaps provides a clue regarding the limits of his embrace of liberty or the extent to which he might envision China implementing protections for the rights of individual citizens. Where Chen sees Lee's Singapore as falling short is its failure to sustain Confucian traditional virtues and to promote the complete development of personal character.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Chen perceives a significant contrast between his system's priority of humaneness and Lee's focus on political values.

The title of the concluding section of his chapter in *Renxue benti lun* sets forth Chen Lai's bottom line: "take humaneness as the essence and regard harmony as the function."<sup>41</sup> On the one hand, Chen has here incorporated the current Party line on the goal of "harmony" into his revised version of the Song Confucian formula of "essence/substance and function" (*ti yong* 體用), which is a significant endorsement of current Chinese Marxist rhetoric. However, he does not use "harmony" the same way that Hu Jintao 胡錦濤 did in promoting "unity" (*tuanjie* 團結), for Chen has a larger agenda: to promote a Confucian society of cultivated persons; thus, Chen's use of the notion of harmony is similar to Zhang Liwen's 張立文 noteworthy books, including *Hehe zhexue lun* 和合哲學論 (On the philosophy of harmony).<sup>42</sup> Chen also accepts the Party's current major emphasis that values are historically contingent to a particular culture and country; moreover, he defends the China Model or Chinese cultural ways against the encroachment of imperialistic impositions of values into China. In short, there is considerable synergy between Chen's standpoint and the Communist Party's, so it is easy to see how his book chapter could be praised in China as a correct model for addressing the issue of universal values.

On the other hand, in Chen's determination to place humaneness as the essence or foundation of China's values, there is a note of criticism of the Party's program. The whole effort to put humaneness at the foundation of Chinese values and to condemn the West for its obsession with conflict and struggle could be seen as also implying a critique of Chairman Mao's vision of a China dominated by class struggle and continuous revolution. But perhaps the best concise and explicit example would be Chen's discussion of the Party's campaign promoting values as expressed in its "twenty-character slogan": "Love the county and abide by its laws; be clear about etiquette and sincere in faithfulness; rally together and be amicable; be hard working and self-reliant; have a professional attitude and make a contribution."<sup>43</sup> As Chen explains, this 2001 slogan did not adequately promote self-cultivation and the (Confucian) significance of personal virtue because the

Party's slogan concentrated on public behavior. The list was so focused on public virtue or behavior that there were only two items (being sincerely faithful and being amicable) that dealt with personal virtue. Furthermore, although being amicable is based on humaneness, he emphasized that being amicable is only a small aspect and is totally inadequate to encompass the richness of the value of humaneness.

Although public virtue is important for society, Chen reminds us that Confucians know that personal virtue and self-cultivation are much more basic. Moreover, Confucians are interested not only in good behavior, but in a deeper, more fundamental transformation of the person. This criticism of the Party's social program also has a parallel in Chen's emphasis that Lee Kuan Yew's program in Singapore was too narrowly political. Chen's criticism of the Communist Party's twenty-character behavioral slogan is indirect and soft enough not to distract the Party's focus on the usefulness of his critique of Western hubris about universal values and his championing of a Confucian value system that is particularly Chinese and compatible with the "Socialist Construction" of the nation. Nonetheless, he still underscores the universal significance and value of essentially Chinese concepts.

In his more recent book, *Zhonghua wenming de hexin jiazhi* 中華文明的核心價值 (The core values of Chinese civilization), Chen Lai utilizes his earlier public lectures in the United States, South Korea, and China to elaborate on his perspective for even broader general audiences. This book is actively promoted by the Party, and it is often reprinted as a required freshmen textbook for almost every university and institution.<sup>44</sup> In the most popular book review website, Douban 豆瓣, there are only three reviews. An enthusiastic review was posted by the associate director of Peking University's Confucian Research Institute, while the most critical one suggests an image of Chen riding atop political waves.<sup>45</sup>

Particularly in Chen's chapter "The Values and Worldview of Chinese Civilization," and in his second appendix, he walks audiences through the evolution of China's culture of ethics and continuity from prehistoric clan society to the present. In different places within the book, he enumerates from four to ten fundamental differences between Chinese value preferences and those in the modern West. Although the fundamental four with emphasis on humaneness and harmony remain essentially the same as in Chen's 2014 book, he now elaborates ten ways in which modern Chinese value preferences differ from the modern West: morals are more important than laws; the social group is more important than the individual person; the spiritual is more important than the material; responsibility is more important than power and rights; the livelihood of the people is more important than the rule of [by] the people; order is more important than freedom; this life is more valuable than life in the hereafter; harmony is more valuable than conflict; civilization is more valuable than poverty; and family is more valuable than class.<sup>46</sup> These diverse lists boil down to Confucian-inspired

humaneness, duty to society, and harmony in contrast to modern Western individualism, rights, and political conflict.

Chen Lai's book on core values also picks up his call for a "re-Sinification" of Chinese Marxism, which he voiced at the 2007 Beijing Forum. Drawing attention to early twentieth-century Chinese Confucians, he points out that they, too, regarded Western universal values as inadequately universal and thus needing Chinese elements; hence, these earlier twentieth-century Chinese considered both Chinese and Western cultures to possess universal values. Moreover, they wanted modernization in order to save the nation. Here, Chen returns to his list of Singapore's "Asian values" (enumerated above). He continues to suggest that we see these values both as being rooted in Confucianism and as incorporating aspects of modern Western values, such as democratic safeguards to respect the individual; however, here he more explicitly claims that these values should be considered as a Chinese version of universal values. Chen briefly mentions that these "new universal values" are "closer to [Western] communitarianism" than to liberal democracy. Nevertheless, specifically suggesting how the structure, order, and core of values still differ, he proclaims that the Singapore version "needs to protect the realization of human rights by relying on the expansion of democracy and on values that respect the individual," yet "its overall attitude demands that the individual has duties and responsibilities in relation to others and to the community."<sup>47</sup>

Although his focus on Singapore enables him to evade a direct discussion of human rights in China itself, Chen's explicit endorsement of "new universal values" is also set forth as a general discussion with wider implications. In his general discussion, Chen endorses the view that there are universal values inherent within China's Confucian culture, as well as in the Western liberal democratic tradition:

The mainstream values of Eastern and Western civilizations are both universal values. However, there are differences between them, and between their degrees of realization in history. Thus, plural universality must look directly at these intrinsic structural differences and the disparity of their historical realization. Because of this, justice, freedom, rights, and reason are of course universalist; yet, humanity, responsibility, community, inner peace, and social harmony are also universalist values.<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, he contextualizes this embrace of pluralism by recounting what he had written in 2005 while responding to a book in which Chinese scholars had argued that only Confucian values were truly universal. Unfortunately, he does not identify these scholars or provide a footnote for his own contextual explanation. Still, it is significant that Chen ends his second appended essay with this embrace of universalism in both Confucian and Western values. Given how much more stringent the political environment has become since 2012, it is encouraging that Chen has taken this

measured step in 2015 beyond what he had written in his book published the year before. Nonetheless, since the 2015 book is addressed even more to a general audience, his characterizations of Western philosophy and worldview are overall even more generalized and sweeping.

For a scholar of Chen Lai's erudition and extensive experience abroad and enduring friendships with foreign scholars, it is surprising that he deals so summarily with the West. Although he refers to a few Western thinkers, he does not even draw upon the compatible work of his friends, such as Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. (1934-2017). Much of their writings and lectures utilize Confucian philosophy to critique the West; moreover, both men have long championed the Confucian focus on duty and roles as a better way to develop values than to import the dysfunctional conception of rights. More troubling, Chen is quite reductionist in his description of the West; at times, it sounds as if he perceives someone like Ayn Rand (1905–1982) as representative of the dominant mainstream in the West. In any event, except for one brief comment in passing in his 2015 book, he ignores communitarianism (in all its diverse forms), an orientation that would provide Western counter-examples to what he presents as a one-sided focus on rights with no expectation that citizens will have any concern or duties related to the public interest. In contrast to Huntington, communitarians recognize the historical contingency of human values. Despite Chen's grounding in Confucian philosophy, he chooses here to paint the West as an absolute opposite, instead of pointing out yin and yang polarities within Western traditions or between China and the West. In this sense, Yan Fu's 嚴復 (1854–1921) observations of England were far more nuanced. Yan Fu was also struck by England's un-Chinese willingness to unleash the energies of individuals to pursue their own ends and self-interests; however, he was also impressed by the public spirit and dedication to the common good that also thrived in England. Indeed, he marveled at how willing Englishmen were (compared to Chinese) even to die for their country.<sup>49</sup> Yan Fu's nuanced perspective of Western Liberalism might be useful for Chinese friends to review in the present confrontational climate.

### *Conclusion and Reflections on the Potential for Universals in China*

The narrative about how presentations of *Master Zhu's Family Instructions* changed from 1996 to 2015 reflects the context of political culture in China during this period. As evident in the quotations from Jiang Zemin and the Communist Party's Central Committee that were highlighted in the articles from the WFCa conference in 2002, the Communist Party had become more open than earlier to adapting ethics and perspectives from "Old China" and the "feudal" past to help strengthen the moral construction of New China's Socialist society, family, and nation. Although Party directives did not specifically mention *Zhu's Family Instructions*, the WFCa seized this



opportunity to promote the *Family Instructions* as a special model. Furthermore, the unique prominence given to Confucius in the opening ceremony at the Beijing Olympics enhanced the international visibility of the value of Confucian traditions. We could also say the display of Confucius' contributions to civilization at the Olympics might have encouraged Zhu Jieren to utilize the idea of universal values to promote Zhu Xi's *Family Instructions* as having universal significance and universally perceived values. Besides following the 2002 theme of the importance of Confucian ethics to strengthening Chinese families and the Chinese nation, Zhu Jieren was seizing upon greater openness and the cultural confidence inherent in China's rise in international standing in the early twenty-first century in order to highlight that Zhu Xi's ideas also provided cultural capital with purchase in world civilization and were basic to humanity's values.

Of course, this was not the only such global or universalistic move by Confucian scholars in contemporary China; however, this case study suggests that as Chinese self-confidence continues to rise along with China's international standing and economic power, we will probably see an increase not only in such efforts to globalize Confucianism, but also in the kind of aggressive "push back" evident in Zeng and Guo's book, questioning *What's Called Universal? Whose Values?* Even though Zhu Jieren praises the bold courage and independent thinking of its authors, I personally regard them as too timid and defensive—especially if we consider a sixth-century hero's response to similar cultural and national situations. Before reflecting on that sixth-century hero, we should turn to the advances evident in Chen Lai's recent books, which go beyond Zhu Jieren's claim of "universal significance" for *Master Zhu's Family Instructions*.

Chen's recent books go beyond the Shanghai volume's diatribe against Western values to launch a more positive effort toward constructing a world-class philosophy founded on the Confucian value of humaneness, as well as the Chinese Marxist transformation of the classical Confucian ideal of harmony, in order to project a new synthesis that would encompass aspects of the universal values of liberty, equality, and justice the core of the French Revolution. The value system he has constructed would domesticate these three universal values into the Chinese identity and place them within a distinctly Chinese context. The Party-controlled media's embrace of his recent books and articles reinforces the impression that despite its sensitivity to, and policies against, universal values, the Chinese Communist Party still includes members who are not totally opposed to the universal significance of values, but are anxious to re-define these values to accord not only with Chinese tradition (as Chen has done) but also to be compatible with the conditions deemed necessary for continued political control, stability, and prosperity in China (as Chen does less completely).

Chen Lai is a high-visibility philosopher who is able to publish on universal values in the current political climate; however, he portrays the

West and universal values in such a one-sided fashion that he neglects the complexity and diversity in the West. Even when our Chinese friends ignore aspects of the West of which they are surely well aware, we should remember that the West is not their intended audience or their real interest, so it should be no surprise that they do not seek to provide a corrective to the simple caricatures of the West in the dominant Party line. Their often indirect, modest, or soft critique of current policies underscores local objectives and audiences. Chen focuses his efforts on counterbalancing the Party's concentration of public behavior and political virtue with his attention to Confucian ethical self-cultivation of personal virtue. His summary dismissal of Western values and thinkers is probably, in part, a move to make the West more distant in order to provide space and time to develop a Confucian ethical system that will encompass universalistic elements while being perceived in China as quintessentially Chinese. Despite Chen's positive advances over the philosophers in the Fudan conference volume,<sup>50</sup> Western readers are still likely to wonder if such an extraordinarily erudite scholar has progressed beyond earlier decades of Chinese intellectuals in addressing tensions between Chinese and Western values.

One historical example from centuries ago that should reinforce contemporary Chinese confidence in Chinese culture and possibly provide an inspiring model in the encounter with external cultures is the case of Zhiyi 智顓 (538–597).<sup>51</sup> Zhiyi was born at a time when foreign Buddhism had been the dominant religious and cultural influence in China for over two centuries; moreover, the Chinese heartland of the Central Plain had been militarily invaded and forcefully dominated by a series of Central Asian tribes with alien nomadic cultures. Zhiyi himself was orphaned as a teenager in the wartime conflicts that culminated in the unification of China under the Sui dynasty (581–617), the first Chinese unification in almost three centuries. The cultural challenges and foreign pressures of that era of disunity were surely no less serious than ones faced by Chinese in “the century of humiliation” before 1949. Yet, Zhiyi had the cultural confidence to engage Buddhism and significantly reinterpret Buddhism in such fundamental ways that Buddhism became both more “Sinified” and more universalistic. Realizing the potential for enhancing domestic cultural unification and international standing, the Sui patronized Zhiyi's version of Buddhism.

In the face of the huge range of sutras and diverse schools of Buddhism in different areas of China, Zhiyi provided a synthesis for cultural and religious unity. While acknowledging the truth in all sutras and versions of Buddhism, Zhiyi ranked sutras and meditation practices as steps in a progression toward more comprehensive levels of understanding. Much of Buddhism's challenge to native Confucianism arose from Buddhist claims to be a universal religion, in contrast to the historical particularity and cultural specificity of Confucianism. Confucianism had not yet spread significantly

even into Korea and Japan, which had intensive agrarian economies, extended kinship systems, and so on, that were similar to China's. Buddhism had already demonstrated its appeal to peoples in both nomadic and agrarian environments across much of Asia. After initial confusion about Buddhism, Chinese by the early fifth century had embraced, as devout students, the complex and internationalized aspects of Buddhist teachings. In the wake of political unification, Zhiyi could claim direct inspiration from the Buddha to perceive the real truths hidden under the conflicting messages in centuries of imported sutras and schools of thought. These trends in interpretation created further developments that flourished in meditation and devotional sects not only in China but also in Korea and Japan (and ultimately the West as well). Thus, not only did Zhiyi's synthesis domesticate Buddhism to make it more suitable to his particular time and place, but his synthesis of Buddhism and traditional Chinese notions further enhanced Buddhism's universal value. I would suggest that, comparable to today's China, a contributing factor in Zhiyi's transformation of Buddhism was the cultural confidence that accompanied China's political unification after almost three centuries of foreign intervention and internal divisions.

From this historical perspective, China today does not need to be so sensitive about discussions of universal values, and the West should realize that China will eventually transform the universal to integrate the particular in ways that will likely have impacts globally. I anticipate that with China's continuing domestic unification and global rise, Chinese will reinterpret not only universal religions, such as Islam and Christianity, but also universal values. All these "universals" will surely obtain particularly "Chinese characteristics." If, or as, China raises its eyes beyond Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* worldview and becomes more conscious of the diversity of Western values and also less sensitive about discussions of "universals," Zhu Jieren might well push forward with his project to proclaim the universal significance of the *Family Instructions*, and Chen Lai might expand on his case for encompassing aspects of universal values within his Confucian and Chinese paradigm of humaneness and harmony. Or, if a longer span of time elapses before a significant easing of confrontational politics across the Pacific, people might look back to Zhu Jieren and Chen Lai as taking steps in the quest toward universal values. After all, universal values are a challenge not just to China but to all nations—including the United States. With greater courage to pursue the study of culture on both sides of the Pacific, there is much progress to be made.

## Notes

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  - 15 – Zhu Xi and Zhu Jieren, *Zhuzi jiaxun*, pp. 49–51.
  - 16 – *Da jiyuan* 大紀元 (Epoch times), May 16, 2013, retrospective on Yan Huangyi 嚴煌翊, “Xi Jinping zuo diwang meng” 習近平做帝王夢 (Xi Jinping dreams of emperors), June 26, 2015, <http://www.open.com.hk/content.php?id=1339#.VXD5fEjAdU>, accessed June 6, 2015.
  - 17 – Liu Qibao 劉奇葆, “Women zouzai zhengque de daolu shang” 我們走在正確的道路上 (We are advancing on the correct path), *Qiu shi* 求是 (2014); reprinted October 2015, “Daolu haobuhao zou zai zhetiao lushang de ren zui you fayanquan” 道路好不好走在這條路上的人最有發言權 (People who travel this path of asking whether the path is good or bad have the most right to speak), <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2014/1015/c1001-25836646.html>; English at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/21/c\\_133805127.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/21/c_133805127.htm). Both accessed June 3, 2015.
  - 18 – E.g., “Xi Jinping zai jinian Kongzi danchen 2565 zhounian Guoji Xueshu Taolunhui ji Guoji Ruxue Lianhehui diwujie huiyuan dahui kaimu hui shang fabiao zhongyao jianghua” 習近平在紀念孔子誕辰2565周年國際學術研討會暨國際儒學聯合會第五屆會員大會開幕會上發表重要講話 (Xi Jinping gives an important speech at the opening ceremony of the International Academic Conference of the International Confucian Association’s fifth congress celebrating the 2565th anniversary of Confucius’ birthday), CCTV summary report of speech

on September 24, 2014, my.tv.sohu.com/20140924/n404622727.shtml, accessed October 16, 2014.

- 19 – “Xi Jinping zai Quanguo Dangxiao Gongzuo Huiyi shang de jianghua” 習近平在全國黨校工作會議上的講話 (Xi Jinping’s speech at the work conference of the National Party School), *Qiu shi* (September 2016), [http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2016-04/30/c\\_1118772415.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2016-04/30/c_1118772415.htm), and on school’s website, [http://www.ccps.gov.cn/recommendation/201605/t20160510\\_78825.html](http://www.ccps.gov.cn/recommendation/201605/t20160510_78825.html); Li Li 李莉 and Zhou Baoyan 周寶硯 elaborate: *Dangqian dangyuan ganbu he qunzhong pubian guanzhu de 13 ge shen cengce wenti* 當前黨員幹部和群眾普遍關注的13個深層次問題 (Party member cadres and the masses widely pay attention recently to thirteen deep-level issues) (Beijing: Zhongguo Yanshi, 2016), pp. 98–114, [http://www.ndcnc.gov.cn/book/shizheng/201610/t20161009\\_1262976.htm](http://www.ndcnc.gov.cn/book/shizheng/201610/t20161009_1262976.htm). All accessed January 5, 2017.
- 20 – Zeng Yi 曾亦 and Guo Shaodong 郭曉東, eds., *He wei pushi? Shei zhi jiazhi?* 何謂普世? 誰之價值? (What’s called universal? Whose values?) (Shanghai: Huadong Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 2013; revised, 2014).
- 21 – Eloquent example quoted from referee’s report; see also John Makeham, ed., *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- 22 – Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002); trans. by Zhou Qi 周琪 et al. into Chinese as *Wenming zhi jian de chongtu yu shijie zhixu de chongjian* 文明之間的衝突與世界秩序的重建 (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 2002 and 2013).
- 23 – Zhu Jieren, “Lizhiqizhuang de wenhua zijue” 理直氣壯的文化自覺 (Cultural consciousness with boldness and self-assurance), *Wenhuibao* (March 11), *Zhonghua dushubao* (March 6), *Bianji xuekan* (3), *Zhuzi wenhua* (2): 4–7; reprinted as Preface to Zeng and Guo, *He wei pushi?* pp. 1–10.
- 24 – Zhu Jieren, “Zhuzi jiaxun de pushi yiyi” 朱子家訓的普世意義 (Universal significance of *Master Zhu’s Family Instructions*), in Zhu Xi and Zhu Jieren, *Zhuzi jiaxun*, pp. 15–31.
- 25 – Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, pp. 184, 313.
- 26 – Zhu Jieren, “Pushi yiyi,” p. 24.
- 27 – *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 28 – *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 29 – *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 30 – Xi Jinping, “Xi Jinping zai jinian Kongzi danchen 2565 zhounian” (2014).



- 31 – Discussion on July 2015 and emails on August 2015 from Zhao Jingang.
- 32 – Chen Lai 陳來, *Renxue bentu lun* 仁學本体論 (Study of the essentials of humaneness) (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2014), pp. 421–499.
- 33 – Ibid., pp. 431–456.
- 34 – Ibid., pp. 455–456.
- 35 – Ibid., pp. 429–430.
- 36 – Ibid., p. 487.
- 37 – Ibid., p. 490.
- 38 – Ibid., p. 487.
- 39 – Ibid., pp. 491–492.
- 40 – Ibid., pp. 489–490.
- 41 – Ibid., pp. 493–494.
- 42 – Zhang Liwen 張立文, *Hehe zhexue lun* 和合哲學論 (On the philosophy of harmony) (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2004).
- 43 – Chen Lai, *Renxue bentu lun*, p. 465.
- 44 – [http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/lt/ds/tjzm/201510/t20151021\\_63821.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/lt/ds/tjzm/201510/t20151021_63821.html), accessed February 23, 2017.
- 45 – <https://book.douban.com/subject/26354420/>, accessed February 23, 2017.
- 46 – Chen Lai, *Zhonghua wenming de hexin jiazhi* 中華文明的核心價值 (The core values of Chinese civilization) (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2015), pp. 182–183; published in English as Lai Chen, *The Core Values of Chinese Civilization*, trans. Paul J. D’Ambrosio et al. (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2017), pp. 144–145.
- 47 – Ibid., p. 200 (Chinese edition); p. 156 (English edition), modified.
- 48 – Ibid., p. 203 (Chinese); p. 158 (English).
- 49 – Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).
- 50 – Chen Lai, *Zhonghua wenming de hexin jiazhi*, pp. 191–192; Chen Lai, *The Core Values of Chinese Civilization*, pp. 151–152. To Chen, they represent enhanced cultural awareness and subjective agency; moreover, criticisms of the West reject Western political institutions as universal values, and searching for an Asian alternative is the “motif of the age.”

51 – Leon Hurvitz, *Chih-i (538–597): An Introduction to the Life and Ideas of a Chinese Buddhist Monk* (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1962); Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, trans. James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2005; published in 1963 as *A History of Zen Buddhism*, trans. Paul Peachey). My view is influenced by Masatoshi Nagatomi's mid-1970s Harvard classes.