

Chapter 2

The Values and Worldview of Chinese Civilization

By the mid-Neolithic period, seven or eight thousand years ago, a relatively stable agrarian economy had already formed in both northern and southern China. The prehistoric agriculture of China's Yellow River and Yangtze regions at this time had already moved beyond primeval slash and burn agriculture. Due to the richness of loess and crop resistance to arid conditions and drought, intensive farming had already developed in the Central Plains and northern China, where use of stone tools predominated and the irrigation of major waterways was not relied on. Because of this, in contrast to Mesopotamia and Egypt, although early Chinese Civilization also arose in regions along the middle and lower stretches the Yellow River and Yangtze, China's agrarian economy nevertheless led early Chinese civilization away from becoming a civilization of irrigation of major waterways. The slow but steady maturation of Chinese agriculture came to influence the entirety of the development of its civilization. Archeologists describe Chinese civilization as having originated ten thousand years ago, evolving from tribal clanship into early ancient nation-states beginning around five thousand years ago, and then ultimately developing from diverse sources into a unified empire.¹

This chapter was translated by Robert Carleo III. All quotations from Chinese texts in this chapter are also Carleo's, unless otherwise noted.

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¹Su Bingqi 苏秉琦, *Zhongguo wenming qi yuan xintan* 中国文明起源新探 (Hong Kong: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1997), 142.

2.1 The Ethical Spirit of Early Chinese Civilization

A great many peoples of the world have lived in tribal clans organized by relations of kinship. However, very few exhibit the isomorphism of clan organization and political rights found in the society of early Chinese civilization. In ancient Chinese civilization, the sites of ancestral temples became centers of early settlement, and the inheritance of political and ancestral identity were unified. These became pronounced characteristics of Shang and Zhou society. This unity of political and ancestral identity, or reliance of political identity on ancestral identity, developed a political tradition in which familial order was merged with state order. Culturally, China's culture of ritual and music came to characterize this period generally.

From the Western Zhou to the Spring and Autumn period, ancient Chinese society was basically a clan society. Here, I use the term "clan society" as a descriptive concept, without affirmative or pejorative connotations, to refer to a type of society structured by familial relations and regulated by principles and standards of familial relations. In clan societies, all social relationships are transformed into relations of clanship or kinship. Clan relations are political relations, and political relations are clan relations. Therefore, the norms and regulations of political and other social relationships all follow the familial relations of clanship. This type of society is in essence quite close to what Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 describes as a society in which ethical relations are most fundamental (*lunli benwei de shehui* 伦理本位的社会). A characteristic of ethical relations is that they concurrently involve both hierarchical order and compassionate emotional connection. Because of this, in a society of such relations, the leading principles are not laws but rather emotional ties, with principal emphasis on obligation and not rights. Liang Shuming believed China's society in which ethical relations are most fundamental arose from ancient clan society.² This is accurate. With the arrival of the late Spring and Autumn period, clan relations had already broken down in the political realm. However, these clan relationships persisted on the social level, and those characteristics of the civilization and cultural spirit fostered by clan society were replicated and passed on.

In terms of the evolution of early Chinese culture, the modes of Xia, Shang, and Zhou culture differed, yet the Three Dynasties also developed qualities of continuity. The general background of these qualities was the culture of the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, which gradually formed within the historical progress of the increasing power of the imperial court to unify and integrate surrounding vassal states. These qualities began to fix themselves within Western Zhou culture, and through the development of the Axial Age, they evolved into the fundamental characteristics of Chinese civilization. These cultural characteristics found focused expression in the Zhou dynasty as emphasis on filial piety, caring relations with others, valuing the people, and veneration of virtue. Filial piety was not only exhibited in the rich and widespread practices of sacrificial ancestor

²See Liang Shuming, *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi* 中国文化要义 (Taipei: Liren, 1982), 81.

worship of the Shang dynasty. Within the Zhou culture of music and ritual, it was even more strongly expressed as amicable relations between members of the ancestral clan, love for human life and human relationships, and familial obligation and dependence. This emphasis on the centripetal, inward orientation of the family or clan, which anthropologists refer to as clan ties, manifests an ancient Chinese value attitude toward oneself and the world in which one resides. Therefore, these cultural qualities differ greatly from orientations that stress the divine realm and the afterlife, seeing the human world and human life as pure illusion and seeking supernatural fulfillment. They tend more toward a proactive, social, sincere, and humane value orientation. Chinese people seek to establish positive human relations and the internal needs and orientation of these human relationships, whereas Hindu culture strives to establish positive relations with the divine and the internal needs and orientation of these divine relationships. Chinese culture lays great emphasis on the people and their needs, whereas Hindu culture extols the divine and seeks unification with the supernatural. There are indeed large differences between the two. Moreover, although Hinduism strongly emphasizes familial worship in one's life, and in its rites of passage and other aspects is even comparable to Western Zhou ritual ceremony and etiquette, the deceased in Hinduism generally go without tombs. Throughout India, phenomena associated with ancestral worship are extremely rare. The highly developed state of Shang and Zhou culture's funerary rites and ritual worship for the dead form a dramatic contrast with India's lack of emphasis on funerary matters and worship. This is not only a difference in religious views, but also manifests divergence in value orientation.

Another characteristic exhibited by early Chinese culture is an emphasis on virtue. Early modern scholars have already asserted Chinese culture to be a culture of ethics (*lunli leixing de wenhua* 伦理类型的文化). In terms of the qualities of its guiding spirit, the most pronounced achievements and clearest limitations of Chinese culture are all related with the tendency of its ethical aspects toward predominance and regulation. This cultural tendency was revealed very early in ancient China, and developed from these tendencies into the fundamental emphasis on ethical relations that has characterized the spirit of Chinese culture. Chinese culture had formed the genes of a "sense of virtue" as early as the Western Zhou period. In mainstream Chinese culture, extraordinary importance was laid on the moral evaluation of things and affairs, exhibiting a rich vibrancy of moral culture. Moreover, the early expression of morality was often concentrated within the political realm, specifically on issues of "the people." The will of the people, understood as the demands of the people, came to be seen as the ultimate source of all political legitimacy. This focus on the will of the people tremendously influenced the idea of heavenly mandate (*tianming* 天命) in the Western Zhou period, which led the will of the people to become the principle connotation of the notion of "heaven" (*tian* 天) in Western Zhou thought. The qualities of the spirit of Chinese culture formed by Western Zhou culture were the source and foundation from which later Confucian thought was produced.

Deep understanding of the historical course of cultural development over the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties grants us the clear impression that the content

developed in Confucius and early Confucian thought was not produced in opposition to or breaking away from Western Zhou culture and its path of development. In the thought and early cultural characteristics of Confucius and early Confucians there was a relationship of inheritance and continuity with Western Zhou culture and its direction of progression. Without the Duke of Zhou there would have been no culture of music and ritual passed onward. Without the Duke of Zhou there would have been no historical origin of Confucianism.³ Confucius' admiration and reverence of the Duke of Zhou and Xunzi's view of the Duke of Zhou as the first major Confucian both explicitly identify these origins of Confucian thought, and do so very early on in the Confucian tradition. We could say that the Western Zhou culture of ritual and music was the soil from which Confucianism was born. Western Zhou thought provided an important foundation for the worldview, political philosophy, ethics, and virtues of Confucius and early Confucianism. At the same time, Western Zhou culture was also the product of the long and gradual evolution of the culture of ancient China's Three Dynasties. Through cultures of magical shamanism and sacrificial worship developed the culture of ritual and music. From primeval religion to natural religion, and then developing into ethical religion, the deep foundation from which Confucius and Confucian thought emerged was formed. Traced further back, this developed from Longshan 龙山 culture through the integration of various local cultures of the Central Plains. Political culture, religious belief, and moral emotion gradually developed, and in the Western Zhou period began to form relatively stable qualities of spirit. These qualities manifested as a political culture in which virtue was venerated and the people valued, as an ethical culture of filial piety, respect for elder siblings, and amicability of intimate relations, as a culture of ritual and music that combined inner substance with outward refinement, as existential belief in the unity of heaven and human, and as a humanistic tendency of keeping distance from the spirits and engaging with the human. Because of this, Confucian thought and its humanistic spirit are products of the continuous development of Chinese culture itself from the early stages of Chinese civilization. They embody the tradition passed on through ancient China's Three Dynasties and the qualities of spirit it fostered. Confucian thought possesses an intrinsic connection with the progress of development of ancient Chinese culture, and Confucian values correspondingly came to form the mainstream value system of Chinese civilization.⁴

As the crystallization of the wisdom of the Three Dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou, the "Six Classics" are the original classic texts of Chinese civilization. Therein are solidified the historical wisdom and mainstream values developed by early Chinese civilization, such as reverence for virtue, protection of the people, emphasis on filial piety, careful consideration and reservation regarding

³See Yang Xiangkui 杨向奎, *Zong Zhou zhidu yu liyue wenming* 宗周制度与礼乐文明 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1992), 136.

⁴Chen Lai, Introduction, *Gudai zongjiao yu lunli* 古代宗教与伦理 (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing, 1996), 7–8.

punishment, and cooperation between states. These embody the political wisdom, moral ideas, and aesthetic spirit accumulated within the historical experience of the millennium or even longer period of development of Chinese civilization under the Xia, Shang, and Zhou, and became the principle historical source of the development of later Chinese culture.

2.2 The Fundamental Values of Axial Age Chinese Civilization

From this perspective, Axial Age Chinese civilization continued the development of the humanistic thought of early civilization and the Western Zhou period, systematically putting forward cultural values and virtues. The primary values and virtues among these were asserted in regard to the relationships of a person with others and with the community. This tendency is seen in the emphasis on the values of humane love (*ren'ai* 仁爱) and ritual and music exhibited in Axial Age Chinese civilization as represented in Confucianism. Through later philosophical explication, these values even more clearly exhibited universality.

First among these is the veneration of humaneness (*ren* 仁). As is widely known, the most important moral notion of Axial Age Confucian thought was “humaneness.” Humaneness is an attitude of the self toward others. It is concern and care for others, or the enactment of compassion for others. This is why the *Guoyu* 国语 states that “speaking of humaneness must involve humans (others).”⁵ In terms of etymology, the Eastern Han period *Shuowen Lexicon* (*Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字) explains the character for “humaneness” as equivalent to feelings of intimacy, and points out that it is composed of the graphs for “human” (*ren* 人) and “two” (*er* 二). This shows that the basic literal meaning of “humaneness” is intimate caring or love. Qing dynasty scholar Ruan Yuan 阮元 especially emphasizes that the left graph for human and right graph for two combine to express the relationship of intimate caring between two people, and that therefore one can only speak of humaneness in terms of two or more people. A single person enclosed in solitude at home cannot be considered humane. Humaneness is a reciprocal or mutual relationship between persons. Ruan Yuan’s description here explicates humaneness’s quality of reciprocity.⁶ In terms of textual resources, the concept of “humaneness” prior to Confucius referred to caring and love for one’s parents. The *Guoyu* states clearly, “Loving one’s parents is called humaneness.”⁷ Confucius took humaneness as the highest moral notion, and both Confucius and Mencius emphasize that humaneness involves loving others. Humaneness thereby gradually transformed

⁵“Zhouyu III” 周语下, *Guoyu*.

⁶See Ruan Yuan 阮元, “Lunyu lun renlun” 论语论仁论, in *Yanjingshi ji* 掣经室集 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1993), vol. 1, book 8.

⁷“Jinyu I” 晋语上, *Guoyu*.

into universal humane love, no longer referring exclusively to intimate caring for one's parents or for certain people. Kong Yingda 孔颖达 explains the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the mean), "humaneness refers to reciprocal humane love among intimate relations." Of course, humaneness is love, but love is not necessarily humaneness, because if love is partial or biased, then it is not humaneness. Humane love is universal, just, and selfless love. In fact, Mencius further expands humaneness to "loving one's intimate relations, being humane to the people, and caring for animals."⁸ Humane love at this point had already been further extended from social ethics to human caring for nature. Chinese Confucianism consistently placed the virtue of humaneness in the foremost position of its moral and value systems. Some scholars believe that the promotion of humaneness is a natural development of ties of kinship and clan democracy, a manifestation of the continuity of Chinese civilization.⁹

Viewed from another perspective, the primeval spirit of humaneness was a mutual caring and ritual respect demanding recognition of the importance of the other party by both parties. It relied on the emotion and etiquette that people ought to exhibit in their engagement with things to express feelings of caring and respect. This displays the ancient notion of humanism or belief in "the Way of humans" (*rendaozhuyi* 人道主义) contained in the character for "humaneness." Confucianism then extended this to the universal love and humane caring of an ethic of humanism or "the Way of humans" (*rendao* 人道). However, "humaneness" certainly does not advocate mere unilateral subjective expression of one's own feelings. Rather, one must respect other parties. The representative modern New Confucian thinker Liang Shuming summarized the ethic of Chinese culture as "mutual recognition of the importance of the other" (*hu yi duifang wei zhong* 互以对方为重), which expresses precisely the spirit of the traditional Confucian ethic of the theory of "humaneness."¹⁰

Therefore, the practice of humaneness possesses a principle of extension which resolves the question of how to extend oneself to others (*tui ji ji ren* 推己及人). This is the Way of loyalty and empathy (*zhong-shu zhi dao* 忠恕之道), especially empathy (*shu* 恕). Confucius discussed empathy in stating, "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."¹¹ Through respecting other parties, this can assure that one does not force one's own loves and preferences upon others, which has become a universal principle of global ethics in contemporary times.

Ancillary to this is reverence of ritual. Ancient Chinese civilization has been called a "civilization of ritual and music." Ritual held an important place within ancient Confucian culture. Confucius emphasized that the practice of ritual was the

⁸Mencius 7A45.

⁹The first to assert this point was Li Zehou 李泽厚. See Li Zehou, *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun* 中国古代思想史论 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1985), 22, 25.

¹⁰Liang Shuming, *Liang Shuming quanji* 梁漱溟全集, vol. 5 (Shandong: Shandong Renmin Chubanshe, 1990), 706.

¹¹*Analects* 12.2, 15.24, trans. D.C. Lau [Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1979 (1992, sec. ed.)], 109, 155.

basic method of carrying out humaneness. Confucian thought is representative of East Asian Axial civilization, and Axial Age Confucian thought can be said to be extremely closely related with the culture of “ritual.” The Western Zhou civilization of ritual and music was the mother of Confucian thought. Axial Age Confucianism was characterized by an emphasis on “ritual” and full of a ritual spirit. This ritual quality was a rational affirmation of the fundamental nature, spirit, and values of ritual education (*lijiao* 礼教).

In Confucianism, morality is realized within the concrete acts of human interaction. The common mode of these acts is ritual. Ritual is the expression of mutual respect as well as the humanized form of interpersonal relations. Of course, the “ritual” of ancient historical culture contained a plurality of meanings, as recorded in ancient books of ritual. The majority of these were rules of etiquette for the aristocratic society of the level of “scholar-gentleman” (*shi* 士) and above. These regulated the forms of aristocratic life and communicative relations, and possessed extremely developed formal expression and specific formal regulations of etiquette. The ancient phrase “Ritual emphasizes reciprocal interaction” (*li shang wang lai* 礼尚往来) refers precisely to the separation of ancient ritual from ceremonial worship and development into the formalized normative system of communicative relationships of the Western Zhou period. Comparatively speaking, the ancient system of the *Classic of Ritual* (*Yi li* 仪礼) can be better characterized as ceremonial and behavioral regulations regarding the celebrations, holidays, life journey, and interpersonal interactions of ancient aristocratic life. The later *Record of Rites* (*Li ji* 礼记), on the other hand, emphasizes, “The first indications of the meaning of ritual appear in the correct arrangement of the bodily carriage, the harmonious adjustment of the countenance, and in the natural ordering of the speech.”¹² This takes ritual to be a system of behavioral norms, emphasizing that norms and adornments of appearance and speech are the foundation of this normative system as well as the entrance into beginning practiced cultivation of ritual etiquette. One’s behavior, speech, adherence to proper order, and correct use of gestures in accordance with specific circumstance must all be carried out in line with regulations of ritual etiquette, which clearly shows highly developed formalization of behavior. People began study of these regulations in childhood, then refining it into an autonomous art, and this art of behavior at that time was a type of civilized cultivation. Zixia 子夏 even stated, “The Gentleman is reverent and does nothing amiss, is respectful towards others and observant of the rites, and all within the Four Seas are his brothers.”¹³ Only by being respectful and observing ritual could one make brothers of all within the Four Seas and achieve harmony in interpersonal relations.

History shows that the formal aspects of ritual can change. This transformation occurs following shifts in the circumstances of the times. The essence or “substance” (*ti* 体) of ritual, on the other hand, is an unchanging fundamental spirit and principle. It can be said that for several millennia Chinese culture has fostered a

¹²“Guan Yi” 冠義, *Record of Rites* (*Li ji* 礼记), trans. follows James Legge, with alterations.

¹³*Analects* 12.5, trans. D.C. Lau, 111.

“spirit of ritual education” that originated in the ritual ceremony of sacrificial worship. This gradually became independent from religious practice and developed into rituals of social interaction within the human realm. These are exhibited in the diverse expressions of ritual custom of various ancient historical periods, yet are also a universal spirit that transcends these specific regulations of etiquette. This is a humanistic ritual spirit. The culture of ritual includes three levels: ritual spirit, ritual attitude, and ritual regulations. We can say that the “ritual” of Chinese civilization is a cultural system that takes “respectful yielding to others” as its spirit, takes “being temperate, kind, respectful, restrained, and magnanimous” (*wen liang gong jian rang* 温良恭俭让) as its attitude, and takes comprehensive ritualized adornments and limitations of behavior its particular forms. Whatever the case, ritual not only is significant to personal cultivation, it has an even greater function for society in advancing the progression of social spirit and culture. In terms of relations between states, “love of ritual” (*hao li* 好礼) manifests a behavioral mode of respect for other states and peoples.

2.3 The Ancient Confucian System of Moral Concepts

The guiding value of the Western Zhou and Spring and Autumn periods was “ritual.” This can be seen clearly from the evaluative system of the *Zuozhuan* 左传. The individual virtues promoted during the Spring and Autumn period were myriad, and although no unified understanding of a principal virtue had yet developed, nevertheless it can be said that in general “loyalty and trustworthiness” (*zhong xin* 忠信) and “humaneness, wisdom, and courage” (*ren zhi yong* 仁智勇) were the major virtues of the middle and late Warring States period. In the *Analects*, Confucius retains this emphasis on “loyalty and trustworthiness,” and the *Zhongyong* affirms “humaneness, wisdom, and courage” to be the three major virtues (*san da de* 三达德). And yet whatever the case, by the end of the Spring and Autumn period, “humaneness” within the thought of Confucius had already become the most important value and moral virtue.

“Righteousness” (*yi* 义) already held a place of importance in the Spring and Autumn period. However, this position of importance was not especially pronounced. By the Warring States period, righteousness and humaneness in the thought of Mencius were already discussed alongside one another, beginning the promotion of “humaneness and righteousness” together as the principal Confucian virtues. Mencius’ promotion of humaneness, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom alongside one another as the “four virtues” became the most historically influential particular moral virtues through their promotion by later thinkers. The “four virtues” of humaneness, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom also became the basic morals promoted by Confucianism. During Han times, the virtue of trustworthiness (*xin* 信) was added to humaneness, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom, leading these five virtues to correspond to the “five standards of conduct” (*wuxing* 五行) and thereby form the “five constant virtues” (*wuchang* 五常). The “four virtues” and

“five constant virtues” became the basic Confucian morals of the last two millennia, deeply and broadly influencing Chinese society.

In addition to the “four virtues” and “five constant virtues,” other virtues appear in the “five classics” and “four books” that Confucianism promotes. Together with the “four virtues” and “five constant virtues,” these constitute Confucianism’s complete system of moral virtues. They include filial piety and respect for elder siblings, loyalty and empathy, achieving the mean and harmony, and sincerity and respect. Within practical social life in ancient China, these virtues functioned together with the “four virtues” and “five constant virtues” to commonly govern the moral life of Chinese people. The clearest example of this is that of “filial piety,” which although it is not included among the five constant virtues, nevertheless undeniably occupied an important and prominent position in the moral life of Chinese people.

The theory of “humaneness” strongly promoted by Confucius had as a moral concept already broken free of feudal society as well as ties of kinship, and had advanced to more general relations between humans. By the Warring States period, “humaneness and righteousness” had become the most important morals. This was not only because of their successive promotion by Confucius and Mencius; it was also due to the decay, demise, and transformation of feudal and clan institutions that took place during this period. The personal morals of clan and political relations gave way to more general social morals and interpersonal standards. Humaneness, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom moved beyond standards regulating particular ethical relations. They moved beyond particular ethics of kinship (such as filial piety) and particular ethics of political relationships (such as loyalty) to possess more universal notions of virtue and standards of interpersonal relations, and were thereby more universally accepted.

As for “humaneness,” the foremost of the “four virtues,” there has historically been very little dispute over the interpretation that the principle content of humaneness is universal love. At the very least, there has been consensus on this since the Tang thinker Han Yu 韩愈 stressed, “Universal love is called humaneness.” The core of humaneness is loving others, yet humaneness is not limited to love. Humaneness transcends the intimate caring and love among family members to possess broader and deeper connotations. The ritual of the “four virtues” originally emphasized regulations of ceremonial forms and etiquette, focusing on the adornment of behavior and appearance. Therefore ritual as a moral virtue referred to respecting and adhering to these regulations of the rites. The early concept of righteousness possibly emphasized respect for elders or superiors outside of one’s immediate family, and later increasing came to denote a virtue connected with shame. Shame emphasizes moral judgment distinguishing between good and evil, and therefore its meaning evolved toward steadfast moral principle and the rejection of evil and promotion of the good. Wisdom is a higher level of epistemological form than knowledge. As a moral virtue it refers to the ability for distinction and grasping of moral knowledge. Clearly, as virtues of personal morals, “humaneness” is warm and deep caring and love, “righteousness” is steadfast moral principles, “ritual” is adherence to ritual regulations and respectful yielding, “wisdom” is clear

consideration and distinction, and “trustworthiness” is faithful adherence to one’s promises and honesty.

What needs to be pointed out is that the “four virtues” of humaneness, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom not only possess meaning as virtues of personal morality, they also possess broader meaning as social values. Humaneness, for example, is advocated in Mencius’ call for humane governance, which emphasizes the realization of humaneness through political means. Here humaneness is no longer merely personal morality, it is also a principle of government. Thus Mencius states:

An Emperor cannot keep the Empire within the Four Seas unless he is humane; a feudal lord cannot preserve the altars to the gods of earth and grain unless he is humane; a Minister or a Counsellor cannot preserve his ancestral temple unless he is humane; a Gentleman or a Commoner cannot preserve his four limbs unless he is humane.¹⁴

Facing the broader world, humaneness is expanded to be expressed as the highest social ideal of “brotherhood of all those within the Four Seas” and “great unity under heaven” (*tianxia datong* 天下大同). In both its values and theory, the more than two millennia of Chinese political culture from the Han dynasty onward took humaneness as its guiding political and administrative principle. For example, the *Zhen Guan zheng yao* 贞观政要 takes humaneness and righteousness as the foremost basic values. Due to the influence of Confucian thought, this was not limited to the political realm, and “humaneness” became the most universal value within more than two millennia of history and culture. As for righteousness, we see it used in the sense of “justice” (*zhengyi* 正义) in the *Zuozhuan*, which states, “the abundance of unrighteous action necessarily results in one’s own failure.”¹⁵ Mencius states, “It is contrary to humaneness to kill one innocent man; it is contrary to righteousness to take what one is not entitled to.”¹⁶ Killing one innocent man violates the principle of humane love, and taking what belongs to another as one’s own violates the principle of justice. Righteousness in these places does not refer to righteousness of virtue but rather to righteousness of moral principle (*daoyi* 道义) and justice. We thus see that righteousness in ancient times was used in many places as justice. Song thinker Zhu Xi 朱熹 often spoke of righteousness as resolve and resilience, emphasizing that righteousness involves clear and firm distinction between good and evil along with resolute and steadfast rejection of evil and promotion of goodness. This characterization of righteousness points to the connotations of justice in righteousness and its aspect of carrying out this justice. Thus, the “four virtues” of humaneness, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom are not merely personal virtues; they are also social values of ancient society. As social values, humaneness is humane governance and benevolence toward the people, righteousness is the principle of justice, ritual is cultural order, and wisdom is intelligent practice. Additionally, methods of moral

¹⁴Mencius 4A3, trans. follows D.C. Lau with alterations [Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1979 (2003, rev. ed.)], 153.

¹⁵“Yin Gong yuan nuan” 隱公元年, *Zuozhuan*.

¹⁶Mencius 7A33, trans. D.C. Lau, 301, with alterations.

cultivation were considered of extraordinary importance in ancient times. The Confucian classics include many methods of practice for the cultivation of morality, such as “overcoming oneself” (*ke ji* 克己), self-reflection (*fan shen* 反身), preserving the heartmind and cultivating intrinsic nature (*cun xin yang xing* 存心养性), rectification of the heartmind (*zheng xin* 正心), making one’s intentions sincere (*cheng yi* 诚意), vigilance and fear (*jieshen kongju* 戒慎恐惧), vigilance when alone (*shen du* 慎独), and so on. The resources of Confucian moral cultivation are extraordinarily rich. From Han times to Tang times, celebration of humaneness, honoring of harmony, respect for ritual, and benefiting the community were well established as the core values of Chinese culture.

2.4 The Preferences and Characteristics of the Values of Chinese Civilization

The cognitive and existential aspects of an established civilization belong to its worldview, while the principles of evaluation of moral values of an established culture represent the basic lifestyles of its people and their fundamental cultural character. If we aim to explicate the philosophical foundations of Chinese civilization, we will lay greater emphasis on cognitive and existential aspects, especially pronounced qualities of its cosmological views. This is because people generally express their overall views of the world in which they live through their cosmological views. These are primarily embodied in their understanding of how the cosmos and world exist and act, as well as of how the cosmos and world are composed. That is to say, what is generally called worldview primarily refers to understanding of the world. However, this worldview also includes or expresses another aspect, which is the attitudes people hold toward the world. People’s understanding of the world and people’s attitudes toward the world are interconnected and run through one another. Understanding of the world often reflects or influences one’s attitude toward the world, or creates a certain attitude. The same is true in reverse. People’s attitudes toward the world arise from their understanding of the world, or influence their understanding of the world. In this lecture, we focus on Chinese civilization’s attitude toward the world in which it resides, highlighting the significance of the value attitudes of Chinese civilization in constituting the worldview of Chinese civilization. We will describe this from several aspects. The first of these is attitudes toward others and the community. The second is China’s attitude toward the external world and other parts of the world. Third is Chinese civilization’s pursuit of order in the world. Attitudes are values, and therefore this lecture mostly describes Chinese civilization’s pursuit of values.

The value preferences of Chinese civilization are interconnected with its cosmological views. The philosophy and cosmology of ancient Chinese civilization emphasized ideas of continuity, dynamicism, connection, relation, and totality. They did not advocate a self-centered philosophy prioritizing the static, independence, reality, and subject-object distinction. Beginning from this organic holism,

all of the cosmos is interconnected and existentially interdependent. Every thing manifests its existence and value within connection with others. Therefore, relationships of symbiosis and harmony ought to be established between people, between cultures, and between humans and nature. In another aspect, the value preferences of Chinese civilization are also connected with the historical path of Chinese civilization. Many historians believe that ancient China entered into civilized society without fundamentally altering its clan structures. Because of this, the framework of political and social institutions retained many characteristics of clan society, which have been carried forward continuously since ancient China's Three Dynasties. That is to say, the political and cultural development of Chinese civilization exhibits continuity. This is the historical basis on which Chinese civilization became a "civilization of continuity." Some have called this manner of transformation in entering into civilized society ancient institutional reformation. Reformation is not revolution that breaks from the past, but rather inclusive revision involving transformation and development characterized by continuity.¹⁷ According to this position, the culture and values of the tribal and clan society of early Chinese civilization were extended and elevated within the continuous inheritance of Chinese civilization into the later intellectual world.

Values have various levels. An important question of the study of values is how to grasp traditional Chinese notions of value, especially the characteristics of values on the social level. One of the characteristics of values is that they generally display these value preferences through comparison, choice, and selection between various ideas and things. Therefore we cannot merely look at the moral concepts of Chinese culture themselves in discussing the characteristics of the values of Chinese civilization. Rather, we must take Western culture, especially the values of modern Western culture, as an object of comparison in order to observe and understand the characteristics of the values of Chinese civilization.

Viewed from this perspective, the fundamental values and value system of Chinese civilization clearly differ greatly from modern Western culture. There are four fundamental qualities in which the values of Chinese civilization contrast with modern Western values.

The first of these qualities is "the priority of responsibility to freedom." The values of Chinese culture strongly emphasize the person's responsibility to others, to society, and even to nature, which manifests very powerful consciousness of responsibility. This responsibility involves transcendence of the desire for life and needs of survival of the individual self and facing the demands on the self made by others and higher levels of society. Ancient Confucianism's virtue theory was extraordinarily developed. A complete virtue system had formed by the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, and its virtues of loyalty, trustworthiness, humaneness, righteousness, filial piety, benevolence, yielding, and respect all concerned the direct relationship of the person with others and society. The value

¹⁷See Hou Wailu 侯外庐, *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中国思想通史, vol. 1 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1992), 8–9.

orientations of these social virtues all call on the person to take on responsibility toward others and society. For example, filial piety emphasized responsibility to one's parents, loyalty emphasized fulfillment of one's responsibility toward others, and trustworthiness emphasized responsibility toward one's friends. Assertions of responsibility sit in opposition to rights. The ancient Chinese moral concept of "righteousness" often included demands of responsibility. In Confucian thought, the relationship of the person with others and with the community is a continuous and unbroken connection. Within such relationships, people must proactively take on their own responsibility toward other parties. Self-consciously taking on responsibilities toward others was considered virtuous, and this served to maintain and solidify such relationships. This mentality of responsibility was a universal psychology of values cultivated by Confucian culture.

Within the understanding of Chinese culture, the person is not atomic. Rather the person is a relational being that forms one party of the continuous body of social relationships. Therefore, this position emphasizing relationships differs from positions taking the individual person as most fundamental. It advocates that within relationships composed by the person with other objects, people do not form these relationships with a mentality of rights, but rather with a mentality of responsibility. When the person forms a relationship with another party, it does not take itself as the center, but rather takes itself as a starting point from which the importance of the opposite party is recognized, with the requirement that personal benefit be subordinated to responsibility. People forget themselves in the realization of responsibility, disregarding their own person. Responsibility often becomes a major motivation of personal social practice. Such a position is one that asserts responsibility as most fundamental within interpersonal relationships. At the same time, since the person is a person within a web of social relations, the person forms various relations with diverse objects, and thereby the responsibilities of the person are manifold, and not single or unitary. However many roles a person has, he or she possesses a corresponding number of responsibilities.

Confucian values have always expressed the seriousness of shouldering responsibility. As Mencius states, a cultivated gentleman "takes upon himself the heavy charge of the empire (all under heaven)."¹⁸ That is, the moral person takes important affairs of "all under heaven" as his or her own responsibility. Han thinkers explicitly stated that one ought to "take all under heaven as one's own responsibility." From the pre-Qin scholar-ruler to the Han dynasty scholar-official, this consciousness of responsibility is constantly pronounced, emphasizing responsibility toward the state and not personal freedom. Among scholar-officials from the Han dynasty to the Song dynasty, the representative statement of this consciousness of responsibility is Fan Zhongyan's 范仲淹 advocacy to "Place concern for the concerns of the empire first, and then take pleasure in the pleasure of the empire."¹⁹ This is the most paradigmatic example of this in Chinese history.

¹⁸*Mencius* 5A7, trans. follows James Legge with alterations.

¹⁹Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹, *Yueyanglou Ji* 岳阳楼记 (1046).

Later, Ming dynasty scholar Gu Xiancheng 顾宪成 put forth advocacy of “concern for all affairs,” including “affairs of the family, affairs of the state, and affairs of all under heaven.” Gu Yanwu 顾炎武, whose life spanned the transition between the Ming and Qing dynasties, likewise declared, “ordinary citizens hold responsibility for the flourishing and decline of the empire.”²⁰ Qing dynasty thinker Lin Zexu 林则徐 even promoted willingness to sacrifice one’s life if it benefits one’s nation.²¹ All of these are common statements in Chinese culture that express of scholar-officials’ views on responsibility. Chinese people are familiar with them, and they have deeply influenced society and folk culture.

The second quality in which the values of Chinese civilization contrast with modern Western values is “the priority of duty to rights.” Since modern times, Western society has laid extraordinary emphasis on the priority of individual rights. However, Chinese thinking, especially Confucian thought, emphasizes instead the priority of obligation. The major 20th century Confucian Liang Shuming participated in the movement to establish rural government in Shandong and Hebei, and during this experience had an insight: This is Chinese culture’s prioritization of duty in relationships among people. The reciprocal assumption of duty is a fundamental characteristic of Chinese ethics. He believed that the rise of individualism that began with Western modernity formed a society in which individuals are most fundamental (*geren benwei de shehui* 个人本位的社会). Such a society contains myriad problems. China, on the other hand, took ethical relations as most fundamental. Liang Shuming wrote:

A human life has other people with whom it is necessarily interrelated; these are heavenly relations.²² A human life takes place in its entirety within relations between humans; these are ethical relations. Feelings of intimate interrelation arise from the corporality of heavenly relations. These natural emotions extend to all interrelated persons, without exception. Where there are feelings of affection, duty is born. The duty of the father is loving his children; the duty of the child is filial piety; the duty of elder siblings is friendship; and the duty of younger siblings is respect. Spouses, friends, and all interrelated people naturally have duties which they ought to fulfill. Ethical relationships are expressions of a kind of obligation. A person seems to not exist for oneself, but rather recognizes the importance of the other. Modern Westerners oppose this, their belief in the self as most fundamental arising everywhere, and everything concerned primarily with concepts of rights.

From this perspective, the ethics of Chinese people especially emphasize sense of duty. Of course this sense of duty is open. Ethical duty can be enlarged from the family to the clan and community, and further to the country prefecture, nation, all under heaven, and the cosmos. In sum, the ethical notions of Chinese people emphasize sense of duty, and the virtue toward which duty is oriented does not celebrate individual rights but rather strives to realize obligation toward others and the fulfillment of the responsibilities one carries. Liang Shuming believes this orientation of duty is especially expressed in how one treats the relationship

²⁰Gu Yanwu 顾炎武, “Zhengshi” 正始 chapter of *Ri Zhi Lu* 日知录.

²¹Lin Zexu 林则徐, “Pu shu dengcheng kou zhan shi jieren” 赴戍登程口占示家人 (1842).

²²Translator’s note: Or perhaps “natural relations,” in the sense of relations bestowed by heaven.

between oneself and others. In his view, the West prioritizes the individual, taking oneself as most important, while China sees duty as most important, respecting other parties. Liang Shuming writes, “Primary concern with the fundamentality of the individual leads to proliferation of notions of rights. Primary concern with consciousness of respect for other parties leads to proliferation of notions of duty.” Clearly, rights have become a fundamental notion of modern Western society, while in Chinese culture notions of duty occupy a fundamental position.

The third quality in which the values of Chinese civilization contrast with modern Western values is “the community being higher than the individual.” Following the Western Zhou rise of humanistic thought in Chinese culture, the Spring and Autumn period clearly put forth notions of the human as most fundamental. Early modern Western culture following the Renaissance also advocated the fundamental position of the human. However, modern Western humanism has had a stronger affinity to take the individual as fundamental, whereas Chinese culture’s assertion of the human as fundamental does not promote the fundamentality of the individual but rather emphasizes the fundamentality of the community. Therefore, its values see the community as higher than the individual.

According to the views of Chinese culture, humans do not exist in the world as individual and independent beings. They live necessarily as beings within the community. The realization of human morality also must be achieved within communal life. The most basic communal unit by which one transcends one’s individual person is the family, which expanded is the clan, community, and various levels of the scope of political administration, such as village, county, prefecture, and province, all the way up to the national level. Chinese civilization views family values as especially important, as the family is the first level by which one moves beyond oneself and develops toward society. The mainstream thought of Chinese culture does not emphasize individual rights and interests. It believes that personal values cannot be higher than communal values. Society is far more important than the person. It therefore emphasizes a melding of the personal with the communal and the duty of the person to the community. It emphasizes the importance of the interests of the communal totality. Although in ancient times Chinese thought did not give abstract discussions of the community but rather mostly used ideas of the “family,” “state,” “gods of land and grain,” “all under heaven,” and so on to concretely express the meaning and value of the community, all of these descriptions (such as “ability to form community,” “protecting one’s family,” “dedication to serving one’s country,” and so on) nevertheless clearly embody the importance of social stability, harmony, and prosperity. They emphasize the person’s duty toward community and society, as well as the priority and importance of community and society for the person. In its forms of expression, emphasis on the priority of society is also often accentuated through the opposition of “public” (*gong* 公) and “personal” (*si* 私). The “public” transcends beyond the personal and refers to the value of the interests of the larger community. If the individual is personal, then family is public; if the family is personal, then the state is public, and so forth. The publicness of the community and state gods of land and grain are greater versions of publicness. The greatest publicness lies in justice

(*gongdao* 公道),²³ fairness (*gongping* 公平), and public interest (*gongyi* 公益). Thus it is said, “The public is all under heaven” (*tianxia wei gong* 天下为公).

In summary, Confucian ethics do not see the individual as fundamental, but rather develop within a structure of concentric circles that open toward society and are characterized by continuity. These circles are the person, family, state, world, and nature. They expand outwardly, unbroken, thereby giving Confucian ethics manifold dimensions and affirming the responsibility people carry toward various levels of community. The *Analects* discusses the idea of fraternity with “all within the Four Seas,”²⁴ and the *Record of Rites* advocates “looking on all under heaven as one family.”²⁵ If we say that family is a fundamental idea of Chinese people, and that familial relations are the basic relations among Chinese people, then Chinese people long ago extended and enriched this concept of family and familial relations. It should be pointed out that the value structures of Chinese civilization are pluralistic. Daoism and Buddhism both provide their values, making them constitutive parts of the values of Chinese civilization. However, Confucian value structures formed the mainstream values of Chinese civilization. This is without doubt. At the same time, that our focus is on East-West relations in an era of globalization and concentrated on political and moral values is also a reason that our discussion here often takes Confucianism as representative and does not look at other schools of thought.

The fourth quality in which the values of Chinese civilization contrast with modern Western values is “harmony being higher than conflict.” The cultural history of humankind is full of conflict, battle, and bloodshed. East and West are the same in this regard. However, comparatively speaking, Chinese culture lays greater emphasis on harmony among people than Western culture does. Chinese culture focuses on the high esteem of harmony and emphasizes pursuit of pluralistic harmony.

The Spring and Autumn period imperial historian Bo Yangfu 伯阳父 (known as Shi Bo 史伯) put forth the teaching, “Harmony is that by which things are actually generated; whereas through sameness things are unable to continue.”²⁶ This formed Chinese culture’s notion of “being harmonious while being dissimilar” (*he er bu tong* 和而不同).²⁷ This notion of “harmony” began to develop in the early stages of Chinese civilization. The *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚书) records Emperor Shun 帝舜 ordering a minister of music to achieve a state in which “the eight different kinds of musical instruments can be adjusted so that one shall not take from or interfere with another; and spirits and men are brought into harmony.”²⁸ This shows that ancient people already understood the harmonious function of

²³Translator’s note: Literally equivalent to “the Way of publicness,” perhaps philosophically corresponding to a “Way of public reason.”

²⁴See Footnote 13.

²⁵“Li yun” 礼运 18, *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 礼记), trans. follows James Legge with alterations.

²⁶“Shi Bi wei Huan Gong lun xing shuai” 史伯为桓公论兴衰, *Zhengyu* 郑语 book of the *Guoyu* 国语.

²⁷See *Analects* 13.23.

²⁸“Shun Dian” 舜典 (Canon of Shun), *Yu Shu* 虞书 (Book of Yu) of the *Book of Documents*, trans. James Legge.

music, and embodies the aspiration toward cosmic harmony in early wisdom. Ancient Chinese repeatedly used musical harmony as a metaphor for harmony among the various things of the world, and harmony thereby became a sort of universal pursuit. The *Zuozhuan* correspondingly describes, “In nine meetings of vassal lords over eight years, there was harmony like that of music, with no element out of concert.”²⁹ Ancient Chinese took musical harmony as a model for managing relationships between people, between persons and society, between communities, between humans and heaven, and so on. The pursuit of “harmony” also became a universal ideal of Chinese culture and thought, shaping the modes of thought and value orientations of Chinese civilization.

This type of thinking also strongly influenced Confucianism. The Confucian classic of the “Record of Music” (*Yueji* 乐记) in the *Record of the Rites* states, “Music is the harmony of heaven and earth; ritual is the order of heaven and earth. From harmony all things receive their being; through order they are all differentiated.” This clearly shows that the harmony of humankind fundamentally originates from the harmony of heaven and earth, that is, the harmony of nature. Harmony is the principle of the generation and development of all things; without harmony there is no generative transformation of the myriad things. The realization of harmony, moreover, has deep cosmological origins. Song era philosopher Zhang Zai 张载 wrote, “When there is one thing, there is its opposite; this opposite must be contrary to it in its activity; with this contrariness, there is antagonism; this antagonism must be harmonized and resolved.” This emphasizes that the movement from opposition to harmony is not merely a law of nature, but also a principle of society and human life that possesses universal significance.

There is a consciousness of conflict in Western culture in which people generally want to use their own power in a self-centered way to conquer, control, and possess others. Because of this, religious war is extraordinarily cruel in Western history. Such religious war did not occur in China. We might even say that the two World Wars of the 20th century did not have their source in Eastern culture. Generally speaking, in comparison with Western culture, Chinese culture emphasizes harmony to be higher than conflict.

2.5 The Divergence Between the Value Preferences of Chinese Civilization and Modern Values

The basic values formed in Axial Age Chinese civilization became the core values that guided the development of later Chinese civilization. Through development over the two millennia following the Axial Age, Chinese civilization fixed its own value preferences, the principal four of which are “the priority of responsibility to freedom,” “the priority of duty over rights,” “the community being higher than the

²⁹“Xiang Gong shiyi nian” 襄公十一年, *Zuozhuan*.

individual,” and “harmony being higher than conflict,” along with the unity of heaven and human (*tian ren he yi* 天人合一) being higher than the subject-object distinction.

There is great divergence between the values of Chinese civilization and modern Western values. For example, the central moral principle of modern Western liberalism is the prioritization of individual human rights. Everyone has the right to live and act in accordance with their own values. This position believes that making demands on all citizens according to a conception of the common good violates basic individual liberty. Confucianism and the ethics of the various major world religions, on the other hand, all emphasize the common social good, social responsibility, and the virtue of benefiting the public interest. The “community” and the “individual” along with “responsibility” and “rights” constitute two different ethical vocabularies that reflect two different ethical positions and are suited to two different spheres of values. The ethical position centered in the community and responsibility must clarify its own outlook. That is, while also expressing affirmation of freedom and human rights, it should at the same time unambiguously declare that it does not affirm the discourse of rights and the ethical position of prioritizing the individual.

Today we have experienced the course of modern and contemporary development of Chinese culture. In facing the social transformation of modernization and trend of global change, we undoubtedly ought to uphold and protect the demands of the Declaration of Human Rights as well as strive for its realization. However, this certainly does not mean that freedom and human rights are the most important values, or that ethics is merely meant to provide support for individual human rights. It should be pointed out that the discourse and thinking of rights are limited and insufficient in dealing with ethical issues. The generalization of rights-centered thinking is even one of the sources of the many problems we face today. The discourse of rights is also often connected with individualism. Individualism’s prioritization of rights holds a basic presupposition placing individual rights in the foremost position, believing that individual rights must have priority over collective aims and the common social good. In this position, individual duty, responsibility, and virtue all prove difficult to establish. Advocacy of the prioritization of rights emphasizes merely emphasize the protection of people’s negative freedom, and is unable to promote individual recognition of the importance of society’s public interests. It is unable to clearly recognize the conflict between society’s public interests and individual personal interests. The position emphasizing the community and responsibility, on the other hand, seeks to advance the establishment of value attitudes that have positive significance. The 20th century Chinese New Confucian Liang Shuming promoted ideas of self-responsibility representative of Chinese culture, a position asserting the responsibility to “reciprocally recognizing the importance of the other,” in opposition to the outlook of individualism and notions of rights as fundamental to human life. This can be said to fundamentally oppose the rooting of basic attitudes and basic ethical principles for human life in individualism. What Liang Shuming advocated was a Confucian outlook that can be seen as the view of the modern values of Chinese civilization on an ethic of rights.

Liang Shuming's ethic of "recognizing the importance of the other" might be said to arise from the Confucian ethic that he explicated, which indeed possessed a consciousness that differed from the emphasis of the subject. It differed as well from notions of "intersubjectivity," being an ethic characterized by recognition of the importance of "the other." Within this ethic, not only was acknowledgment of the opposite party pronounced, but caring, obligation, and respect toward the other was also emphasized. This was not respect in the sense of fair exchange, but rather an unconditional "recognition of the importance of the other."

In the mainstream understanding of Western culture, human rights are rights demanded by individuals in facing the state. They are moral and political demands on government that are needed by everyone. Here, the demands of individual rights are the responsibility and duty of government. Therefore, notions of human rights involve only the responsibilities and obligations of government, but are unable to delineate the obligations and responsibilities of the individual toward society, family, and others. These ideas of rights have been the core of Western liberal philosophy since early modernity. They are products of the advance of the modern market economy and political democracy. Yet due to the focus on demands of the individual toward society, the responsibility of the individual toward society has often been overlooked. Concentration on the individual's protection of his or her own rights has left the responsibility also possessed by the individual to respect the rights of others overlooked.

As the core of Chinese civilization, the values of Confucian ethics have various forms of expression in modern society. For example, in modern East Asia, Singapore's celebration of "Asian values" constitutes one of these forms. Although Singapore's use of the term "Asian values" may draw skepticism from Asian cultures including those of West and South Asia, nevertheless, according to Li Guangyao's 李光耀 explanation, the term "Asian values" principally refers to the manifestation of Confucian-influenced East Asian values. These "Asian values" are the value attitudes and principles developed in the convergence of the traditional and modern worlds of East Asia. These principles are rooted in the historical development of the culture, religion, and spiritual tradition of East Asia. They are also challenges within Asia's process of modernization of dealing with the world, as they are principles formed by removing unreasonable elements of tradition and adapting to modern Asian experience. The Asian values Li Guangyao has asserted are summarized as five major principles: 1. Society and the nation are more important than the individual person; 2. The root of the state lies in the family; 3. The state must respect the individual person; 4. Harmony is more beneficial to maintaining order than conflict; and 5. Religions ought to complement one another and coexist peacefully.³⁰

These five principles not only include the traditional values of East Asia, they also include the new values developed out of the process of absorbing Western

³⁰Taken from Lü Yuanli 吕远礼, *Yazhou jiazhiguan: Xinjiapo zhengzhi de quanshi* 亚洲价值观: 新加坡政治的诠释 (Nanchang, Jiangxi: Jiangxi Renmin Chubanshe, 2002), 59.

culture and establishing a market economy and democratic governance over the last century. Therefore, asserting these to be “Asian values” does not imply that all elements of this system of values are exclusively Asian. That modern Asian values and modern Western values differ does not mean that all aspects of these values are different, but rather that there are differences in the structure and order of these values. That which is most central in these values differs. Simply stated, this is a set of values that do not prioritize individualism. They are a Singaporean version of modern Asian values, as well as a Singaporean version of the values of modern Confucian civilization. Their core is not the prioritization of individual freedom and rights, but rather the prioritization of the interests of the community and society. It is not related with the prioritization of conflict among parties, but related with the prioritization of harmony among parties. This value attitude of prioritization of the interests of the community cannot be used as an excuse for repression of human rights. It must rely on values of democratic institutions and respect for individual persons to realize the protection of human rights. Its difference from modern Western values lies in this value attitude demanding that people possess a mentality of duty and responsibility toward others and the community. This mentality of duty and responsibility accords with the fundamental consensus and shared values of the community. Of course, Singaporean ethics are not the entirety of modern Confucian ethics. For example, in addition to the emphasis on communal values and responsibility, modern Confucian ethics also strongly demands that people maintain traditional virtues, believing that these virtues are both the manifestation of intrinsic human nature and the distillation of universal social interests. These values strive for symbiosis and harmony between people, between persons and society, between cultures, and between humans and nature, yet what they seek goes beyond social harmony, as well. More importantly, even in its social values, modern Confucianism still necessarily grants humaneness the foremost position. This differs from Li Guangyao’s perspective as a politician.

The principle of humane love, spirit of ritual education, consciousness of responsibility, and fundamentality of the community all oppose the value position of individualism. The communal collaboration, culture of ritual education, politics of cooperation, and world governed by “the Way of the king” (*wangdao* 王道)³¹ that develop from this are needs of the contemporary world. Communal collaboration emphasizes the significance of the community, in contrast with individualism; a culture of ritual education emphasizes moral consciousness, as opposed to legalism; a politics of cooperation emphasizes collaborative political communication, unlike a politics of conflict; and finally, a world governed by “the Way of the king” is a universal order that differs from the use of brute force and hegemony of imperialism. These four points all take humaneness as their core. Humaneness is a fundamental principle of interconnection and symbiotic harmony. It is a universal cultural

³¹Translator’s note: “The Way of the king” is generally understood in the Confucian tradition as the highest path of governance, characterized by moral virtue, benevolence, and the implementation of political practices and policies that benefit society. “The Way of the king” thereby also involves the people willingly following their ruler and a corresponding lack of need for coercion.

principle that differs from modern Western mainstream values. In contemporary society, humaneness can form mutual complementarity with modern Western values.

Several years ago I brought up the question of the “pluralistic universality” (*duoyuan pubianxing* 多元普遍性) of values. I believe that we must attempt to establish this notion of “pluralistic universality.” In his book *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, American sociologist Roland Robertson asserts that “the particularization of universalism” and “universalization of particularism” are mutually complementary dual processes of globalization.³² In the particularization of universality, universality refers to the basic values of the modern economy, political institutions, and systems of management first developed in the West. This can also be called “global localization” or “glocalization.” “The universalization of particularism” on the other hand refers to the increasing global universality of particular values and identities. If individual peoples and local communities abandon their various particular forms of essentialism and are open to integrating into the process of globalization, then the culture and localized knowledge of those peoples can likewise acquire globalized universal significance. This is “local globalization.” Roland Robertson’s ideas here are highly significant. Yet this explanation is certainly insufficient in regards to the universal significance of the values of Eastern civilization. In my view, the West actualized the universality of its own values rather early on, whereas the East was still only beginning to actualize the universality of its own local qualities. Yet the internal universality of spiritual values is certainly not determined by the external degree of actualization of this universality. The spiritual culture and values of both East and West internally and intrinsically possess universality. This can be called “internal universality.” Whether or not internal universality is able to be actualized depends on many external and historical conditions, and when realized can be called “actualized universality.” Therefore, in reality we must recognize that both Eastern and Western cultures each possess universality on the level of spirit and values. Both are universalist, it is just that they diverge from one another and their degree of actualization differs in different historical periods. This is pluralistic universality. Justice, freedom, rights, and rational individuality are universalist values; humane love, ritual education, responsibility, community, and inner tranquility are also universalist values. This was precisely the point that Liang Shuming strove to make clear in his early work *Dong-Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue* 东西文化及其哲学 (Eastern and Western cultures and their philosophy). Today, only by establishing the notion of pluralistic universality within globalization is it possible to make all cultural modes of the world relativized and equalized. In this sense, if we say that in the first stage of globalization cultural shifts possess characteristics of Westernization, then in its second stage we will possibly return the West to the West and return Western culture to a relativized position similar to that of Eastern culture. In this sense, in contrast with the emphasis on “the politics of recognition” of Western pluralist

³²Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: SAGE Publications, 1992), 100.

positions, we will emphasize a “culture of recognition” in globalized cultural relations. This would be the recognition of pluralistic universality among cultures, a principle that would be used to manage relationships among diverse cultures. This position is naturally a position of cosmopolitan cultural pluralism, and advocates decentralization and polycentrism in global cultural relations.

2.6 The Worldview of Chinese Civilization: Understanding and Attitude Regarding the External World

The attitude of Chinese civilization toward the world is not only an ethical attitude of the person toward the other and toward the community in which one resides, it also includes a cultural-political attitude toward the external world. “Chinese,” “all under heaven,” “the Way of the king,” and “soft and yielding” are all typical notions and elements of this discourse. The fundamental ideas they embody are culture being higher than ethnicity, all under heaven being higher than the nation, and the ideal of the world as “great unity.”

In ancient China, the idea of “Chinese” (*Zhonghua* 中华) did not refer to the name of a nation or a geographical region, nor did it refer to ethnic lineage. The title of “Chinese” referred to a cultural group. Thus the Chinese could devolve into barbarism and barbarians could evolve to become Chinese. During the Western Zhou period, the state of Lu 鲁, ruled by the same familial clan as the Zhou court, was considered Chinese; the state of Qi 齐, ruled by a different familial clan, was also considered Chinese. The criterion for being Chinese was that of the culture of ritual and music developed in the early dynasties. Over the following several millennia, various ethnic groups of the north and south integrated into the traditionally Chinese people, all becoming Chinese. Therefore, the meaning of “Chinese” is cultural, not ethnic. This shows that within Chinese civilization, generally speaking cultural values are far higher than ethnic consciousness.

As for the term “all under heaven,” this term has historically been used in three ways. Theoretically, all under heaven refers to the entirety of geographic space that lies beneath the sky. It is unlimited, and equivalent to what today we call the world. This is the first sense of all under heaven. Yet in reality the use of the term “all under heaven” was often limited. For example, in Chinese people’s use of the term, it is often seen to refer to the actual scope of rule and domination of the ancient Chinese emperor. In this sense, all under heaven refers to China. This is the second meaning of the term. Finally, all under heaven was also used to refer to the concentric world centered on China and its structural system. This is the third meaning of the term.³³ The first sense of all under heaven is seen frequently in classic texts of

³³See Shinichiro Watanabe 渡边信一郎, *Zhongguo gudai de wangquan yu tianxia zhixu* 中国古代的王权与天下秩序 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2008) 2–9.

Confucianism, and expresses Chinese people's understanding and ideal of the world. The second sense is seen frequently in Chinese political texts, and is used to discuss the management of political affairs within China. The third sense of the term is seen frequently in texts that discuss Chinese involvement with the external world, including how Chinese thought imagined the structural order of the world.

In terms of the second sense of the term, all under heaven is China itself, its geographical scope equivalent to the "Nine Regions" (*jiuzhou* 九州). This use of all under heaven is close to the modern nation. In terms of the third sense of the term, all under heaven is the structured space of the Nine Regions, Four Seas, and Four Wildernesses (*sihuang* 四荒). The Nine Regions were the center, the Four Seas were occupied by border states, and the Four Wildernesses were even more remote realms. This meaning of all under heaven is close to world order. Ancient China considered itself the center of civilization, believing that the degree of civilization decreased progressively from the Nine Regions to the Four Seas and then the Four Wildernesses. The ancient Chinese conceptualized and put into practice this graded arrangement of world order.³⁴ We see this in the system of imperial tributes of the Ming and Qing dynasties. In this arrangement, the relationship between China and the world that borders it is not equal, yet China only carried out "hegemony of titles of rank" and "regulations of imperial tribute" toward border states. It did not interfere with local lines of independent rulers, nor did it demand to directly govern their people. Their people had no obligation to pay taxes to the Chinese emperor. In this type of relationship, the formal requirements of ritual institutions were the most important of China's demands on the world on its borders. The Chinese emperor did not greedily seek the land and wealth of these surrounding states.³⁵

Early modern China fell victim to imperialist oppression, and Chinese intellectuals reacted emotionally in response. Some said that Chinese people had only considered the idea of all under heaven and not nationality, and that Chinese people had only world consciousness and not national consciousness. They hoped to use this explanation to promote people's national consciousness and establish a modern nation state. Others said that Chinese people had generally envisioned no world external to China, that China was equivalent to the world and the world equivalent to China. These thinkers asserted that Chinese people had only a consciousness of China and no consciousness of the world. Both explanations are inaccurate. Chinese people had established their own national identity long before China transformed into a modern nation. It is simply that this national identity differed from the form of modern ethnic national identity. Speaking historically, since Qin and Han times, Chinese people clearly understood the limitations of their own borders. The *Shiji* 史记 (Records of the Grand Historian) discusses China as the "Middle Kingdom" alongside "external kingdoms" in several places. As early as

³⁴Gao Mingshi 高明士, *Tianxia zhixu yu wenhuaquan de tansuo* 天下秩序与文化圈的探索 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2008), 23.

³⁵Ibid., 26, quotation of Tang emperor Taizong 唐太宗.

Han times people clearly recognized that China was only one of the states of the world.³⁶

Chinese civilization's political imagination of the order of the external world and attitude toward dealing with it were centered in rule by ritual and rule by virtue. This extended from its central belief that the Way is achieved through virtue and order achieved through ritual. The leading foreign policy of Confucian thought generally has not advocated expansion of China's borders. It is rooted instead in maintaining peace along its borders and prized harmony with its neighbors.³⁷ Therefore, its attitude toward the external world differs from the orientation of early modern ideology and the hegemonic international relations of imperialist violence and inhumanity. Overall, it does not adopt an approach of military force but of peace in achieving its goals. This differs fundamentally from modern imperialism's use of force to occupy territory and seize wealth. Naturally, in empirical fact, there are many isolated instances of emperors violating the guides of Confucian thought and carrying out military campaigns on border states. However, these actions do not accord with the mainstream values of Chinese civilization, and within China have been reflected on and judged critically.

The differences of this way of imagining the world and these political politics arise directly from Confucian culture's attitude toward the realm of distant peoples. The *Analects* states:

What I have heard is that the head of a state or a noble family worries not about underpopulation but about uneven distribution, not about poverty but about instability. For where there is even distribution there is no such thing as poverty, where there is harmony there is no such thing as underpopulation and where there is stability there is no such thing as overturning. It is for this reason that when distant subjects are unsubmitive one cultivates one's moral quality in order to attract them, and once they have come one makes them content.³⁸

This is the use of moral civilization and culture to attract and pacify distant peoples. The *Zhongyong* book of the *Record of Rites* states:

There are nine standards by which to administer the empire, its states, and the families. They are: cultivating the personal life, honoring the worthy, being affectionate to relatives, being respectful toward the great ministers, identifying oneself with the welfare of the whole body of officers, treating the common people as one's own children, attracting the various artisans, showing tenderness to strangers from far countries, and extending kindly and awesome influence on the feudal lords. If the ruler cultivates his personal life, the Way will be established. If he honors the worthy, he will not be perplexed. If he is affectionate to his relatives, there will be no grumbling among his uncles and brothers. If he respects the great ministers, he will not be deceived. If he identifies himself with the welfare of the whole body of officers, then the officers will repay him heavily for his courtesies. If he

³⁶Yao Dali 姚大力, "Bianhua zhong de guojia rentong: Dui Zhongguo guojia guannian shi de yanjiu shuping" 变化中的国家认同:对中国国家观念史的研究述评, in *Du shi de zhihui* 读史的智慧 (Shanghai: Fudan Daxue Chubanshe, 2010), 260.

³⁷Yu Yunguo 虞云国, "Gudai Zhongguoren de zhoubian guozuguan" 古代中国人的周边国族观, *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 中华文史论丛 (Jan. 2009): 239.

³⁸*Analects* 16.1, trans. D.C. Lau, 161–163.

treats the common people as his own children, then the masses will exhort one another [to do good]. If he attracts the various artisans, there will be sufficiency of wealth and resources in the country. If he shows tenderness to strangers from far countries, people from all quarters of the world will flock to him. And if he extends kindly and awesome influence over the feudal lords, then the world will stand in awe of him. ...To welcome them when they come and send them off when they go and to commend the good among them and show compassion to the incompetent—this is the way to show tenderness to strangers from far countries. To restore lines of broken succession, to revive states that have been extinguished, to bring order to chaotic states, to support those states that are in danger, to have fixed times for their attendance at court, and to present them with generous gifts while expecting little when they come—this is the way to extend kindly and awesome influence on the feudal lords.³⁹

Showing tenderness and extending kindly and awesome influence are the use of education of virtue to deal with distant peoples, drawing them into allegiance and obedience.

In reality, Chinese civilization during the Western Zhou period already followed this attitude. The *Zuozhuan* states:

Use music to solidify virtue, righteousness to manage it, ritual to enact it, trustworthiness to maintain it, and humaneness to impel it; then one is able to pacify the nation, share in common prosperity, and attract remote peoples. This is what is called happiness [in the *Book of Poetry*].⁴⁰

The *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周礼) similarly promotes, “creating harmonious relations among the various states, fostering harmonious accord among the people, placing guests at ease, and making remote peoples happily offer their allegiance.”⁴¹ This notion of dealing with the external world through showing tenderness to distant peoples as a way to promote moralization is deeply ingrained in Chinese civilization. Although ancient Chinese civilization in its time was an advanced and powerful civilization, pride was never a virtue upheld by Chinese culture. To prosper without arrogance and have power but love the rites are virtues promoted in Chinese civilization. Chinese people value a civilization in which strength does not coerce the weak, does not violate the weak, and carries out ritual. “Strength without righteousness and without ritual” is not civilized. It does not reach the level of civilization.

If we see all under heaven as conceiving of the world, then a reasonable way of thinking about this kind of world order can be seen in Mencius’ explication of a world governed by “the Way of the king.” Mencius’ distinction between “the Way of the king” and “the Way of the hegemon” is:

One who uses force while borrowing from humaneness will become leader of the feudal lords [as a hegemon], but to do so he must first be the ruler of a state of considerable size. One who puts humaneness into effect through the transforming influence of morality will

³⁹Trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 105–106, brackets in original text.

⁴⁰See Footnote 29.

⁴¹“Da si le” 大司乐 section of “Chun guan zong bo” 春官宗伯, *Rites of Zhou*.

become a true King, and his success will not depend on the size of his state. ...When people submit to force they do so not willingly but because they are not strong enough. When people submit to the transforming influence of morality they do so sincerely, with admiration in their hearts.⁴²

Under the guidance of this type of thought, the humane government of “being a king for all under heaven” and the ideals of “the public as all under heaven” and “great unity of all under heaven” opened the moral dimension of “all under heaven” external to political-geographic structures.

In regards to the world consciousness of Chinese people, what must be pointed out is that prior to Qin times, all under heaven was a synonym for the imperial Zhou court. This was a concept of the nation that was higher than its individual vassal states. “All under heaven” also represented unified values that were a level above the vassal “state.” While the vassal states under the Zhou dynasty were individually self-governing, they all recognized the Zhou court to be the common feudal leader of all under heaven, and all took Zhou culture as a shared cultural paradigm. Even under the successive rise of the Five Hegemons of the Spring and Autumn period, the political borders of the larger territory represented by the Zhou court, which transcended the individual vassal states, remained an important part of the political consciousness of each state. Even if by the late Spring and Autumn and Warring States period that unity of the Zhou court that was higher than individual states had gradually become a formal unity, nevertheless this notion of “all under heaven” as higher than the individual state continued to influence political imagination during this and subsequent periods. For example, Confucius’ time was characterized by the collapse of ritual and downfall of music, and yet Confucius continued to uphold that “the rites and music and punitive expeditions are initiated by the Emperor,”⁴³ that is, that they ought to be initiated by the Zhou emperor. In Mencius’ time, the political vision of scholar-officials was not limited to individual states, but took political aim instead at kingly governance for all under heaven. “All under heaven” was a larger world that transcended individual vassal states. The representative ideas of the *Daxue* 大学 (*Great Learning*) also place the pursuit of “pacifying all under heaven” (*ping tianxia* 平天下) above “governing the nation” (*zhi guo* 治国). In the prefecture and county system practiced in Qin and Han times there was equivalence and unity between the nation and all under heaven. There was no pursuit of a greater political unity beyond China. Yet, because there were in fact other nations outside of China, the teachings of “all under heaven” being greater and higher than “the nation,” especially in the Confucian classics, expanded people’s political consciousness beyond the limits of “the nation.” The nation was certainly not the highest concept, and this had very early on already become Chinese people’s worldview and conception of all under heaven.⁴⁴ In this sense,

⁴²*Mencius* 2A3, trans. D.C. Lau with alterations, 69, brackets added.

⁴³*Analects* 16.2, trans. D.C. Lau, 163.

⁴⁴See Zhao Tingyang 赵汀阳, *Tianxia tixi* 天下体系 (Nanchang, Jiangsu: Jiangsu Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2005), 44.

“all under heaven” expressed the world consciousness of Chinese people. The *Record of Rites* states, “Look on all under the sky as one family, and on all in the Middle states [i.e., China] as one man.”⁴⁵ The world of great unity is a world of mutual assistance and loving fraternity, of residing in peace and taking pleasure in industry, of social equality, and of peaceful international relations. The ideal of great unity of all under heaven is equivalent to the ideal of the world of great unity, and remains the Confucian ideal.

2.7 The Universal Ideal of Chinese Civilization: Pursuit of Pluralism and Harmony

The *Guoyu* records imperial historian Bo Yangfu 伯阳父 of the Spring and Autumn period as stating:

Harmony is that by which things are actually generated; whereas through sameness things are unable to continue. Bringing different things together so as to arrive at equilibrium is called harmony. One is thereby able to richly develop and unite things. If one adds together like elements, their interaction results in exhaustion and leaves nothing. Therefore, the former kings mixed soil with metal, wood, water, and fire, and the interaction of these created the myriad things. We thereby have harmonization of the five flavors to please the mouth, strengthening of the four limbs to protect the body, harmonization of the six notes to cultivate the ear, rectification of the seven apertures to serve the heartmind, coordination of the eight body parts to constitute the complete person, the health of the nine organs to establish pure virtue, and the use of ten levels of office to guide the myriad ministers. ... This is supreme harmony. Therefore, the former kings married queens of other clans, grew their wealth through tributaries from all four directions, selects those ministers presenting criticism to manage affairs, and strives to put forth harmony and unity. A sound with only one note is not something worth hearing; a thing with only one color is without richness; monotony of flavor does not please people's tastes; when things are all the same there is no corrective balance.⁴⁶

This type of thinking believes that harmony among different things is the root by which things are generated. The pure replication or addition of like things is unable to produce generation and growth. In this sense, the existence of the other is a precondition of the generation and development of new things. This is seen in five elements theory, which posits five different fundamental materials which through their interaction and combination produce all things. The principle herein is that of “being harmonious while being dissimilar.” This rejection of uniformity, which sees plurality as the root of flourishing and development, is true wisdom. It is a view that emphasizes that coordination, mediation, balance, and harmony among plural factors is far superior to uniformity, and believes that uniformity can only obstruct

⁴⁵“Li yun” 礼运, *Record of Rites*, trans. James Legge, brackets added.

⁴⁶“Shi Bi wei Huan Gong lun xing shuai” 史伯为桓公论兴衰, *Zhengyu* 郑语 book of the *Guoyu*.

creation and development. The *Zuozhuan* also records the late Spring and Autumn thought of Yan Ying 晏嬰:

Harmony is like making soup. One cooks fish with water, fire, vinegar, meat sauce, salt, and plums, and heats it with firewood. The masterful chef combines these harmoniously, adjusting its various flavors, adding where insufficient and subtracting where excessive. ...If one uses water to adjust the flavor of water, who will find it edible? If the ancient instruments of the *qin* and *se* played only a single note, who would be willing to listen to them?⁴⁷

Only the mediation, complementarity, and blending of different things can produce flourishing and new things. The existence of difference, plurality, and otherness are preconditions of the generation and development of things. Harmony of the differences of diversity is the fundamental condition of continuous generation. This type of dialectic thought had already developed prior to Confucius to become an intellectual resource for the celebration of diversity inherent within Chinese philosophy, and was applied in understanding of politics, society, cosmological generation, and other realms.

As for the connotation of “harmony” possessed by the Chinese term *he* 和, this began developing in early Chinese civilization. As mentioned above, the *Book of Documents* records Emperor Shun ordering his minister of music to use poetry and song to reach a state in which “the eight different kinds of musical instruments can be adjusted so that one shall not take from or interfere with another; and spirits and men are brought into harmony.” This makes clear that ancient people already understood the harmonious function of music, and hoped that musical harmony could lead humans and deities to achieve a harmonious relationship. The people of the Spring and Autumn period inherited this type of thought, and advocated the expansion of harmony of sounds to a harmony that transcends the human realm, that is, “to bring spirits and men into harmony.”⁴⁸ This manifested the yearning of early learned people for cosmological harmony. Ancient Chinese people repeatedly used musical harmony as an allegory for harmony among the various things of the world, and harmony thereby became a universal pursuit. The *Zuozhuan* likewise records the marquis of Jin 晉 stating, “You have taught me to use harmony with border tribes to manage the Chinese vassal states of the Central Plains, and in nine meetings of vassal lords over eight years, there was harmony like that of music, with no element out of concert.”⁴⁹ Ancient Chinese people took musical harmony as a model for managing relations among people, between people and society, among communities, and between heaven and human. The pursuit of “harmony” also became a general ideal of Chinese thought and culture, and molded the modes of thought, value orientations, and aesthetic pursuits of Chinese civilization.

Confucius’ grandson Zi Si 子思 wrote, in the *Zhongyong* book of the *Record of Rites*:

⁴⁷“Zhao Gong ershi nian” 昭公二十年, *Zuozhuan*.

⁴⁸See Footnote 5.

⁴⁹See Footnote 29.

Equilibrium is the great foundation of the world, and harmony its universal path. When equilibrium and harmony are realized to the highest degree, heaven and earth will attain their proper order and all things will flourish.⁵⁰

“Equilibrium” (*zhong* 中) is the principle of the Way of the mean and balance, and harmony the principle of concord. Balance and harmony not only possess significance for humankind, they are also universal cosmic laws. Humans must accord with the universe, adhering to the principles of balance and harmony, which will result not only in the prospering of human society but also necessarily advance the flourishing and order of the cosmos. This is a manifestation of so-called correlative thought. Moreover, the harmonious unification of humans and nature, which following the Han period was referred to as “the unity of heaven and human,” became an inherent value ideal of Chinese civilization.

From the Warring States period to the Han dynasty and then to the Song dynasty and thereafter, the notion of the unity of heaven and human was consistently rich and highly developed. What was referred to as the unity of heaven and human was an emphasis on the harmonious unity of humans and nature. This stressed accordance between the Way of humans (the laws of human society) and the Way of heaven (universal cosmic laws). It did not advocate the separation of heaven and human. This way of thinking does not emphasize the conquering or alteration of nature, nor does it advocate opposition between heaven and humans. It advocates coordination between heaven and humans. According to this type of thought, humans cannot go against nature, but rather ought to coordinate human behavior with nature under the precondition of obeying natural law. Ancient ideas of the unity of heaven and human emphasized that humans are one part of nature and that humans themselves embody intrinsic natural properties. These notions strive toward the unification of humans with nature and integration of humans and nature in a single body. At the same time, these ideas also advocate people’s proactive cooperation with the continuous generation and transformation of the natural world. While coordinating ourselves with nature, we should also facilitate and advance the harmony and development of the cosmos. This pursuit of universal harmony of humans and nature has its reasonable practical significance in correcting the pursuit of comprehensive and coordinated socioeconomic development of unrestricted conquering of nature and disregard for the environment and ecological equilibrium.

Taking the pursuit of lasting harmony as its attitude in dealing with the external world has long historical roots within Chinese civilization. *The Book of Documents* states:

He made the able and virtuous distinguished, and thence proceeded to the love of all in the nine classes of his kindred, who thus became harmonious. He also regulated and polished the people of his domain, who all became brightly intelligent. Finally, he united and harmonized the myriad states.⁵¹

⁵⁰Trans. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 98.

⁵¹“Yao Dian” 尧典 (“Cannon of Yao”), *Book of Documents*, trans. James Legge.

Later, “harmonization of the myriad states” became a paradigm of the worldview of Chinese culture. A similar statement is made in the *Rites of Zhou*, which advocates, “harmonizing the various states of the empire, governing the various officials, and making the people harmonious.”⁵² Confucius long ago employed “harmony” as a principle of interaction with the external world. The *Zuozhuan* records Confucius stating, “Peace is had through harmony.” The commentary on the judgments for the *qian* 乾 hexagram in the *Book of Changes* states, “One stands with head above the multitudes, and the myriad states are all at peace,”⁵³ which is also in line with the idea of concord among the myriad states. A world of peaceful coexistence has been the continuous ideal of Chinese civilization for several millennia.

Prior to Han times, communication was limited and China had remained unable to clearly put forth a concept of the world as a non-concentric collective body of a plurality of civilizations. Due to the communication between India and China that followed the Wei-Jin period, and especially the eastward transmission of Buddhist teachings from India, Chinese culture not only absorbed Buddhist culture, but its consciousness also clearly understood the existence of other advanced civilizations outside of Chinese civilization. These other civilizations even surpassed China in certain aspects. This opened up the Chinese vision of pluralistic civilization. Moreover, the exchange between Chinese civilization and Indian civilization remained continuously peaceful. Due to the transmission and development of Buddhism, China’s various dynasties mostly upheld all three teachings of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, which came to be called “the unity of the three teachings” (*san jiao heyi* 三教合一) among later Chinese intellectuals. This showed that it was possible to interblend different religions, which thereby precluded the occurrence of religious war between China and the external world. This tradition of integration of different civilizations and diverse religious teachings is the cultural practice of ancient China’s notion of “being harmonious while being dissimilar.” It has also been a major resource for managing religion and culture in Chinese civilization since at least the Tang period. All of this makes clear that the harmony pursued by Chinese culture is a vision of harmony under conditions of mutually complementary diverse coexistence.

Globalization has already led to close interconnection in many aspects of the world, including the economy, technology, finance, and trade. The world is now more interconnected in these various realms than at any previous period in history, yet the situation of humankind has not improved as a result. Following the end of the Cold War, localized warfare has not ceased. The Balkans, Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan—with the intervention of the West, warfare and disorder have arisen intertwined. With the rising tide of globalization, the gap between north and south has not contracted. Developing countries have received not only opportunity from

⁵²“Dazai” 大宰 section of “Tian Guan Zhong Zai” 天官冢宰, *Rites of Zhou*.

⁵³Trans. Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 130.

globalization, but also disaster. The establishment of global and regional communities, although of urgent necessity, is riddled with difficulties. America's financial tsunami showed the inherent danger of market capitalism, while Europe's financial crisis has proven increasingly severe. Facing these problems leads us to believe that it is impossible to remedy them relying only on modern Western values—freedom, democracy, the law, rights, the market, individualism. We must open up and pursue various paths of exploration, including renewed excavation of the values and worldview of East Asian civilization, development and promotion of correlative and reciprocal ethics, and engagement of moral consciousness and consciousness of ritual education so as to improve this unsatisfactory world.



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