

From:

CARMEN MEINERT (ED.)

Traces of Humanism in China

Tradition and Modernity

JUNE 2010, 210 p., 26,80 €, ISBN 978-3-8376-1351-3

Since discourses on humanistic traditions have so far largely been focused on European cultures, this volume attempts to open the field to counterparts within Chinese culture which, as a matter of fact, has a rich autochthonous tradition of humanism as well. The contributors explore Confucian and Daoist dimensions of humaneness in Chinese philosophy and history up to the first half of the 20th century, when Chinese and Western concepts of humanism first merged.

This book addresses a non-sinological audience as well as specialists in this field and contributes to a non-eurocentric view on humanism history.

Carmen Meinert (Dr. phil.), sinologist and tibetologist, currently works as a research fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities (KWI) in Essen (Germany) and teaches at the University of Bochum.

For further information:

www.transcript-verlag.de/ts1351/ts1351.php

CONTENTS

Foreword	7
Introduction: In Search of Humaneness in China	9
<hr/>	
CARMEN MEINERT	
Confucian Statecraft in Early Imperial China	19
<hr/>	
WEIZHENG ZHU	
Footprints in the Water. Assessment in the <i>Zhuangzi</i>	49
<hr/>	
PAUL D'AMBROSIO	
Reconsidering <i>Ren</i> as a Basic Concept of Chinese Humanism	69
<hr/>	
ACHIM MITTAG	
Negotiations of Humaneness and Body Politics in Historical Contexts	83
<hr/>	
ANGELIKA C. MESSNER	
Human Equality in Modern Chinese Political Thought	103
<hr/>	
DENNIS SCHILLING	
Inventing Humanism in Modern China	131
<hr/>	
KE ZHANG	
Bibliography	151
Table of Chinese Dynasties	171
List of Chinese Characters	173
Indices (of Names and Subjects)	181
Authors	205

Foreword

Our book series on “Being Human: Caught in the Web of Cultures — Humanism in the Age of Globalization” aims to inspire “an intercultural dialogue on humanity, culture, and values,” so we consider it a matter of self-understanding to also present here the Chinese tradition of dealing with humanity. The editor, Carmen Meinert, has emphasized that this book does not pretend to cover the whole field of Chinese intellectual and conceptual history, and therefore deals with the encompassing idea of the essence and features of this tradition. This selectivity is all the more necessary when intercultural dimensions are addressed. In this wider perspective, the terms “civilizations” and their cultural “traditions” very often claim for a more or less closed set of phenomena clearly separated and distinguished from other “civilizations” or “cultures” and their “traditions”. Nobody can deny cultural differences, but nobody can deny similarities, intersections, and changes either, which rule out an uncritical use of the concept of cultures as closed systems with a unique cultural code of human life.

Therefore one has to be very careful when entering — or even stimulating — an intercultural discourse on such an essential issue as humanity in the special perspective of humanism. I am very grateful to the editor and to the contributors that they are rather reluctant to tie themselves to general assumptions regarding humanism in general and Chinese humanism in particular. Their cautious approaches to these issues present a convincing way of coming to terms with the great challenge for the humanities in the context of globalization, namely, to think about culture in such a way that universal dimensions and specific differences in space and time are realized simultaneously. The intercultural discourse on basic cultural orientations today cannot start from presupposed principles or definitions of what humanism is about; rather, it has to work out these principles or definitions by bringing different traditions of thinking about the cultural nature of man into a productive interrelationship. In order to bring about such a productive interrelationship, two

conditions have to be fulfilled: an attitude in which cultural differences are recognized and, at the same time, an attitude of critique, which addresses the failures and shortcomings of the other as well as one's own tradition. Both — recognition and critique — require a solid knowledge of the idea of humankind, humanity, and humanism in the rich variety of human life-forms in space and time. This book is a contribution to such knowledge. It presents aspects of Chinese thinking which have to be systematically taken into account if the present-day discourse on man wants to profit from the experience of a great culture. This book can be read as an impulse for the beginning of an intercultural humanism, as an attempt to open chances for humanizing human life in all its conflicting aspects, within and beyond one's own cultural forms. It shows that humanism is not a privilege of one tradition but a promise and a desire in all forms of cultural life, within which man has to realize his or her humanity.

Bochum, January 2010

Jörn Rüsen

Introduction: In Search of Humaneness in China

CARMEN MEINERT

The topic of this volume, *Traces of Humanism in China*, is anything but the remnant of a Western hope to find common ground for an intercultural discourse in a time of ever-increasing global interconnectedness and interdependency. In fact, in China too it very much mirrors the spirit of the time, as can be seen in the title of a recently published volume of photography shown in an exhibition in Canton and Shanghai during the years 2003 and 2004: *Humanism in China (Zhongguo renben)*.¹ That volume is an unvarnished collection of snapshot portraits taken in contemporary China, showing China's diverse ways of life in all their shades in a rapidly changing society — here with the *human being* at its center. It is remarkable that those photographs often depict individual lives, persons, whereas in traditional Chinese thought a human was seen more as a part of society, with certain obligations and clearly defined relationships. Yet, as a matter of fact, to find such a title circulating in China at the beginning of the 21st century is not surprising at all; rather, it pays tribute to a long indigenous tradition of humanism. Although the medium of expression, the photography of individuals, is a rather modern approach to the subject, the topic itself is an old friend and a reoccurring theme in the history of Chinese culture over the past two millennia. As Heiner Roetz has shown, the topic of humaneness (*ren*) kept reappearing as a reshaping force in transformatory processes of Chinese society throughout history.² Therefore, the attempt to redefine the place of the human being is not at all astonishing at a time when Chinese society, in the wake of an economic boom, has now attained one of

1 Wang/Hu 2003.

2 Roetz 1992. For a discussion of the crucial power of “change”, that is, change in ethical systems concurrent with shifting political systems, see the article by Angelika Messer, particular pp. 86-88 in this volume.

the highest income disparities in the world,³ with clearly delimited social strata at both ends of the scale.

Simultaneously, various other attempts to meet the needs of the times are noticeable as well, mostly in the form of a revival of real or quasi-traditional Confucian thought, and thereby of ideas of humaneness itself. Intellectual discourses in mainland China and in Chinese overseas communities since the 1990s have turned to Confucianism as an immediate reaction to the fear of losing sight of human values in the rise of a market economy.⁴ Recent efforts of the Chinese government have been directed towards establishing humane policy (*rendao*) and harmony (*hexie*) based on the theoretical foundation of indigenous Chinese concepts in defense of cultural relativism and against Western concepts of human rights and individuality.⁵ There is also the sudden yet comprehensive proliferation of Confucian Institutes appearing worldwide to parallel Germany's Goethe Institutes⁶ — an outspoken sign of rediscovering (once again) Confucius (ca. 551–479 BC) as the ambassador of China.

There is no question about the fact that within the process of the great societal transformation that China is experiencing at present, the individual as well as society as a whole is searching to redefine their self-perception. Here, the official reinforcement of “traditional Chinese values” by an authoritarian

3 The distribution of family income is measured according to the Gini coefficient. Its application shows how China, since 1978, rose from a rather egalitarian society to become one of the countries with the most unequal distribution of income world-wide. Cf. Schucher 2007, Chang 2002, and OECD 2004.

4 These discussions in mainland China were published in the then most influential periodical *Dushu* (Review). See eg. Wang Hui 1995 and the article by Ke Zhang in this volume.

5 At the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2007 the establishment of a “harmonious society” as the party's mainstream guiding ideology was proclaimed. For a summary of the Congress see Schucher 2007, and Zheng/Tok 2007. Heiner Roetz (2009) has pointed out some difficulties in bringing the current allegedly Confucian policy of harmony and humaneness in accord with traditional Confucian thinking. Moreover, the present political discourse might as well remind us of policies in Han dynasty China, the second century BC: Weizheng Zhu analyses in this book (p. 43) the use of Confucian Classical Learning, or Confucian statecraft, at the time simply as a means to make policies more appealing.

6 The first Confucian Institute was founded in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in 2004. At the end of 2009 there were 282 Confucian Institutes in 88 countries. The Office of Chinese Language Council (short Hanban) envisions expanding further to have 1000 Confucian Institutes worldwide in 2020. It has been observed that the Chinese government uses the Confucian Institutes as organs of political propaganda and, as such, as attempts to influence academic research on China abroad.

government might help the national cause — just as it seemed to have helped in so many transformation processes throughout the ages. However, whether such principles will remain equally applicable outside the Sinic cultural sphere as ethical guidelines in a global context is more than questionable — particularly with regard to the intensely inward-looking aspect of Chinese culture, associated with a certain kind of Sino-centrism, and the resulting degree of resistance on the Chinese side to truly engage in an intercultural discourse with the other. In this regard, it remains to be seen whether the present Chinese search for “humaneness” is simply another extension of highly traditional discourses formed over the past 2000 years, or whether the current changes in Chinese society within a global context might lead to a certain “breaking with culture”⁷ and as such to the development of innovative ideas and real alternatives for both individual well-being and social welfare that would allow for thinking outside the (well-known) box.

There is no doubt that Chinese culture has a rich humanistic tradition in its own right, even though of a kind quite different to humanistic concepts developed in the West. The Chinese-language terms which correspond to the Western term “humanism” are a phenomenon of the 20th century;⁸ however, the focus of Chinese philosophy throughout the ages has been on man and society to such an extent that discussions on ethical and political concerns have often been at the expense of the development of metaphysics. As such, Chinese philosophy may be best described as a human-centered one, and may in this respect be called a particular kind of “Chinese humanism”. However, it should be added that unlike Western humanism, this kind of Chinese humanism cannot be thought of as separate from a supreme power or nature. Since antiquity, traditional Chinese philosophies were embodied in the proposition of the “integration of heaven and man” on the one side, and of the “integration of knowledge and practice” on the other.⁹ Humanism, or the way of man (*rendao*), had to mirror the way of heaven (*tiandao*).¹⁰ Therefore, this particular Chinese humanism was not at all as secular as Western humanism and was by no means a counterpart of religion. Yet those great virtuous men whose writings ascended to canonical status were esteemed as sages (*shengren*) or immortals (*xianren*). Their lives and sayings as a man of

7 See Alfred Hirsch (2010) for his argument that a certain breaking with traditional culture is a necessary precondition for e.g. the establishing of the human rights idea in a society.

8 See the discussion of the different Chinese translations of the term “humanism” in the article by Ke Zhang in this volume, particularly pp. 133-137.

9 Cf. Tang Yi-jie 1991, p. 161.

10 For a discussion of the the relationship of nature and society see the article by Dennis Schilling in this volume, particularly pp. 106-108.

this world reflected the way of heaven — a divine principle, so to speak. It is this very fact that makes their writings not merely a source for ethical conduct, but also a source for spiritual orientation, to nurture the mind-heart (*xin*) for very inner-worldly purposes. The unity of heaven and man has characterized the entire history of Chinese philosophy. Thus, the core concern was not so much the search for truth. Rather, Chinese humanism emphasizes social relationships: how should the ruler govern, how should man behave, how should he take over responsibilities, and how should he fulfill his duties to society and to others.

This volume intends to simply give a glimpse of some of the humanist traces found in this *Chinese humanism*. However, it neither attempts to exhaust the topic to its full extent from a historical perspective, nor to cover all areas of knowledge and all schools of thought in China that were concerned with the *conditio humana*. From a historical point of view, the articles in this volume cover antiquity, when the foundations of the Confucian state ideology of imperial China were laid, and developments from early pre-modern China, that is, from the Song dynasty in the 12th century up to the debates of the 20th century. Except for the article by Paul D'Ambrosio, which deals with an early Daoist critique of the Confucian search for humaneness, the contributions here rather focus on aspects of humanism in the Confucian context; Buddhism, which despite its high degree of Sinification continued to be perceived as foreign, is therefore not treated in a separate article in this volume. Nevertheless, the articles in this book precisely demonstrate how Chinese intelligentsia over centuries and millennia dwelled on similar issues, once the socio-political order of Confucianism, with its very clear-cut social stratification, had been established. In order to open up the realm of Chinese humanism for the non-Sinologist reader as well, let me first establish here the following reference point with which to fathom the *traces of humanism* in China found in this book.

The time before the unification of the first Chinese empire, the Qin dynasty (221–206 BC),¹¹ under Qin Shihuang (259–210 BC), is known as the golden age of Chinese philosophy and is as such marked by a great intellectual and cultural expansion. It is the flourishing time of the Hundred Schools of Thought (*zhuzi baijia*) (770–221 BC), freely developing ideas that should have had a profound and lasting impact on all aspects of life, intellectual and spiritual outlook, social identity, rulership and diplomacy in China up to the very present. Among those competing schools of thought were the followers of Confucius and Mencius (372–289 BC), the Legalists following Han Feizi (ca. 281–233 BC), Daoists in the footsteps of Laozi and Zhuangzi (d. 286

11 A table of all Chinese dynasties is given on p. 171.

BC), Mohism developed by followers of Mozi (ca. 490–381 BC) and others. All these schools of thought affirmed that their canonical texts and their statecraft had universal value and would entreat the monarch to put their theories into practice in order to attain internal peace and stability for the empire. Their thoughts aimed at a political applicability in order to develop a society free from disorder (*luan*),¹² or in other words to bring about “no dissent under heaven” (*tianxia wu yi yi*).¹³ As such, any ethical concerns were right from the start intimately connected with political affairs as well.

From the beginnings of the Qin empire in 221 BC to the demise of the last dynasty, the Manchurian Qing, in 1911, the approved way of rulership — despite numerous dynastic changes, foreign rulers, divisions, reunifications and major societal changes — remained the same: autocratic monarchy. And the remedy, to ensure stability, generally remained the same as well once it was established during the Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). Confucian statecraft was legitimized through the Chinese canonical texts, mostly referred to as the *Four Books and the Five Classics* (*Sishu wujing*), or the *Six Classics*, or from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) onward as the *Thirteen Classics* (*Shisan jing*).¹⁴ Once such a corpus of classical texts was established, it remained the sole and primary reference point for scholars throughout Chinese intellectual history. All later philosophical concepts are developed, strictly speaking, as comments on these classical texts. Even if philosophical discourse as a whole never emancipated itself from the limitations of the canonical scriptures, scholars from the circles of the New Confucianists more recently argue positively, in that this culture of exege-

12 See the article by Paul D’Ambrosio in this volume, which discusses the Daoist critique of the Confucian approach to the problem.

13 Cf. Weizheng Zhu’s article in this volume, where the term “no dissent under heaven” is used.

14 Since all contributions in this book refer to some of these canonical texts, they shall be listed here: The *Four Books* (*sishu*) include (1) the *Great Learning* (*Daxue*), (2) the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*), (3) the *Analects of Confucius* (*Lunyu*), and (4) the *Book of Mencius* (*Mengzi*). The *Five Classics* (*wujing*) are (1) the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*, or *Zhou Yi*), (2) the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*), (3) the *Book of Rites* (*Liji*), (4) the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* or *Shangshu*), and (5) the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*); sometimes as the sixth classics (6) the *Book of Music* (*Yuejing*) was added. Alternatively, the *Thirteen Classics* of Confucianism are made up of (1) the *Book of Odes*, (2) the *Book of Documents*, (3) the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*), (4) the *Ceremonies and Rites* (*Yili*), (5) the *Book of Rites*, (6) the *Book of Changes*, (7) the *Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuo zhuan*), (8) the *Commentary of Gongyang* (*Gongyang zhuan*), (9) the *Commentary of Guliang* (*Guliang zhuan*), (10) the *Analects*, (11) *Luxuriant and Refined Words* (*Erya*), (12) the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing*), and (13) the *Book of Mencius*.

sis itself meant the very continuity of Chinese intellectual history.¹⁵ Yet because of this continuous self-reference to scriptures of Chinese antiquity until the very present, it is difficult to imagine — at least outside a Sino-cultured point of view — that the Confucian version of humaneness could become a genuinely alternative system of ethics on a global scale.

When in 135 BC Confucian statecraft was adopted as *the* policy for establishing socio-political order, it marked the beginning of a process of appropriation of a certain set of ideas that proved functional enough to become developed and refined and to endure for about the next 2000 years — and to remain the yardstick of governing even under the three and a half centuries of foreign rule of the Mongolians (Yuan dynasty 1271–1368) and Manchurians (Qing dynasty 1644–1911). Not once throughout imperial history did the ruling class in China try an alternative philosophy of governance. However, the circumstances that led to the adoption of the Confucian and not the Daoist or Legalist teachings as Chinese imperial state ideology were almost random, and were the results of a number of historical coincidences rather than a pre-eminent teaching walking over inferior competitors.

This brings us right into the first story told in this book. Weizheng Zhu, one of the leading contemporary Chinese historians, detects a number of such historical coincidences and decisions that led in the earliest stages to the rise of the Confucian teachings as imperial state ideology. During the first half of Han dynastic rule (particularly during the 2nd century BC), a super-structure was shaped that was based on a very specific type of learning; Confucian Classical Learning was used for pragmatic reasons, only to make policy more appealing. And the first official paragon of Confucianism was constructed in the figure of the scholar Dong Zhongshu (ca. 179–104? BC), although, as Weizheng Zhu judges, Dong never really grasped the real meaning of Confucius. It is in this way, Weizheng Zhu argues, that “Confucian learning was transformed into a state-sponsored theology”. A very specific mode of national self-perception was thereby also constructed. Moreover, it was also in the 2nd century BC that the knowledge of the *Six Confucian Classics* became the yardstick by which officials were chosen for government service — and it is here that the Confucian version of humanism became a matter of education: only the morally educated one, versed in Confucian classics, was regarded as *humane* and as such as a functional part of society. This decision laid the cornerstone for the later imperial examination system (*keju*) that lasted for 1300 years (605–1905) after its institutionaliza-

15 The argument in favor of this culture of exegesis is that those interpretations of one and the same text could differ radically that it is hard to believe that they were comments on the same canonical text. See Schmidt 2009, pp. 14-15 and Huang 2009, p. 33.

tion, and became probably the most important institution of the Confucian state; it would allow control over political ideology as well as providing a recruitment system for the central bureaucracy.

In a way, moral standards, the essence of human culture (*renwen*), were thus used for highly pragmatic reasons in political practice. It is precisely this fact which is the target of the Daoist critique of the Confucian version of humaneness (*ren*), as is discussed by Paul D'Ambrosio. Referring to one of the Daoist classics, the book *Zhuangzi* by Zhuang Zhou or Zhuangzi (d. 286 BC), and to the great commentator Guo Xiang (252–312 AD), Paul D'Ambrosio shows how a lack of concern is actually regarded as an alternative to get out of the disorder (*luan*) of society. Whereas the Confucianists try to establish and control order by means of clear-cut regulations for the human being as a part of society, and mount an educational campaign in order to reach the state of “no dissent under heaven”, the Daoists advocate non-interference (*wuwei*) and rather remain in a natural state. From an official Confucian viewpoint, such a person was not regarded as a functional part of society and in this respect did not have the same value as a human being, because human value had to be gained through moral education. Yet for Zhuangzi it is more harmful than beneficial to cultivate particular virtues such as *ren* (humaneness), as they neglect the undivided whole. Although the official elite in imperial China was officially bound to Confucian values, nonetheless, in private a literatus would often find the naturalism of Daoism or the spiritual outlook of Buddhism more attractive. Yet the fact that both groups — Daoists and Buddhist — were not esteemed to the same degree as functional human beings who were part of society, can be seen, for example, from the official petition that a Buddhist monk should be spared from bowing to the emperor — an idea unthinkable from a Confucian point of view.¹⁶

With the first two articles, the reader may be able to grasp a rather fundamental tension inherent in society in imperial China: the Confucian state ideology that trained and controlled the Chinese elite for two millennia on the one hand, and its counterpoints, such as Daoism, that were present in the background throughout the centuries. The following articles in this volume show different facets of the Confucian ideal of humaneness (*ren*) and how the topic reappeared and became involved in various other discourses during times of great societal changes between the 16th and 20th centuries.

16 For the text “Treatise On Why The Monk Need Not Bow To The Ruler (*Shamen bujingwangzhe lun*)”, composed in 404 by the aristocratic, learned monk Huiyuan (334–416) see Shi Zhiru 2010, p. 128.

Achim Mittag brings the reader right into the heart of Confucian humanism, namely, into a discussion of various meanings of the core virtue of *ren* (humaneness) — particularly with regard to Song dynasty (960–1279) Neo-Confucian sources. He demonstrates how misleading and narrowing it would be to settle for simply one single English translation of the term, such as humaneness or benevolence; instead he explores four different meanings of *ren*, ranging from a “keen sense of responsibility in one’s action” to “benevolent government”.¹⁷ He thereby shows how moralistic and pragmatic concerns became more and more intertwined in discourses on *ren*. The sources quoted by Achim Mittag rest on the notion of a superior man leading the rest of society or humanity, which may be alien to a Western tradition of humanism.

With the contribution of Angelika Messner, another trace of humanism is discussed: the embodiment of moral values and the extension of humaneness to the medical field in times of societal change in the 16th and 17th centuries. Under the influence of Daoist and Buddhist currents of the time, moral self-cultivation (*xiu shen*) was embodied and practiced to nourish life (*yangsheng*), inspired by the strong voice of the Neo-Confucianist Wang Yangming (1472–1529). Here the notion of *ren* acquired yet another new meaning, namely “to feel or to sense”. The Confucian way of attaining sagehood was no longer restricted to the field of learning of the canonical classics; in fact, a popularization of knowledge can be observed which made medicine as a practice of humaneness part of the higher culture as well. Just as *ren* (humaneness) was applied in the political sphere as statecraft (*shu*), as shown by Weizheng Zhu, it here found a new application in the skills or craft of medicine (*vishu*).

With yet another major societal shift in the late 19th century in the light of the imminent downfall of the imperial system in China, discussion of aspects of humanism was voiced through the social and political theories of progressive thinkers, here using the concept of human equality (*pingdeng*), as is discussed by Dennis Schilling. Although the arguments brought forward by scholars such as Kang Youwei (1858–1927) or Tan Sitong (1865–1898) recognize distinct humanistic traditions in Chinese thought influenced by Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism alike, they nonetheless viewed traditional Confucian state ideology as the main source of inequality, namely, that human nature necessarily determined the stratification of human soci-

17 The scope of meaning covered by the term *ren* is well documented in the index on pp. 196–197, where under the entry of “*ren*” are listed various English translations of the term used in the different articles in this book. They exemplify the many shades, shifts in meaning, and areas of application of the semantics of *ren* throughout the ages.

ety.¹⁸ Tan Sitong understood the notion of *ren* as a selfless act that meant a kind of existential transformation. By interpreting *ren* with a soteriological connotation, for Tan Sitong it came to have the specific meaning “to commit suicide” — an astonishing turn towards radicalization in the semantics of *ren* which can only be understood against the background of the socio-political situation of his time.

The article by Ke Zhang outlines modern Chinese responses to the encounter with the Western concept of humanism in the 20th century when, following the demise of the imperial system and thus the downfall of Confucian state ideology, a vacuum emerged for new discussion. In the ensuing attempt to formulate a modern Chinese humanism, traditional culture and particularly the political and ethical doctrines of Neo-Confucianism were — if only for a moment — totally refuted in the iconoclastic May Fourth Movement of 1919. What followed, however, was a gradual yet continuous reaffirmation of Confucian values in the Republic of China, the People’s Republic of China and in Chinese overseas communities. Ke Zhang aptly describes, using the words of the contemporary overseas Chinese historian Yu Yingshi (born 1930), the predicament of modern Confucianism as a “drifting soul” that has lost its institutional foundation following the abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905.

It appears that presently Chinese society has halfway broken with traditional culture, yet is still somehow stuck in between — neither willing or able to fully let go of the familiar past, nor able to embrace the unknown future. One of the reasons might be the failure of Maoism, which in its original sense could — at least partly — be understood as a search for humanism on modern terms. Yet the attempts of Mao Zedong to establish a *new* human being and in this sense to completely break with traditional culture ended in the well-known disasters and in misery for the Chinese people. In this regard the present attempts to revive Confucianism are yet another expression of moving back and fro between tradition and modernity. Following the *traces of humanism* sketched in this volume the reader might fathom China’s arduous path into modernity, which, as indicated in the beginning of this introduction, is still not fully accomplished. However, that the topic of humaneness continues to be an essential feature of the discussion is a sign of hope at a time of ever-growing global interdependency.

18 One of the reasons for the Chinese government and for Chinese society to not so fully embrace the concept of equal chances for all human beings, for human rights, might be the fact that according to traditional Confucian views human value had to be gained through a moral education; it is not given naturally to all human beings by birth.

Last but not least I would like to thank Prof. Jörn Rüsen, the head of the project “Humanism in the Era of Globalization” at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) in Essen (Germany), for his unquenchable zest in looking beyond the confines of the occidental history of ideas for alternative role models, ideas and inspirations concerning humaneness and for other possibilities to overcome difficulties arising from cultural difference in a world of cultural diversity continuously moving closer together. In this regard I am very grateful for the opportunity provided by Jörn Rüsen to enable me to contribute my Sinological expertise to this series “Being Human: Caught in the Web of Cultures” by editing this volume of traces of humanism in China. My thanks also go to Martin Hanke, who prepared the typeset manuscript, to Sebastian Lorenz, who kindly offered his expertise in preparing the indices and the language list, to the authors who keenly wrote their contributions — partly under great time constraints, and to Trever McKay who willingly prepared the English translation of the article by Weizheng Zhu on very short notice when the Chinese original had proved to challenging to other translators. May I close my introduction with the hope that this volume as a joint effort of scholars from the West and the East forms one step towards a mutual understanding in search of humaneness and in search of an intercultural humanism.