CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

CHINESE ETHICS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Recently, questions of moral philosophy have become unexpectedly relevant. Some people even speak of an "ethics boom" in philosophy and politics. What are the reasons for this renewed interest in ethics after decades of neglect? Three areas seem to be prominent: First of all, the latest developments in bio-medicine and gene technology have raised new ethical questions that we previously never needed to think about. Thus far it seems that scientific inquisitiveness and technical feasibility together with economic interest and influence are the chief criteria for deciding what is to be implemented. But where will this development lead, and in what ways could or should we try to control it? Should there be limits to man's tampering with structures and processes that have so far seemed to most of us part of the natural order? Then there is the human rights issue that has become exceedingly significant within the last two decades, starting with civil rights and continuing with the anti-discrimination movement in the US. However, there remain some controversial questions: Are human rights - in their present form - once and for all universally valid or are they culturally conditioned by our Western history of ideas with its Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment heritage? Or, putting it differently, has the West perhaps universalized its own particular cultural priorities? What about the priorities of other cultures? Do we know them well enough? Lastly there is the question of the moral bases of our societies. We must acknowledge that for the last few decades there have been alarming signs of societal erosion or *anomia* - of what we call the "weakening of the social fabric." As for the reasons for this development, there seems to be some controversy: Is it simply a necessary result of modernization, the price we have to pay for greater self-determination? Does the pursuit of such goals as subjectivity, individuality, self or self-realization (as a result of European intellectual and political history,

the Enlightenment paradigm in particular) lead to that development, or does the free-market ideology – deregulation, commercialization and commodification of our lifeworlds – bring about corresponding phenomena in the realm of social relationships?

Although these three problem areas concern questions that are hotly debated predominantly in the Western world, they have, in an age of globalization, not only an intercultural but, like all ethical problems, also a universal relevance. Moreover, as the Western model of development is in the process of spreading across the entire world – nourishing the suspicion that globalization might de facto be nothing but Westernization, if not Americanization - we cannot expect only the principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law and market-economy to take hold in other cultures; we must expect also comparable signs of societal erosion to show there, if they are not already evident.

Nevertheless, other parts of the world have other cultural resources available with which to meet new societal challenges. This includes the various fundamentalist movements, as well as the appeal to non-Western values, such as we have been experiencing in East Asia with the propagation of "Asian Values." China, representing the origin and center of the East Asian cultural region, with its Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist traditions, has an extraordinary wealth of cultural and ethical resources. The question is now being asked again in China whether and how she is capable of responding to the effects of global developments by making use of these resources, that is, whether she can find an independent road to modernity, one that would not only draw more on her own specific resources but, and even more urgently, suit her specific problems which, given a population of 1.3 billion, are often markedly different from those found in Western societies. In fact, this is a persistent question in the history of modern China, going back to the aftermath of the Opium War, when the Western powers, with the help of gunboats, first tried to force their worldviews on China. In its present actuality, however, this question also relates to current ethical problems, such as concerning the latest developments in gene technology and bio-medicine, as well as to the fundamental question of the relationship between the individual and society, i.e., the balance between individual freedom and responsibility to society, between the good of the individual and the good of the whole. But, once again, do we know the current

situation of China and her traditions adequately enough? Can we assume – because of our universalistic understanding of ethics - that there are the same ethical priorities in China as there are in the West?

Let us, for the sake of a comparative perspective, first look back at the long history of moral philosophy in the European tradition. Here we can observe a few distinct stages and emphases: First there is a development from virtue ethics (Aristotle) via the idea of divine law and a formalistic deontological ethics (Kant) to a utilitarian ethics (Bentham/Mills). Today, finally, we have contractual ethics and discourse ethics as the latest and most fashionable trends. To realize the good now means: not to limit others' possibilities of self-realization and to guarantee unforced procedures according to which people can negotiate their respective self-interests and problems. This reflects what is central to the mainstream of history of ideas in the West: the evolution of the concepts of liberty and individual autonomy, i.e. of the emancipation of the individual subject from the confines of church and state.

Ironically, and as it were to counterbalance this development which began in the 18th century, at the same time legification started to increase: Codified law (going back to the Roman tradition) and a language of rights, starting with John Locke, came more and more to substitute unwritten rules of moral conduct.[1] Thus, as Charles Taylor once remarked, "Instead of saying that it is wrong to kill me, we begin to say that I have a right to life."[2] The language of rights was reinforced at the time of the French Revolution when rights were understood as claims of the citizens against the state. Because of the history of the *ancien régime*, the state (government) was – and still largely is - conceived of as an, at least potentially, evil force which the citizens had to be protected against by means of rights. Meanwhile we have reached a situation in which everything is permissible which is not explicitly prohibited by law, or, put in terms of a minimalist ethics: "I can do whatever I want, so long as no one gets hurt." Morality as an unwritten code thus has, as it were, dissolved

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[1] The connection to morality is still visible in the word "right," meaning both "not morally wrong" and "a subjective right to something."

[2] Charles Taylor, "Conditions for an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights," in Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell (eds.), *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 127

into written rights and laws and has become, more or less, superfluous. The procedural rules and laws that have come, especially in Western democratic societies, to substitute traditional morals are of course necessary in order to safeguard a complex, pluralistic polity made up of "unencumbered" individuals who are regarded as standing in merely contractual relationship with one another. The problem is, however, that the *good* is lost sight of in an ethics of rights. If there still is a common good, it might only consist in the guarantee that each individual interest ("I can do whatever I want ...") is being treated fairly.

Although the Western language of ethics, law and rights has become universally accepted as standard, we have to be aware of other cultural contexts within which these concepts have begun to take root. The Chinese translation of our word "ethics" may already give us an inkling of possible differences: *Lunli* means literally "principles of human relationships" - which is certainly not the way we would define "ethics." Whether or not we take account of its etymological roots in the Western tradition, we usually understand ethics as the philosophical discipline that inquires into the conditions of morally good acting. Thus, there are different and culturally conditioned perceptions of what constitutes our moral and political nature and of what is important about human relationships. In contrast with the Western tradition, which emphasizes autonomous individuals imbued with rights and liberties, the Chinese traditionally focused on the family and the kinship group as models for the common good. The whole polity was conceived of as a family with benevolent and exemplary leaders responsible for cultivating virtues and creating harmony among the subjects. This peculiar Chinese ethical tradition has led to quite different constellations. For example, there used to be (and still is) an emphasis on the unity of morality and politics, originating in the traditional concept of "sageliness within and kingliness without" (*nei sheng wai wang*), meaning that moral self-cultivation and social/political responsibility in a community have to go hand in hand, leading to a harmonious polity. In other words, the path towards the goal of social, political, if not universal harmony used to begin with the cultivation of oneself. Furthermore we have a focus on rites (*li*), instead of rights, implying greater importance of

ritual obligations and social duties than on individual liberties.[3] True, Chinese ethical traditions – and this is particularly true of Confucianism – were debunked by radical intellectuals during the May Fourth Era (1919), which was formative for the modern Chinese period. All the same, the Chinese ethical heritage shows its lasting effects in an inextricable intermingling of traditional features with Western elements, both of Marxist and Liberal origin. For those familiar with Western and Chinese concepts, it would be an intriguing task to analyze this mixture of Western and Chinese notions, and to answer the question: Is modern Chinese ethical thought to be regarded as a distinctly Chinese approach with modern Western adaptations, or is it a modern Western or universalistic ethics with peculiar Chinese contextualizations? And what does this specific intermingling of different local traditions tell us about cross-cultural transfers of ethics in general?

These questions lead to another issue addressed in the Trier symposium the papers of which are collected here: the necessity of intercultural exchange and dialogue. Due to the history of colonialism and imperialism, the Western world thus far has laid an unchallenged claim to the validity of its world-view, its norms and standards. We were able to conduct, as Leonard Swidler once put it, a "cultural monologue" with the rest of the world. We were - first as explorers, colonizers and missionaries, then as scientists, academics and politicians - the teachers, and the rest were the pupils. And this still seems to be the prevailing attitude in the fields of politics and ethics, as Daniel A. Bell once observed:

> Many progressive liberal voices in the West still seem compelled by a tradition of universalist moral reasoning that proposes one final solution to the question of the ideal polity, yet paradoxically draws only on the moral aspirations and political practices found in Western societies.[4]

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[3] See for example, Wm. Theodore De Bary, "Human Rites: An Essay on Confucianism and Human Rights," in Irene Eber, ed., *Confucianism, the Dynamics of a Tradition* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), Roger Ames, "Rites as Rights: The Confucian Alternative," in Leroy S. Rouner, ed., *Human Rights and the Worlds Religions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) as well as some of the papers in Wm. Theodore De Bary and Tu Weiming, eds., *Confucianism and Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

[4] Daniel A. Bell, "The East Asian Challenge to Human Rights: Reflections on an East-West Dialogue," *Human Rights Quarterly*, 18 (1996), p. 655

Living in a postcolonial period today, this eurocentristic universalism can no longer be maintained (although some people still like to hang on to it). But this is not a loss, quite the contrary: treating the world-view of other cultures as our equal entails the chance of mutual learning and enrichment. The "ethics boom" in the West might actually be a perfect timing for a cross-cultural exchange on this topic, because the Chinese, in general, consider their tradition explicitly to be a culture of ethics. We thus should welcome the possibility of a positive and critical Chinese contribution to the international and cross-cultural discussion on ethics, without anticipating whether at the end of this process there will be one single "global ethics" or just more tolerance for different contextualizations. Be that as it may, intercultural dialogue, as necessary as it is, has to be treated with due caution, or better, with due respect for each other. For, some of the most ardent proponents of inter- or cross-cultural dialogue in the West only take it as a means – according to their universalistic convictions – to leveling all cultural difference, the sooner the better, and to assume again the role of teachers. Dialogue, however, means ideally that, in the end, not only one partner's but *both* partners' views will be changed.

In today's world we have on a global scale an inter-penetration and cross-fertilization of local knowledge and traditions. But the local and global significance of ethics, in other words its universality and particularity, do not need to be mutually exclusive: they can complement each other. The late medieval philosopher Nicholas of Cusa, for example, who was born in the vicinity of Trier and whose 600th birthday will be commemorated in 2001, put forward the idea of "unity in plurality," maintaining that each individual thing is a manifestation of the totality of the universe, that it, in fact, even contains this totality.[5] It is a view which, interestingly, is also shared by Neo-Confucian philosophers of the Song-period (10th – 13th cent. A.D), e. g. the Cheng Brothers (Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao) who maintained that "the principle is one but its manifestations are many" (*li yi fen shu*).[6]

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[5] *De docta ignorantia, On the Learned Ignorance*, II.3
[6] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton 1963, p. 499, 544

This also illustrates that we find a *global* or universal relevance as much in the teachings of such *local* thinkers as Confucius, Mencius, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming as we do in the Western tradition with Plato, Kant, Hegel and Marx. The former only escaped the notice of European and American intellectuals because – unlike their Eastern counterparts – Westerners were, and largely still are, familiar with only one, *viz.* their own tradition. Thus there is some insight to be gained by an encounter with cultural difference. For to open up to Confucianism – or to any other cultural tradition - through intercultural exchange means to become aware of one's own conditioning through collective memories, experiences, history, *Zeitgeist*, i.e. culture, and to be able to view one's own standards as only relative – or better, as in part provisional and incomplete. With other words, intercultural openness and dialogue might help us – and this, of course, also holds true for the Chinese - in making us aware of the blind spots in our respective cultural, political and ideological orientation.

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The contributors of this volume - Chinese and Western scholars - came together for a symposium to conduct such a cross-cultural exchange. More concretely, the driving idea behind these activities was to bring together views from China and the "West" on the topic of "ethical bases of our societies," inducing a dialogue that was not only meant to be cross-cultural but, being aware of the political/ideological rift between the regions concerned, also intended to cross political boundaries. The goal was an exchange of ideas without trying to harmonize perspectives or to blur discrepancies that may result from political considerations, ideological bias, or preconceptions characteristic of Western and Asian approaches respectively. Regarding the "Chinese" side, five people from the PR China attended (Zhang Rulun from Fudan University in Shanghai and Chen Yunquan, Zhang Youyun, Yao Jiehou and Huang Yufu [f.] from CASS in Peking), two from Taiwan (Chen Jau-Hwa [f.] and Lin Li) as well as one from Singapore (Poon Kim Shee); in terms of the "West," we had scholars from the US and Germany. Some of them (Tu Wei-ming and Whalen Lai) are ethnic Chinese, living and teaching in the US, another (Gerhold K. Becker) a German living

and teaching in Hong Kong, hence by their modes of living and working already carrying a cross-cultural significance. The Chinese and Western traditions of ethics were thus represented by a mix of views and reflections. The organizers of the symposium and editors of this volume did not intend all of the "Western" contributions to make explicit reference to the Chinese tradition and experience (and *vice versa*).

It is to be kept in mind that the contributions of all participants must be read not only as describing facts and developments or as theorizing about them, but also as reflecting participants' frames of mind and attitudes towards the dialogue, as well as social and political backgrounds. Above all, they must also be seen as documenting the roles and functions that statements of fact, and theory, and dialogue itself tend to have in the intellectual, political and social, in short, in the cultural contexts in which and for which they are conceived. This concerns, for example and in particular, the voices from the PRC as their contributions are often classified by a "Western" audience as mere rhetoric and propaganda. Contrary to this widespread attitude, the view of the organizers/editors was that these voices have to be taken seriously if we understand politics as being part of culture and "cross-cultural," thus, as including the political dimension. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Peking (CASS) is certainly one of the major think-tanks of China, for this reason the work of its members is bound strongly to reflect its political environment and might here and there give rise to the impression of idealized statements of policy. During the symposium some of their contributions thus triggered discussions on "social engineering," an issue certainly not *en vogue* in "Western" countries anymore, but in a place with the demographic dimensions of China and its ensuing problems (mass migration, unemployment, feeding, housing, education, etc.), an issue of continuing importance. Hence, their context of articulation and their horizons of experience were felt to be quite different from those of the scholars from the West, but this was to be expected, or even intended. In contrast to this, the views from the colleagues from Taiwan, of course, mark a difference in outlook and tone, but again, these different views on tradition, antiquity or modern issues from the "Chinese world" (including the one from Singapore) were expected and made the exchange only richer.

It will be obvious to the reader from this introduction that the editors have aimed to give the "East" and the "West" equal chances of articulating views of their respective traditions as well as of a cross-cultural dialogue concerning these traditions. At the same time, it was "Westerners" that organized the conference, approached contributors, set the agenda, arranged the papers and edited the volume for publication, and finally wrote the introduction. So there is no denying that, to this extent, the volume as a whole, and the introduction in particular, are themselves representative of a Western point of view - and, indeed, of a particular Western point of view. We do not think that this detracts from the value of the volume. It may, on the contrary, underscore the need for the kind of continued reflection and dialogue which this volume is intended both to represent and to encourage.

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The papers of this volume are divided in the following four sections: I: Ethics in a Global Context; II: Ethical Bases of Chinese Society; III: Ethical Bases of Western Societies; IV: Ethical Issues in Comparison.

The first section, "Ethics in a Global Context," deals with a few general issues that were underlying the theme of the symposium, such as universalism, contextualism, cultural identity etc., or the question how to reconcile the demands of a global community with historically grown local and cultural particularities. Michael VON BRÜCK's essay "The Quest for an Ethics in a Cross-Cultural Context" discusses a few of these issues in a programmatic way. Considering that any dialogue is based not only on different ethical orientations due to specific social and religious identities but also on language, he first of all stresses that the question of which language to use for a discourse on ethics is not simply a linguistic one but also a question of power. The language being used (mostly English in the international arena today) is the language of the one who determines the rules. For this reason he sees the necessity to also conduct a meta-discourse on the conditions of cross-cultural communication, for only on a consensus concerning the rules of a discourse might the disagreements in material questions be solved and worked out in a non-violent way. Furthermore there is the question of cultural and

religious identities. A specific identity, on the one hand, comes into being because of a traditionally shared set of ideas (ethical rules, collective memory, beliefs, etc.), and these ideas live on in a specific community. On the other hand, tradition is not something given in the past, but a process of continuous construction in the present. Seen from this perspective, cross-cultural consensus on ethics should be understood as a dialogical process of discourse and communication in which first hidden structures of identity and power need to be revealed and addressed and which then needs to take into account the plurality of religious and other views – not only between cultures, but also within cultures. ZHANG Rulun, in his article "The Conditions and Possibilities of a Dialogue Between China and the West," also first addresses the "power factors" which he finds to be inseparably interwoven with the subjective needs of the participants in dialogues. Then there is, for each culture, a framework of orientational symbolism according to which social relations are patterned and social values and norms take on specific meaning. As for China, this orientational order collapsed under the onslaught of Western imperialism in the 19th century, whereas Western societies are suffering from a homemade crisis of moral orientation. According to Tu Zhang, it will be important for an intercultural dialogue to avoid the dangers of both relativism and pseudo-universalism (*viz.* holding the own culture as the model for other cultures). Moreover, dialogue should not be between unequal partners, one participant being the teacher, the other being the student. Instead, dialogue should be guided by mutuality, trying to understand the other first as "other." Only then respective value-horizons can be broadened and eventually brought into fusion. CHEN Jau-hwa's essay "Problems of Comparing Chinese and Western Ethics" also deals with certain basic issues concerning intercultural ethics, first of all with the question how and why to compare different systems of ethics. Should, for example, traditional Chinese ethics be interpreted in Kantian terminology, as has become customary with Mou Zongsan? How can Chinese ethics be interpreted this way, as the Kantian system would impose a very limiting structure onto the system of Chinese ethics? In Chen's view, the unity of a cultural tradition has to be respected. So she proposes to first of all pursue dialogue on the basis of cultural autonomy. This means not only to take into account the respective cultural context but also to analyze and classify ethical approaches if they are to

have meaning for us (e.g. parent-child relationships, human rights, etc.), and lastly to allow not only internal but also external critique. In this way, dialogue can be shaped by the principle of mutual understanding. TU Wei-ming in his article "Multiple Modernities – Implications of the rise of 'Confucian' East Asia" takes issue with a few key notions that are prevalent not only among Western intellectuals, such as Hegel's view of history – the assumed process of historical inevitability. According to this interpretation of history, the dominance of the Western development model, or the "iron cage" of modernity, would make cultural diversity inoperative, if not totally meaningless. Contrary to this view, Tu points out that tradition continues on into modernity and that in the global context, what some of the most brilliant minds in the modern West assumed to be self-evidently true, e.g. much of the enlightenment mentality, has turned out to be parochial, a form of local knowledge that has lost much of its universal appeal. Tu sees the modernity not only of China but of all of East Asia shaped by persistent "Confucian" ideals (not necessarily identical with realities). The rise of "Confucian" East Asia signals for him that modernization may assume different cultural forms – leading to "multiple modernities." Lastly, the move to global concerns does not undermine long-term local self-interests. For Tu Wei-ming it is the global significance of local knowledge that compels us to engage in the dialogue of civilizations. Gregor PAUL, in his article "Global Ethics and Chinese Ethical Resources," holds that a set of ethical norms, such as respect for human dignity, the right to life, and the right to individual freedom (especially moral autonomy) are universally valid principles and can be considered as the core elements of a universal ethics. Concerning the controversy on human rights, he strongly argues against cultural relativism. Examining the Chinese philosophical tradition – with particular emphasis on Mozi and Xunzi – he concludes that from the viewpoint of normative methodology, Chinese philosophy provides all the doctrines and arguments one needs to argue (from a Chinese perspective) for the realization of universally valid norms. Similarly to Roetz (see further below in this volume), he argues that the notion of inalienable human dignity which from its Christian roots is at the basis of Western human rights discourse, is formulated already by the Confucian philosopher Mencius. Strongly believing in the power of human reason, Paul thinks that the task of establishing global ethics comes down,

ultimately, to the task of creating conditions under which rational argument becomes an efficient means of solving problems and conflicts.

Section II, "Ethical Bases of Chinese Society," offers the views of mainly Chinese scholars on issues related to the topic of the symposium, such as the transformation of values in present day China, Buddhist ethics and political ethics in Singapore. In their article "Values and Their Transformation in Contemporary China" CHEN Yunquan and ZHANG Youyun discuss the applicability of certain traditional Chinese moral categories – such as the Mencian preference of righteousness (*yi*) in contrast to profit (*li*) – in the context of Modern China's transition to a Socialist Market Economy. They maintain that the new situation demands the construction of a new moral system consisting of public morality, professional morality and a morality of marriage and the family life. They also stress the need of better moral education giving the values concerned a binding force. YAO Jiehou's article "Social Ethics and Chinese Modernization" likewise explores the relationship between traditional Chinese ethics and the needs of a modern society. According to his view, traditional ethical/political ideals, such as a harmonious and stable moral order, are still possible under modern circumstances. He recommends, first, to translate the traditional Chinese notion of unity of knowledge and action (*zhi xing he yi*) into the modern context of unity of scientific reason and humanistic ethos, second, to converge tradition and modernity, and, third, to assimilate valuable elements of Western ethical culture. HUANG Yufu's article "Chinese Conceptions of Moral Development" offers a Chinese view on the process of human moral development. In contrast to Western theories, dominated by scholars such as Piaget, Kohlberg or Habermas, Huang emphasizes the role of educational institutions which, having a long tradition in China, are still alive today, albeit under a different, *viz.* socialist, label. Her article also shows that certain traditional Chinese priorities, such as seeing the family as the nucleus of society, are weakened today as China is opening up further not only economically but also culturally (particularly through the mass media and entertainment industry which in China as everywhere else on the planet is governed by American tastes and preferences). For her, finding a balance between the maintenance of a social moral order and accommodating to the trends towards a pluralistic society will be

the main task for China in the new century. Whalen LAI's approach to "Buddhist Ethics in Absence of a Civil Religion" in China is quite different. Having first observed the destruction of organized Buddhist religion in modern China, he then draws attention to the Buddhist content of traditional Chinese fiction and shows, as popular novels are the *vox populi*, that Buddhist ethics in fact did have inspired a Chinese "civil society" and that it may still provide moral guidelines in the current absence of a viable civil religion in China. Simon TAY and Poon Kim SHEE discuss in their article "Economic Crisis, Accountability and the Singapore Example: Political Ethics and Law" the relationship between ethics and politics based on the specific example of Singapore. Considering the relative absence of corruption or cronyism, so widespread in other parts of Asia, they show that through transparency and accountability in public governance there can be control of the abuse of political power in a political system quite different from the Western standard. In fact, Singapore attempts to ensure an ethical self-regulatory political system, modelled on the Confucian tradition, i.e., a unity of morality and politics, through the exemplary conduct of those who are politically responsible.

The papers of section III concern the "Ethical Bases of Western Societies," ranging from ethical issues in the context of politics to the question if the Christian religion still provides a basis of ethical behavior in the societies of Europe and North-America. Gerhard GÖHLER first deals with "The Values of Liberal Democratic Societies." Elaborating on such basic values as those of the French Revolution, human and citizens' rights, rule of law, etc., he draws attention to an indissoluble tension in pluralistic democracies: People are not obliged to hold any particular value-orientation, and yet democratic politics cannot endure without common values. Göhler traces this tension back to a number of other theoretically unsolvable problems that are at the basis of Western democratic societies: the conflict between interest and virtue (manifest in the respective political schools of liberalism and communitarianism) or universalism vs. contextualism. Whereas the apparently mutually exclusive questions concerning interest and virtue have to be addressed in conjunction, the dichotomy between universalism and contextualism, according to Göhler, is connected with different historical experiences (e.g. holocaust or colonization). Emphasizing the notion that a polity must

visibly express the values upon which it is based, including the symbolic dimension of the actions of politicians (here inviting an interesting parallel to the Singapore example), Göhler concludes that more important than the question of whether the values of our liberal democratic societies are universal or contextual is the question of whether these values are actually being represented in our communities, and thereby serving to integrate the latter. In his article "The Value of Virtue under the Challenge of Change" Anselm W. MÜLLER asks us to pay more attention – within the context of an East-West intercultural dialogue on ethics – to the long neglected study of the virtues. For, reflection on the virtues, starting with Confucius in China and with Aristotle in the West, might be considered one of the chief meeting points between the ethical traditions of our respective societies. Contrary to the mainstream of present day moral philosophy, he demonstrates that constancy of the ethical virtues, on the level of both individual character and public morality, is all the more required in times of radical and rapid changes, not only because constancy of character provides an indispensable point of reference but also, and even more, because, just as in the Chinese tradition of unity of morality and politics, there is a mutual dependence between individual morality and institutional goodness. In his paper "Autonomy versus Virtue? – A Virtue-Ethical Defense of Moral Universalism" Martin WALLROTH tries to reconcile the two apparently contradictory notions of individual autonomy and virtue. He argues that a wrong conception of autonomy, i.e. autonomy understood as "moral self-legislation," is to blame for the antagonism. According to Wallroth, the formation of a virtuous character is the most important prerequisite of true autonomy, the latter understood as independence from outer or inner moral authorities. From this background he defends Western moral universalism – being characterized by a strong respect for ethical individuality – as advocating mature and virtuous moral independence and thus avoiding the false antagonism between autonomy and virtue. Discussing the ethical relevance of the Christian religion from an insider's point of view (i.e., as a Jesuit Father), Norbert BRIESKORN in his article "Christian Belief – a (still Relevant) Basis of Ethical behavior?" first emphasizes that Christian ethics is not identical with the ethics of Western civilization, because Western societies no longer regard themselves as Christian, and, moreover, the majority of Christians now live in

the so-called Third World. And yet, in the end he answers the question in the title of his paper in an affirmative way, for the Christian code of ethics is neither utilitarian, nor deontological nor consequentialist. It encourages commitment to the world with a realistic and moderately optimistic attitude, expecting everything from God as the creator and ultimate redeemer of human life.

Section IV, "Ethical Issues in Comparison," deals with a number of ethical questions that are relevant in a cross-cultural debate on ethics, such as education, the family, rights vs. duties, and, last not least, medical ethics. In his essay "Moral Education in China and the 'West': Ideals and Reality in Cross-Cultural Perspective" Gerhold K. BECKER points out not only the difference but also the many similarities of moral education in China and the Western countries. Affirming the influence of other social factors, particularly of religion, he shows that, although religious influence on moral education was minimal in China, it did traditionally and in an indirect way take place, with its prime locus in the family. As to today, as traditional ideals have been replaced by modern socialist counterparts, he sees a growing rift between declared high-sounding goals and obvious shortcomings and limitations of educational practice. Being particularly familiar with the situation in Hong Kong, he concludes by emphasizing the need for a comprehensive vision of moral education that will meet the challenges of a rapidly changing and shrinking world and that can be shared cross-culturally. Richard MADSEN's article "Ethics and the Family: China/West" focuses on the relationship between the family, as one of the central institutions conveying moral education, and other major economic and political institutions that now dominate our societies. As all of these institutions (including the family) are under new global and cross-cultural forces, he envisions a dialogue to take place on the following key ideas: (1) the shaping influence of our ethico-religious traditions (that have remained alive in spite of conscious attempts to destroy them in the case of China, and powerful forces of secularisation in the case of Western countries); (2) discerning how ideals from these traditions are imbedded in practices and rituals of ordinary life, constituting respective "lifeworlds"; (3) identifying the moral centres of our societies, i.e., the institutions in which moral ideals are most powerfully alive. In China, this would be family life, in the US organized religion, and in Northern Europe possibly the rituals of care and

solidarity celebrated in the welfare state. A dialogue on these issues, finally, would also have to reflect on the adequacy of certain moral traditions to sustain a decent level of economic development and maintain an acceptable level of political order in the current global context. The next two articles deal in depth with the issue of human rights which has certainly caused most of the controversy between China and the West within the last decade. Heiner ROETZ in his article "Rights and Duties: East/West" sees the rights vs. duties debate as part of a stereoptypical juxtaposition of alleged cultural essentials, with rights marking the West and duties the East. He tries to show that these views are not only based on a selective perception of the "other" but also on a mistaken culturalistic interpretation of the relationship of rights and duties. In an attempt to reconstruct the ethics of Mencius, particularly finding there a concept that can be linked to the Christian rooted notion of human dignity which is at the heart of human rights justification in Western discourse, he finds in the Confucian tradition a solid ground on which a Chinese adaptation of human rights can be built. In contrast to Roetz's philosophical and justificational approach, LIN Li's article "The Difficulties of Importing the Western Idea of Human Rights into China" criticizes certain deficiencies of the Chinese jurisprudential tradition and ethical culture, particularly the rigid family hierarchy and its parallel structure in the political scene. Seen from the point of view of Western legal and political philosophy, he detects in the Confucian tradition a complex legacy of internal ideological insufficiencies and of external deliberate distortions. Particularly with regard to the Chinese legal tradition, he identifies three characteristics – inegalitarianism, collectivism and authoritarianism – which as independent factors have effectively stunted the growth of human rights in China. Ole DÖRING's article "Intercultural Issues of Medical Ethics in China," while giving a survey on the current situation regarding medical ethics and its philosophical implications, deals with rather practical issues that have become of particular interest due to the rapid developments of bio-medicine, such as euthanasia, assisted reproduction, eugenics, AIDS, organ trade, and reform of the health-care system. Döring concludes that, on the one hand, current medical ethics is of course guided by remnants of a great ethical tradition, on the other, it is the result of the tremendous task of regulating the dynamics of Chinese society with its vast population, varieties of

ethnic groups, diversity of social and moral substructures, and, last not least, of the determination to help the people survive in peace and dignity.