

WT12 – The change to ethical reference points Session 1

The Chinese vision

- Since the 90s China has undergone great change.
- Dazzling economic growth
- The downfall of single political thought
- Loss of traditional moral guidelines
- China is the “kingdom of paradoxes”
- Confucian ethics: general interest
- Modern ethics: personal interest
- Challenge: how to reconcile market economy ethics with Confucian ethics/traditional values
- Slow appearance of environmental ethic

The European questions addressed to Chinese

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The European vision

- Profound transformation of European civilisation after World War II
- Failure of the authorities of king, father, man, and religion
- Search for meaning and direction
- New sides to ancient values appear from the bottom up (not from the top down)
- Moral crisis not so much felt on a personal level, as by institutions, enterprises, churches = loss of trust

The Chinese questions addressed to Europeans

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Similarities

- Similarities can be observed in all crises (moral, environmental, economic, et cetera)
- The differences are to be found in ethical guidelines (Confucius: man is good by nature/Christ-ianity: man is sinful by nature)
- Nevertheless the common interest resides in the ecological challenge: the survival of humanity and of the planet

Differences

- Common world ethic will remain a theoretical endeavour because of the hierarchy of different values

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How to enhance the dialogue between China and Europe ?

- True “dialogue” barely exists, because Europeans know almost nothing of Chinese culture. The Chinese are more interested in European philosophy/literature/art et cetera than the Europeans are in Chinese culture
- “Reinforce”: by raising awareness of Chinese culture
- Identify common challenges and interests
- China’s growing economic power will force Europeans to accept dialogue