

Chinese Ultimate Values and the Concept of Wealth

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that cultural factors may be influencing Chinese and American citizens' saving behavior alongside social and economic factors. In the end of their research, Malul and Shoham test their hypothesis and find a strong correlation between culture and savings behavior; they conclude that a culture that promotes thriftiness can lead to higher saving rates. Indeed, Hofstede and Bond² find that under the influence of Confucianism, Chinese tend to possess future-oriented economic values, i.e., saving more money for the future events. When contending that cultural factors can account for saving behavior, both researchers point out that it is people's cultural attitude towards wealth and their concept of wealth that leads to different savings behavior.

Apart from the four scholars mentioned above, many other scholars also use Chinese culture to explain modern Chinese economic behaviors. However, I notice that most of them mainly focus on investigating conspicuous consumption behavior displayed by the part of the Chinese community who are heavily influenced by materialism (a belief that material possession, instead of spiritual cultivation, will bring happiness), leaving out many other behaviors displayed by different parts of the Chinese community. Proposed by American economist Veblen, conspicuous consumption refers to lavish consumption only to show off and manifest one's wealth. Researchers such as Lin et, al. and Chen et, al. invoke Chinese concerns about the face (*mianzi*), the self-image one shows to other members of society, to explain conspicuous consumption behaviors in China. For example, Lin et, al. theorize that because both *mianzi* and conspicuous consumption encourage social comparison, the Chinese easily accept the latter as part of their way of life: Chinese buy luxurious goods in public because they want to be approved by others in society to protect their *mianzi*. Chen et, al. parallel the phenomenon of *mianzi* in China with "keeping up with the Joneses" in the West, arguing that *mianzi* is a global

² Dr. Gerard Hendrik Hofstede was a Dutch social psychologist and an organizational anthropologist. Dr. Michael Harris Bond is a Canadian social psychologist.

phenomenon because of the similar materialistic worldview Chinese and Western cultures possess (632). Chen et, al. parallel the phenomenon of *mianzi* in China with “keeping up with the Joneses” in the West, arguing that *mianzi* is a global phenomenon because of the similar materialistic worldview Chinese and Western cultures possess (632).

While it remains questionable that part of contemporary Chinese culture resembles Western culture, the lopsided and selective depiction of modern Chinese economic behaviors may develop an understanding that modern Chinese society is Westernized due to global materialism’s influence. This understanding supports the convergence thesis of the modernization theory, which views modernization as homogenizing and that every country’s cultural development process will eventually resemble the Western pattern during modernization (Liu). The convergence thesis can be seen in modernization theories raised in the early post-World War II (Liu; Welzel and Inglehart). For instance, Lerner³, a supporter of the convergence thesis, argues in *The Passing of Traditional Society* that modernity is primarily “a state of mind” that prevails during the social processes of “secularization, urbanization, industrialization, [and] popular participation” (viii). Lerner further claims that modernization appears to be a process of Westernization due to “historical coincidence” and that the Western model of modernization is “only historically Western; sociologically it is global” (viii).

Many scholars criticize the convergence thesis for it takes a unilineal view that all societies will eventually follow Western countries’ steps in the modernization process (Eisenstadt; Liu; Welzel and Inglehart). Most of these scholars are advocates of the divergence thesis in the modernization theory. They take an alternative perspective of the modernization process, contending that the modernization process of a country is cultural path dependent and should be

³ Dr. Daniel Lerner was a Professor of Economics at MIT.

understood by examining the country's cultural history. In support of the divergence theory, sociologist Eisenstadt⁴ proposes the concept of multiple modernities, which presumes that "the best way to understand the contemporary world ... is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs" (2). Indeed, as observed by multiple advocates of the divergence thesis, the actual modernizing process in societies after World War II demonstrates a reality closer to the assumption made by the divergence thesis, refuting the convergence thesis (Eisenstadt; Welzel and Inglehart). As a Chinese international college student studying in the United States, where modern Chinese culture is either understudied or easily understood through a Western lens, I find it important to take the divergence thesis as a theoretical foundation for understanding China's modernization. Only in doing so can I contribute to developing a more comprehensive and authentic understanding of modern Chinese culture without falling into the trap of a homogenous Western gaze. To understand modern Chinese culture from the divergence thesis perspective, I seek to find out the ultimate values or the cultural roots of modern Chinese society.

In this paper, I aim to investigate the following question: What are the "ultimate values" beneath the contemporary Chinese concept of wealth? To approach the research question, I first illustrate the relation between ultimate value and culture by (1) defining ultimate value (2) understanding how ultimate values are rooted in ancient thoughts and (3) establishing a theoretical framework

to understand Chinese ultimate values, because wealth is one of the most important elements that constitutes ancient Chinese culture. For example, in Confucianism and Daoism, accumulation of wealth is considered the necessary premise for self-cultivation and social harmony construction. In Chinese folk tradition, wealth is also regarded as important ritual tool to foster social and familial harmony and order. In short, wealth is the material foundation for ancient Chinese values to be taught and is a crucial means to establish ancient Chinese social harmony and order. In the last section of the paper, I examine contemporary Chinese concepts of wealth to understand what aspects of ancient Chinese thought continue to influence modern Chinese culture can constitute modern Chinese ultimate values. I draw conclusions on what are the contemporary Chinese ultimate values.

2. Ultimate Value and Culture

can be turned into a new value that is motivated by another goal that one wants to achieve. At the end of this chain, there should be a value that is motivated by a final goal that cannot be turned into a new value. This value, then, is the ultimate value.

Next, to understand how ultimate values of a group of people relate to their culture, I invoke Berger's⁶ sociological theory. First, Berger argues that humans initially come together to form societies because they need such a connection to accomplish tasks that individuals cannot. In a society, culture is produced by the collective effort of human beings "to provide the firm

Based on Berger's theory that culture is the objective social reality to guide all social behaviors, it can be contended that the ultimate value found in a religion fundamentally shapes the way of life of people whose culture is influenced by that religion. However, since the concept of religion does not exist in traditional Chinese culture, but ancient Chinese thought like Confucianism do justify the social order in ancient China, the phrase "ancient thought" will replace "religion" in this paper. Therefore, I understand the relation between ultimate value and culture in the following way: the ultimate value found in ancient thought fundamentally shapes the way of life of people whose culture is influenced by ancient thought.

While Berger's theory mainly focuses on the relation between religion and the culture of "ancient" society, he comments on the role of religion in "modern" society at the end of his book *The Sacred Canopy*. Berger's argument in this book falls in the camp of the convergence thesis, which claims that modern values and ideologies found in modern Western countries will eventually replace "backward" traditional cultural values in every modernizing society (Welzel and Inglehart 17). Specifically, Berger contends that with the secularization of communities in the modern world, religion would gradually lose its legitimating power to monopolize people's way of life, fading away from people's social consciousness. However, he changes his mind decades later, taking a position that aligns more with the divergence thesis. In Berger's most recent book in 2014, he argues that while modernization may still liberalize and pluralize people's way of life, it does not lead to the disappearance of religion in people's consciousness; what has been changed is how people treat religious belief and traditional values in their life (Hjelm). By reframing his argument that the secularization process allows people to construct both their faith and secularity fluidly, Berger affirms the continual existence of religion to shape modern thinking and a way of life.

political surroundings, people naturally incorporate cultural elements into their daily behavior.

Therefore, the ultimate values found in ancient thoughts at the roots of cultures continue to exist in modern society by offering the cultural foundation to organize people's habitual behavior.

3. A Phenomenological Analysis of Contemporary Chinese Concept of Wealth

This paper examines the Chinese concept of wealth with a phenomenological method to understand modern Chinese ultimate values. Phenomenology is usually employed to understand religious or cultural phenomena in their own terms instead of explaining the source or questioning the authenticity of the religion or culture in a reductive way. If an empirical and positivist religious inquiry is analogous to scientific method, a phenomenological examination of a culture is similar to an actor who can develop a “genuine, empathetic understanding of the experiences of the worshippers” (Ekeke and Ekeopara 14). In this way, the phenomenology of religion methodology can help researchers study the essence of religion, which includes the “meaning” and “manifestation” of believers' experiences, by analyzing religious phenomena (Ekeke and Ekeopara 8). Since the present paper seeks to understand the ultimate value of contemporary Chinese culture instead of reducing the Chinese

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heritage have enduring effects on the contemporary Chinese concept of wealth. This way, contemporary Chinese ultimate values can be understood from the limited contemporary Chinese cultural repertoire.

4. Ancient Chinese Concept of Wealth

Ancient Chinese concepts of wealth are mainly found in three sources: Confucianism, Daoism, and folk tradition. Confucianism and Daoism are the major sources of Chinese political philosophy and philosophy of individual cultivation, which continue to influence modern Chinese culture. These schools of thought also contribute to modern Chinese values toward wealth and profits. Chinese folk tradition originated from ancient Chinese myth or folk religion and was incorporated into Chinese traditional culture as time passed. This section mainly focuses on the “red packet tradition,” a Chinese New Year custom that elder family members give money contained in red envelopes to the younger family members as blessings. This tradition contributes to constructing Chinese concepts of wealth together with Confucianism and Daoism.

4.1 Wealth Accumulation as Prerequisite for A Stable State

Early Confucians agree that the desire for wealth or profit is natural. For example, from *the Analects*, Confucius places righteousness (*yi*) in the context of a society that is seeking profit (*li*) (Liu and Fan). He states that “wealth and high rank are what people desire” (Eno 14). Thus, for Confucius, it is natural that human beings have the desire to pursue wealth. To Mencius, human interest in *li* is inevitable (Liu and Fan). He explicitly indicates that everyone seeks wealth and ranking: “Who indeed does not wish for wealth and rank?” (Eno 51). In *Mencius* Book Six, he also says that, “the desire for noble rank is something all men share in their hearts” (Eno 113). Similarly, Xunzi also states that all people like *li* and hate what is harmful to them (Hutton). By saying that desiring wealth and rank, and *li* in general, are common to all human beings, Mencius

and Xunzi makes a generalizing statement. They imply that sages, who are usually regarded as morally superior and have no interest in private profit

strife and trouble in society are caused by the excessive greed of the human heart. If human beings can all achieve the ideal state like an unhewn wood, a metaphor for simpleness and naturalness, there will be harmony and stableness in society. Specifically, In *Dao De Jing* Chapter Two, Laozi mentions the idea of “action through inaction.” Laozi first indicates the mutual causality of opposing concepts – “When the world knows beauty as beauty, ugliness arises; When it knows good as good, evil arises” (Lin 18). Through this metaphor, Laozi proposes that non-being and beings create each other. This relation between two opposing concepts indicates that the existence of a concept requires the emergence of its opposite one as a reference for both concepts to make sense. Following this logic, if a ruler wants to act upon the people to rule the state properly, the ruler should interfere as little as possible, conducting “the teaching of no words” (Lin 18). By restraining the external power from the ruler, the state will be operating desirably. This is due to the fact that action on the state is carried out by the ruler’s inaction, allowing the state to operate following the flow of nature. Thus, if the ruler wants to create the wealth and prosperity for common people, he should not impose excessive control on people. Only in this way could people follow their natural needs, i.e., returning to the state of *pu*, to obtain the amount of wealth and profit they need for living. This is why in Chapter Seventy-Five, Laozi says that “the people’s hunger is due to the excess of their ruler’s taxation” (Lin 91). If the ruler does not interfere too much with the common people’s livelihood, their earnings will not be taken away by the selfish and exploitative ruler, and they will live a prosperous life.

Inaction is also embodied in the idea of anti-tactics. In Chapter Fifty-Seven, Laozi explains various tactics a government employs: restrictions, equipping common people with too many

people make profit. To Confucius, individuals must know whether their ways to pursue profit accord with Confucius' moral standards.

Mencius and Xunzi even prioritize righteousness over profit. In Chapter One, Mencius argues that a ruler should only speak of benevolence (*ren*) and righteousness but not profit. The reason is that speaking of profit only will lead to greed which is harmful to the stability of a state. Xunzi also created a dichotomy between righteousness and personal desire by saying that “through avoidance of prejudice and through *yi* the gentleman overcomes capricious personal desires” (Hutton 15). They are arguing against the selfish private profit a sage, or a ruler should avoid; these private desires can lead to chaos. For instance, Mencius states that a man who has no concern for righteousness but only desires profit to his own benefit tends to seize complete control of power, which makes him very dangerous to the state. Therefore, to Mencius, what a ruler should avoid is indulging in the private interest that “singularly servape interest that s3 Td[(e)-6 (r)3((, I

personalizes *Dao*, granting it the mother-like quality to love everything in the world unbiasedly (Wang). Therefore, Laozi's first treasure, *ci*, is understood as altruistic love that resembles a mother's love. Laozi's concept of *ci* is similar to benevolence (*ren*) in Confucianism. *Ren* is the highest virtue a sage can attain; it can only be achieved when a person has achieved the highest level of self-cultivation. Mencius claims that a sage who has *ren* can be empathetic about everyone else by extending their kindness towards family members to others in the community. In the end, with *ren*, a person will naturally be sympathetic to everyone else, an idea similar to *ci* in Daoism.

The second treasure, conservation (*jian*), means frugality. According to Lu, Laozi thinks the wealth earned should be consumed for survival (Lu). Thus, he states in *Dao De Jing* Chapter

pillow – joy also lies therein. Wealth and high rank obtained by unrighteous means are to me like the floating clouds” (Eno 32). In this verse, Confucius points out that the simple and frugal life can bring joy to people. However, he does not entirely denounce the attainment of wealth and high rank; instead, it is the material prosperity brought by unrighteous means that he rejects. Consequently, this verse can be understood this way: staying frugal would be a preferable choice and joyful if wealth and high rank can only be obtained unrighteously. Therefore, while Confucianism and Daoism value frugality as virtuous conduct to attain the Way and establish a harmonious state, living frugally is not a moral requirement to Confucius. How one should live, according to Confucianism, still exists in the dialectic balance between profit (*li*) and righteousness (*yi*).

The last treasure, not daring to be ahead in the world (*bu gan wei tianxia xian*), advocates for attitudes of non-striving and humility. Laozi believes that the chaos in the world is primarily caused by people who exert too much effort in striving for greater prosperity and social rankings. When people can be non-contentious with each other, competition will not occur so that the world can be at peace (Wang). This idea is best shown in *Dao De Jing* Chapter Sixty-Six, where Laozi says, “If sages wish to be over people, they must speak humbly to them. If they wish to be in front of people, they must place themselves behind them” (Lin 82). Therefore, to a person, staying humble and non-striving can bring about success; to a society, when everyone is not daring to be ahead in the world, the world will return to its natural and harmonious state – this is the last treasure, or non-material wealth advocated by Laozi.

5. Contemporary Chinese Concept of Wealth

Since the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, China has been through a tremendous social and economic transformation. These changes do not eliminate traces of traditional culture in

Chinese society. Research shows that Chinese people growing up in different social, economic, and political contexts tend to rely on different aspects of Chinese cultural heritage to live their lives. For example, the older generation who lived through the impoverished decades of the Cultural Revolution tends to value altruism, industriousness, and frugality (Liu). While these qualities were propagated in the state government's ideologies back then, they are also values

are (1) personal happiness, (2) harmonious family and social life, (3) personal achievement, and (4) power or social status. Since there is no evidence that indicates which ultimate goals Chinese want to achieve most, the ultimate values correspond to each ultimate goal should be analyzed to

Social status and public images were studied in Osburg's⁹ research who found that some Chinese youth are questioning the obsession with status and image in contemporary China. Osburg discusses an exemplary person, Long, who is a member of a group that focuses on social status and public image. Long decides to release herself from the fetter of social competition by changing her lifestyle. She divests her time and money from elevating her social status and spending most of her wealth on herself (Osburg). According to Osburg, Long believes that inner self-cultivation is more important than external images. Living an ordinary life that is not bounded by worries of social relations and public image is considered a "high quality" life that leads to personal happiness (130).

Long's pursuit of an ordinary life that does not involve an obsession with social status or social image seems to point toward the idea of *pu* (unhewn wood) that Laozi advocates. According to Laozi, the idea of *pu* indicates a state of naturalness and purity that is not tainted by external cutting. Centering around the idea of *pu*, *jian*, or frugality, in both Daoism and Confucianism, leads to avoidance of being attached to the worldly lure and personal desires that can divert attention from staying natural, simple, and focusing on one's own heart. Long wants to detach herself from the obsession with external displays and social status and return to a simpler lifestyle through which she can focus on self-cultivation. Despite the fact that Long does not mention the exact concepts (i.e., *pu* and *jian*) in Daoism or Confucianism, her attitude toward how to spend money shows that ancient Chinese values are part of her ultimate values that allow her to achieve personal happiness through simple and natural ways of living.

In addition to Long, many others take refuge in helping others to relieve their anxiety caused by social competition. For example, Pan seeks his way out by spending money on helping

⁹ Dr. John Osburg is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Rochester.

those who are closely related to him, including his subordinates and his family members (Osburg). Pan contends that simply possessing money cannot bring people happiness; everyone needs “a framework of belief or values to orient their consumption” (Osburg 116). Pan chooses to orient his consumption to his relatives and employees to attain personal happiness. Pan’s decision to spend money on people who immediately relate to him shows that his employees and family members are important to him, so he is willing to create a better life for them with his wealth. Pan’s kindness to people around him demonstrates the virtues of *ci* in Daoism and *ren* in Confucianism. Both *ci* and *ren* contain a value of altruistic love or kindness to everyone in the world. *Ren*, in particular, perfectly aligns with Pan’s attitude toward wealth. According to Mencius, the virtue of *ren* is extended from one’s kindness to his or her family members to the whole society. Here, one sees in Pan’s kindness to his relatives and employees that he plants the seed of kindness in his immediate social relations, which can potentially be spread over the larger community. Therefore, Pan’s concept of wealth reflects that kindness to people with immediate social relation to him is regarded as his ultimate value to attain happiness. In fact, not only does Pan value kindness as a means to attain happiness, but many other Chinese, especially the younger Chinese who were born in the late 1990s, also regard familial well-being as crucial to personal happiness (Liu). Many of them believe that being able to spend money for their parents and create a good life for them after they earn money is an important precondition of living good personal life. These young Chinese’s concept of wealth reflects the Confucian traditional value of filial piety, which shares a similar altruistic connotation with *ci* and *ren*.

In sum, to attain personal happiness as an ultimate goal, some modern Chinese regard personal virtue (mainly simpleness and naturalness) and altruism as ultimate values to pursue.

5.2 Harmonious and Orderly Family and Social Life

Chinese ultimate values can also be seen in the preferred Chinese lifestyles where modern Chinese concepts of wealth are expressed. Chinese either directly borrow cultural concepts to explain or justify their lifestyles or embody those concepts through their interactions with wealth. However, no matter how these ancient concepts are expressed, most of these concepts point to the ultimate goal of harmonious and orderly family and social life.

To begin, research shows that many Chinese businessmen value altruistic lifestyle both when doing e C i t f e m (e 5 (

logo. The consumers who display this phenomenon explain that they buy luxuries in this way to indicate their educational background and personal virtues distinguish themselves from the new rich (*baofahu*) who try their best to show off their wealth by only purchasing luxuries with huge brand logo (Zhang). In this example, these upper-middle class Chinese consumers seem to value virtue in general, humility in particular. By contrasting themselves with the new rich who love to compete with others to demonstrate their socio-economic status, these upper-middle class consumers express the idea that it is better to stay low-key and humble and not to compare themselves with others. Humility and non-contentiousness are key Daoist virtues. It is the last treasure of Laozi's three treasures as he raised in *Dao De Jing* Chapter Sixty-Seven: not daring to be ahead in the world (*bu gan wei tianxia xian*). Laozi expresses the idea that if everyone stays humble and non-striving, the fighting and conflicts in society will no longer exist. Consequently, society will become harmonious and orderly. Therefore, as displayed by the consumption style of upper-middle class Chinese in Zhang's research, it can be seen that humility is another ultimate value contemporary Chinese possess.

Finally, to keep stability and harmony of Chinese society, research shows that many Chinese value the importance of social roles. Most of these roles are formed in ancient Chinese society that are gradually incorporated into Confucian social system. The willingness to take social roles according to cultural norm and tradition can be seen in three ways. First, many Chinese lay importance to fulfilling filial duty. They believe that they have moral and social obligation to spend on the wellbeing of their parents and offer them a good life (Liu). Similarly, many Chinese men believe that they should be the main material provider of their families (Liu). In doing so, the former assumes

roles, according to Confucianism, is necessary foundation of a harmonious and orderly state.

Therefore, taking traditional social roles is another ultimate value of modern Chinese.

In sum, to keep family and society harmonious and orderly, modern Chinese place personal morality (mainly frugality, and humility), altruism, and traditional social roles as ultimate values.

5.3 Personal Achievement

Past research has different definitions of achievement. First, Liao and Wang¹³ find in their investigations that in China, personal happiness comprises of success

material life and spiritual life; rich and sufficient material life is the foundation of spiritual life. The idea that wealth accumulation is the prerequisite of non-material accomplishment resonates with the idea that material sufficiency is necessary for a stable mind and state in Confucianism and Daoism. In Confucianism, Confucius states that to cultivate citizens' inner selves, they should first be enriched. Mencius also famously argues that a fulfillment of one's survival needs

more harmonious relations with the rest of the world. The second aspect is creating good life for families (Liu). Many research participants in Liu's study claim that creating ideal life for their families are required for them to be successful. Specifically, these people also emphasize the idea that a good family life requires health, love, material comfort, and harmony (Liu, 135). To do so, they contend that they will earn enough money to contribute to their family. One of the interviewees, Xuezhong, even argues that, if possible, he will accumulate enough wealth to both help out his family and donate money to the needy in society (Liu). These research participants' value towards wealth is another demonstration of modern Chinese's value of altruism and kindness, which indicates the continuous influence of ancient Chinese cultural concept of *ci* (motherly altruistic love), *ren* (benevolence), and *yi* (righteousness).

In sum, to attain personal achievement as an ultimate goal, modern Chinese take self-cultivation and altruism as ultimate values.

5.4 Power or Social Status

Power, which is mostly indicated by one's social status, is found interrelated to personal achievement, according to Liao and Wang. In Liu's research, accomplishment is also indicated to comprise power. However, in Li (0 Tecn92 (e)4 (Rf)5h ((ca)8,6eT04ppomb(12:(0)Y13a 26i0)626Tlw)421(h7)925

Chinese in the modern age do not reject material possession or wealth accumulation. In contrast, Li and Hu find that Chinese love money, especially when power is pursued. Chinese's love for money can be explained by ancient Confucian idea that pursuing wealth and ranking is a natural state of every human being, including the saints. In addition, as shown in Daoist *Caishen* culture, sustainable wealth accumulation is highly valued by ancient Chinese. Indeed, the fact that Chinese culture creates the wealth god to secure businesspeople's wealth shows that material possession is encouraged to some extent.

However, if a person only has money, Chinese tend not to regard that person as having power or occupying high social status. To be recognized as having high social status, one needs to have virtues and moralities at the same time (Osburg; Zhang). Liu Lixing, one of the upper-middle class interviewees participated in Zhang's research, shows off his wealth by telling Zhang that he bought a new car because he believes that it can demonstrate his upper-middle class status. However, in the meantime, Liu Lixing also emphasizes that he is not picky on clothes or food; he is satisfied as long as clothes and food are sufficient for basic living (Zhang 10). Zhang comments in her article that Liu Lixing's emphasis on his attitude toward clothes and food shows that he treats frugality as an important moral quality he needs to have to be recognized as a genuinely rich person. In this case, frugality is identified as an important virtue to demonstrate one's "genuine" social status. In addition, as being discussed in previous section, the virtue of humility, which is seen in the instance of upper-middle class people's purchasing of luxuries with no explicit brand logo, is also pointed out by Zhang

Therefore, when power or social status is the ultimate goal, modern Chinese want to pursue, the ultimate value is a balance between material possession and personal virtue (mainly frugality and humility).

6. Conclusion

By adding up ultimate values that correspond to all four ultimate goals, I find that modern Chinese ultimate values are (1) cultivation of personal virtues (mainly naturalness, humility, frugality), (2) altruism, (3) assuming traditional social roles, (4) wealth-virtue balance. Among the four ultimate values, “cultivation of personal virtues” and “altruism” are considered the most important because these values almost always play a significant role for the Chinese to achieve their goals no matter which ultimate goals are pursued.

First, regarding the ultimate value of “cultivation of personal virtues,” it should be noted that although specific virtues (i.e., naturalness, humility, and frugality) are indicated in this paper as primary personal virtues valued by modern Chinese, other virtues may have the same importance to the Chinese. The reason is that in the individualized modern Chinese society, Chinese have more freedom to choose which virtue they value to achieve among various goals. In addition, it is the generic term “morality” or “virtue” instead of specific morals and virtues that modern Chinese invoke to give meaning to their behavior and beliefs relevant to wealth. This use of a generic term indicates that to modern Chinese, moral or virtue might be an integral term that contains all kinds of moral qualities or virtues Chinese can think of. Hence, it is unnecessary to indicate which specific moral qualities or virtues are regarded as most important to the Chinese today.

Second, I use “altruism” to include various kinds of ultimate Chinese values that contain altruistic ethical features. These values include filial piety, *ci* (altruistic motherly love for others),

ren (benevolence), which requires a sympathetic understanding of others, and *yi* (righteousness), which implies a care for the public. While the concepts mentioned above have slightly different meanings, the research shows that it is the altruistic aspect of these concepts that commonly drive people to act to achieve ultimate goals. Moreover, although in ancient Chinese thought, these values are categorized as personal virtues one should cultivate to become a whole person, in modern China, showing kindness to family members and others in society is less relevant to self-cultivation. To most modern Chinese, cultivating personal virtues can demonstrate one's moral and educational quality as an individual, whereas altruism is less pertinent to personal quality demonstration. Instead, modern Chinese regard altruistic attitudes and behaviors either as

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