

westlichen Konzepten geprägt ist. Die Frauenbewegung in Japan ist in vielen kleinen Gruppen mit eigenen Anlaufstellen organisiert, die eigene *minikomi* (vom englischen *mini communication*; Rundbriefe/Newsletter) herausgeben. Sehr häufig sind überlappende Mitgliedschaften der Aktivistinnen in mehreren Gruppen. Diese kleinen Netzwerke zeichnen sich durch eine horizontale Struktur und Reziprozität aus; sie gruppieren sich wiederum zu Dachnetzwerken. Es entsteht eine Semiöffentlichkeit mit sehr flexiblen Strukturen, auf die sich auch die Diskussionen und die Öffentlichkeitswirkung richten. Eine Wirkung in die hochinstitutionalisierte Öffentlichkeit in Politik oder Medien ist dagegen weiterhin beschränkt und schwierig.

Prof. Dr. Toshiko Himeoka (Kyoto) nahm in ihrem Beitrag "Diskursive Grenzziehung der Geschlechter am Beispiel des gesetzlichen Frauenschutzes" die 1997 erfolgte Revision des japanischen Gleichstellungsgesetzes zum Ausgangspunkt ihrer Betrachtungen. Eine kontrovers diskutierte Maßnahme der Revision war die Aufhebung von Frauenschutzbestimmungen. Frau Himeoka schilderte, wie Ende des 19. Jh. durch den Erlaß des Frauenschutzgesetzes die Arbeiter in einem diskursiven Prozeß geschlechtlich segregiert und hierarchisch strukturiert wurden und sich damit das Konstrukt eines dichotomen Geschlechterverhältnisses verfestigte.

Wie in den Beiträgen des Workshops deutlich wurde, gab es auch in Japan nie einen rein männlichen öffentlichen Raum, Frauen haben vom Beginn der Modernisierung an Wege gefunden, sich in der Öffentlichkeit zu artikulieren. In Ansätzen ist es im Workshop gelungen, das spezifische Verhältnis zwischen privat und öffentlich in Japan aufzuzeigen. Gleichzeitig wurde aber auch deutlich, wie schwierig es ist, den Begriff der Öffentlichkeit, der selbst nicht statisch ist, sondern sich mit neuen Entwicklungen in der Informationstechnologie immer weiter ausdifferenziert, in seiner Vielschichtigkeit zu erfassen.

Ein ausführlicher Workshop-Bericht und Informationen zum nächsten Workshop (9.-10.12.1999, zentrale Tagungsstätte der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Schloß Eichholz in Wesseling bei Köln) können im Internet unter der Adresse <<http://www.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/oasien/japan/service/service.htm>> abgerufen werden.

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Reality meets Ideology - The International Symposium 'China and the West in Dialogue: Ethical Bases of Our Societies'¹

Trier, October 20 to 23, 1998

This symposium was meant to promote the understanding of ethics, both within and between certain cultures. It succeeded to a previous symposium about the 'Conditions and Possibilities of Intercultural Understanding' (Trier, April 9 to 12, 1997).

In his opening address, Karl-Heinz Pohl (Trier) quoted the Chinese Neo-Confucian maxim 'the principle is one, but its manifestations are many' (*li yi fen shu*) which would reflect the notion of the 'unity in diversity' of the German Nicolaus Cusanus,

1 An extended version of this report is published on <www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/zme/Disk-a.htm>.

as the motto for the symposium, with the function 'to bridge possible gaps in the spirit of tolerance'.

It soon turned out that the ethical gaps between the participants from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, USA, Poland and Germany were neither fundamental nor to be defined in terms of cultural determination. This observation notwithstanding, the spirit of tolerance, together with constructive criticism and the serious dedication to learn from one another, prevailed as a thread throughout these four days.

Addressing ethics in a cross-cultural context, Michael von Brück (Munich) stated that 'only on the basis of a consensus concerning the rules of a discourse the dissensus in material questions might be solved and worked out in a nonviolent way'. Arguing against a naive equation of ethics with the impact of certain religious traditions, von Brück pointed at the internal diversity of these normative macro-systems, wherein groups of interest adhere to different ethical priorities. Accordingly, traditions in Europe as well as in China, always have pluralistic patterns. Von Brück emphasized that the cultural ethical discourse is always a current affair.

While the symposium raised no objections against this framework, the concept of religion was criticized as not well suited to provide the desired rules of the game. It was argued that the capability for violence against 'non-believers' plays a mayor role in many religions. Furthermore, as a matter of faith more than one of argument, religion can hardly be grasped by rational terms, the means of ethical communication.

A philosophical approach to intercultural ethics was presented by Chen Jau-hwa (Taipei). She explained that it is important but not sufficient to describe the meaning of the different ethical positions which, as she conceded to von Brück, 'may be differentiated sharply from their cultural and historical origins' and should always consider the dynamics within culture. In order to solve conflicts between different moral standpoints we must 'try to understand and justify that unjust ethical opinions should be rejected, since their cultural origin is not the measure of their validity'.

This perspective was supported by Gregor Paul (Karlsruhe) who explained that no tradition as such can bear a normative value. He strongly argued against the confusion of the fact that a certain ethics has been developed under certain historical circumstances in a certain region with ethical arguments. Such a confusion would be the culturalistic mode of the natural fallacy, namely to derive a prescriptive 'ought' from a descriptive 'is'. Paul explicated that 'the value of a cultural tradition is a function of its morality'. Consequently, his answer to the question, why a normative global ethics has not been realized yet, was, that we have to date failed 'to create conditions under which rational argument becomes an actually efficient means of solving problems and conflicts', while this should be the first task for ethicists worldwide.

The discussion revealed that there are quite diverging interpretations of what makes a 'rational argument' in practice. It was argued that education in China has to put a particular emphasize on civil and moral education and that Chinese culture provides favorable conditions for education as a key to transformation. However, who is

being educated, and who, by which authority, institution and method, is educating - questions concerning all aspects of education and its meaning were debated without consent.

Two general perspectives may be distinguished: Firstly the approach to education by engineering. In a joint paper, Chen Yunquan and Zhang Youyun (Beijing) made it clear that under the difficult current conditions of China 'it is required to set up a series of clear norms of social morality in the form of institution, to tell what to do and what not to do, so as to assist individuals to establish correct values'. This paternalistic approach regards ethics and education as tasks of the state and its organs. In this view, cronyism and corruption are not produced by the system, but merely a result from inefficient state power. Consequently, 'of course, the education in ethics should be linked with the bounds of discipline'.

In her paper, Huang Yufu of the same Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing) as Chen and Zhang supported the need for external guidance. According to her strictly behavioristic development model, morality emerges after an age of 2 years, by the way of becoming 'internalized'. Until an age of 28, individual morality would be built. From this stage on, the process of moral maturing continues. The whole process of moral development was considered as part and parcel of the 'improvement of the quality of the citizens', as ordained by the state. In subsequent discussions, Huang insisted that despite of her theory's authoritarian outlook, there is room in Chinese education for individual contributions.

The contributions by Huang, Chen and Zhang described themselves as inspired by the tradition of Zhu Xi. Their point of departure is to 'never just rely on the emphasizing of one's moral consciousness'. This social engineering approach conceptualizes education and 'good politics' in terms of constructing the good and right. 'Moral correctness' is subject to institutional definitions and, in the absence of individual's moral autonomy or spontaneity, it depends largely on means of compulsion. Within this conceptual horizon even '(human) rights are external' (Chen and Zhang).

The second general perspective approached education with concepts from the traditions of Kant and Meng Zi. As Gerhold Becker (Hong Kong) emphasized, moral guidance is communicated by our languages, by traditions and our social environments. However, these moral 'signposts must not be followed blindly and uncritically but judiciously and with a clear grasp of the particular circumstances which bear on responsible action'. According to Becker, the aforementioned institutions play less a constructive role in moral education than some scholars believe. Regarding the example of schools in Hong Kong, Becker confirmed that 'schools have never been a force in democratizing (...), and, if anything, have hindered the process'. This may be true for both, the British colonial Hong Kong and the socialist China. The actual capacity of institutions to encourage morality is one crucial point where reality meets ideology. Generally speaking, 'the political constellations directly affect the moral, educational space available both in the public and the private domain, the schools and the family'. As to the current moral theories and institutions the real problems of our globalizing world call for joint efforts of ethicists. 'Education today is in urgent need of a moral vision (...). What is required then is, above all, the cultivation in each individual student of moral sensibility, moral discourse

and moral imagination. The resources are certainly available in both China and the "West". We need the political will to make good use of them.'

Heiner Roetz (Bochum) explored the history of ideas about rights and duties in China and the 'West'. Using numerous literal examples as illustrations, he countered the popular reduction of these histories to traditional mainstreams, according to which the quest to rights and the quest to morals would be 'dichotomized' along the 'East-West'-stereotypes. Roetz argued that 'this view is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of subjective rights, especially human rights, and at the same time on a self-misunderstanding of Chinese culture'. He provided evidence for a 'logical link between Confucian and democratic thought'. On the other hand, he explained that there is by no means a direct line of historical necessitation for the genesis of the notion 'subjective rights' in Europe. Even the understanding of 'natural rights', in a sense of supporting individual rights, is a relatively recent invention. Roetz maintained that 'the specifically moral point of view of Confucianism would be an advantage rather than an obstacle' in order to build an ethical theory of human rights.

The framework of this second general perspective on moral education is evidently different from the first one. Its main characteristics include an affirmative understanding of moral self-explanation and the encouragement of critique. It links autonomy with dignity and responsibility. And it trusts the human being as capable of developing original contributions to morality. Last but not least, this framework situates the ethical debate within a perspective of an open process. The respective institutions, norms and political structures ought to encourage, and not primarily to enforce moral acts.

The term moral or social engineering was widely used in discussions in order to qualify approaches which stress the moral function of external authorities, such as the state and its institutions. 'Engineering' proved likely to be confused with other concepts of political regulation and the respective instruments of a civil society which also aim at changing the people's behavior. The difference is crucial for ethics. Social engineering is based on a belief in the legitimacy and capacity of some personal or impersonal powers to construct the people's morality according to a certain standard ('tradition'). This evidently bears a temptation for paternalistic and authoritarian political systems. Civil societies, to the contrary, are based on the concept of every citizen as a moral authority. Thus, the second general perspective favors moral development concepts of self-realization of an ideal original human nature.

The philosopher Yao Jiehou (Beijing) proposed a social ethics with a view on the actual Chinese modernization. He made it clear that moral education 'is the essential means to cure the social disease', e.g. corruption and egotism. On the other hand, however, individuals would have to be encouraged to realize their creative capacities by 'maintaining people's multiple rights and interests'. Yao insisted that China needs to develop a constitutional democracy and a state of right: 'No democracy, no Chinese modernization!' China ought to establish 'moral pluralism without moral relativism and the dialogue of plural moral traditions'.

Another thread through the symposium's discussions was the issue of cultural relativism. Although no paper explicitly defended this position, it appeared in many contributions. The interpretation of the quest for universal ethical norms as being invasive and hence morally offensive was easily nullified by distinguishing universalism from uniformism. While the latter was criticised as an expression of relative morality, patterns of universal ethics would not only be logically immune against relativistic objections, but would also be refuted by the fact that Chinese thinkers over history have time and again introduced, explored and discussed universal moral claims. The old strategy of reasonable adaptation, for example, to learn valuables from other nations is in itself a universalistic strategy, even if it is employed by relativists or chauvinists. A systematic and comprehensive selection of what is valuable and useful is already part of the global modernization. This seems to be acknowledged by more and more Chinese scholars, such as in the concept of the joint humanistic and scientific venture as presented by Yao Jiehou.

Accordingly, the topic of 'Asian Values' played no substantial role in the discussion. Although, it was to some extent present within arguments of 'cultural conditioning' and cultural relativism that were put forward occasionally. In this context, it was well taken that Tu Weiming (Harvard) rejected any authorship for the creation of the 'Asian values' fashion. 'Asian Values' were also rejected as a pattern in economy. Singapore's success story was explained by Shee Poon Kim (Singapore) as owing to 'relatively strong, rational institutions, free from widespread corruption or cronyism', supported by an advanced education system and the favorable conditions of the city state.

Further topics, such as Medical ethics in China, values of the younger generations, current developments in Chinese Buddhism, and comparisons between European and Chinese moral and political ideas were debated.

It had been an unconventional move by the organizers that made this substantial and inspiring discussion possible at all. They had brought together a multidisciplinary group of scholars with significantly different backgrounds, methods and terminologies. The participants were challenged to communicate interdisciplinarily, with professional curiosity and the maxim that 'understanding is possible because the other talks reasonably' as bridge-building devices. These bridges, then, were not built primarily between the conceptual borderlines of 'East meets West', but between the diverse approaches. As the philosopher and co-host Anselm Müller (Trier) put it, a great deal of clarification in normative discourses still is required, but the very engagement in such a quest is a virtuous effort in its own right. Thus, the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (KAS), in collaboration with the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies and the Research Center for Current Ethical Issues of Trier University had been successful in assembling a bouquet of issues and approaches that made one listen and talk to each other. This symposium encourages scholars who believe in the possibility of ethically significant cultural sciences, and who seek for new ways of scientific communication.