

[Conférence]

Cultural Nationalism and Chinese Exceptionalism: Contemporary Chinese Confucians discussing “Universal Values”

Dans le cadre du cycle de conférences Confucianism in the Context of Globalization

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In spite of the remarkable changes within the People's Republic of China during the past decades, leading to economic growth, an increased standard of living and—at least on the surface—a significantly higher level of political and cultural self-confidence, the focus on national peculiarities is a persisting theme in the intellectual discussion of the PRC still today. In particular this can be observed by taking a look at the discussion of universal values that took place among influential Confucian scholars around the years 2012–2014. The contents of a series of conferences, published under the title *He wei pushi? Shei zhi jiazhi?* 何謂普世? 誰之價值? (*What is universal? Whose values?*), permit us to take a glance at the layer behind the ideologically controlled surface and get acquainted with some modes of thinking widespread among Confucian intellectuals from the PRC. From an analysis of these discussions about “universal values”, we will be able to reflect on arguments that are used to “exceptionalize” Chinese culture and devalue western culture. Instead of trying to enrich the global discussion on the notion of “universal values” with elements from Chinese cultural tradition, the focus is laid on strengthening the own tradition while eliminating the “Western values”. In addition, this form of Chinese cultural nationalism is combined with materialistic thought, which can be traced back to Marxist ideology.

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