

Recognizing and Understanding China Series



Yuwen Li

Translated by Zhang Xingquan

# The Values of the Chinese



China Renmin University Press

Recognizing and Understanding China Series



■ Yuwen Li  
■ Translated by Zhang Ningqun

# The Values of the Chinese

China Renmin University Press

· Beijing ·

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

中国人的价值观: 英文/宇文利著; 张兴权译. —北京: 中国人民大学出版社, 2012. 11

(“认识中国·了解中国”书系)

ISBN 978-7-300-16671-1

I. ①中… II. ①宇…②张… III. ①人生观-研究-中国-英文 IV. ①B82

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2012) 第 269528 号

“认识中国·了解中国”书系

中国人的价值观

宇文利 著

张兴权 译

---

出版发行	中国人民大学出版社				
社 址	北京中关村大街 31 号	邮政编码	100080		
电 话	010-62511242 (总编室)		010-62511398 (质管部)		
	010-82501766 (邮购部)		010-62514148 (门市部)		
	010-62515195 (发行公司)		010-62515275 (盗版举报)		
网 址	<a href="http://www.crup.com.cn">http://www.crup.com.cn</a> <a href="http://www.ttrnet.com">http://www.ttrnet.com</a> (人大教研网)				
经 销	新华书店				
印 刷	北京鑫丰华彩印有限公司				
规 格	170 mm×250 mm 16 开本	版 次	2012 年 12 月第 1 版		
印 张	11.5 插页 2	印 次	2012 年 12 月第 1 次印刷		
字 数	134 000	定 价	138.00 元		

---

版权所有

侵权必究

印装差错

负责调换

## Preface

What are values? What is the use of values? What is the relationship between values and me? What are the values of the Chinese like? And what are the contents of values? All these questions may flash into the readers' minds at their first sight of this book. But, with a little understanding of the purport and scope of this book, the reason why the Chinese have that kind of values perhaps will be the question that readers are most interested in before and in their reading of this book. As a matter of fact, the discussion of the issue about values is often regarded as a very serious academic topic or theoretical matter. And, when people discuss values, they usually interpret them through some abstract theories that make people feel very abstruse but still can not get rid of the fuzzy sense. Thus, the first impression of the word "values" left in people's mind is "vague and elusive". As a result, as regards such a topic about values, people tend to be reticent on it and avoid mentioning it. Even if talking about it, they often can not grasp its true meaning, or only touch on its superficial meaning like a dragonfly skimming the surface of the water. Nevertheless, in the scope of the knowledge of most people, or the scope

seen or heard by them, there are still some works that talk about the values of the Chinese. Although these works do not mention them directly, values have permeated in their contents. Most of them are literary and historical works with light and easy style, which may inspire the readers and make them learn something, and this, is a common way to write about values. Such works are mostly derived from the authors' experiences, which are able to stand up to the test of their readers, and deserve the careful reflection in thought, the slow approaching in feeling, or the gradual closing in mind. There is quite a lot of such kind of works, even only counting those works that are still popular in recent years, and it is easy to give some examples: *The Spirit of the Chinese People* by Gu Hongming, *My Country and My People* by Lin Yutang, *The Character of the Chinese People* by Luo Jialun, *A Survey of the Chinese People* by Bo Yang, etc. However, this book you are reading is different from the above works, and in fact, the difference is precisely where the main idea of this book is, which, in a nutshell, is manifested in the following three aspects:

First, the difference in the direct title. Obviously, the theme of *The Values of the Chinese* is to deal with the values. As we know, values are different from the culture or the cultural personality, or even the personality spirit. They are standards, the core of culture, as well as the kernel of human spirit, and they are not neutral, but capable of making choices and judgments. Any kind of values embodies its value as well as the judgment of its value. However, value judgment is a very complex activity, which is related with people themselves, conditions people live in and the emotion, knowledge, quality and character of them. Since values permeate and manifest



themselves in all aspects of people's life, production, study, work and contacts, it is hard to write about them, for which the very reason is that values exist everywhere at any time, in every person and every thing. For this reason, the works with the title of values that we usually see are either attributed to being too academic or too common. As for the former, the public may be unwilling to read or unable to understand it; while as for the latter, the public may find it hard to draw impressive and intuitive conclusions owing to its vacuous contents and spirit. Thus, obviously it is quite difficult to take a middle road between the two styles so as to organically combine academic study and common life. Despite this, I am willing to make some attempts to directly use values to title this book and transform some abstract and theoretical academic points of view into common and acceptable popular knowledge. Of course, this is the wish of the author, as for what the effect will be, it still remains to be judged by the readers.

Second, the difference in its subject. The subject of this book is the Chinese people, who are not the historical or traditional Chinese people, but the contemporary Chinese people. If we consider that the previous works show us an image of the Chinese people who live in the history or the tradition, then in this book, the image has been transferred to the contemporary era. The contemporary era here refers to the present time, that is, the current Chinese people. Of course, from a cultural perspective, the contemporary Chinese people can not be completely divorced from the shackles of traditional culture, for the culture is a special kind of life connector with the continuous and radiating nature, which can not be thoroughly separated and disconnected by the times. The great thinker Marx once com-

pared the past ideological tradition to a “nightmare” on the brains of the living, believing that the ideology and spirit of the new age is developed in the inheritance and transformation of the old tradition. The values of the contemporary Chinese people are closely related with the values that were born in and continued from the Chinese history and tradition. So, this book intends to, on the one hand, find out the relationship between them, and on the other hand discover the creation and change in the values of the contemporary Chinese people. In short, this book aims to find the values of the Chinese that embody the modernity.

Third, the difference in its proposal of dimensions. The above-mentioned works are a kind of works that research into values by means of concealing them in the people’s way of life and survival in an indirect and implicit manner. This is where the merit of such kind of works lies. However, it is exactly because of this that the readers may easily get ambiguous conceptions from such kind of works, for when reading them, usually people can only vaguely grasp the visualized information about values, but will not explore the sources of the values or their precise manifestations. In academic circles, a lot of works that research into values tend to divide values into different levels and categories in accordance with the domestic or international academic consensus. Although there is not a unified classification at present, such a method of classification is undoubtedly the best way to refine, deepen and expand the research on values. The classification of values in this book is made on the basis of the combination of traditional and modern values and from the dimensions of life, politics, economy, culture and society, which mirror the overall view of the survival, living and life of the contemporary Chinese people from

different sides. Although it may not be sufficient and perfect, it is able to take account of the reality of the existence and development of contemporary Chinese society. There's no doubt that the values reflected through such a classification of dimensions are exactly the survival values, political values, economic values, cultural values and social values of the Chinese.

Holding the spirit of exploration and conducting frank researches, seeking not to cover everything but to consider every detail, with such an attitude and spirit, we dedicate *The Values of the Chinese* to the contemporary Chinese and our friends who care about and wish to know about China, and we hope this book that depicts the spirit and values of the Chinese can vividly convey the true image of the Chinese people in respect of spiritual wishes and value pursuit in a fair and objective manner.

Yuwen Li

June, 2012



# Contents

---

## Chapter One A General Discussion and Evaluation of the Values of the Chinese

1. The Values and Their Appearance 4
2. The Manifestations of the Values of the Chinese 11
3. The Western Evaluation of the Values of the Chinese 23
4. New Changes in the Values of the Contemporary Chinese 35

## Chapter Two The Endless Survival Values

1. The Traditional View of Fate of the Chinese 43
2. The Modern View of Life of the Chinese 53
3. The Survival Values of the Chinese 62
4. The View of Lifelong Learning of the Chinese 69

## Chapter Three The State-supremacy Political Values

1. Cultivating the People, Regulating the Family, Governing and Pacifying the Country 80
2. Patriotism and Internationalism 87
3. A View of State Governance by the Use of Both Law and Morality 94

4. A View of International Association Advocating Equality, Peace and Harmony 101

Chapter Four The Beneficial Economic Values

1. Have the Chinese People Become Economic Animals? 111
2. A Gentleman Fond of Wealth Will Gain It in the Proper Way 115
3. A View of Efficiency and Fairness in the Distribution of interests 120
4. A View of Civilized and Harmonious Ecological Resources 125

Chapter Five The Diverse and Inclusive Cultural Values

1. A View of Harmonious But not Uniform Cultural Relations 133
2. A View of Incongruous and Diverse Cultural Beliefs 138
3. A View of Cultural Utilization Through Learning from Others 143
4. A View of Harmonious, Happy and Shared Cultural Home 148

Chapter Six The Civilized and Progressive Social Values

1. A View of Social Collective of Respecting Work and Being Gregarious 156
2. A View of Free and Equal Social Democracy 160
3. A View of Healthy and Positive Social Morality 164
4. A View of Coordinated and Progressive Social Stability 169

# **The Values of the Chinese**

# The Values of the **Chinese**

## Chapter One .....

### THE VALUES OF THE CHINESE

#### A General Discussion and Evaluation of the Values of the Chinese

# 1

## A General Discussion and Evaluation of the Values of the Chinese

## 1. The Values and Their Appearance

What are values and their manifestations? From an academic perspective, it seems not difficult to answer this question. For those scholars who are engaged in theoretical research, they may easily find some rather academic definitions from the areas that they are proficient in, and can make an analysis of the definitions and quote the classics to support their arguments. Even for those scholars who were not familiar with this concept, they still can find a variety of explanations by consulting dictionaries or searching on the Internet. However, for the average people, especially the general public who do not specialize in research or are not used to acquiring knowledge from the Internet, the term “values” must be obscure and difficult to understand and be explained. If we simply define values by the use of a variety of definitions existing in different academic disciplines, for example, tell them “values” mean “the criteria that the subject applies for evaluating and choosing the objective things in accordance with their significance or importance to the subject itself and the society”<sup>[1]</sup>, or “the criteria adopted by members of society to evaluate behaviors and matters, and to choose their desired goals among all a variety of possible targets”<sup>[2]</sup>, or any other too academic definitions, it is certainly not easy for them to understand the true meaning of the concept. Ordinary people are different from scholars. They need the most concise, intuitive and succinct statement, because for them, they may even not try to carefully distinguish the nuances contained in various definitions of the concept, but just grasp the most straightforward explanation of some object. This is exactly the tastes and in-



terests of the public, which is also the characteristic of the public in understanding a concept.

As a result, in order to make it concise and easily understandable and eliminate unnecessary academic debates and troubles in concept, we make some modifications to the definition of values that is most commonly used but still accurate, so as to popularize it as follows:

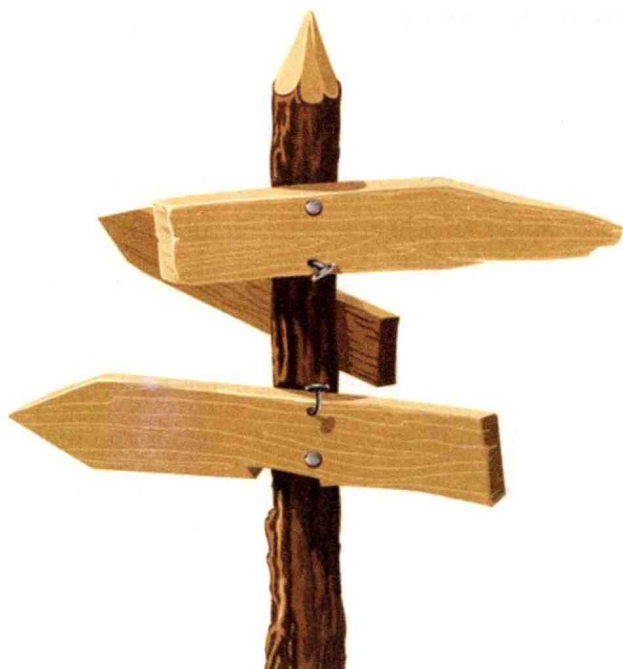
Values are the standards in people's minds, which represent the recognized value. With these standards, people can judge whether or not their own or others' words and deeds are important and accord with some of their own or universally recognized principles.

In simpler words, values are a standard for knowing and judging things. In our daily life, we often express our views on some

Values are a standard for knowing and judging things.

certain things or objects, evaluating whether or not they are important, correct, reasonable, advisable, true, good and beautiful, and whether they are consistent with our wishes and principles. The intrinsic yardsticks of value adopted by us to make evaluation in these respects are values.

For example, when a young passerby jumps into the pond to rescue a child from drowning without hesitation, some people may say it is foolish of him to risk his life to rescue the child; some would believe he is very brave, kind, beautiful in heart, and worth praising; and some others may be indifferent about it and stand aside without making comments. These three different ways of evaluation represent three different values. No matter what kind of evaluation people make, they all compare the external things, objects, and behaviors



Values: Behavior Guidance

with the standards of value inside their own mind, and then arrive at their own judgments. And no matter what kind of stance they take, they apply their personal values. But if the majority of people in the society or social institutions make a judgment on the behavior of the young people, then we say these people or social institutions are using the social values. In general, the values we talk about refer to the values of the majority of people in the society. Social values consist of individual values, but that is not to say they are equal to a hotchpotch of individual values, instead they are an organic and effective coupling of individual values, which are the unified and sublimated group values.

Values are very important for both individuals and groups. Talcott Parsons, a famous American sociologist, believes that values can be regarded as a factor like a yardstick in a conventional symbolic

system, according to which, people make their own choice among a variety of alternative courses of action under certain circumstances. The famous *organizational behavior* scientist Robbins also said: “Values usually affect the attitude and behaviors of a person.” “Values are very important for the study of or-

Values are just like a beacon that guides the individual and groups' actions and illuminate the road along which people make value judgments and value choices.

ganizational behavior, because they are the basis for the understanding of the attitude and motivation of employees. And they also have influence on our perception and judgment.”<sup>[3]</sup> Popularly speaking, values are just like a beacon that guides the individual and groups' actions and illuminate the road along which people make value judgments and value choices. They are also like a balance that is weighing equipment used to measure the value as well as the right and wrong of certain objects, events, persons or behaviors. Under the guidance of values, people, in the face of choices, will know what should and what should not be done, what is and what is not reasonable, what kind of behavior is and is not favorable, etc. Therefore, just from the values of a person, we are able to judge his thought, sentiment, belief and behavior and know what the important value pivot that supports him in making his own decisions is, as well as what kind of value he believes in and what standards he adopts. It goes without saying that under the guidance of different values, a person may like and approve a matter, appreciate and recognize a behavior, and support and help another person, or he may take a completely opposite decision, opposing, criticizing and resisting the same matter, behavior and