The Discourse of Human Rights in China: Historical and Ideological Perspectives. By ROBERT WEATHERLEY. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. xi, 185 pp. $59.95.

Many Chinese voices, both official and academic, have claimed that China has its own concept of human rights and thus that China should not be criticized in terms of Western versions of that idea. Robert Weatherley examines the emergence and evolution of the idea of rights in China, and then assesses both the degree to which Chinese rights thinking genuinely differs from its Western counterpart and the extent to which Western criticism of Chinese human rights practice is justified.

Weatherley argues as follows. Neither classical Confucianism nor the imperial Chinese legal tradition was hospitable to rights. The challenge of Western imperialism in the nineteenth century posed a "dilemma" to the Chinese tradition, which it attempted to solve by importing certain Western ideas, including the idea of rights. The resulting new tradition, however, was still heavily influenced by the old: some aspects of the old tradition most inimical to rights had been jettisoned, but that which remained was powerful enough to shape Chinese understandings of rights in important ways. The concerns of Marxism represented a second dilemma, but again the tradition that emerged retained many Confucian ideas. Even the idea of rights found within Chinese Marxism, therefore, bears the stamp of Confucianism. Some of China's most egregious human rights violations cannot be justified even in terms of this native Chinese concept of human rights, but in general Weatherley urges us to use care when criticizing China on grounds of human rights since we too often ignore the equally legitimate Chinese standpoint.

Weatherley's subject is of great importance, and for precisely the reason he adduces. Only on the basis of such research can we—whether "we" are English, American, Chinese, or whomever—be sure of our grounds when evaluating cross-cultural claims about human rights. There are important lacunae in Weatherley's historical account, however, which render it problematic as a basis for such evaluation. A second problem with the book is more theoretical: Weatherley's model of traditions allows for change, but does not recognize internal diversity—it is precisely evidence of such diversity that he has omitted. The only time period for which he does recognize a multiplicity of views is the 1990s, which is also the only period for which he relies on primary sources.

The problems cluster in two areas. First, on Weatherley's telling, Confucianism prior to the late nineteenth century is a static, monolithic entity with "no place for the individual," advocating "selflessness," concerned with duties but not rights, and seeing the people as a "resource of state power" (pp. 43, 44, 52). Some of these claims are problematic even with respect to classical Confucianism, but here I will confine myself to later diversity. Ming and Qing intellectual debates were rich and vibrant, with issues relating to "individuals" and "selflessness" at their very center. This matters enormously for Weatherley's project since early Chinese and Japanese rights thinkers drew explicitly on the Confucians who, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, emphasized the importance of people's fulfilling their desires. (For one aspect of this, see my "Did Someone Say 'Rights'? Liu Shipei's Concept of *Quanli*," *Philosophy East and West* 48:4 [1998].)

The second problem area is Weatherley's story of rights discourse in late Qing and Republican China. The secondary literature on which he relies does not call his attention to theorists who do not fit his model. This allows him to conclude, for

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instance, that "Even the most liberal of rights theorists, such as Liang Qichao and Yan Fu, believed that individual rights . . . were little more than a means to collective state ends" (p. 147). To give just one example of a competing view, here is Gao Yihan (1884–1968), a prolific contributor to *New Youth*, in 1915: "The state is not in itself the final end of life. . . . The only way that the people can make progress toward their final end is through their rights. Therefore, it is sufficient for the state to stand behind the people, using its powers to encourage and support the realization of the people's goals" (translation from *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 31:1 [1999], pp. 58–60).

The reason these problems matter is that, at the very least, they mandate substantial revision to what can count as a Chinese concept of rights. Some will even see the diversity present throughout Chinese rights discourse as reason to reject the idea of a distinctively Chinese concept of rights altogether. I believe that this is an overreaction; more careful investigation than I have time for here will show that Chinese rights discourse has had persistent and distinctive concerns, and that these concerns must be taken seriously by those who would engage with Chinese over human rights—just as Weatherley argues.

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Alternate Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan. By ROBERT P. WELLER. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999. xvi, 172 pp. $60.00 (cloth).

This book focuses on intermediate social ties between the family and the state to explain how Taiwan was able to suddenly democratize in the 1980s and to argue that China is developing the underpinnings of democracy. Woven in with this argument is an explanation of how Chinese social ties have influenced Chinese enterprises and Taiwan's economic development, a reinterpretation of the concept of civil society in the context of China, and a sophisticated theoretical analysis of the nature of culture. Intermediate social ties are most visible in voluntary associations, so the book uses case studies of three types of voluntary associations: business organizations, religious groups, and environmental movements. Threading through the book is the issue of gender; women are shown to play leading roles in all three cases and in the informal sector generally. Women contribute to civil organizations in ways different from men and add significantly to the reach and strength of intermediate institutions.

Chapter 1 on "Culture, Economy, and the Roots of Civil Change" lays out the theoretical problem, and chapter 2 on "Legacies" describes organizational life from below in the imperial period that affects voluntary associations today. Chapter 3, "The Limits to Authority," shows how twentieth-century authoritarianism and totalitarianism not only did not eliminate horizontal relations of trust but also made them more important in some cases. Chapter 4 looks at business organizations, from rotating credit clubs to chambers of commerce. The comparison between Taiwan and China highlights the powerful role of the state and the limited autonomous power of civil associations. Chapter 5 examines religion, illustrating a split in market cultures. On the one hand, religion is "happily commercializing, celebrating individuality, and encouraging profit, while on the other hand it is reacting against a perceived loss of values by offering moral alternatives" (p. 18). The result is religious organizations that have strong roots in earlier Chinese culture and do not simply reproduce Euro-American developments. Chapter 6 examines groups involved in environmental

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