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# PEGASUS

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAUX ROUND TABLE FOR MORAL CAPITALISM  
NETWORK LOOKING AT BUSINESS ABOVE THE CLUTTER AND CONFETTI



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# Introduction

This issue of *Pegasus* considers the foundational civilizational requirements for social justice.

Michael Hartoonian, our Associate Editor, proposes that such requirements are personal to individuals, rather than systemic to institutional orders of power. However, as Michael points out, institutional orders shape individual personalities through culture, psycho-social dynamics and the advantages that come with the possession of power. Michael refers to these institutional arrangements as “infrastructure.”

Michael’s argument is that a kind of mindset – we could call it “middle class-ness” – calls forth and gives priority to regimes, discourse and otherwise, that facilitate the emergence, in time, of and the sustainability over time of constitutional democracies protecting self-sustaining economic growth for a society.

Michael echoes Aristotle’s ethics, which locate virtue as a mean between extremes, a middle way and his observation that constitutionalize democracies balance class and other extremes of power and interest. Cicero, too, in his treatise on the *res publica* or the “public thing” (or “public operational and decision-making entity”) argued for balancing interests through the maintaining of different offices. The Qur’an insists on the virtue of keeping a balance (*mizan*). In China, Mencius insisted on seeking justice through personal attainment of *jenyi* (“humane righteousness”), while the Confucian tradition preserved the text of the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

Michael’s observations align with the agency approach of Amartya Sen and the cognate capabilities approach of Martha Nussbaum.

The OECD noted in 2006 that:

*Well-being has several dimensions of which monetary factors are only one. They are nevertheless an important one, since richer economies are better placed to create and maintain other well-being-enhancing conditions, such as a clean environment, the likelihood that the average person will have a right to 10 years or more of education and lead a comparatively long and healthy life. Well-being will also be increased by institutions that enable citizens to feel that they control their own lives and that investment of their time and resources will be rewarded. In turn, this will lead to higher incomes in a virtuous circle.*

The operating principles of middle class-ness would seem to welcome the Caux Round Table’s principles for business, government and civil society.

Next, this issue brings you a political document from China, which aligns with both Michael’s recommendation and the teachings of Mencius. It is a letter written by former Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, ostensibly in filial praise of his mother, but between the lines is a critique of current Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, and his “China dream.”

Wen is observing that Xi's ideals for China do not promote "middle class-ness," but rather, the power of the state to do as it pleases with those subject to its dominion.

Thirdly, this issue brings you an essay of mine on the theocratic reality of the China Xi is trying to revive. To place this Chinese tradition of the imperial order responsible to Heaven in Michael's framework of justice, we need only observe that theocracies only have room for subjects and not for citizens. Theocracies command and demand in seeking conformity with the vision and mission of a transcendent order of right and wrong, do and don't do. In doing their work, theocracies regulate and order social, economic, political and cultural realities. Citizen freedom with individual agency cannot be permitted.

The justice sought and imposed by theocracies is self-referential to the divine vision or narrative taken at face value to justify the regime. Moderation, checks and balances, compromise, tolerance and live and let live subsidiarities create resistance to perfecting the purity and the uniformity of the theocratic order. As threats to order, they must be expunged from regime protocols and practices.

This conflict between China's theocracy and "middle class-ness" and the sophistication of repression to prevent subjects from becoming citizens explain why, over the past 40 years, remarkable wealth creation in China has not resulted in the democratization of that polity.

*Stephen B. Young*  
*Global Executive Director*  
*Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism*

# **Moral Capitalism AND *the Middle Class***

**Michael Hartoonian**

*There is a historiography at loose in the world, that traces a current discontent or complaint backwards and then claims it to be the whole of history. This belief leads to fanaticism or apathy. Fanaticism is resentment in search of power; apathy is consumerism in search of happiness.*

-Theodore Dalrymple (2010)

## **Introduction**

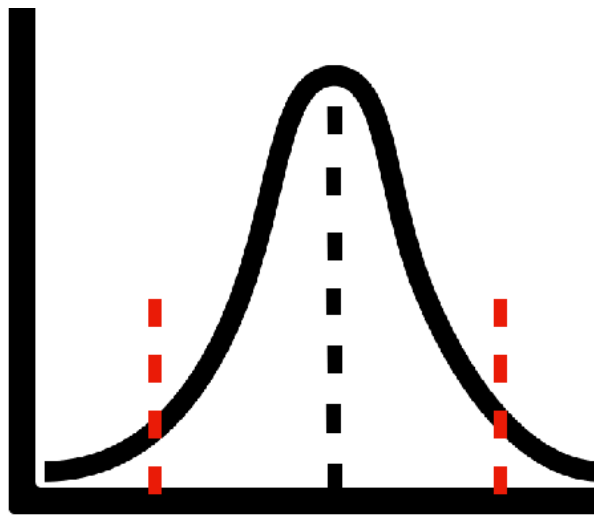
Incomplete indicators of middle class:

- \* A ratio of 1 to 90 represents the distribution of wealth in much of the world. That is, 1% of the world's population owns as much wealth (income/goods) as 90% of the rest of earth's people. This is also the case in most so called "rich" nations.
- \* The inequality reflected in this relationship, however, may seem to be about money, but there is a deeper inequality in values, education and responsibility that manifests itself in health, safety, meaning and happiness.
- \* History is clear in informing us that there must be a congruency between "middle class" and a democratic and market-oriented republic.
- \* As long as money and financial status are the measures of the middle class, capitalism and democracy are problematic.

In the literature of economics and political science, there is a persuasive claim made connecting the concepts of the middle class with democratic attitudes. In fact, this connection has been considered a cornerstone of democratic rule and wealth creation since antiquity. An article by Chunlong Lu (2005) is representative of this literature and offers a structural perspective on the relationship between middle class and democracy. The article uses the method of structural equation modeling to test the structural relation between a country's size of middle class and its level of democracy. The findings indicate that where the middle class is large and strong, there are more opportunities for the country to be a stable democracy, while where the middle class is small and weak, there are few possibilities to be democratic. The findings also indicate that economic development does not exert direct negative impacts on democratic status, but rather, it works through the middle class to exert indirect and more positive impacts.



In this essay, I will extend the argument advanced by Chunlong Lu, with support from Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Adam Smith, Hamilton, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ray Carey, Jr. and others to show how the bell-shaped curve is useful in illuminating both the economy, as well as its link with democratic values. Of course, the bell-shaped dissemination pattern is applicable to almost any natural phenomenon. Whether dealing with demographics, climate or native intelligences, the bell curve applies simply because it presents a natural distribution. We ignore this truth at our peril.



Here, however, we will focus on the meaning and relationship between the concept called middle class and democratic principles. Metaphorically, we can imagine an aircraft we might call a democratic republic. It takes off and remains in flight on the airfoils of the middle class and moral capitalism. However, I will make the claim that the attributes of “middle class” have less to do with income and are more relevant to conditions of just behavior and wealth, where wealth is understood, as Plato might suggest, as excellence: “The temple of happiness can only be entered through the courtyard of excellence.”

In short, the “middle class,” understood upon the whole of human history, is the foundation for justice – political (constitutional democracy), economic and social (opportunity) and cultural (the moral sense supported by wisdom).

## **Middle Class Attributes**

Here are the necessary attributes (all are measurable) that define the middle class:

-Time. The middle class mindset understands and practices delayed gratification. This is also defined as having a generational covenant. Our responsibility carries forward (also encompassing the past) into the future. Our children are foremost in our decision-making process. We also understand the spiritual necessity of sacrifice. You must make sacrifices

today for a better future. Another way to put it – “The present leaves footprints in the future.”

The metrics used here, as in the following attributes, engage attention to savings, investing, education and care of self, family, responsibility for the maintenance of home and community and the ethical and aesthetic social networks that gracefully connect people in community. Indeed, there are instruments and methods to assess all of these relationships.

-Health. The middle class understands that wealth can only be created by healthy people. They work to keep themselves healthy and support an infrastructure that implements healthcare for all.

-Education. The middle class understands that the first purpose of education is not to help a person become better off, but to become better, period.

-Scale. The middle class understands what is gained and lost in scales of consumption, technology, size, population density, time and distance.

-Aesthetics. The middle class understands that beauty attracts, while ugliness repels. Aesthetics form the foundation for the ethical community.

-Happiness. The middle class understands that happiness is the result of positively addressing the five elements above. The pursuit of happiness is never a personal achievement, but always a social or moral state of being. Jefferson was clear about his definition – he stated “public” happiness in the Declaration, but the word public was edited out. Happiness was and always will be a relational concept.

### **The Middle Class: Overcoming Tensions Between Equality and Freedom and Subject and Citizen**

Throughout the world today, there is a great deal of confusion about income inequality and what to do about it. In Thomas Piketty’s new book, *A Brief History of Equality*, the argument is made that what is needed is “participatory socialism!” Good luck with that. By definition, socialism, writ-large, is non-participatory. It’s for *subjects*; that is, people with the propensity for or to be subject to debt, a debit of money and character.

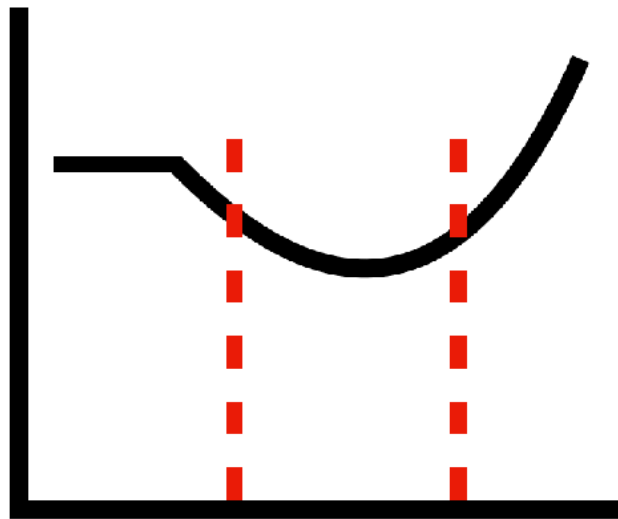
Citizens, on the other hand, create excellence (social wealth simply because of who they are). The citizen understands that the verb “to be” is far more important than the verb “to have” or “to consume.”

Piketty’s statement, “participatory socialism,” is a contradiction in terms. Socialists do not want to participate. They would rather have someone else (the state) do the work. You

simply can't create an adjective for a noun that destroys meaning, unless you are a post-modernist who believes that words can mean anything you want them to mean. This ignorance of human nature and history is breathtaking. Yet, many people will take this stuff seriously.

One way to debate this idea of middle class is to engage in a deeper discussion about its meaning and relationship to the values of wealth or worth; competition; excellence; potential; public happiness; beauty; rationality; and reciprocal duty or responsibility. To be clear, income inequality has to do with individual and social virtues and only parenthetically with income.

Let's start with the tautological notion that there is a contested truth in the following claims, simply because we are engaged in a continuing debate that needs ongoing clarification of factual, definitional and value assertions. In any definitional discussion, tautologies can be useful. What's under the surface of income inequality? We could argue, with some assurance, that the "natural" bell-shaped curve should depict a large middle class with much smaller upper and lower classes and that seemed to be the case in the U.S. from about 1949 until about 1980. Since that time, the middle of the curve continues to become smaller. Today, we see a morphed curve that has a larger lower class, a diminished middle class and a larger upper class. As a way to consider why the natural bell-shaped curve, so necessary for democracy and capitalism, has mutated since the 1980's, let's consider the tensions between the values of **freedom and equality**. We can use the bell distribution curve as a point of entry into understanding the middle class/income misconception.



Democracy, at its best, is a continuous struggle to balance these ideals. For example, the history of the U.S. and other modern constitutional democracies can be read as attempts, at one time, to promote freedom over equality and at other times, to favor the reverse. Like a swinging pendulum, one value or the other seems to be more popular and persuasive during a particular cycle of history.



Like other value tensions, emphasis on either freedom or equality results in too little of one or the other. The logical extension of freedom is anarchy, while the logical extension of equality is lockstep thinking, suitable to communism. An imbalance of these values is undemocratic and injurious to the republic and economy. For example, when the conventional wisdom favors freedom, the power and resources of a society tend to flow into the hands of the few. In turn, those in power develop rationales to justify this distribution in the name of merit, efficiency and economic growth. Left unattended, this imbalance of income and power undermines democracy and threatens to destroy the nation.

However, when the pendulum swings, the national persuasion favors redistributing income in the name of compassion and economic justice. The common result is that personal freedom suffers. In a democratic republic, citizens need such freedoms to achieve knowledge, justice and wealth (excellence).

It is society's task, which is to say all of ours, to assure that these elements are fairly distributed through enlightened material and ethical infrastructures. That is, an enhanced common wealth. Democracy and capitalism are both team sports, played within ethical and legal norms. There can be no private wealth without common wealth, only a groveling for money and power. In this situation, meaning and happiness are exchanged for status and stuff.

The proper understanding of natural equality was central to constitutional republicanism. If it were to work, privilege was out and meritocracy in. Ability mattered, not birthright. Artistic talent, declared Thomas Paine, is not hereditary. This prompted historian Gordon S. Wood to remark that equality was the most powerful idea in all of American history.

However, "republican equality did not mean the elimination of all distinctions," added Wood. Republics would still have an aristocracy, but it would be, in Jefferson's words, a "natural aristocracy." Our republican aristocracy, leaders arising from the people, would not be those of opulence or income, but people of virtue and talent, such as writers, painters, scientists, founders of businesses and creative statesmen. It also would include the reserved, disinterested heroes like Washington and Lincoln, who are not there by hereditary right.

Even Washington had his skepticism about democracy without the contributions of the "middle class." He once called the common people "the grazing multitude." John Adams referred to them as the "common herd of mankind." Republicanism was both a profound and radical idea. Perhaps only the few were capable of reasoning and intellectual achievement, wrote the British political philosopher John Locke, but everyone could use their senses and develop common sense. With this understanding,

Thomas Jefferson included in the Declaration of Independence the words, “all men are created equal.” This sentiment had become the conventional wisdom of the new democratic republic.

Still, these men of American enlightenment understood that being guided by one’s senses in a chaotic environment could lead to, what they called, excessive sensations. To temper this Lockean possibility, they deferred to thinkers, such as Adam Smith, the Scottish moral philosopher, who wrote about man’s natural social disposition. Our moral gyroscope, Smith taught us, is held in place by natural affections and benevolence.

Just as we understood the physical world to have gravitational forces that held heavenly bodies together, so too, our social world had its interpersonal forces. “Love between humans,” relates Professor Wood, “was the gravity of the moral world.” People had a natural instinct to be sociable and benevolent. This was the glue that would bring together potentially self-serving individuals into community and a republic. The middle class thrives on this gravity-like force created by and sustaining the moral world.

In order for people to live together in society, the American founders also believed that it was necessary to give up a portion of their freedom so that others could enjoy theirs.

Government has the duty to build and maintain infrastructures to serve as a way to help create more equality within freedom and freedom within equality. Governments are instituted for the purpose of managing that freedom, which individuals donate to the common good, those agency powers which become collective and ensure a measure of equality before civil and natural law. This is the stuff of a cohesive and good society.

Let’s begin with infrastructure. As suggested above, the infrastructure must be thought of as including both material and ethical components. The material common wealth would include all elements that would allow (all) people to have good healthcare, education, superior transportation, communication and energy distribution networks, clean water, air, food and care for families, like day care. There would also be safety net programs, such as social security and unemployment grants. A mandatory program of national service would also be implemented for people between the ages 18 and 21. Young men and women would be required to serve one or two years, with pay, working to improve infrastructure and the aesthetics of communities around the country.

The necessary ethical infrastructure is built and sustained by individuals with guardrails provided by government. That is, to the best of our common ability, laws should reinforce citizens’ decisions to do what is expected of them. That is, the right thing. Government officials simply develop laws and policies consistent with ethical principles of life,

addressing the question – how best should we live? To those who would say that this is not the government’s business, I would only say the citizen who thinks that way has no business at all and no business being a citizen. To suggest, for example, that you can cheat on your taxes because the law allows it is to say that there is no ethical infrastructure. A democracy or free market cannot long exist in such a cultural desert. One final observation regarding our infrastructures. There should be little need for government programs of welfare for the middle or upper classes. Healthy and effective infrastructures, like the ones described above, as well as the social norms that attempt to instill the advantages and pathways to achieve middle class principles and rewards, will inspire individual excellence. Humans simply want to be and do better. Common wealth is the instrument to that achievement. This kind of wealth, held in common, would make for a more efficient and less expensive government and would allow the government to stop doing things over which it has little control and even less chance of success.

However, our acquisitive individual pursuit of material gain and goods often makes a mockery of Jefferson’s “natural aristocracy.” Those who are creative, artistic and intellectual tend to be thought of as quaint, unless, of course, they are able to popularize this talent and become rich with money and property. What is natural about these qualities and what does a natural distribution of talent have to do with the bell-shaped curve, democratic governance and the proper behaviors and policies of citizens and government servants?

Well, if we consider freedom and equality as necessary to democracy, there must be a “middle distribution,” where most people can see and debate the importance of these values as making up the majority or “middle” of the way people think about the republic. In other words, we have a bell-shaped curve with freedom and equality at the extremes and their blend at the apex. This is what democracy and moral capitalism look like:

*There is or must be a reciprocal duty among individuals and all institutions in which people live and work or of which they are a part, including the state. This is the operational definition of morality. It is in these relationships that culture is defined and there can be no confusion between the market and the culture. This may seem like a frivolous assertion, but it begs some questions: do we live in a market or a culture? If income does not define the middle class, what does? Why is the bell curve, depicting income distribution, a lagging indicator? If we understand that democracy is an idea sustained through ongoing arguments, what are the arguments about and how should we engage in them?*

Confucius makes a similar claim in *The Analects*, where he states, in chapter IV, that the noble-minded are concerned with the way and not first with earning a living. The way is about the ritual and practice of the principled mind, not the dogmatic mind. The principled mind is a mind in search of understanding the eternal question: how shall I live my life? The principled mind is the mind that has the ongoing task of examining all of life and life’s

relationships. The principled mind shapes the middle class and in turn, the middle class prizes the principled mind.

Without attention to these ideas and attending debates and arguments, people can never advance in wealth (excellence) or happiness. Also, history and philosophy clearly tell us what happens when citizens no longer participate in civil and civic debates and arguments – blood happens. We can look to 1917 Russia and to Italy and Germany in the 1930's. Was it the case that here and in the larger world, the “middle class” values simply disappeared? Not really. Another truth is that a radical or reactionary minority, from either political periphery, is no match for a disengaged majority. In the 1930's, the majority of people in Germany, for example, held to notions of virtue, but timidity is a powerful drug. There are, in fact, two values that cannot occupy the same space in the mind of a person or a society – fear and love. Like Gresham's Law, fear will always drive love into oblivion and make people unconscious and without conscience. The middle class needs to be attended to and sustained. Its existence follows upon conditions. Destroy those conditions and the middle class will melt away as plastic thrown into the flames.

## **A Very Simple, Inconvenient Truth**

Most of the cultures that I have studied engage in ethical and moral debates related to the multi-dimensional natures of the political/economic/social realms. They try, with mixed success, to do so with civility and rationality, for intuitively they know that when these connections stop functioning, first, the market becomes sluggish, expensive and corrupt. Next, the political power distribution becomes dangerous and people lose their life's purpose and meaning. Finally, people begin to focus on entertainment and style, at the expense of character and happiness. What history has shown repeatedly is that if these issues and questions here delineated are not adjudicated, with ethical and moral debates, humans will, as they always have, simply worship power and money and have no higher purpose than any other animal.....animals feed, humans dine. Animals have sex; humans make love. Animals die; humans pass on. Thus, rising to a higher condition of life demands that we see moral and ethical principles as essential in our debates and public policies. This must be the case so we can see with sensitive eyes the fullness of what it means to be human.

## **Remembering the Meaning of Middle Class**

When economists and statisticians define middle class, they do it with income numbers. That is, if you earn 0 to X dollars, you're in the lower class. If you earn from X+1 to Y dollars, you are in the middle class and if you earn Y+1 dollars, you are in the upper class. There you have it. It's easy to do, easy to understand and simple minded. Unless we understand the values and behaviors of people of whatever economic class, all of these income numbers remain misleading and destructive to both individuals and democratic societies, as well. Even when economists present their models of the working world, they should understand two things:

models are not reality and they are often counter to the notion that economics is about people, which demands attention to disclosure concepts, such as motives, meaning, respect and human connections of purpose.

Bell curves are ubiquitous in nature. However, when we apply such a distribution of outcomes to individuals within a democratic society, we must be careful that what we measure to make the curve is appropriate to democratic behavior. This means an assessment of values, not just adding up dollars and cents. Within the operational definition of a republic, the measurement must first be made regarding values such as delayed gratification, trust, prudence, responsibility (a loving critic) to self, others and institutions and aesthetic and ethical sentiments. Above all, it should help people develop a scientific or conditional mindset that continually asks – if I (we) do X, what can I (we) expect Y to be?

So, if we want to develop an overlay of democratic sentiments and apply it to the bell curve showing the distribution of lower, middle and upper classes, what would we need to measure in order to expect a congruency between an actual middle class in some country and democratic principles? We would have to measure the following attributes of people, as well as redefine the scope of the infrastructure – our common wealth.

I have made the claim that a society that manifests a bell-shaped curve where the middle class represents the largest demographic, is a necessary condition for democracy. However, the metric used to measure the distribution is not one of income, but of values and behavior. Given the material and ethical infrastructure illustrated above, income distribution would simply be a by-product of character, as happiness is a by-product of a well-lived life. So, what kind of metric or measurement can we use to fully understand the relationship between the bell-shaped distribution and democracy? And can we evaluate them the same? What factors should we measure to ascertain the strength of a democracy?

There are six elements, as outlined above, that make-up the value set necessary for democracy and moral capitalism. These elements must be the criteria for defining the middle class. Without them, democracy will become, as Aristotle said, corrupt.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion we can draw from antiquity to the present is that an instrumental relationship exists between the relevance of the middle class and a democratic republic. However, the measure of the middle class is NOT income or financial worth. Its measure must be calculated in the capability and competence of that majority, called middle class, to administer and extend the democratic values enumerated above to their society and their children's children. This work is long overdue and in need of deep and profound attention.

How like our first parents, Adam and Eve, we are. I believe that all people can relate to John Milton's words in the last four sentences of his "Paradise Lost." They illuminate our present circumstance:

***They looked back, all the eastern side beheld  
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat.  
Waved over by that flaming brand.  
The gate,  
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.  
Some natural tears they dropped but wiped them soon.***

***The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide,  
They, hand and hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.***

***John Milton, "Paradise Lost"***

***O God, you have bound us together in this bundle of life;  
give us grace to understand how our lives depend on the courage, the  
industry, the honesty and integrity of our fellow men;  
that we may be mindful of their needs,  
grateful for their faithfulness,  
and faithful in our responsibilities to them;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.***

***Reinhold Niebuhr, "For All The Saints," American Lutheran Publicity  
Bureau, volume IV, p. 283-4***

*Michael Hartoonian is Associate Editor of Pegasus.*



# Filial Remembrance of His Mother

## Wen Jiabao Former Chinese Premier

In April 2021, a written homage to his mother by former Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, was made public. It received great attention and was quickly removed from the internet in China.

In the elegant style of neo-Confucian literati in previous dynasties, when they would comment on the unfitness of a ruler, Wen's political thesis is put forth indirectly with allegories, symbolic references well known to readers and analogies to past heroes and ideals. His thesis, though, is to criticize the politics and philosophy of Xi Jinping for lacking virtue and relying instead on the repressive apparatus of the state to be the "One Man" in China supervising "All-Under-Heaven," as the former emperors asserted was their right and duty.



Wen Jiabao

When Wen finally states his beliefs at the end of the letter, he provides a China Dream to rival Xi's China Dream of power, glory and global hegemony. Wen's China Dream is that of "a country full of fairness and justice, where there is always respect for the human heart, humanity and the essence of human beings and where there is always an air of youth, freedom and struggle."

The revealing "tells" in Wen's letter are:

- 1) He goes on at length about his mother and father and the sufferings and vicissitudes of their lives as just ordinary, hard-working and patriotic Chinese establishing his credentials as a Chinese worthy of respect for being "of the people."
- 2) He states that "My mother taught how to be a human being" or simple "how to be human." This simple sentence brings to mind the first passage in the book of Mencius, where Mencius sets forth the core of his vision for humanity – "My only counsels are to humanness (ren) and righteousness (yi). Mencius rejects li or self-interest as the basis for just rule. This implies that others may not follow renyi and so are not dutiful administrators of the best of Chinese thinking.
- 3) His mother's telling him about the heroes Yue Fei, Wen Tianxiang and Zhuge Lian. To me, the most important allegory here is to Zhuge Lian. Zhuge Lian was the Taoist master strategist who could use yin/yang forces and the Five Elements. He was one of

- 1) the heroes seeking to preserve the Han Dynasty against unworthy militaristic upstarts in the historical novel Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Mentioning Zhuge Lian immediately brings to mind noble efforts to preserve righteousness under Heaven. Yue Fei and Wen Tianxiang were famous under the Southern Sung Dynasty striving to preserve the ethical heritage of China against northern invaders, again pitting righteousness against military might and unseemly personal ambition.
- 2) Building on this moral instruction, Wen says: “She always combined being a human being, ambition and responsibility with hard work and conscientiousness, which made me understand that people should not only be able to do something, but also learn to be a human being first.”
- 3) Another “tell” is his pointing out that his mother called on him when “at the top” to “make peace with people, and to remember that a lone tree cannot become a forest.”
- 4) Wen provides a guide as to how to measure the goodness of a leader – look at his face. This brings to mind a saying by Confucius that a person cannot hide his moral quality. Wen simply says, “There are many things that people can do to imitate each other, or even make painstaking efforts to do so. But the only thing that cannot be faked is the sincerity, simplicity and kindness of emotion and heart. Just look at his eyes, look at his compassion, look at his courage in distress, look at his spirit of commitment at the critical moment of the country’s future and destiny, and you can see his true nature.” Xi Jinping, by the way, has a face (physiognomy) which does not inspire trust or reveal his possession of caring virtue.
- 5) Wen’s closing lines are a frontal challenge to the state authoritarianism advocated by Xi Jinping:

**The China in my mind should be a country full of fairness and justice, where there is always respect for the human heart, humanity and the essence of human beings, and where there is always an air of youth, freedom and struggle. I have cried out and fought for this. This is the truth that life has taught me and that my mother has given me.**



温家宝：《我的母亲》  
**Wen Jiabao, My Mother**

Mom is gone. She left us, left the earth, and returned to the land where she was born and raised.

Mom is still here, and she will always live in our hearts, in the students she loved so much, and in the townspeople she was attached to.

...

Mother was born in a time of suffering and a place of suffering ...

When my mother was a child, her hometown was already a poor and unlivable village. The village was a dirt road, dirt house, dirt bed, crop yield less than a hundred pounds. People were mostly engaged in trading buckwheat hides, hemp stalks, Panicum stalks, herbs, etc., and were struggling to get by. ...

They live in earthen houses and sleep on earthen beds, the men do business outside the home, there is no rice soup at home, the children cry for hunger, the women cry, the sisal is exchanged for corn flour, and the belly is muddled to survive the famine.

In 1936, Grandpa died of illness at the age of 45. The pharmacy was run by grandma alone. She hired two men from Shandong, surnamed Zhao, to help take care of the pharmacy. In addition to the pharmacy, she also rented 10 mu of land from the “Deaf Tenth Master” (a landowner surnamed Yang).

In October of that year, the Japanese invasion forces conducted a large-scale exercise in the suburbs of Tianjin to seize Pingjin in the “imaginary enemy” style. Six to seven thousand Japanese troops formed a half-moon arc-shaped encirclement from the northwest to the southeast outside Yixingbu, and many crops and farmlands were destroyed by the sound of gunfire and artillery. The people did not dare to go out, the crops could not be harvested, business could not be done, life was difficult and there was no food or clothing.

...

From February 1937 to January 1938, my father taught at Yixingbu Shifan Elementary School. During this period, my father and my mother fell in love and got married, and in April 1938, my father was admitted to the History and Geography Department of the National Beijing Teachers College (later changed to Beijing Normal University). In that year, my mother gave birth to her first son, whom my grandfather named Guanghai (meaning “restoration of China”), but unfortunately he lived only one year and died of pneumonia.

On September 15, 1942 (the sixth day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar), my mother gave birth to me during the national tragedy. My grandfather was so distressed that he named me “Jiabao [family treasure]”. ...

One day in October, a group of Japanese invaders entered Yixingbu and concentrated the village’s old and young in the southwest square of the village, surrounded by machine guns set up against the villagers, to force the handover of the Eighth Route Army. My mother hugged her newborn child and crowded in the crowd, terrified. The ghosts roared, threatening to shoot if they didn’t hand over the people. The courtyard was silent, and my mother, afraid that I would cry, held me tightly in her arms.

...

Mom is strong, self-reliant and upwardly mobile.

Before liberation, in order to struggle to support the family, my mother looked for jobs everywhere and taught at Yixingbu Shifan Primary School and Tianjin County Seventh District Central School. She knew that every job was hard to come by, so she cherished it very much. Before and after the victory of the war (July 1944 to July 1946), she studied in the nursing school of the “Madaifu Hospital” in Tianjin, but later resigned because I was left unattended.

In order to find a job, she had attended teacher training courses and night school for bookkeeping. In 1954, she left home in pain and went to Gansu with a group of young people to teach. She was a teacher at Fuxi Primary School in Tianshui, and she was there for most of the year. I was only 12 years old that year and had just started junior high school. My father had no time to take care of me at work, and I had to cook with him at night. It was then that I learned to steam nests and boil thin rice. My three-year-old sister was placed in the home of my fifth aunt.

Mom came to East Gate Lane Elementary School in 1959 as a language teacher and classroom teacher. She read a lot when she was young and had a solid foundation in the language. ...

Mom is in her 90s, and her students still miss her. They are both accomplished in their careers, but they still talk about Ms. Yang a lot when they are together.

It is a great blessing in our lives that we are still the children of our teachers when our teacher reaches the advanced age of over ninety years of life. The students, who are now nearing old age, remember their teacher in this way.

Mom is an extremely compassionate and kind person.

Mom sympathizes with the poor.

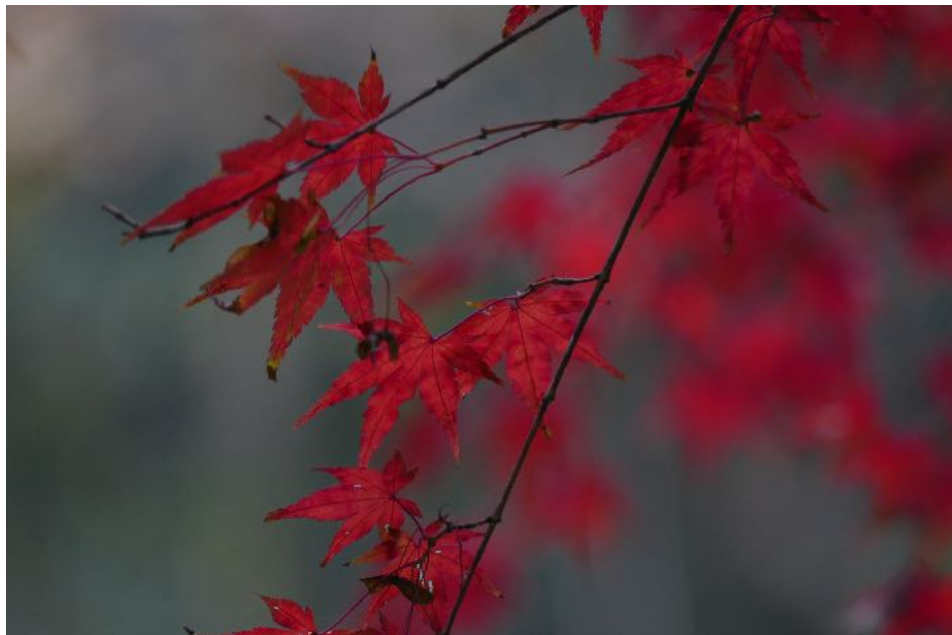
The Han family, the neighbors in front of the temple in Yixingbu, was a poor farmer with many children and a difficult life, but the whole family suffered from tuberculosis. My mother had been friends with their family since she was young. After liberation, the Han family had only one pair of siblings (Han Yuqin and Han Fuqi) in Tianjin. Mom took care of the orphans while the family was in dire straits until the older sister found a job at the Seventh National Cotton Factory and the younger brother graduated from the 35th Middle School in Tianjin and became a physical education teacher. When Han Fu-kyu had nowhere to live while attending 35th Middle School, his mother let him live in her own home, a nine-square-meter hut that was already overcrowded with a large young man.

The hutong in front of Damoan on Xili Street, where my family lives, was a place where the lower class people lived, living on their labor and business, earning a meager income and barely getting by. As time changed, the houses became more and more dilapidated, the roads became more and more muddy, the hutongs became more and more chaotic, and the residents became more and more crowded.

When I first moved here, a family of scholars came to the hutong, and people treated each other very politely. They called my father “Mr. Wen” and my mother “Ms. Yang.” My parents were honest, modest and got along well with each family.

The landlord, Grandma Liu, was alone, with no relatives to take care of her, and lived by renting two houses in the courtyard and a little savings. My family rented a north room outside the courtyard and lived there for more than 40 years. My mother was very kind to the elderly, and although the rent was expensive, she always paid on time and sent something to the elderly from time to time. The courtyard, toilet and kitchen were cleaned up very well. ...

Many families in the neighborhood were friends of my mother. Among them were tricycle riders, those who ran a silk-pulling workshop, those who ran a sauce garden, and orphans and widows. My parents were not deeply involved with them, but they were warm and sincere with each other, and sometimes helped each other. There is no professional or cultural barrier here, no false feelings. For many years, the parents did not have any disagreements with any of the families. This relationship lasted until those “unprecedented” times. When the family was suffering, the neighbors quietly sympathized with us and tore down the big-character posters put up for Dad in the hutongs at night when no one was around, but not a single family fell into the well.





I remember, at that time the family meal is very simple, each meal is generally only a dish, rarely eat meat. Sometimes I went to the butcher's store to buy 20 cents of meat, but also to explain the fat and lean, which is to improve the food. When it came to the New Year's festivities, the family had "noodles." Mom always carried a bowl full of noodles, put the fried sauce and vegetable code, to the neighbors to send home. This was her heart for her neighbors and her passion for treating people well.

Mom lived a simple and clean life.

After liberation, in 1950, my father, mother and I moved to Tianjin and rented a hut of only a few square meters, so we had no money. Dad's salary was only 37 yuan a month, but the rent alone was 8 yuan (the money for a bag of flour). This hut accompanied our family for decades, during which time we added a sister and a brother. Mom was so frugal that our clothes were mended and repaired. This is how, the salary last month cannot receive the next month, but also borrow some money every month. At that time, Dad had a small notebook, specifically for keeping accounts.

I have known the hardships of life since I was a child, and I have lived a simple life throughout my life.

I remember when I was in junior high school, my mother once made me a new pair of cloth shoes. That day, I was happy to put on my new shoes. I went to school, but it was raining heavily at the end of the school day. When I arrived home, my mother was waiting by the door in the rain, and she saw me walking barefoot, holding the new shoes in my hands. She rushed to me and took me in her arms. In the rain, I looked at my mother and she was in tears, her face full of tears and rain.

...

One day, I picked up a penny on the street and put it in my coat pocket, and my mother found it. She asked where the money came from while beating it up, and actually broke a broom. From then on, I learned the truth that you can't take a penny that is not your own. I have kept this truth in my heart for decades and have never violated it once.

My mother had a bad temper and was never coddled and was very strict with her children. Looking back now, the lessons my mother taught me when I was a child have benefited me for the rest of my life.

Mom was taking such things as the root of morality and strictly requiring the whole family. In the year when Tianjin was first liberated, Dad entered the North China People's Revolutionary University and worked in the Tianjin Bureau of Industry and Commerce for a while after graduation. At that time, it was the period of private industrial and commercial enterprise reform, and Dad's job required him to deal with private industrial and commercial entrepreneurs. Mom was very vigilant and often instructed Dad not to accept any money or goods from others. Dad was very honest, never got involved in any wrongdoing, and never



took a penny from anyone, as a result, he was clean in the “Three Against Five” campaign later.

...

The disaster of the “Cultural Revolution” fell on our family. My father was seized and arrested, put under surveillance at school, and his salary was suspended. Large-character posters were posted from the door to the alley. From her own small salary, my mother saved enough money for Dad’s food and sent it to the school herself. In 1970, the family was forcibly evacuated to the countryside again. First, the family was sent to Wuyuan in Inner Mongolia (my sister was in Tongliao in the countryside), but my parents were already over 100 years old at that time, so it was difficult for them to bring their young son to adapt to the environment there. After repeated negotiations and many contacts, the family was moved to the Xiaodian Commune in the northern suburbs of Tianjin, where they worked for six years. After the smashing of the “Gang of Four,” my father was transferred to Yixingbu Ninety-Six Middle School in the northern suburbs of Tianjin as an instructor.



On November 5, 1978, the Tianjin Hebei District Education Bureau issued a reconsideration opinion on the political history of his father, saying that “no new problems were found” during the review of the “Cultural Revolution.” ...

...

“During the Cultural Revolution, my father was locked up in school and was often subjected to brutal “interrogations” and beatings. One day, the rebels punched my father’s face and swelled his eyes so much that he could not see. My father couldn’t

stand it anymore and pointed to his heart and said, “Boy, punch here!”

### **My mother taught how to be a human being.**

My mother loved reading ancient books and often told me stories about historical figures such as Yue Fei, Wen Tianxiang and Zhuge Liang, as well as stories about elders I knew well. When she was doing housework, I used to pester her and tell me stories while she was doing her work. Mom always said that people should work hard and move up. She always combined being a human being, ambition and responsibility with hard work and conscientiousness, which made me understand that people should not only be able to do something, but also learn to be a human being first. These words of my mother touched my heart deeply. I often shed tears while listening to her words, and I was determined to study

hard for the sake of my country and the people, and to be a man of character, knowledge and ability. Whenever I remember the look on my mother's face and her unforgettable words, I feel a sense of respect and gratitude from my heart.

My mother was worried about me taking on a big responsibility. I have kept two letters from my mother in my hand. One was written in November 2003, when I first became prime minister, and the other was written in October 2007, when I was about to become prime minister for the second time.

The first letter reads, "How hard it is for you to be in such a high position as a minister today, without any backers, let alone your family. Your character is to strive for perfection, but with such a large country and such a large population, it is difficult to achieve perfection." She asked me "to get through to the top, to make peace with people, and to remember that a lone tree cannot become a forest."

The second letter reads, "The achievements of the past five years have been hard-won by you with your heart and soul. The next five years will be difficult and complicated, and it will not be easy to keep it up. With such a large country, so many people, and such a complicated economy, you will have to accomplish many things one by one, and it will be thankful if you can achieve half of them. So many things, how wide your shoulders can withstand? This requires everyone in the same boat, smoothly and steadily through five years of difficulties."

Mom's heart is in her children and in her country. She watches the news every day and keeps abreast of domestic and international events. She never asked me about my work, but often told me in various ways what the public reflected and reminded me of it.

On February 2, 2009, during my visit to the UK, I made a special trip to Cambridge University to give a speech. On that day, it was snowing heavily and the Cambridge auditorium was packed. The title of my speech was "Looking at China through the eyes of development." I introduced China's past, present and future to the students and teachers with words full of emotion, and my speech received a lot of applause.

Towards the end of the event, there was an "episode." A Western-looking student disrupted the meeting, shouting and throwing shoes at the podium. I stood with my head held high, unperturbed, calm and collected. After the meeting was quiet, I said, "Such despicable tricks cannot destroy the friendship between the Chinese and British people. The progress of mankind and the harmony of the world is a historical trend that cannot be stopped by any force." My words elicited a long and enthusiastic applause from the venue.

I didn't know that at this moment, my mother, who was sitting in front of the TV watching the live broadcast, was worried about her son and stimulated to suffer a sudden cerebrovascular embolism, from which she lost her eyesight, had difficulty speaking and walking. That year, my mother was 88 years old.

I have retired after 28 years of service in Zhongnanhai, including ten years as Premier. For a person of my background, “being an official” is a matter of chance. I was ordered to be careful, and I was on thin ice and in the abyss, and I always made plans to return from the beginning of my service.

It was a happy feeling to return to my mom after retirement, but it was hard to see her getting worse every day. For eight years, I rarely went out and spent a lot of time with her.

Whoever says that the heart of an inch of grass is rewarded with the love of three springs. My mother’s love, my mother’s kindness cannot be repaid. Many of her teachings have penetrated into my cells and melted into my blood. There are many things that people can do to imitate each other, or even make painstaking efforts to do so. But the only thing that cannot be faked is the sincerity, simplicity and kindness of emotion and heart. Just look at his eyes, look at his compassion, look at his courage in distress, look at his spirit of commitment at the critical moment of the country’s future and destiny, and you can see his true nature. I sympathize with the poor and the weak, and oppose bullying and oppression. **The China in my mind should be a country full of fairness and justice, where there is always respect for the human heart, humanity and the essence of human beings, and where there is always an air of youth, freedom and struggle. I have cried out and fought for this. This is the truth that life has taught me and that my mother has given me.**



# The Re-emergence of Theocracy in Modern China

**Stephen B. Young**

In 2021, the Chinese Communist Party celebrated 100 years of its achievements. What has it wrought for China and the world?

In June 2021, the leaders of NATO confronted Xi Jinping's regime with these concerns:

"China's growing influence and international policies can present challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance. We will engage China with a view to defending the security interests of the Alliance."

"China's stated ambitions and assertive behaviour present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to Alliance security. We are concerned by those coercive policies which stand in contrast to the fundamental values enshrined in the Washington Treaty. China is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal with more warheads and a larger number of sophisticated delivery systems to establish a nuclear triad. It is opaque in implementing its military modernisation and its publicly declared military-civil fusion strategy. It is also cooperating militarily with Russia, including through participation in Russian exercises in the Euro-Atlantic area. We remain concerned with China's frequent lack of transparency and use of disinformation. We call on China to uphold its international commitments and to act responsibly in the international system, including in the space, cyber and maritime domains, in keeping with its role as a major power."



Xi Jinping

A few days earlier, the leaders of the G7 countries had chastised China:

"At the same time and in so doing, we will promote our values, including by calling on China to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially in relation to Xinjiang and those rights, freedoms and high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong, enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law."

"We reiterate the importance of maintaining a free and open Indo Pacific, which is inclusive and based on the rule of law. We underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and encourage the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues. We remain seriously concerned about the situation in the East and South China Seas and strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo and increase tensions."



In response to the G7's demands, Xi Jinping's government gave this stern repost: "China's internal affairs must not be interfered in, China's reputation must not be slandered and China's interests must not be violated." It added, "We will resolutely defend our national sovereignty, security and development interests and resolutely fight back against all kinds of injustices and infringements imposed on China."

On February 4, 2022, President Xi of China signed a pact with President Putin of Russia calling for a new global order. That order will provide special powers and privileges to:

*A nation can choose such forms and methods of implementing democracy that would best suit its particular state, based on its social and political system, its historical background, traditions and unique cultural characteristics. It is only up to the people of the country to decide whether their State is a democratic one.*

*The sides note that Russia and China as world powers with rich cultural and historical heritage have long-standing traditions of democracy, which rely on thousand-years of experience of development, broad popular support and consideration of the needs and interests of citizens. Russia and China guarantee their people the right to take part through various means and in various forms in the administration of the State and public life in accordance with the law.*

In the July 29, 2022 edition of the Wall Street Journal, Chun Han Wong wrote:

*Poised to claim a third term as Communist Party chief at a twice-a-decade party congress this fall, Mr. Xi has assigned associates to senior roles overseeing law enforcement and propaganda in recent weeks, clearing their paths toward higher office. Some vocal Xi supporters won promotion, while one prominent ally retained his position in the face of public anger over his recent performance. Others out of favor with Mr. Xi have been eased into less-important roles.*

*The Chinese leader also stepped up a broad propaganda drive in recent months to celebrate his decade in power. Top lieutenants have sung Mr. Xi's praises with rising fervor, calling on party members to swear loyalty to their lingxiu—a reverential title that means "leader" and is most closely associated with Mao Zedong, whom the party honors as its weida lingxiu, or "great leader."*

*The promotions and propaganda drive telegraph Mr. Xi's preparations to pack more allies into the party's top leadership bodies at the coming congress. Since taking power in late 2012, he has assumed a degree of autocratic authority unseen since the Mao era and upended recent retirement norms to allow himself to stay in office indefinitely—and likely well beyond the 10-year tenure that his predecessor served.*

*What is China's ambition, which has prompted these objections from the G7 and NATO? What inspires the leader of its ruling Communist Party, Xi Jinping? That party is no longer*

a Communist movement. It is more an expression of Chinese ethnic exceptionalism in a corporatist, national socialist form. More prosaically, what strategies has Xi adopted to make his “China Dream” a global reality under Heaven?

William Galston has accurately noted five strategies: 1) impose authority over all sectors of government, society and the economy; 2) obtain Chinese superiority in technology, integrating civilian with military capabilities; 3) upgrade his military and build a blue water navy supported by global ports of call; 4) use wealth to influence the internal affairs of countries around the world; and 5) use the full emotional force of Chinese ethnic nationalism (Han chauvinism) to mobilize domestic support for his policies and his personal authority.

What kind of regime believes it has a right to strip entire peoples of their ethnicity and religiosity, a right to dictate what his subjects can learn and think and a right to superintend all religious leaders who minister to its subjects and all congregations which provide community?

What kind of regime believes it has a right to micro-manage the lives of its subjects with reward for obedience and right-thinking and punishment for being too free in thought and deed? What kind of a regime believes that it can teach its exclusive truth to all and sundry, enforcing that narrative with the full force of the repressive apparatus of the state as it sees fit?

What kind of a regime believes it is above international law which makes possible the nation state global order, that it is entitled to impose its sovereignty where it wishes - on its neighbors? What kind of a regime refuses to cooperate in making public the truth about the origin of a pathogen which emerged from its territory and spread globally, infecting, to date, 586 million people, of which some 6.4 million have died?

A self-righteous theocracy. Let there be no mistake about it.

The imperial cults of the pharaohs in ancient Egypt and of the Roman emperors were forms of theocratic imperium. Flavius Josephus argued that the Jewish state of his time was a theocracy, where Yahweh was sovereign and his word was law.

Xi Jinping’s China is a restored theocracy of ancient origin.

To expose the deep roots of Xi’s China Dream, his means of governance and the ideological orientation of his Communist Party, it is absolutely necessary to ask fundamental questions as to the unique nature of the Chinese imperial order since its founding in 221 BCE.

Under Xi’s leadership, the Chinese Communist Party has revived the Chinese imperial structure, where culture, society and the economy are directed by the state towards discipline and order.



That imperial system, what I have called the *Huangdi Dao* or “the Way of the Emperor,” was created by the founder of the Qin Dynasty in 221 BCE. The system was then perpetuated over the centuries by the Han, Sui, T’ang, Sung, Yuan, Ming and Qing family dynasties. Whenever one dynasty collapsed, the system was immediately restored by its successor. Two dynasties, the Yuan and the Qing, were founded and managed by foreign invaders, first the Mongols and then the Manchus. But each of those dynasties assiduously restored the *Huangdi Dao* as used by their Chinese predecessors.

The *Huangdi Dao* only suffered a serious, but interim rejection upon encounter with Western modernity during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. But now, it has reappeared with vigor under Xi Jinping.

Over the last decade, the Chinese Communist Party has successfully domesticated the norms, decentralized institutions and individualism of modernity to Chinese tradition.

Chinese patriotism has been defined as “In this country where we practice socialist democracy, we can allow different political opinions, but there is a red line – we absolutely cannot allow any acts that will harm this basic system, namely the socialist system led by the Chinese Communist Party. You cannot say that you are patriotic, but you do not love the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party or you do not respect it, this does not make sense. Patriotism is holistic love.”

In December 2019, the Chinese Communist Party Politburo elevated Xi Jinping with a new title, *renmin lingxiu* or “People’s Leader,” providing him personally with a status akin to that of the “Emperor” under the dynasties. His thought is privileged with authority provided by the state’s constitution. Previously, Mao Zedong had been graced with that title and its prerogatives.



Accordingly, the Chinese people are obligated to learn “Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era.” Such thought includes the “China Dream,” the “four confidences,” the “four-pronged comprehensive strategy” and the “five-sphere integrated plan.” Andrew Nathan has recently noted the party’s presentation of Xi as the “all-knowing, benevolent, serenely smiling sage who guides China unerringly toward inevitable historic greatness.”

The party's diktat now disciplines religions and education, the formative structures by which the Chinese people learn to use words and therefore, to think and assess reality. The sophisticated repression of Uyghur adherence to Islam, coupled with forced conversation of their ethnic identity to Han Chineseness, reveal the working of a theocracy elevating an ethnicity as the source of ultimate truth. A similar ethnicized colonialism has been imposed on the Tibetans and their form of Buddhism. The party calls this transformation "sinicisation."

The same theocratic insistence on autocratic party control of religious expressions drives Beijing's opposition to the Vatican's discretion in selecting bishops for its churches in China. New regulations on the selection of bishops gives that privilege to the Chinese state alone.

The Falun Gong sect was a challenge to the ruling theocracy because it provided its adherents with an independent channel personally to connect with the Theos. It was, therefore, thoroughly suppressed.

A third normative institution, besides religion and education – public opinion – has also been brought under party supervision. Media, both traditional and social, is monitored by the party through its administrative state for conformity to opinions which are approved by the party. Other statements – normative and factual – inconsistent with that orthodoxy are prohibited and such speakers punished for thinking and speaking wrongly.

The road map for the retrogression of China away from genuine modernity back to an earlier form of state practice was set forth in the 1980s under Deng Xiaoping's leadership with the vision of a "socialism with Chinese characteristics." For a time, this program of national development was seen both in China and the West primarily as an opening of the Chinese economy to market forces and private power, free from state management. What was overlooked, however, was the deep and pervasive orientation of "Chinese characteristics" as having sustained the *Huangdi Dao* for the prior 2,000 years.

Some may question how a Communist party could so easily abandon its proletarian ideology to become so parochial and culturally "nationalistic." Those puzzled by this seeming incongruity may more easily understand what has happened in China when they recall that, what we have named "fascism" in the cases of Mussolini and Hitler, actually came from the same intellectual roots as Communism. Mussolini and Hitler built regimes of "national socialism," where the "volk," rather than the workers, provided the moral basis for regime legitimacy. That has now proved to be the case in China, where Han chauvinism is now triumphantly proclaimed as the basis for the ruling caste of cadres. So, an apt Western translation of Xi Jinping's new title of *renmin lingxiu* could be "Der Fuhrer."

Building on the analogy between the two titles, the *Huangdi Dao* can be associated with the *Fuhrerprinzip* of Hermann von Keyserling which envisions each organization as a hierarchy of leaders, where every leader has absolute authority over his domain of competence,

demands absolute obedience from those below him and answers only to his superiors. Under the *Führerprinzip*, nearly every activity or organization in National Socialist Germany was completely subordinate to party or state leadership.

In the case of Nazi Germany, use of the *Führerprinzip* was closely pinned to a naturalist, theocratic belief system. Hitler's National Socialist German Workers Party was closely linked with an occult religious movement with various idiosyncratic, but related interpretations. One strand was ariosophy or the wisdom of the ancient Aryan-Germanic people. This asserted a mystical union of a Supreme Deity, humanity and nature. Under Heinrich Himmler, for his SS corps of elite cadres, loyalty and absolute obedience to Hitler became an obligation of the initiated.

In China today, restoration of the *Huangdi Dao* teaches another truth: modernity should not be measured only by the degree of industrialization and now post-industrialization of production and material standards of living, must also incorporate culture. Modernity is above all a state of mind, a relationship between the human person and reality. As Max Weber noted, capitalism arose from the Protestant ethic. The ethic did not arise to justify retrospectively the new economic vitality and forms of production and trade, the rise of financial intermediation and the conversion of natural law consciousness from science to technological innovation. Marx got it wrong. The foundation of human societies is cultural; economics and politics are the superstructure. Nietzsche and Gramsci were closer to the truth than was Marx.

The Chinese imperial order is, in modern terms, a discourse regime with its core legitimating narrative composed by Mozi (470-391 BCE) in the late Bronze Age. This discourse could be described as a story explaining natural law – a realization that “what is” must be so. The story tells us that our role in the “what is” is to accept and not to challenge; to accommodate ourselves to the happenings which flow around us.



This theocratic discourse was not personified with stories about a deity. Rather, its vision of theism saw a creative force, rather mystical and later to be called by many the “Dao,” a way which was the ultimate architect of all living realities and which disposed of all things, in Heaven and Earth.

The name given by the ancient Chinese to the source of such comprehensive causation was *Tian*, or what we would call “Heaven.”

The workings of *Tian*, however, could be predicted because *Tian* expressed itself in a force field called *Qi*, which actively created all things. *Qi* worked through two states *Yin* and *Yang*, which could be discerned. Thus, we can learn what *Tian* expects of us under different circumstances or what *Tian* has in store for us.

The *Huangdi Dao*, as it was formulated by the first dynasty, proposed this formula: *Tian* set the standards; a *Tianzi* or “Son of Heaven,” learned the standards of *Tian* and organized a state to ensure that the *Tianxia* or “All-Under-heaven” followed those standards with exactitude in every punctilio of thought and behavior. There was to be no deviation from the “Will of Heaven.”

One might consider this ancient Chinese natural philosophy a righteousness code of propriety and correctness applicable to every aspect of our lives; code sent down to us by the power which created the universe.

This is the formula being used today by China’s Communist Party. The party is *Tian*; Xi Jinping is the *Tianzi*; and the entire world is the *Tianxia*.

Thus, arises the current Chinese claim of right to bring their system to every country and every person in our world. From their theocratic point of view, each nation and each of us is part of the *Tianxia* under the authority of the *Tianzi*. Xi describes this role for the Chinese as “working to build a community with a shared future for mankind.”

Thus, it is theocratically axiomatic that the Han Chinese can impose their cultural and political order on the Muslim Uighur Turks and the Tantric Buddhist Tibetans, claim the South China Sea as domestic waters and establish naval bases anywhere they want. It is further theocratically axiomatic that the Chinese can aspire to replace international law with their own global arrangements. The Chinese state is not a Westphalian nation state. It is a Heavenly ordained moral order, supervising multiple lesser territorial administrations.

This formula structured Chinese diplomacy over the centuries – non-Chinese rulers and peoples were expected to subordinate themselves to the *Huangdi* sitting on his throne in Han China.

The beliefs and moral premises of the *Huangdi Dao* are easily available for study. They can be found in the ancient texts – especially the History Classic, the Poetry Classic and the *Yijing*, the guide revealing the operations of *Yin* and *Yang*.

As recorded in the History Classic, under the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE), an understanding of Heaven and its mandate was worked out and taught by the dynasty's founders. Later, this acceptance of the ultimate transcendent was refined and expanded by Confucius. But Confucius was not the only ancient Chinese to have considered and parsed the way of Heaven and from that analysis, advocate moral norms for humanity.

After Confucius (551-479 BCE), one Mozi (470-391 BCE) came to radically different conclusions about the relationship of human persons to Heaven. Mozi's thinking – not the morality of Confucius – provided the template for the *Huangdi Dao*. Between Mozi and the founder of the first Imperial order came other important thinkers. They are usually classified as legalists (*fajia*) in contrast to Confucians (*rujia*), Yin/Yang Five Element determinists and agnostically intuitive Daoists.

Mozi's thinking, less nuanced and comprehensive than the writings of his successors, was followed by Shang Yang, Han Feizi, the text *Lushi Chunqiu* and in most important ways, by Xunzi.

Incorporated into the *Huangdi Dao* for regulation of the economy was the regulatory regime of Guan Zhong (720-645 BCE), a chief minister who followed the implications of Yin/Yang thinking to use the incentives arising from personal egoism and self-interest for the benefit of the ruler.

There are English translations of all these works so that the ideas which cumulated in the *Huangdi Dao* are readily available to us for study and reflection.

### **Mozi's Theology Overlooked by Many Contemporary Scholars and China "Experts"**

The theocracy of the *Huangdi Dao* has been consistently and rather thoroughly overlooked and ignored by contemporary American scholars, journalists, diplomats, intelligence agency analysts and other national security professionals for a simple, but irrational reason. The academic discipline of modern East Asian Studies, which for 70 years has controlled the thinking of our "China" experts, begins the study of all important things Chinese with the Qing Dynasty in 1644. Thus, as a rule, nearly all Americans who now try to understand and explain Chinese policies and intentions have never read Mozi or the other brilliant thinkers who followed his vision.

The confined intellectual framing of modern China originated in the late 1940s, mostly at Harvard, when professors John Fairbank and Edwin Reischauer established the field of modern East Asian Studies. Harvard insisted on a separation of specializations between the new discipline and traditional studies of Chinese history. A line of demarcation was then agreed upon at the start of the Qing Dynasty. Historians could start with the end of the

Ming Dynasty and work backwards over time, while scholars of modern China would start with the beginning of the Qing Dynasty and work forward to the present. Thus, those seeking to understand contemporary events don't know the past, while those who know the past are not credentialed to analyze and comment on current issues and the likely future trajectory of the Xi Jinping regime. The historians keep to themselves as a small club of very talented aesthetes.

As a practical matter, this institutional insistence on a kind of feudalism of independent scholarly domains has caused contemporary students of China to be very narrow-minded in their understanding of foundational Chinese cultural fundamentals. At the present time, this self-imposed myopia is a danger, for it blinds us to reality and keeps us ignorant of the aspirations of those who rule China.

### **Mozi – A Theocratic Presentation of Natural Law**

Mozi was Hobbesian or Hobbes was a Mohist. Either way, the two political philosophers took the same position on human nature – it was dysfunctional and tended towards social discord.

Hobbes said: “Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. ... and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” (*Leviathan*, Chapter XIII)

Mozi said: “As we look back to the time when there was yet no ruler, it seems the custom was “everybody in the world according to his own ethic.” Accordingly, each man had his own ethic, ten men had ten different ethics, a hundred men had a hundred different ethics – the more people the more ethics. And everybody approved of his own view and disapproved those of others and so arose mutual disapproval. Even father and son and brothers became enemies, since they were unable to reach any agreement. Surplus energy was not employed for mutual help; excellent teachings (Dao) were kept secret; surplus goods were allowed to rot without sharing. The disorder in the (human) world could be compared with that among birds and beasts” (*Identification with the Superior II*)

Mozi's remedy for the dire conditions inevitably brought about by humans following their nature – egocentric and each with his or her own standard of right and wrong – was theocracy.

Today, his reasoning is suffused throughout China's Communist Party and its governing apparatus and among hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens.

First, Mozi insisted that all should look to *Tian* (Heaven) for direction in all things. From Heaven came down the correct ethic for all to follow:

“Knowing the cause of the confusion to be in the absence of a ruler who could unify the standards in the world, (Heaven) chose the virtuous, sagacious and wise in the world and crowned him emperor, charging him with the duty of unifying the wills in the empire.”

“... Accordingly [the Emperors] chose the virtuous of the state to be their ministers and secretaries and all the way down to the heads of districts and villages, sharing with them the duty of unifying the standards in the state. ... When the lords of the country and the heads of the people had been appointed, the emperor issued mandates, instructing the people: ‘Discovering good you must report it to your superior, discovering evil you must report it to your superior. What the superior thinks to be right all shall think to be right; what the superior thinks to be wrong all shall think to be wrong.’” (Identifying with the Superior II)

To bring order to the people, the state would set all norms of right thinking and conduct. “... Moreover, righteousness is the standard. A standard is not to be given by the subordinates to the superior but by the superior to the subordinates. ... The emperor may not make the standard at will (either). There is Heaven to give him the standard. That the emperor gives the standard to the high dukes, to the feudal lords, to the scholars and to the common people, the gentlemen in the world clearly understand. But that Heaven gives the standard to the emperor...” (Will of Heaven I, 3)

In a nutshell, this describes the pattern of autocracy now deployed in China: from high theory to the People’s Leader, Xi Jinping, down through the ranks of the party and the government to each Chinese individual. The new social credit system uses rewards and punishments to enforce this uniformity of belief and behavior.

Mozi said: “The will of Heaven to me is like the compasses to the wheelwright and the square to the carpenter. The wheelwright and the carpenter measure all the square and circular objects with their square and compasses and accept those that fit as correct and reject those that do not fit as incorrect.” (Will of Heaven I, 7)

“And so all the people aspired to the rewards and commendation from the superior and dreaded his condemnation and punishment. Thereupon, in accord with the policy of the emperor, the village head proceeded to unify the purposes in the village. Having accomplished this, he led the people of the village to identify themselves with the head of the district, saying: ‘All you people of the village are to identify yourselves with the head of the district and are not to unite with the subordinates. What the head of the district thinks to be right all shall think to be right; what he thinks to be wrong all shall think to be wrong. Put away your evil speech and learn his good speech; put away your evil conduct and learn his good conduct. For the head of the district is naturally the (most) virtuous of the district. If all the people in the district follow the example of their head, how then can the district be disorderly?’” (Identifying with the Superior II)

Secondly, to further secure the theocracy, Mozi proposed for individuals a faith in the virtue of self-effacement. The disposition to care for others deeply and sincerely, called *jian ai*, would turn individuals away from egocentricity towards ego-irrelevance; from self-seeking to service of the collective.

“Suppose everybody in the world loves universally, loving others as one’s self. Will there yet be any unfilial individual? When everyone regards his father, elder brother and emperor as himself, whereto can he direct any unfilial feeling? Will there still be any unaffectionate individual? When everyone regards his younger brother, son and minister as himself, whereto can he direct any disaffection? Therefore, there will not be any unfilial feeling or disaffection.” (Universal Love I, 4)

“If everyone in the world will love universally; states not attacking one another; houses not disturbing one another; thieves and robbers becoming extinct; emperor and ministers, fathers and sons, all being affectionate and filial – if all this comes to pass the world will be orderly.” (Universal Love, I, 5)

To promote the subjugation of self to society, the Chinese state exercises control over education and religion as the supreme teacher of other-regard as the psychic core of every right kind of person.

Thirdly, necessary for the functioning of such an emperor-centered theocracy for Mozi was Heaven’s Dao for human persons.

“When I do what Heaven desires, Heaven will also do what I desire. Now, what do I desire and what do I abominate? I desire blessings and emoluments and abominate calamities and misfortunes. When I do not do what Heaven desires, neither will Heaven do what I desire.” (Will of Heaven I, 2)

“When the emperor practices virtue Heaven rewards, when the emperor does evil Heaven punishes.” (Will of Heaven II, 2)

Mozi said: “If all the people in the world believed that the spirits are able to reward virtue and punish vice, how could the world be in chaos?” (On Ghosts, III, 1) “... if it could be proclaimed to the whole country and to all the people it would really be a source of orderliness in the country and blessing to the people. The corruption of the officials in their public charges and the immorality among men and women will all be seen by ghosts and spirits. ... all these will be no more. And the world will have order.” (On Ghosts, III, 16)

In Xi Jinping’s China, the role Mozi gave to ghosts has been given to the government in the form of the social credit system of surveillance, whereby individual Chinese are rewarded with points for good behavior and punished with a deduction of points from their obedience account ledger, kept up to date in government servers.



## Heaven's Dao and Shang Yang

Mozi's recommendation for theocratic order under the direction of a sovereign was secularized by Shang Yang (390-338 BCE), the Prime Minister of the State of Qin. His thought became the foundation for the legalist school. Shang Yang maintained Mozi's reliance on the natural inclination of persons to respond well to rewards and punishments. He prescribed, therefore, that the state reward actions that gave it benefit and punish actions which undermined its power and legitimacy.

Shang Yang did not, however, insist that the ruler be guided by the Will of Heaven. Rather, he proposed the use of inclinations or patterns created by Heaven as natural laws (*fa*), which could be manipulated by the state and its officials for selfish advantage.

## Heaven's Dao and Guan Zhong

Guan Zhong, a Prime Minister of the State of Qi, preceded Mozi, but, like him, had used the dispositions of human nature to promote the economy for the benefit of the ruler. Guan Zhong provided the model of a state-centered economy that today is "capitalism with Chinese characteristics."

Use of profit and loss, as arranged by market manipulation, would incentivize people to invest time, energy and money where the state saw most advantage and refrain from investing in whatever the state put at a disadvantage. For example, to maintain a steady market price for grain, Guan Zhong recommended that the state buy grain when the harvests were large, preventing harm to farmers from low prices and store it for times when the crops failed. In those circumstances, the state would sell the stored grain to sustain the people and avoid price gouging by farmers and middlemen.

The recommendations of Guan Zhong validate Xi Jinping's subordination of Jack Ma's business empire to state direction. Profit is allowed in Xi's China, but only as an incentive to keep private economic activity dependent on state authority, which decides how money can be made and who can make how much.

The ability to calculate advantage and disadvantage and predict future consequences on the part of both Guan Zhong and Shang Yang were not disconnected with theocratic belief in the sovereignty of *Tian* over the All-Under-Heaven or *Tianxia*. The dependence of calculated state policy on a reality overseen by *Tian* happened through the unfolding of events according to the energies of *Yin* and *Yang*. Thus, human nature was the effect of *Yin* and *Yang*. Our likes and dislikes were provoked and then directed and regulated by *Yin* and *Yang* working through our personas. Here is where the ancient text of the *Yijing* could be used to discern the outcomes forthcoming from natural law, as it moved forward through space and time. Experts in the study of *Yin/Yang* and the cycles of the Five Elements could, thus, discover the Will of Heaven.

## **The Caution of Han Fei**

The legalist thinker Han Fei (280-233 BCE) spotted a great flaw in the theocratic scheme proposed by Mozi and cynically put to use by Guan and Shang Yang: what if a human ruler could not discern the actual Will of Heaven or, selfishly, refused to subordinate himself to that higher authority?

Then, the theocracy would become a tyranny out of harmony with *Tian* and the flows of *Yin* and *Yang*. To address this shortcoming in the quality of the individual who might come to rule, Han Fei proposed that a ruler become a Daoist and so overcome egoism and forswear calculation in the use of power.

In today's China, there is a small underground of intellectuals who challenge the legitimacy of Xi's autocracy. Some of them base their arguments on the observation that Heaven itself has not provided public proof that it approves of Xi's policies. The theocratic premise which Xi implicitly uses to promote his regime is, thus, denied.

## **Xunzi and the Subordination of Confucian Values**

A very important step in designing China's imperial order, its theocracy, was taken by Xunzi (310-235 BCE). He borrowed some Confucian concepts and subordinated them to Mozi's scheme. Xunzi repositioned the Confucian ideal of a virtuous person (*junzi*) as a loyal follower of the state. He saw that a person of good breeding and self-control could follow the punctilio of propriety and formalities and easily become part of a social hierarchy without resentment or untoward ambition.

Xunzi, like Mozi, believed human nature to be corruptible and base. Therefore, he too proposed the imposition of order and rectitude by the state on those who could not behave well of their own accord. Accordingly, he proposed that the state promote and reward those who could master such self-restraint. This became a synthesis between legalism and formalities, lifted from Confucius and separated from the inner authenticity and conviction which could best be provided by a free and energized conscience. This synthesis would become the bedrock of the Chinese imperial order under the Han Dynasty, steady and unyielding below the vicissitudes of human hubris and error, which would be played out for the next 2,000 years of Chinese history.

## **The *Lushi Chunqiu* and Synthesis**

An important and most overlooked text providing wisdom on how to create and administer a theocracy, as recommended by Mozi, is the *Lushi Chunqiu* (239 BC). This text consists of many essays with different recommendations, each of which, however, would be useful in the successful management of an imperial order. The text was compiled for the Prime Minister of the State of Qin, Lu Buwei.

A most interesting reference in the *Lushi Chunqiu* is to the Classic of Filial Piety (*Xiao jing*). This classic, first referred to in the State of Qin, is nominally a work of Confucian thought. Its sections begin with “Confucius said.” But its use of a Confucian virtue, “filiality,” is more rigorous than as used by Confucius in *The Analects*. The Classic of Filial Piety notes that “a man who is filial to his father is loyal to his prince,” an outcome of little interest to Confucius. The Classic of Filial Piety also uses Mozi’s ideal of *jian ai* or self-abasement for the benefit of others, which was not a term used by Confucius or Mencius.

Under the Han and later dynasties, filial piety would become a vital building block of the theocratic order. Each individual Chinese, as desired by Mozi, would be subject to authority – in this case, the authority of the father. Imperial law would punish breaches of filial piety anywhere in China on a par with treason or plotting a rebellion, making the imperial order and the emperor in his palace the guarantor of discipline for every Chinese in their most intimate living arrangements – the multi-generational and extended family. Thus, did the imperial order align for its support every family structure in China.

## **The Imperial Order in History**

The imperial order, as it survived over the centuries, was created by the ruler of the State of Qin, who conquered the other feudal states and proclaimed himself an *Huangdi* or emperor. His administrative structure and its legitimating precepts were replicated by subsequent dynasties. The succeeding dynasty, the Han, elaborated on the synthesis of Mohism/legalism and Confucianism as proposed by Xunzi. A phrase used to catch the essence of that regime was “*yin* on the inside/*yang* on the outside.” *Yin* was the force of law and punishment and *yang* was to be the self-possession of the virtuous person and formal, proper, ceremonial, ritualized interpersonal relationships. By using both *yin* and *yang*, Han Dynasty thinkers sought to tilt Heaven’s Dao towards dynastic survival.

A major advance in the sophistication of the theocracy was achieved by noted philosophers in the Sung Dynasty. They responded to the arrival of Buddhism from India by adopting its individualism to the Chinese imperial order. Such brilliant minds as Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073 CE), Cheng Yi (1033-1107 CE), Cheng Hao (1032-1085 CE) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE) philosophized the naturalism of *Yin/Yang* and Heaven’s Dao into a moral entity of principle *li*. To me, the abstraction *li* takes the place of Buddhist conceptions of dharma and the individual mindfulness which is required to follow the Noble Eightfold Path. It was a new take on how to think about Heaven’s Dao. With *li* as both a reality and as access to perception and understanding, Sung Confucian philosophers draped the imperial system with a splendid rationality. To follow *li* incidentally propelled one into willing submission before the Will of Heaven and its righteous order here on earth.

Several texts not previously central to the ideological foundation of the imperial order – *The Analects* of Confucius, *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Mencius* – could be given pride of place in the theocratic canon as helpful guides in the search for *li*.

*Li* conveniently, in turn, validated the pristine correctness of accepting one's place in the imperial order.

Sung Confucianism is more commonly known in the West as neo-Confucianism. The imperial order under the Ming Dynasty embraced Sung Confucianism as part of its theocracy, adding the four Confucian texts to the corpus of required readings in preparation for taking the imperial examinations. The absorption of Confucian traditions within a Mohist order was complete. Even more, the Mohist theocratic state now subordinated significant quasi-Buddhist and Daoist insights to its realism. China's theocracy had been enhanced by outstanding scholars and thus, became more securely grounded in the mind.

One telltale, however, was that when the founder of the Ming Dynasty incorporated the four texts into the examination process, he deleted from *The Mencius* a section which sanctioned regicide whenever a ruler turned tyrannous. (*The Mencius*, Pt II, Ch VIII) Thus, the imperial order only legitimated those thoughts which supported its integrity and continuity.

## **Conclusion**

If we take Mozi's theory of social justice as a heuristic, we can assess its applicability to Xi Jinping's China. Xi's China aligns fully with the major features of the heuristic.

First, the contemporary equivalent of Heaven's Dao is the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which proclaims that: "The Communist Party of China is the vanguard both of the Chinese working class and of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation. ... The realization of communism is the highest ideal and ultimate goal of the Party." The Constitution then provides that the contemporary Dao for all Chinese is found in Marxist/Leninism, Mao Zedong thought, Deng Xiaoping theory, the "Three Represents" of Jiang Zemin and Xi Jinping thought, which is "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era." This is application of Mozi's principle to follow the Will of Heaven.

Secondly, access to Heaven's Dao is provided by a single individual: the *renmin lingxiu*, the People's Leader, now Xi Jinping. This is Mozi's principles of overcoming the shortcomings of human nature by giving them a leader.

Thirdly, the People's Leader manages a hierarchy of subordinate leaders to order and unify the thinking of the people to accord with the *Dao*. This is Mozi's principle of "identification with the superior."

Fourth, the task of ordering and unifying the thinking of the people requires subordination of education, religion and public opinion to the discipline of party supervision. This is Mozi's principle that only the supreme ruler can define the words and thoughts to be used in thinking.

Fifth, the actions of individuals are manipulated to align in every point with party objectives by rewards and punishments, implemented through the social credit system of tracking personal behaviors. This was Mozi's recommendation on training the people to believe that ghosts would reward them for compliance and punish them for deviance.

Sixth, economic power is organized and guided to produce wealth and the goods and services approved by the party through the use of government regulations structuring through market mechanisms and licensing all material incentives to reward some and prevent or discourage others from doing what they want. This follows from Mozi's belief that rewards and punishments will produce obedience and subordination to the state and an inference from his hierarchy of enforced order that no private power not under the supreme leader's discipline will be tolerated.

*Stephen B. Young is Global Executive Director of the Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism.*





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