

gone through prolonged years and generations before they acquired their knowledge. If we want to excel them, is it really possible to do so in one morning or is it not impossible? . . . Mathematics began in China,¹ and yet it has reached its highest development in Western countries. If we compare the ability and wisdom of the Chinese with those of the Westerners, there is no reason to think that we should be unable to surpass them. It all depends on how we exert ourselves.

Alas! There are endless changes in the world, and so there are endless variations in the sages' way of meeting these changes. To be born in the present age but to hold fast to ancient methods is to be like one who in the age of Shen nong [when people had learned how to cook] still ate raw meat and drank blood. . . . Such a one would say, "I am following the methods of the ancient sages." But it is hardly possible that he should not become exhausted and fall. Moreover, the laws [or methods] that ought to be changed today can still [in their new form] embody the essence of the laws of the ancient sages. [48a–49a]

[*Chouyang chuyi*, in *Yongan quanji*, ce 12, 46b–49a — CT]

ZHANG ZHIDONG: EXHORTATION TO LEARN

Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909) was one of the leading figures in the empire during the last days of the Manchus. A brilliant scholar and official, widely esteemed for his personal integrity and patriotism, he was an early supporter of reform and as a provincial administrator promoted many industrial, railway, educational, and cultural projects. When his *Exhortation to Learn* (*Quanxue pian*) was published in 1898, it was hailed by the reformers then in power and given official distribution by the emperor.

Basically Zhang was a moderate who coupled gradual reform with a stout adherence to Neo-Confucianism, defense of monarchical institutions, and loyalty to the dynasty. Avoiding extremes, he backed away from the radical measures of Kang Youwei (see pp. 260–273), on the one hand, and from the reactionary policies that led to the Boxer catastrophe in 1900, on the other. A combination of moderation and shrewdness thus helped him survive politically to play an influential role at court in the first decade of the new century. During this period he was instrumental both in the enactment of educational and civil service reforms (including abolition of the famous eight-legged essay) and in the attempt to revive Confucianism as a state cult.

Zhang's position is summed up in the catch-phrase "Chinese learning for substance, Western learning for function" (*Zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*). The terms *substance* (*ti*) and *function* (*yong*) Zhang drew from the philosophical lexicon of Song metaphysics, in which they stood for the ontological and functional aspects of the same reality. Zhang, following the example of earlier reformers who distinguished between the Chinese "Way" (or Chinese moral "principles") and Western instruments, used *substance* in reference to traditional Chinese values and *function* (i.e., utility,

1. A widely held view, of which Ruan Yuan was a leading exponent.

practical application) in reference to the Western methods by which China and its traditional way of life were to be defended in the modern world. In this new formulation *substance* and *function* bore no intrinsic relationship to one another as they had philosophically for Zhu Xi, but they were no more incompatible than was Hu Yuan's combining of classical studies and more specialized, technical studies in his educational curriculum (see chapter 19), of which the Chengs and Zhu approved.

Zhang, who was not naive about the lengths to which Westernization would go (he insisted, for instance, that Western methods of administration were as essential as Western technology) nor wholly mistaken about the difficulties of establishing political democracy in China, may have underestimated the frictions that modernization would create within the new order and the extent to which his liberal reforms would increasingly generate revolutionary pressures. This was especially true among the educated elite, whose common bond was now no longer classical learning but Western-style education. Two years after the death of this venerable statesman in October 1909, the Manchu dynasty itself collapsed.

The crisis of China today has no parallel either in the Spring and Autumn period [i.e., the time of Confucius] or in all the dynasties from the Qin and Han down through the Yuan and Ming. . . . Our imperial court has shown the utmost concern over the problem, living in anxiety and worry. It is ready to make changes and to provide special opportunities for able ministers and generals. New schools are to be established and special examinations are to be held. All over the land men of serious purpose and sincere dedication have responded with enthusiasm and vigor. Those who seek to remedy the present situation talk of new learning; those who fear lest its acceptance should destroy the true Way hold fast to the teachings of the ancients. Both groups are unable to strike the mean. The conservatives resemble those who give up all eating because they have difficulty in swallowing, while the progressives are like a flock of sheep who have arrived at a road of many forks and do not know where to turn. The former do not know how to accommodate to special circumstances; the latter are ignorant of what is fundamental. Not knowing how to accommodate to special circumstances, the conservatives have no way to confront the enemy and deal with the crisis; not knowing the fundamental, the innovators look with contempt upon the teachings of the sages. Thus those who hold fast to the old order of things despise more and more the innovators, and the latter in turn violently detest the conservatives. As the two groups are engaged in mutual recriminations, impostors and adventurers who do not hesitate to resort to falsification and distortion pour out their theories to confuse the people. Consequently students are in doubt as to which course to pursue, while perverse opinions spread all over the country. [202:1a–b]

United Hearts

I have learned of three things that are necessary for saving China in the present crisis. The first is to maintain the state. The second is to preserve the doctrine

of Confucius. And the third is to protect the Chinese race. These three are inseparably related. We must protect the state, the doctrine, and the race with one heart, and this is what we mean by united hearts.

In order to protect the race we must first preserve the doctrine, and before the doctrine can be preserved, we must preserve the state and the race. How is the race to be preserved? If we have knowledge, it will be preserved; and by knowledge we mean the doctrine. How is the doctrine to be maintained? It is to be maintained by strength, and strength lies in armies. Thus, if the empire has no power and prestige, the doctrine will not be followed; and if the empire does not prosper, the Chinese race will not be respected. [202:2b–3a]

The Three Mainstays or Bonds

Here Zhang's understanding of the Three Mainstays (*San gang*) or Bonds (i.e., strictly hierarchical relations) reflects the increasingly authoritarian view of this concept in late Imperial China, somewhat in contrast to the Han dynasty versions (see chapter 10), which emphasized complementarity more than mere subordination. These formulations had no canonical status in the Five Classics or Four Books but were simply accretions to later Confucian tradition in the imperial age.

The minister is bound to the sovereign, the child is bound to the parent, and the wife is bound to the husband. . . . What makes a sage a sage, what makes China China, is just this set of bonds. Thus, if we recognize the bond of minister to sovereign, the theory of people's rights cannot stand. If we recognize the bond of child to parent, then the theory that father and son are amenable to the same punishment and that funeral and sacrificial ceremonies should be abolished cannot stand. If we recognize the bond of wife to husband, then the theory of equal rights for men and women cannot stand. [202:13a–b]

Our sage represented the highest ideal of human relationships. He established in detail and with clarity rules of ritual decorum based on human feelings. Although Westerners have such rules only in abbreviated form, still foreigners have never abandoned the idea of decorum. For the norm of Heaven and the nature of man are about the same in China and in foreign countries. Without these rules of decorum no ruler could ever govern a state, and no teacher could ever establish his doctrine. [202:14b]

Rectifying Political Rights

Nowadays scholars who become vexed with the present order of things are angry at the foreigners for cheating and oppressing us, at the generals for being unable to fight, at the ministers for being unwilling to reform, at the educational authorities for not establishing modern schools, and at the various officials for not seeking to promote industry and commerce. They therefore advocate the theory

of people's rights in order to get the people to unite and exert themselves. Alas, where did they find those words that would lead to disorder!

The theory of people's rights will bring us not a particle of good but a hundred evils. Are we going to establish a parliament? Among Chinese scholar-officials and among the people there are still many today who are obstinate and uneducated. They understand nothing about the general situation of the world, and they are ignorant of the affairs of state. They have never heard of important developments concerning the schools, political systems, military training, and manufacture of machinery. Suppose the confused and tumultuous people are assembled in one house, with one sensible man there out of a hundred who are witless, babbling aimlessly, and talking as if in a dream — what use would it be? Moreover, in foreign countries the matter of revenue is mainly handled by the lower house, while other matters of legislation are taken care of by the upper house. To be a member of parliament the candidate must possess a fairly good income. Nowadays Chinese merchants rarely have much capital, and the Chinese people are lacking in long-range vision. If any important proposal for raising funds comes up for discussion, they will make excuses and keep silent; so their discussion is no different from nondiscussion. . . . This is the first reason why a parliament is of no use. . . .

At present China is indeed not imposing or powerful, but the people still get along well with their daily work, thanks to the dynastic institutions that hold them together. Once the theory of people's rights is adopted, foolish people will certainly be delighted, rebels will strike, order will not be maintained, and great disturbances will arise on all sides. Even those who advocate the theory of people's rights will not be able to live safely themselves. Furthermore, as the towns will be plundered and the Christian churches burned, I am afraid the foreigners, under the pretext of protecting [their nationals and interests], will send troops and warships to penetrate deeply and occupy our territories. The whole country will then be given to others without a fight. Thus the theory of people's rights is just what our enemies would like to hear spread about. [202:23a–24a]

Recently those who have picked up some Western theories have gone so far as to say that everybody has the right to be his own master. This is even more absurd. This phrase is derived from the foreign books of religion. It means that God bestows upon man his nature and soul and that every person has wisdom and intelligence that enable him to do useful work. When the translators interpret it to mean that every person has the right to be his own master, they indeed make a great mistake.

Western countries, whether they are monarchies, republics, or constitutional monarchies, all have a government, and a government has laws. Officials have administrative laws, soldiers have military laws, workers have labor laws, and merchants have commercial laws. The lawyers learn them; the judges administer them. Neither the ruler nor the people can violate the law. What the

executive recommends can be debated by the parliament, but what the parliament decides can be vetoed by the throne. Thus it may be said that nobody is his own master. [202:24b–25a]

Following the Proper Order

If we wish to make China strong and preserve Chinese learning, we must promote Western learning. But unless we first use Chinese learning to consolidate the foundation and to give our purpose a right direction, the strong will become rebellious leaders and the weak, slaves. The consequence will be worse than not being versed in Western learning. . . .

Scholars today should master the classics in order to understand the purpose of our early sages and teachers in establishing our doctrine. They must study history in order to know the succession of peace and disorder in our history and the customs of the land, read the philosophers and literary collections in order to become familiar with Chinese scholarship and fine writing. After this they can select and utilize the Western learning that can make up for our shortcomings and adopt those Western governmental methods that can cure our illness. In this way, China will derive benefit from Western learning without incurring any danger. [202:27a–b]

[On Reform]

It is the human relationships and moral principles that are immutable, but not legal systems; the Way of the sage, not instruments; the discipline of the Mind-and-heart, not technology.

Laws and institutions are that with which we meet changing situations; they therefore need not all be the same. The Way is that upon which we establish the foundation; it therefore must be uniform. . . . What we call the basis of the Way consists of the Three Bonds and the four Cardinal Virtues.² If these are abandoned, great disorder will occur even before the new laws can be put into effect. But as long as they are preserved, even Confucius and Mencius, if they were to come back to life, could hardly condemn the reforms. [203:19b, 22a]

If we do not change our habits, we cannot change our methods (*fa*); and if we cannot change our methods, we cannot change our instruments. . . . In Chinese learning the inquiry into antiquity is not important; what is important is knowledge of practical use. There are also different branches of Western learning; Western technology is not important; what is important is Western administration. [202:iiia]

There are five important factors in the administration of the new schools.

2. Decorum, rightness, integrity, sense of shame.

First, both the old and the new must be studied. By the old we mean the Four Books, the Five Classics, Chinese history, government, and geography; by the new we mean Western administration, Western technology, and Western history. The old learning is to be the substance; the new learning is to be for application [function]. Neither one should be neglected. Second, both administration and technology should be studied. Education, geography, budgeting, taxes, military preparations, laws and regulations, industry and commerce, belong to the category of Western administration. Mathematics, drawing, mining, medicine, acoustics, optics, chemistry, and electricity belong to the category of Western technology. [203:9b]

[*Quanxue pian*, in *Zhang Wenxiang gong quanji*, ce 202:ia–b, iia–b, 2b–3a, 13a–14b, 23a–25a, 27a–b; 203:9b, 19b, 22a — CT]