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# Preface

This book comes at the end of my prolonged reflection on events that have puzzled me intellectually for many years. Being a fourth generation Chinese studying in America and England, I have come to understand and respect many deep-seated ideas and values upheld in the West and promoted by the West to the rest of the world in the past 200 or so years. And yet, as I looked back on Asian history of the last 50 years, I was continually puzzled by how unsuccessful those values and ideas had played out socioeconomically as well as culturally in some of the developing countries.

In the meantime, after my studies in Oberlin College, U.C. Berkeley, Yale, and Oxford Universities, I came to China together with my family to live through 9 out of the 10 years of the Cultural Revolution. And later I came to China again as a businessman to witness the development of China under the open-door policy over the last 28 years or so. Those experiences gave me a rare opportunity to witness first-hand how some Western values have and have not played out well in contemporary China.

After observing 50 years of Asian history, I have discovered that, although socioeconomic and political systems are important to a country in their own rights, understanding of cultural values undergirding the systems are of even more critical importance for developing countries. This book is an attempt to find a way to deal with this intellectual search. Globalization today has brought insecurities to many third-world countries, though China has benefited from it economically. But all developing countries, including China, are faced with a search for cultural identity especially when they are drawn into the forceful waves and tricky undercurrents of globalization. Our world today may be deeply interconnected technologically, economically, and culturally, and is unavoidably interactive politically. But the sovereignty and dignity of some developing countries are being challenged. Therefore, how to find cultural identity under such circumstances becomes vitally important for developing countries today.

World affairs are often determined by power politics with self-interests of the powers, and not so much by philosophical ideas and moral values. On the other hand, when leaders of developing countries want to plot directions, establish institutions for their societies, and improve the welfare, confidence, and dignity of their people, they have to base their visions and planning upon concepts and values that would be beneficial to their countries and their people. Ultimately, in other words, all important decisions such as those about the constitution, political system, socioeconomic institutions, and legal system of a country will have to be based upon deep-seated and most cherished values of that culture in order for the development to be meaningful to the people of that country.

My attempt is to suggest an approach to understand, and to deal with, a few important concepts in sociopolitical philosophy for a contemporary modern society in one's cultural context while implementing them in one's historical context. The approach may be carried out in such a way that those concepts could be accepted as the meaningful and dominant tools for development in those countries. For discussion in this book, I have selected the following prevalent concepts as important: respect for the individual person, human

rights, freedom, equality, democracy, and the universal respect for law. My suggestion is that we have to do two things: One is to analyze the concepts to understand their nuances; secondly, to have an honest look at one's own culture to find what are its deep-seated and most cherished values.

I do not pretend to have knowledge of all cultures and their possible interpretations of the various concepts to suggest a model of development. My attempt is only to suggest a method of dealing with those development intellectually, so that potential leaders of developing countries could use the methodology to assist their thinking on some of the important concepts in relation to their own national development. And other readers may use it to understand more thoroughly the concerns of developing countries. Due to my familiarity with China, I shall use perspectives in Chinese culture and events in Chinese history as examples, and only as examples, in this book.

Although this book does not speak directly to the problems of indignation, hatred, violence, and unnecessary bloodshed that are so widespread in the world today, it is dedicated to those committed to work toward the elimination of poverty, ignorance, physical miseries as well as national humiliation, in order to establish decency, dignity, order, hope, and ecologically sustainable prosperity, in the underdeveloped, as well as in the developing countries.

*LING Fusun, George*  
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