

COLLOQUIUM

Human Rights in Chinese Tradition

Speaker: Prof. Stephen C. Angle, Professor of Philosophy and East Asian Studies, Wesleyan University

Date: 15 Feb, 2017 (Wed)

Time: 15:30 ~ 17:30

Venue: CEC 1002, Ho Sin Hang Campus, HKBU

Language: English



Abstract:

This lecture is organized around three contrasting perspectives on the relation between Chinese tradition and human rights: the tradition as barrier to, alternative to, and source of human rights. Each of the forms of barrier I examine—hierarchical rituals, lack of concept, unified field of value, and relationality—is genuine but not insuperable, and I argue that modern Confucians should embrace the development of their tradition in directions that open up space for human rights discourse. Chinese tradition also offers attractive alternatives to human rights, but I join with those scholars who see both the Confucian “alternatives” and human rights norms as jointly necessary in the modern world. The different approaches to finding a source for human rights in Chinese tradition—dignity, interests, and virtue—all show some promise, though none simply demonstrates that Confucianism was ready-made to adopt human rights when it entered the modern age. These sources are excellent starting points for modern Confucian arguments in favor of human rights (possibly, as I note, somewhat different in scope and detail from other lists of rights), but once again the tradition needs to grow and adapt if it is to welcome human rights.

***** ALL ARE WELCOME *****

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