Confucian Contributions to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

A Historical and Philosophical Perspective

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It is often claimed that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a preeminently Western document that promulgates a distinctively Western moral and political ideology of individual human rights incompatible with many of the world’s cultural-moral traditions. Given the fact, however, that the UDHR was formulated through a year-and-a-half-long process of drafting and negotiation among representatives of no fewer than fifty-eight nations and cultural traditions, the claim seems prima facie suspect. Since the traditions of East Asia are often regarded (wrongly, I believe) as most in tension with the aspirations and content of the UDHR, it may be especially instructive to trace the Chinese contribution to its formulation: doing so may help correct those myopic perceptions that (1) the UDHR is predominantly or exclusively Western and (2) individual human rights are necessarily irreconcilable with East Asian traditions.¹

After researching the official United Nations records of 1947–48, as well as consulting the recently published diaries of John Humphrey, the principal coordinator of the drafting process, I have determined that the Chinese delegate P. C. Chang introduced a number of Confucian ideas, strategies, and arguments into the deliberative process leading up to the final formulation of the UDHR, adopted December 10, 1948, by the U.N. General Assembly. This Confucian contribution is considerably more extensive and influential than has ever been reported previously. Chang was described by Humphrey as the towering intellect of the Third Committee (which debated and approved the final UDHR draft sent to the General Assembly) who more than anyone else was responsible for imparting a universal rather than a purely Western character to the UDHR.

Humphrey noted in his diary entry for December 4, 1948, that “in intellectual stature he [Chang] towers over any other member of the committee. I also like his philosophy.” And for October 7, 1948, he noted: “The debate in the Third Committee was passionately interesting this morning. P. C. Chang made a particularly brilliant speech in which he pleaded for two-man mindedness. As only he can he drew the attention of those countries that are trying to impose special philosophical concepts such as the law of nature, to the fact that the declaration is meant for all men everywhere.” In a footnote to the entry for October 11, 1948, the editor John Hobbins reports that at a four-person meeting of the officers of the Commission on Human Rights held in February 1947, “[Charles] Malik

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[Lebanese philosopher and diplomat] believed that the question of rights should be approached through Christian precepts, especially the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Chang argued the necessity of a more universal approach. Humphrey was asked to prepare a draft and Chang suggested, tongue in cheek, that Humphrey go to China for six months to study Confucius before attempting the task.23

BIографICAL BACKGROUND

The P. C. Chang of the United Nations official records was Chang Peng-chun (1882–1957), who was born and raised in Tientsin, China. He graduated from Nankai Middle School (founded by his older brother, Poling) in 1906, and from Bao-Ding Deng School (high school) in 1910. Supported by the U.S. Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Fund, Chang attended Clark University (Worcester, MA), 1910–13, graduating with a BA in 1913. He then pursued graduate studies at Columbia University, 1913–15, taking two master’s degrees in 1915, one from the graduate school and the other from the college of education (Teachers College). In 1919, after working for a few years in China, Chang returned to Columbia and completed Ph.D. requirements in 1922, although the doctoral degree was not formally awarded until 1924, after publication of his dissertation in 1923.

During 1916–19, prior to his doctoral studies, Chang taught at Nankai Middle School, serving as acting president in 1917–19, and helped his brother organize and establish Nankai University in 1919. After completing his doctoral work, Chang returned to China and upgraded Tsingshua School (Beijing) to a college in 1923, serving as its dean, 1923–26. In 1926 he returned to Nankai, becoming the principal of Nankai Middle School, while also serving as professor of philosophy at Nankai University, 1926–37. In 1928–29 Chang was acting president of Nankai University. While on the faculty of Nankai University, Chang also held visiting appointments at the University of Chicago (Chinese philosophy and art) and the Chicago Art Institute in 1931; University of Hawaii (Chinese art and literature) in 1933 and 1934; and Cambridge University (as Ministry of Education Exchange Professor) in 1936. For a brief period at the conclusion of World War II in 1945, Chang also held a visiting appointment at Columbia University.

During his career, Chang authored three books, one on Chinese education (his published dissertation, Education for Modernization in China [1923]) and two on Chinese history and culture (China: Whence and Whither? [1934]; China at the Crossroads [1936]), and edited yet another (There Is Another China [1948]). He also wrote a number of original plays, two of which were staged in New York City (including at the Cort Theatre, Broadway), with the others staged in China. Throughout his career, Chang translated many Western plays into Chinese, directed numerous play productions in China, and directed Chinese Classical Theatre tours in the United States (1930) and Soviet Russia (1935). In 1938, he received a doctor of humane letters from his alma mater, Clark University.

Chang's governmental and diplomatic career developed as his academic career was concluding. In 1937, possibly because of the anti-Japanese influence of his plays, Chang was appointed by the Chinese government to pursue anti-Japanese propaganda activities in Europe and America, which included giving public lectures in a number of European cities, including London, as well as lobbying the U.S. Congress for passage of an economic sanctions bill against Japan (1939). Chang was a member of the People's Political Council, 1938–40, and served successively as minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to Turkey (a neutral country), 1940–42, and ambassador to Chile (another neutral country), 1942–45. In 1942, he negotiated and signed a treaty of amity between China and Iraq. At the conclusion of World War II, Chang served as China's chief delegate (ambassador rank) at the initial organization meetings of the United Nations in London and New York, assuming the role of resident chief delegate to the United Nations Social and Economic Council, 1946–52. In 1947–48, he was a member and vice chairman of the U.N. Commission on Human
Part 2 • Religion and Human Rights

Rights (including membership on the drafting committee for the UDHR), and in 1948 he headed the Chinese delegation to the Geneva Conference on Freedom of Information.

Chang was well placed to make a significant contribution to the UDHR, but before examining the specifics of that contribution, we need also to be aware of certain intellectual influences on Chang, as well as the tenor of his thinking immediately preceding the formulation of the UDHR.

INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

There were two broad intellectual influences on Chang—John Dewey's philosophy of education and classical Chinese culture—both of which are well represented in his published work. Neither of these influences should be particularly surprising, given Chang's dual passions for education and Chinese culture and given the social context in China at the time he was teaching. Let us, just for the record, begin with the social context before considering Chang's writings.

Dewey's Influence

It is well known that Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism—particularly in its methodological approach of combining critical reflection (logic, scientific method) with a practical emphasis (social problem solving)—influenced Chinese thought in the 1920s. In particular, it provided the New Culture movement with a method of critique, evaluation, and adaptation of new Western ideas to the Chinese social situation. That movement was very critical of traditional Chinese cultural values and emphasized supplanting them with Western cultural values (e.g., science and technology; political ideas and structures). Although Dewey himself proposed the critical evaluation of both Chinese traditional culture and Western culture, with the aim of developing a new culture with the best elements of both, the New Culture movement was less cautious in its rejection of traditional Chinese culture in favor of Western adaptations. As we shall see shortly, Chang's approach was more similar to Dewey's than that of the New Culture movement.

It is also well known that Dewey's philosophy of education in particular had an extraordinary impact on Chinese educational institutions and programming during the same period, and even lasting to the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949. Many of China's educational leaders at the time had trained at Columbia under Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick (an educator who put many of Dewey's ideas into practice in the United States). Indeed, Chang's own brother (president of Nankai University) had studied with Dewey and strongly advocated the implementation of his educational theory. Nankai University was known for its Deweyian orientation and influence, along with Peking National University, Peking Teachers College, and Nanking Teachers College. Through the influence of these educational leaders and institutions, Dewey's ideas on experience-centered learning, adapting education to the needs of social evolution, cultivating the individual, and developing democratic spirit in cooperative learning projects were applied to schools and curricula throughout China.

Chang himself in his dissertation and first published book, *Education for Modernization in China*, manifests clear indebtedness to Dewey's educational philosophy. At the outset of this work, Chang argues forcefully for the importance of educating a leadership able to cope with economic problems so as to transform China into a modern industrialized nation with a "wide-awake outlook," "enlightened individuality," and "democratic processes." He does so in a Deweyian way by emphasizing the attainment of an equilibrium between the best of the old (traditional Chinese culture) and the best of the new (Western culture) through a process of critical readjustment from old to new (as contrasted with blind appropriation of Western culture):

In order to be effective in the present-day world, even as conservatives, each one needs to be equipped with the wide-awake outlook and the strong enlightened individuality
which only the modernized social and moral institutions can produce.

China must change and change very rapidly until a state of more or less adjusted equilibrium is reached. But by modernization we do not imply that China must, even if she could, go through all the stages of change that the modern nations have gone through. For China the process is readjustment and not mere appropriation or reproduction. The products of modernism already formed can serve very well as hypotheses, but should not be too blindly or too closely followed as infallible models.

Modernization is a process. It will call for certain indispensable modern products in the development of the process. But it does not commit itself to uphold any crystallized formulations of the modern West to the entire detriment of the norms and formulations of the old culture. It emphasizes the process rather than the products. The old culture furnishes the basic experiences to be modernized.

Chang goes on to use Dewey’s thought in proposing that the immediate aim of education is modernization in the sense of developing in students an appreciation for the scientific method, the rights and liberties of individuals, and democratic decision-making and problem-solving processes. In order to achieve this result, Chang argues that there must be educational analogues for those circumstances that historically produced such characteristics of modernization. In particular, he focuses on the circumstances of expansion, exploration, and frontier community in the U.S. West and then cites Dewey on providing the educational analogues of these circumstances—an expanding and challenging social environment that “encourages the wholesome unification of thinking and doing” in individual exertion and development, conceiving the ideal school as a frontierlike household and community in which are developed discipline, character, order and industry, and responsibility for solving problems that meet communal needs.

At the end of the nineteenth century when industrial transformations were taking place in American life, Professor Dewey saw that the essential powers in men and women who could succeed in adapting themselves to the new environment were the natural products of the mode of living which we may characterize as frontier community-building that had been going on for three hundred years previously in America. He also saw that the most efficient means to adapt the younger generation successfully to cope with the vast problems around them would be the provision in the schools of the substitutes for the environmental forces which in previous generations of frontier life shaped and made possible the characteristics of initiative, keen thinking ability and cooperative endeavor.

As the centerpiece of his argument, Chang then goes on to propose, develop, and apply five “criteria for curriculum construction.” Although it is not possible here to report his argument in any detail, the five criteria are clearly Deweyian, ranging across (1) encouraging hypothesis formulation and verification; (2) adapting methods to needs-oriented goals; (3) developing executive, organizing, and vocational capacities; (4) promoting, on the basis of equal opportunity, democratic social conduct and qualities of independent judgment; and (5) humanizing the aims and processes of modern life. The fifth criterion in particular seems to develop Dewey’s social vision of creating a new culture with the best elements of both traditional Chinese culture and Western culture, for Chang explicitly adumbrates it as follows: “Does the school activity preserve and readapt the ideals and habits of humanism in the old culture? Does the school activity allow and encourage the searching for ‘human’ values in the products and processes of modern culture?”

I think it would be fair to infer from Chang’s discussion of these criteria that he gained from Dewey a set of social, moral, and political values that are recognizably Western in their orientations. At the same time, however, reflecting
on the fifth criterion, Chang also clearly gained from Dewey an affirmation of the value of his own traditional culture, aspects of which might have to be preserved, even if readapted, in order to achieve the goal of a competent leadership for an equilibrated culture that is truly human or humanized. Indeed, one might plausibly discern in Chang’s emphasis on “human” and “humanized” a Confucian-influenced concern that the traits of modernization developed in China and its future leadership be humane in a traditional sense, to which we now turn.

**Chinese Culture, Especially Confucianism**

Although the influence of Dewey’s thought on Chang seems obvious and profound, one should not overlook Chang’s deep knowledge and appreciation of Chinese culture and its contribution to world history and culture. In his second and third books, *China: Whence and Whither?* and *China at the Crossroads*, Chang displays extraordinary erudition about China’s cultural achievements (both material and nonmaterial) prior to the nineteenth century and their impact on the rest of the world. Particularly important for our purposes are Chang’s discussions of Confucian and neo-Confucian philosophical and political thought as well as his views on Chinese education. Also important are his views of how traditional Chinese philosophy and related cultural forms were received by and influenced Western thinkers. Let us begin with the latter.

Chang is utterly clear in his belief that Chinese philosophical thought and culture, as transmitted by returning Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, positively impressed eighteenth-century European thinkers such as Diderot and Voltaire. For example, he quotes extensively from *The Works of Voltaire* that, in the latter’s view, “the life, honour, and fortune of the subject [citizen] was under the protection of the laws . . . [in] China,” its “people were not burdened with taxes,” “the fundamental law in China being to consider the empire as one family is the reason why the welfare of the community is attended to as the first principal duty,” and Confucius was a philosopher par excellence (“I have read his books with attention; I have made extracts from them; I have found in them nothing but the purest morality, without the slightest tinge of charlatanism”). Although Chang himself is not overly credulous about the historical accuracy of such claims—“It was . . . the glamour of a better organized . . . controlled, and more cultured civilization, attracting the attention of eighteenth century thinkers . . . dissatisfied with the order of things in Europe”—his point is that “descriptions of China and Chinese philosophical thought” were known to eighteenth-century Europe in “a period of rather free speculation concerning political and religious ideas” and “caught the imagination of some thinkers of the period.”

Chang goes on to display a rather wide acquaintance with classical Chinese thinkers such as Confucius, Mencius, and Chuang-Tzu, and later neo-Confucian figures such as Ku Yen-wu, Yen Yuan, Huang Chung-his, and Tai Chen. With regard to the classical period, particularly important to Chang are Confucius’s ideas on *jen* and its extension to others, the inclusiveness of human responsibility for improving life, an ideal government founded on “ideals of personal conduct” (rather than on formally enacted laws), and the “cultivation of the completely humanized man,” as well as Mencius’s notions of “the essential goodness of the nature of man,” the “fundamental respect for what is ‘human’ in all men,” and the priority of the people in humane governance, emphasizing “the rights of the people as well as the obligation of the ruler to provide for the good of the people.”

With respect to the neo-Confucians, Chang is particularly taken with Huang Chung-hsi (“a radical political thinker”), from whose treatise, *Waiting for the Dawn*, he quotes the famous opening paragraph criticizing the selfishness of (later) rulers to the detriment of the people being able to consider their own interests, and Yen Yuan, whom he characterizes as “an original educational thinker” and “early formulator of some principles of education . . . familiar to modern educational thinking,” for example, “the fact that real learning and doing must go together.”
Beyond these discussions of particular Confucian philosophers, Chang also identifies a number of what he regards as general or systematic Confucian contributions to political thought in world history. He cites in particular the competitive civil service examination system (which he regards as "democratizing government structure to a certain extent," well before the time of European and American democracies), the right of the people to rebellion against an unworthy ruler ("early formulated in China"), and the emphasis given to education by the state (about which he quotes Quesnay from the eighteenth century—"with the exception of China, the necessity of this institution, which is the foundation of government, has been ignored by all kingdoms"—and then cites Adolf Reichwein's claim that "national systems of education...in the European world...owed much to the system of education in China").

All of this extensive and pointed discussion by Chang of Chinese (Confucian) cultural contributions culminates in his concluding claim that "China must strive to achieve a new culture that is creatively modern—yes, but it is also to be hoped that it will contain elements distinctively Chinese." And some pages earlier he had written:

A more liberal attitude has happily superseded the somewhat superstitious belief in the conflict of East and West. Culturally, there are many "Easts" and many "Wests"; and they are by no means all necessarily irreconcilable. To take just one instance, it is generally agreed that the humanistic attitude and emphasis in the Chinese tradition appear more "modern" than the outlook toward life that prevailed in medieval Europe. . . . Valuable suggestions for the modern world will naturally be sought after, but they can also be found in the earlier Western experiences and in Chinese history as well.

Propensity to Use Confucian Thought

Chang delivered a number of lectures and addresses in the years immediately preceding his work with the Commission on Human Rights. Two sets of talks are particularly revealing of the way that he interlaces Chinese thought and Western sources. The first set of addresses was delivered in Baghdad, March 6 and 11, 1942, at King Faisal II Hall, while he was minister to Turkey. The second are pointed statements made at the initial meetings of the first session of the U.N. Economic and Social Council, January 23 and February 7, 1946 (London), and June 4, 1946 (New York).

Both sets of speeches indicate Chang's propensity for using Chinese sources (in addition to Western ideas) to argue his case for modernization and humanization in the world. In addition, we can see certain precursors to the content of his contributions to the UDHR.

The lectures in Baghdad were untitled addresses that appear to have been designed to characterize Chinese history and culture for a Muslim audience unacquainted with China and to lay the groundwork for comprehending how to go about the process of cultural change, combining elements of tradition with the realities of the modern world in a self-critical manner that advances the human good (presumably a process faced by both Chinese and Muslims in their respective contexts). Without going into the detailed substance of these
Part 2 • Religion and Human Rights

lectures, it is sufficient to say that Chang argues strenuously for the importance of the "sound basis" of knowing the contemporary "concrete needs" of the community and then engaging in a process of "comparative study" of other societies and cultures in their environments (their ways of solving problems and meeting needs), followed by making "daring hypotheses" (about what to do) and "verification in application" (of a given hypothesis)—all as a continuous process of refinement, adjustment, and adaptation of both old and new cultural forms, social structures, institutions, and policies. 28 Here we can discern Dewey's influence.

Intriguingly, in these lectures, Chang makes constant use of the thought of Confucius (quoting from the Analects) in reiterating the importance of maintaining humanism and humane values in cultural change. He repeats more forcefully (without qualification) than in his earlier book that "Chinese thought influenced the so-called Philosophy of the Enlightenment in 18th century Europe" in its battle against authoritarianism. 29 He also asserts (again, without qualification) that "the civil service system...[with] open competitive examination...was the foundation of democratic development in China." 30 He has an extended discussion of Confucius’s ideas regarding resistance to "class distinction in education" and "emphasis on Humanism...mutual understanding and respect." 31 In the latter regard, Chang explicitly discusses Confucius’s attitude toward spiritual things and, "concerning the attitude to worship," cites Analects 6:22 ("Respect the Spirit as if the Spirit were there"), which Chang interprets as follows: "In other words it is again that humanistic attitude. It is to respect the Spirit as if it were there—emphasizing the influence of that respect on humanity, and not so much the nature of the Spirit itself which we human beings should be humble enough to acknowledge we do not know." 32 And concluding the lectures, Chang returns to "the possible influence of Chinese humanism on modern thinkers," boldly citing the following passage from The Great Learning as "a formula...to relate ethics and politics and politics to education," as the "way of creative reorientation...for all peoples in the present day world":

In order to bring peace to the world, there must be order in the different countries. In order to bring order in the different countries, the family (social relations) must be regulated. In order to regulate the family (social relations) individuals must be cultivated. In order to cultivate individuals, their hearts must be rectified. In order to rectify their hearts, their thoughts must be made sincere. In order to make their thoughts sincere, they must extend their knowledge. In order to extend their knowledge, they must go to things as they are. 33

Clearly, for Chang, Dewey's thought and Confucian thought are deeply interpenetrated.

In his three 1946 addresses to the U.N. Economic and Social Council, Chang is equally bold (and arguably Confucian) in his conception of the council’s role and practical work. In his first address, Chang contends that the council is "designed for human welfare" and that "cooperative effort in the solution of common problems" requires "a new loyalty on the part of the peoples of the world" to the work of the council. In discussing how to cultivate this new loyalty, Chang cites (first in Chinese, then in English) a passage from Mencius IV.B.16—"Subdue people with goodness, people can never be subdued. Nourish people with goodness, the whole world will be subdued." In other words, the important thing is to nourish and stimulate the people, not to try to subdue them (even by the force of virtue). Chang adds: "Nourish people with goodness—that is the function of this Council and the whole world is waiting to be thus subdued." 34

In his second address, Chang proposes a resolution for calling an international health conference under the auspices of the council. He frames this call in the language of declaring war against microbes "causing and conditioning disease and pestilence in the world." Although he does not here cite any Confucian sources or texts, Chang does call for a "spirit of cooperation" that does not give "too much attention to national differentiation" or "indulge over much in national pride and
Twiss, Confucian Contributions to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

prejudice,” since, after all, microbes “go from place to place without passports, visas, and custom bars” and “have no sense of national pride or distinction.” Suggests Chang, let us learn from these microbial enemies something that is “not undesirable but may even be considered supremely beneficial”—namely, that we are united in our humanity and that the “spirit of cooperation” contributes to “the true blessing of man.” No Confucian language here obviously, but certainly a concept of brotherhood and cooperation that is compatible with the Confucian idea of an ever-expanding sympathy or benevolence for the welfare of all humankind.

In his third and longest address, Chang argues vigorously for the Economic and Social Council’s giving much-needed assistance to “the economically low pressure areas of the world,” citing specifically the less-developed areas in the Middle East, Latin America, and the Far East. In making his case, Chang argues that economic assistance for the industrialization of comparatively underindustrialized countries and peoples will enhance their self-determination and self-reliance; that such industrial development will “spur onward the progress in all [countries]”; that it would be desirable to promulgate “a suggested code of international investments, setting down conditions in lending and borrowing countries . . . conducive to such investments”; and that the council needs to give special attention to the way that the economic changes result in “political, social, and intellectual” changes as well. None of these betray any specifically Confucian ideas—other than the general Confucian concern for the material and social welfare of the people—but it seems significant that Chang concludes his address with an extensive passage attributed to Confucius (from Li Chi, Book VII, Li Yun), which he [Chang] characterizes as a “statement of the ideal of economic and social adjustment in the world” and which he interpolates for his audience:

When the Ta Tao or Grand Way prevails, the world is for the welfare of all. Officers are selected because of their virtue and competence. Mutual confidence is promoted and peaceful relations are maintained. People regard not only their own parents as parents, nor only their own children as children. Provisions are made for the aged, employment is provided for the able-bodied, and education is afforded to the young. Widows and widowers, orphans and the childless, the deformed and the diseased, are all cared for. Men have their occupations and women have their homes. Surplus goods are not to be wasted: they need not be kept as one’s own. Labor is not to be idle: work is not necessarily for self only. [Please allow me to repeat these phrases—they seem so modern. “Surplus goods are not to be wasted: they need not to be kept as one’s own. Labor is not to be idle: work is not necessarily for self only.”] Scheming and intrigues are repressed and banditry and rebellion do not arise. As a result, there is no need of shutting the house-gate at night. Such is the Age of Grand Harmony.

In retrospect, and in light of this passage, I suggest that Chang’s development proposals are very much a modern articulation of a central Confucian ideal for a harmonious world that serves the welfare of people everywhere.

Considering all of the above, I believe that we can find the following traits in Chang, the last three of which are particularly carried into his work on the UDHR:

1. An abiding commitment to modernization in Chinese education, society, and culture, construed along the lines of Dewey’s thought, self-critically combining aspects of old and new.
2. A passionate commitment to the humanistic elements and vision of Confucian thought.
3. A deep interest in constructive comparative thought that attempts to reconcile the humanistic values of the Confucian tradition with those of Western traditions.
4. A propensity to use Confucian ideas to advance his case for self-critical and humanized modernization in the world.

109
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Strategic Contributions

The historical record shows that Chang argued vigorously and successfully for the position that the UDHR should (1) be conceived as the basis and program for the humanization of mankind (here Chang appealed to the Confucian idea of man's moral nature or capacity to become truly human in the sense of moral growth and achievement); (2) incorporate a large measure of pragmatic agreement on norms of conduct despite persisting differences of philosophy and ideology among peoples of the world (here Chang appealed to the Confucian emphasis on the art of living—as contrasted with metaphysics—together with making the argument that no representatives should insist on including controverted metaphysical or theological concepts in the declaration); and (3) be written in a manner readily comprehensible to all people (here Chang implicitly used the Confucian emphasis on the priority of the people to support his view that the UDHR was to be a people's document, not a scholar's or a lawyer's).

Before examining these three points in a bit more detail, it should be remarked that, unlike many of the other more politically motivated representatives to the Third Committee, Chang's contributions to its deliberations on the UDHR were almost uniformly philosophical and ethical in character. Indeed, the historical record reports at one point that "the Chinese representative felt that ethical considerations should play a greater part in the discussion. The question was not purely political."26 That is to say, Chang attempted to argue for positions based on his understanding of Confucian philosophy and ethics and what they could contribute to constructive debate about, and resolution of, philosophical differences between representatives.

With regard to the humanistic aims of the UDHR, Chang had earlier expressed his view before the U.N. Economic and Social Council (February 1947) that any declaration developed should be based on "the aspiration for a new humanism."29 In September 1948, during the Third Committee deliberations, he elaborated on this view considerably by claiming, first, that "in the eighteenth century . . . in Europe, translations of Chinese philosophers had been known to and had inspired such thinkers as Voltaire, Quesnay and Diderot in their humanistic revolt against feudalistic conceptions," to such an extent that "Chinese ideas had been intermingled with European thought and sentiment on human rights at the time when that subject had been first speculated upon in modern Europe." This claim was immediately followed by another, that "stress should be laid upon the human aspect of human rights. A human being had to be constantly conscious of other men, in whose society he lived," resulting in Chang's concluding and ringing statement that "the declaration should be approved as soon as possible, to serve as a basis and a programme for the humanization of man."30 The point here is not to raise for scrutiny the accuracy or inaccuracy of Chang's first historical claim but rather to show that he quite self-consciously tried to link the Confucian idea of man's moral capacity to the notion of human rights as a development of that very capacity, both in the past and for the future.31 This linkage of human rights and humanization was an important theme in many of Chang's subsequent interventions, and it went unchallenged.

On the matter of pragmatic agreement on norms despite differences in philosophy and ideology, Chang, again, had introduced this idea earlier before the Economic and Social Council in 1947: "The fact that rights of man were included in thirty-five or forty of the world's constitutions indicated that a large measure of agreement was possible in spite of differences of philosophy or ideology."32 He also effectively developed this idea further in the Third Committee by stoutly resisting the incorporation of any language that would raise "metaphysical problems" in "a declaration designed to be universally applicable."33 Here Chang argued that "in the field of human rights popular majority should not be forgotten," adumbrating as follows: "The Chinese representative recalled that the population of his country comprised a large segment
Twiss, Confucian Contributions to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

of humanity... [with]... ideals and traditions different from those of the Christian West... [e.g.] good manners, decorum, propriety, and consideration for others." Yet, despite the importance of the latter to the Chinese, he "would refrain from proposing that mention of them should be made in the declaration," with the hope "that his colleagues would show equal consideration and withdraw some of the amendments... raising metaphysical problems." A subsequent intervention against those wishing to import a theological foundation to the UDHR put the point eloquently and subtly: "without these words [e.g., "God," "natural law," "by nature"]... those who believed in God could still find the idea of God [if they wished to so interpret], and at the same time others with different concepts would be able to accept the text [since theology was not its basis]." Chang's point was clearly that pragmatic agreement was possible despite persisting differences of philosophy, theology, and metaphysics. His point and argument carried through the remainder of the Third Committee's deliberations.

Finally, it should be observed that Chang was a great and consistent advocate of having a brief declaration readily understandable by all, which he reported was the rationale for the Chinese delegation's original submission of a ten-article declaration for consideration by the Commission on Human Rights. Although the final draft declaration before the Third Committee was more than twice this length, Chang was nonetheless able to claim that the Chinese "document had aided in making the present draft declaration clear and relatively brief." Time and time again, during the deliberations of the Third Committee, Chang returned to this point of comprehensibility to all people; for example, "it should be a document for all men everywhere, not merely for lawyers and scholars"; "as the declaration was destined for the vast mass of the world's population, it should never be criticized for being too explicit"; not to mention his innumerable interventions stressing the need for "concrete" language, paragraphing of articles that avoided "expressing two sets of ideas in a single paragraph," and "careful consideration of amendments" in the spirit of the Chinese proverb, "Matters allowed to mature slowly are free from sharp corners." All of these interventions, I interpolate, expressed Chang's great respect for the Confucian emphasis on the importance of the people, whom the UDHR was being designed to serve.

Specific Articles

The historical record also shows that Chang used specifically Confucian ideas to support, and indeed reformulate, various articles of the UDHR. For example, he appealed to Confucian concepts of human moral capacity and jen (two-mindness, benevolence) to forward and formulate the claims of Article 1 about the dignity of human beings and acting in the spirit of brotherhood. He used the Confucian orientation toward moral pragmatism to support what he called "pluralistic tolerance" of thought, conscience, and religious belief protected by Article 18. He implicitly used the Confucian emphasis on the importance of the people and explicitly appealed to the tradition's experience with competitive civil service to support, respectively, governance based on the will of the people and equal access to public service forwarded by Article 21. And, for a final example, he appealed to the Confucian emphasis on duties to community to support the balancing of rights with duties in Article 29. Let us now consider Chang's contributions to these illustrative articles in greater detail.

With regard to Article 1, it is reported in some secondary literature that, within the drafting committee's deliberations, which preceded those of the full Third Committee, Chang had argued for the inclusion of jen (humaneness) in addition to the ideas of human dignity, rights, and reason. In the fuller, more public, and more completely reported deliberations of the Third Committee, the reasoning behind Chang's earlier contributions was much more developed. First, it became clear that for Chang the idea of jen was encapsulated in the phrase "the spirit of brotherhood," which, he claimed, "was perfectly consistent with the Chinese attitude towards manners [li] and the importance of kindly and considerate treatment of others
[jen], wherein both li and jen were related by him to man’s capacity to become truly human—“It was only when man’s social behavior rose to that level that he was truly human.”

Second, it also became clear that for Chang the language of “the spirit of brotherhood” counterbalanced the statement of rights in this article. Chang explicitly claimed, “A happy balance was struck by the broad statement of rights in the first sentence and the implication of duties in the second,” accomplishing the article’s important function that “the various rights [of the full declaration] would appear more selfish if they were not preceded by the reference to a spirit of brotherhood.” That is to say, for Chang, “spirit of brotherhood” connoted duties to others in such a manner that human rights and duties were importantly and appropriately interdependent.

Finally, in the Third Committee’s debate about whether Article 1 should incorporate metaphysical or theological concepts, Chang made the crucial mediating intervention that it would be acceptable to understand the article on the basis of eighteenth-century European philosophy’s claim about man’s innate goodness, implying that “although man was largely animal, there was a part of him which distinguished him from the animals. That part was the real man and was good, and that part should therefore be given greater importance” (compare Mencius VI.A.14). Why would this be acceptable to Chang? Because this idea was consistent also with the Confucian idea that “human beings” refers to the “non-animal part of man,” wherein man has the capacity to “increase his moral stature,” “reach a high moral standard,” and rise to “that level where he was truly human.” By proposing this link between European and Chinese philosophy, Chang effectively quelled further effort to build into the declaration any stronger metaphysical or theological concepts. Collectively considered, the foregoing three points appear to present a genuine Confucian contribution to the formulation and adoption of Article 1.

With respect to Article 18, Chang made another distinctive Confucian contribution to the Third Committee’s deliberations, one that may be somewhat surprising, given the oft-cited, though myopic, view that Confucianism is hostile to religious tolerance. Amid the heated debate over protecting the freedom of religious belief, most pointedly the freedom to change one’s religious adherence—a point of grave contention between the Saudi and Pakistani delegates representing conflicting Islamic views on the question—Chang introduced his view of another important link between East and West. First, he affirmed that this article dealt with “one of the most important principles in the declaration,” stemming “from the eighteenth century, when the idea of human rights was born in Western Europe.” Second, in the interest of “studying the problem of religious expression in its true perspective,” he wished to explain “how the Chinese approached the religious problem.”

What followed was a Confucian-informed argument in five steps: (1) “Chinese philosophy was based essentially on a firm belief in a unitarian cause” [a reference to intra-worldly, organic cosmology]. (2) “That philosophy considered man’s actions [also called by Chang “the art of living”] to be more important than metaphysics” [also called by him “knowledge of the causes of life”]. (3) “The best way to testify to the greatness of the Divinity [used by Chang in an all-encompassing way to refer to both theistic and non-theistic beliefs] was to give proof of an exemplary attitude in this world.” (4) “In the eyes of Chinese philosophers, it was pluralistic tolerance in every sphere of thought, conscience, and religion, which should inspire men if they wished to base their relations on benevolence and justice” (the exemplary attitude or art of living). (5) QED: against “the objection of the representative from Saudi Arabia,” freedom of religious belief was to be protected. To which Chang added the pragmatically compelling point: not “to ensure the inviolability of that profound part of thought and conscience . . . was apt to lead mankind into unreasoned conflict.” Shortly after this intervention, Article 18 was adopted by the Third Committee.

Chang’s Confucian background also played a large role in his support for Article 21, sometimes
explicitly, but often implicitly.\textsuperscript{50} It was certainly the case that on numerous occasions at the Economic and Social Council Chang invoked the Chinese experience with “the institution of public civil service,” which he claimed had “not yet been realized in the Western world,” to support “the right of free and equal access to public service” in one’s country.\textsuperscript{51} I take the Confucian-inspired influence here to be reasonably uncontroversial.

By the same token, although he strongly supported the principle that “the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government,” to the extent of proposing that “the will of the people” should be “the subject of the first clause” of subparagraph 3, Chang did not explicitly mention or discuss the Confucian idea of the priority of the people over the ruler or government (as strongly asserted in Confucian and neo-Confucian texts).\textsuperscript{52} Perhaps the closest he came to invoking this idea was when, in his 1947 contribution to the Economic and Social Council, he tied together the ideas of public civil service, representative government, and freedom and equality forming “the basis of social democracy,” when referring to the then new 1946 Chinese constitution.\textsuperscript{53} This, of course, is hardly convincing evidence, if indeed it is evidence at all, of a Confucian influence. However, I must say that throughout all of his interventions in the Third Committee, including those discussed above, Chang made it utterly clear that the people were his priority. This principle may have been so deeply formative in his thinking—and acceptable to so many other representatives—that he did not feel the need to invoke its Confucian background.

Finally, with respect to Article 29, we return to one of Chang’s contributions to Article 1—the notion of balancing rights and duties in the UDHR.\textsuperscript{54} In supporting that “happy balance” of explicit human rights and implicit duties (in “the spirit of brotherhood”) in Article 1, Chang claimed that “similar reasoning applied to Article 29, which contained a statement of duties.”\textsuperscript{55} Inasmuch as the “duties to community” mentioned in Article 29 were thereby related to Chang’s fuller claim that “the aims of the U.N. were not to ensure the selfish gains of the individual but to try and increase man’s moral stature,” for “consciousness of duties enable man to reach a high moral standard,” I believe that we have here reasonably clear evidence of a Confucian idea in support of this article.\textsuperscript{56}

\textbf{Comparative Philosophy}

Beyond this discussion of Chang’s interventions in the Third Committee’s deliberations, there are certain philosophical points that may be of particular interest to comparative philosophers. For example, although he referred time and again to the concept of \textit{li} (rites, customs, manners) as central to Confucian ethics, Chang nevertheless clearly accepted the conceptuality of individual rights, so long as these were balanced with duties to the community in a way that would function to increase man’s moral stature. For a second example, reiterating a point discussed earlier, although at one time in the deliberations tempted to take no position on the nature of man (“for the purposes of the declaration it was better to start with a clean slate”), Chang finally supported the text of Article 1 (referring to human dignity, brotherhood, and rights) understood on the basis of eighteenth-century European philosophy incorporating the idea of man’s innate goodness, which he regarded as similar to the Confucian idea that the part of man distinguishing him from the animals is his moral nature, his innate capacity for moral achievement.\textsuperscript{57} This similarity was apparently regarded by Chang as an important normative link between Western and Eastern philosophy that could be safely affirmed by both, so long as it was kept clear of any other metaphysical and theological ideas.

What is particularly interesting and important about Chang’s Confucian contributions to the debates of the Third Committee is the fact that he often appeared to be engaging in constructive comparative ethics. That is to say, he self-consciously tried to find normative and conceptual bridges between Confucian moral thought and Western European philosophy in a way that forged new angles of vision on both traditions and how they might learn from each other.\textsuperscript{58} Cases in point included, for example, (1) linking human rights to
humanization (thus producing an understanding of human rights as contributory to mankind’s moral growth and maturation, an advance over some Western conceptions of rights as no more than protective fences around individuals); (2) emphasizing the interdependence of rights and duties (thus opening the Confucian tradition to a new, moral-conceptual category [rights] while also reminding Western traditions that rights alone were not conducive to genuine community); (3) highlighting the significance of “the spirit of brotherhood” as a moral concept shared by both East and West (prompting both to take the concept more seriously); (4) identifying mankind’s moral capacity as another philosophical bridge or similarity between East and West (which both could profitably explore further in the common project of human rights’ humanization of the world); (5) demonstrating how freedom of religion could be soundly protected by both Eastern and Western traditions (in a manner that did not require adopting any specific set of religious premises or beliefs—a model for future cooperation and interaction); and (6) demonstrating how Eastern and Western traditions could agree on certain fundamentals of humane governance (e.g., priority of the will of the people, equal access to public service, implying that neither tradition had a special premium on how to understand humane governance).

Equally important, perhaps, as these constructive achievements were those lines of argument that Chang did not pursue—whether by choice or inadvertence is difficult to determine. He did not, for example, attempt to substitute li (rites, customs) for the category of rights or to argue for li’s moral superiority, as I believe some Western scholars of Confucianism have attempted to do. He did not argue for the priority of socioeconomic human rights over civil-political rights, as, again, some Western scholars of Confucianism are tempted to do. He did not claim that, as a communitarian tradition, Confucianism was somehow conceptually incompatible with human-rights thinking and advocacy, as, once again, some Western scholars are tempted to claim. Why did Chang not pursue such lines of argument when they seem so obvious to others familiar with the tradition? Was he, for example, so steeped in his Western education that he was blinded to these moves? I personally doubt that this is the right sort of answer, given the extent and subtlety of Chang’s Confucian interventions.

A better answer perhaps is this: Chang saw both Confucianism and the West as evolving traditions, originally formed by different historical, political, and social circumstances and yet sharing the same world, equally vulnerable to cruelty, bestiality, inhumanity of man to man, and linked in that bond of vulnerability. Furthermore, in confronting the issues before the Third Committee, Chang came increasingly to appreciate certain similarities of moral thought and action, East and West, which together formed a bridge for intercultural exchange and pragmatic agreement on the really important issues of the postwar world. And he wagered that strengthening and widening that bridge—or at least keeping it open—would allow both traditions to learn from each other, to change and evolve at least to the extent that they could actively cooperate in the grand project of the world’s humanization. If Chang so wagered, and I believe he did, then his position is one I share, and one we all can at least appreciate.