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Moral China in the Age of Reform

Three decades of dizzying change in China's economy and society have left a tangible record of successes and failures. Less readily accessible but of no less consequence is the story, as illuminated in this book, of what China's reform has done to its people as moral and spiritual beings. Jiwei Ci examines the moral crisis in post-Mao China as a mirror of deep contradictions in the new self as well as in society. He seeks to show that lack of freedom, understood as the moral and political conditions for subjectivity under modern conditions of life, lies at the root of these contradictions, just as enhanced freedom offers the only appropriate escape from them. Rather than as a ready-made answer, however, freedom is treated throughout as a pressing question in China's search for a better moral and political culture. A probing account of moral China in the age of reform, this book is also an original philosophical inquiry into the relation between moral subjectivity and freedom.

Jiwei Ci is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hong Kong and the author of *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution: From Utopianism to Hedonism* (1994) and *The Two Faces of Justice* (2006).

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In loving memory of my maternal grandmother

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Acknowledgments

I first started paying serious attention to what came to be known as China's moral crisis back in the early 1990s as I was working on an earlier book, *Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution*. It was only much later, around 2005, that it dawned on me that there was, in the Chinese context, an incredibly close link between my interest in the moral crisis and a long-standing preoccupation of mine with the question of freedom. When these hitherto only parallel concerns thus came together, the idea for the present book was born. By a happy coincidence, it was at roughly this time that I began to receive invitations to speak or write about themes in the vicinity of the moral crisis or the question of freedom or both. As this book goes to press, I feel a renewed appreciation of those friends and colleagues who by their invitations and pressures gave me the stimulus to shape inchoate and fragmented inklings into claims, arguments, and narratives. These people include, in alphabetical order, Geremie Barmé, Timothy Cheek, Pochung Chow, Fred Dallmayr, Gloria Davies, Gan Yang, P. J. Ivanhoe, Tao Jiang, Liang Zhiping, Lorenzo Marsili, Thomas Pogge, Q. S. Tong, and Zhao Tingyang.

Some of these initiatives led to particularly useful trial runs, in published form, of ideas that have now found their way into this book. In this connection, I am grateful to several publishers for permission to draw on previously published material. Chapters 1 and 2 are revised and expanded versions, respectively, of "The Moral Crisis in Post-Mao China: Prolegomenon to a Philosophical Analysis," *Diogenes* (Sage Publications), vol. 56 (2009), pp. 19–25, and of "Dialectic of the Chinese Revolution Revisited: Desublimation and Resublimation in Post-Mao China," in Fred Dallmayr and Zhao Tingyang, eds., *Contemporary Chinese Political*

Thought: Debates and Perspectives (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012), pp. 173–84. Chapter 3 is a substantially revised version of “China and the Question of Freedom,” *boundary 2* (Durham: Duke University Press), vol. 38 (2011), pp. 53–76, and Chapter 4 contains, within a new thematic structure, portions of an article that first appeared as “What Is in the Cloud? – A Critical Engagement with Thomas Metzger on ‘The Clash between Chinese and Western Political Theories,’” *boundary 2*, vol. 34 (2007), pp. 61–86. Finally, Chapters 6 and 7 are slightly modified versions, respectively, of “Neither Devotion Nor Introjection: Freudian Reflections on China’s Moral Crisis,” in Tao Jiang and P. J. Ivanhoe, eds., *The Reception and Rendition of Freud in China: China’s Freudian Slip* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 103–16, and of “Agency and Other Stakes of Poverty,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell), vol. 21 (2013), pp. 125–50.

It has not been an easy time writing this book, especially emotionally, as I am not only an observer but also a participant in relation to the subject matter, and prolonged reflection on the deep roots of the moral crisis and the huge obstacles to freedom as its solution is bound to take its toll on the participant in the author. All the more invaluable under such circumstances has been the intellectual and moral company of friends, which gives constant life to the simple truth that passionate critique is a labor of love. Thus, without mentioning these friends by name, as they know best who they are, I thank them both for helping keep me sober and for making me dare to be more hopeful than I would otherwise be.

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