

Being Authentically Chinese 做个真正的华人

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When I was young I used to really agonize over why China had to be so poor, so weak, and so backward compared to the West? Surely that didn't mean that Chinese, i.e. Chinese like me, were inherently inferior to the whites?

小的时候曾经有一个问题令我极度痛苦：为什么比起西方中国这么穷、这么弱、这么落后呢？不会是因为华人，即好像我的那些华人，本质上是比起白人低等的吧？

Growing up as a eleven year old during the sixties in North America, my self-esteem was repeatedly battered by popular culture. It was bad enough that Asians were portrayed either as vicious communist “Red Chinese” or Vietcong “gooks,” or as utterly helpless though good “Hop Sing’s,” who couldn’t fend for themselves and had to depend completely on Americans, i.e. white people, for protection. What’s worse, however, was that the TV shows that I had come to love, their (white) heroes that I had come to admire, and movies that were all the rage among my (white) friends and classmates, viciously, though perhaps unintentionally, put down Asians, mainly Chinese.

作为在北美洲六十年代成长的十一岁孩子，我的自尊心一次又一次被流行文化打击。亚洲人被描绘为凶狠的共产“红色中国人”或越共“残渣 (gooks)”，或被描绘为尽管是好人但完全没有独立自主能力，要彻底依靠美国人即白人保护的“合胜 (Hop Sing)”华佣，这已经够坏了，但更严重的是，我所爱上了的电视剧片，剧片里我所仰慕的 (白人) 英雄，和令我的 (白人) 朋友和同学们疯狂的电影，都恶毒地，尽管也许是无意地，贬低亚洲人，主要是华人。

Every week I would look forward to such shows as “Gunsmoke,” “Have Gun, Will Travel,” or “The Untouchables,” and then one day they would have an episode where the heroes fought evil Chinese, who were all absolutely useless—why, just one of the white heroes, with whom, alas, I had earlier identified, would dispose of ten top-notch kungfu masters simultaneously without even breaking a sweat! And all the prettiest and classiest Chinese women swooned at the first sight of the white heroes, abandoning hapless though very elite and patrician Chinese lovers to throw themselves at mere plebian whites.

每个星期我都渴望着等待观看“枪烟”，“有枪可以旅行”或“不可触动的人”，然后一天，剧片就会演出一场剧片英雄打邪恶华人的戏，而华人们都绝对是饭桶：哼，一个我不幸认同的白人英雄，能够单独干掉十个功夫高手，而且一滴汗水也不流！最漂亮、最高贵的女华人们，见到白人英雄便都神魂颠倒，都把倒霉的、虽然是很精英、很显贵的男华人爱人抛弃，向不过是粗俗的白人怀抱里把自己投掷。

And Cold War spy movies! Cold War spies, whom everyone I knew loved, everyone, that was, unless you were Chinese like me, did the same to top elite Chinese men and women except on a much grander and fancier scale. I remembered watching my first Cold War spy movie in sixth grade and getting very angry but very choked up, with a big lump in my throat and tears starting to come into my eyes, one part of me feeling totally ashamed of being Chinese—we were so inferior—but another part of me shouting in a rage, “The creeps! They are lying; they are making all this up! Chinese aren’t such barbaric, evil weaklings!”

还有冷战间谍电影！所有人（除了例如我的那些华人）都热爱的冷战间谍，对最高等级的男女华人精英也干同样的事情，但是他们干的规模更大、更精彩。我记得，小学六年级我第一次看冷战间谍电影，变成很愤怒但哽得很厉害，有个大肿块塞在咽喉里，眼泪开始流出来，有一部分的我，则以身为华人觉得极端羞耻（我们实在太低等了！），但另一部分的我，就狂怒地喊叫，“坏蛋们！他们在撒谎！所有这些都是捏造出来的！华人不是这么野蛮、邪恶的弱者！”

I knew, because I was no weakling, at least not in spirit; I could stand up to any bully in our small town grades K through 12 school where we were the only Chinese family, though he might be years older and two to three times heavier—I had been taught to fight back against any bully, no matter how big or strong, because even if you “lost” physically you always won morally and strategically, and the frightened bully who had never expected any fighting back would never touch you again. After a fight or two no one cared to bully me. Anyone who dared to taunt me with “Chinky, Chinky Chinaman!” I would curse back with an English version of some Hong Kong street vitriol, “Die, boy! Die, boy! So many people die, why don’t you die!” Seeing the anger on my face, nobody wanted to fight me, and soon no one taunted me.

我确信那一点，因为我不是弱者，最少精神上不是；在我居住小镇里的那所幼稚园至高中六年级的学校里，我们是唯一的华人家庭，但我可以跟任何恶霸对抗，尽管他比我大好几岁或重两三倍。我被教导，要对任何欺负我的恶霸还手攻击，无论他多大或多强，因为就算你肉体上“输了”你道义上和战略上会赢了，从来不意料到会遭遇反抗的恶霸，会被你吓坏了，永远不会再触动你。打了一两次架之后，没有人乐意欺负我了。有人敢用“清记，清记，支那人！”来侮辱我，我就反过来用香港街上恶毒言语的英语版本骂他，“死仔，死仔，咁多人死，又唔见你死！”见到我脸上的怒气，没有人想跟我打架，很快就没有人侮辱我了。

As for being barbaric and evil, hadn’t my Dad always taught me that true Chinese were honest and kind, and that China was the Land of Courtesy and Integrity?

至于野蛮和邪恶，我爸爸不是一向都教导我，华人遵守信和仁，而中国是礼义之邦吗？

So the part in me that said the screen was lying always won over the part in me that was ashamed of being Chinese, and I would finish the show absolutely furious, but unbowed.

所以，说银幕撒谎的我那部分，每次都击败感觉做华人羞耻的那部分，我把戏看完后会非常愤怒，但是不屈。

The townspeople were, on the whole, absolutely wonderful to us, and my (white) friends and classmates I loved dearly, but because of the TV shows and how my friends all gushed about the Cold War spy James Bond I always felt I was a bit different. By the time I was a teenager in search of my identity, I knew I couldn't identify with white society; no, I had to search elsewhere for my true identity.

小镇的人们整体来说对我们非常非常好，而我热爱我的（白人）朋友和同学，但是，因为电视剧片和因为我的朋友都把冷战间谍詹姆斯·邦德叹赏为绝妙，我总是觉得我跟他们是有点不同的。当我成为了一个要寻找自己个体的少年时，我知道我不能跟白人社会认同，不，我要在别的地方寻找我真正的自己个体。

Finding my identity meant that I had to be true to myself, to be authentic, and that meant I had to be authentically Chinese. Did being authentically Chinese, however, mean being authentically inferior? If Chinese weren't inferior to whites, then why was China so poor, weak, and backward, in a word, so inferior?

寻找我自己的个体意味我要对自己真诚，要真正，而这就意味要做个真正的华人。但是，做真正的华人，是不是意味做低等的人呢？如果华人不比白人低等，那么为什么中国这么穷、弱和落后，一句话，这么低等呢？

Hoping to find an answer, I went to the library and read book after book.

我走进图书馆里，把一本又一本书阅读，希望能够找到答案。

Well, one response from some authors I had read back then was that China's poverty, weakness, and backwardness weren't bad things and didn't mean that China was inferior; it just meant that we valued "non-materialistic" stuff while the "spiritually inferior, greedy" West valued "materialistic" stuff; we were "spiritually superior". I couldn't buy that; it sounded too much like the ostrich burying its head in the sand. I thought to myself, "Why, sirs, you mean all that infant mortality, all that malnutrition, all that illiteracy, all that ignorance and deprivation, that's all OK?" No, I couldn't accept it; only callous members of a rich elite from a poor country could stand up and say that it was OK that their country was poor, to say that it was just that their country was not as "materialistic" as the West. "Sure, you rich gentlemen are fine; there are lots of servants to pamper your kids and protect them from child mortality and the sequelae of disease, and lots of expensive elite schools to teach your kids literacy, English even—I am talking about the ordinary folk! Yes, the ones who barely get 1,200 calories a day and yet have to toil while you rich gentlemen get 2,400 and yet live in leisure!" Thought I. No, for me the response that the material level of living was unimportant didn't hold water.

我所阅读的一些作者说，中国的穷、弱和落后，并不意味中国低等，只不过意味我们珍惜“非物质”的东西，而“精神上低等、贪枉”的西方则珍惜“物质”的东西；我们“精神上是高等的”。但我不能相信这个论点，太像鸵鸟把头放进沙里面了

。我对自己想，“什么，先生们，你们是说，所有那些婴儿夭折，所有那些营养不良，所有那些文盲，所有那些无知和匮乏，所有这些都是毫无问题的吗？”不，我不能接受这个论点，只有从穷国家来的麻木不仁的一些精英成员才可以站起来说，他们国家的穷困是毫无问题的，不过是他们国家不像西方那样“追求物质”。我想，“当然啦，富有的绅士们，你们毫无问题，你们有很多仆人来娇宠你们的孩子，来保护他们，让他们不会遇到夭折和病残，更有很多昂贵的精英学校来教你们的孩子认字，甚至认英语呢！我所关怀的是普通人啊！对，那些几乎一天1200卡热能食物也拿不到但是仍然要勤劳工作的人，不像绅士你们，一天吃了2400卡热能却闲瑕无事！”不，对我来说，物质生活程度并不重要这个论点不能成立。

So I had to accept as fact that China had been and was still, poor, weak, backward, and inferior.

所以我便需要接受中国曾经是和仍然是穷、弱、落后和低等这个事实。

Then another response, from another set of authors, was that China wasn't poor and backward to begin with—no, it was rich; it became poor and backward only because of Western aggression and exploitation. Such authors pointed to the fact that China had to pay hundreds of millions of ounces of silver and gold as reparations for losing all the wars inflicted by Western powers during the nineteenth century. But, I asked, before those wars why hadn't China developed the guns, ships, and modern weaponry? Why hadn't China industrialized before the West? When I looked into and read about the matter, I had to accept that China was poor, weak, backward and inferior compared to the West even before the West invaded.

另外一个论点，是另一群作者写的，说中国本来并非贫穷落后，不，中国原本是富有的，变成贫穷只不过是因西方的侵略和剥削。这些作者指出，中国付出了亿万两黄金和白银，来赔偿输掉了的、西方列强们强加于中国的战争。但是，我问，这些战争发生之前，为什么中国没有制造出大炮、战舰和现代武器呢？为什么中国没有在西方之前工业化呢？我研究了这个问题和阅读了有关的书本之后，我就需要接受这个事实：西方侵略中国之前，中国已经是比起西方穷、弱、落后和低等了。

In fact, I came to realize, Chinese and people from the rest of the world should be grateful to the whites and the West for having developed all this technology, which had lifted all mankind to a much higher level of civilization, knowledge, and health. What was more, the West was still leading and pioneering the continuous advance in science and technology, and was still continuing to do most of the work of uplifting mankind more and more.

同时我发现了，事实上，华人和全世界的其他人都应该对白人和西方感激，感谢他们发展了所有这些科技，把人类提升到高很多的文明、知识和健康水平。还有，西方仍然在领导和开垦科学和科技的继续进步，西方也仍然在负担最大部分的继续提升人类水平的工作。

The young me had to swallow hard and accept that what China had was, taken as a whole, poor, backward and inferior, that is, Chinese tradition and culture had bad things that had made China poor, backward and inferior compared to the West. China had to change and Chinese tradition and culture had to change. If being authentically Chinese meant sticking to the entire established and overall inferior Chinese tradition and culture, then being authentically Chinese would be a bad thing. Well, could being authentically Chinese mean something else; could it mean a good thing?

少年的我，要使劲地咽一下，接受事实：中国所拥有的，整体上来说还是贫穷、落后和低等的，那就是说，中华传统和文化有些坏的东西，使到中国比西方贫穷、落后和低等。中国需要变，中华传统和中华文化要变。如果做个真正的华人意味死守整个现成的、整体上是低等的中华传统和文化，那么做个真正的华人便会是件坏事了。哎，做个真正的华人能够意味另外的东西，能够是件好事吗？

Well, yes. After I have gotten older, I have come to know what is in Chinese tradition and culture that is good and absolutely applicable today. The Chinese heritage has the theme of the supremacy of the relationship-defined obligations, and that is applicable today and good for living happily and successfully in the modern world. So there is something good to being authentically Chinese after all: there is a good part to the Chinese heritage that is useful for today, that even the West and indeed the whole world should adopt. Thus half of our puzzle is solved: for being authentically Chinese to mean something good, one must be true to that good and superior part of the Chinese heritage, the culture and tradition of the supremacy of the relationship-defined obligations.

是的，是能够的。我长大一点后，我知道了中华传统和文化中有甚麽是好的和绝对合今天世界的东西。中华传统有人伦至上的主题，而主题合适现代和有利于在现代社会快乐地和成功地生活。真的，做个真正的华人的确可以得到些好东西：中华传统有个好的部分，在今天仍然有用，全世界连西方也应该采用。那么，我们的难题有一半解答了：要使做个真正的华人成为好事，就一定要遵守中华传统好的和优越的那一部分，就要遵守人伦至上的文化和传统。

Furthermore, now that I have grown older, I have come to know what has kept China in such a backward state all these centuries. It is none other than excessive government: since the Qin Dynasty of 221 B.C.E., the Chinese government has always strictly controlled commerce, regulated agriculture, monopolized waterworks and irrigation, monopolized the metal mines, monopolized salt production and trade, and recruited successful inquirers into natural science into the imperial academies to pass their lives in empty talk, just so that they can be watched and controlled by the government. For a technologically backward society, the reach of traditional China's government has been amazingly pervasive. It is none other than this excessive government, though well intentioned, that has repeatedly suffocated innovation and economic development over the ages.

此外，现在我年纪大了一点，我知道了是什么使到中国这么多世纪以来还这么落后。不是别的，是政府过分的统治。自从公元前221年的秦朝以来，中国政府一向都严格地控制贸易，管制农业（例如禁止宰牛吃肉，因为政府“明智地”决定了，牛

是应该留下来耕种的)，垄断水利和灌溉，垄断金属矿场，垄断造盐和卖盐，更把对自然科学有一点心得的学者募召进入太学里面，过一辈子没作为的清谈，以便政府监视和控制。作为一个科技落后的社会，传统中国的政府，干涉范围惊奇地广泛。正是中国政府这种过分的统治，尽管是出于好意的，曾经在漫长岁月里，把创新和经济发展再三窒息。

Coming to know that has been very liberating: now I know for sure that Chinese, including Chinese like me, aren't inherently inferior to the whites. I also know that China must, China can, and China will catch up to and maybe surpass the most advanced countries of the world. In doing so, the Chinese must purge that which has kept China backward from Chinese tradition and culture, i.e. excessive government, and to adopt or invent new, good things to replace the purged. Such new, good things will be things that can propel China to a higher level of wealth and progress, a level that is on a par with or surpasses the advanced countries today.

知道了这个道理，授予我很大的解放，我知道了华人，包括我在内，不是本质上比白人低等。我也知道了中国一定要，中国能够，和中国将会追上和也许超越世界最先进的国家。要这样做，华人们一定要把令到中国落后的东西从中华传统和文化清除掉，采用或发明新的、好的东西来代替清除掉的东西。这些新的、好的东西将会把中国推进到新的财富和进步水平，一个跟今日的先进国家相等或超越的水平。

Now what is it that the West has had that has enabled it to advance so far ahead of the rest of the world as early as the 1500's, the time when famine becomes unknown in England and Holland, though still recurring in China? It is none other than the free market. And the free market is the exact opposite of China's excessive government. Now many who don't understand what the free market really is will protest at this point that the free market is barbaric and a free-for-all where the law of the jungle rules, so how can civilized China stoop so low as to adopt this barbarism? No, that's all wrong; the free market is not barbaric or where the law of the jungle rules; the free market is one of the highest attainments of human civilization and is where mutual help, not mutual harm, rules. Indeed the market is nothing but a vast arena for people to help each other. Honesty, integrity, and the highest moral and ethical standards, all things that traditional Chinese culture has emphasized and traditional Chinese aspire to, are the inevitable outcomes of a proper, truly free, free market. Of course, the market as it exists in the West is not perfect, and is not even very free, and China can make the market even better, freer, and more conducive to innovation and economic development, in a word, more conducive to humans helping each other.

那么，西方有的是什么，让西方早在1500年代即英国和荷兰不再有大规模饥荒的年代，就超越全世界的呢？不是别的，是自由市场。自由市场恰恰是中国政府过分统治的相反。到这里，很多不明白自由市场是什么的人会抗议，说自由市场是野蛮的，是个丛林规格统治的、每一个人跟每一个人争夺的搏斗场，中国怎能够把自己降得这么低，采用这种野蛮东西？不，这都是错误，自由市场并不是野蛮，也不是丛林规格统治的场所，而是人类文明最高尚的成就之一，是被互相帮助而不是被互相伤害所统治的地方。其实，市场不外是庞大让人们互相帮助的场所。诚信、正直、

最高尚的道义和品德准则，这些都是传统中华文化所强调和仰慕的东西，都将会是正当的、真正自由的市场的必然产品。当然，西方的市场并不完美，也不是很自由，中国可以使市场更好、更自由、更有利于创新和经济发展，一句话，更有利于人们互相帮助。

Another thing that the West has possessed that other cultures haven't is the highest esteem for investigation and the natural sciences. Many traditional cultures think of all truth, including truth about the natural world, as being either handed down by authority or discoverable by "geniuses" thinking hard and debating among themselves. The West, however, has practiced in a grand way the concept that the truth about the natural world is discoverable by anyone who conducts scientific investigation. And in the West there has been a tradition of fanatic and brutal adherence to scientific principles: for example, around the year 1600 without giving it a second thought Kepler abandoned years and years of theoretical work on planetary motion to embark on a new direction after discovering that his original work led to a minute but detectable discrepancy of $2/60$ of a degree of arc between his predicted and the observed trajectory of Mars. The strictest respect for investigation and the right of anyone, not just the ordained or the exalted, to investigate the world for truth has been a Western one.

另外一样西方拥有而其他文化没有的，是对调查和自然科学最恭谨的崇敬。很多传统文化把所有真理，包括关于自然世界的真理，看作是权威传递下来的或者是由“天才们”使劲思量 and 互相辩论而得出来的。西方则不然，西方巨大规模地实践了这个概念：只要进行科学调查，关于自然世界的真理是任何人都可以发现出来的。而且，在西方有一个狂热地和狠心地遵守科学原则的传统。例如，1600年左右，开普勒想也不想，就把自己多年的关于星球运行的理论工作抛弃，改向新方面探索，因为发现了原来的理论工作，使到他对火星轨道所作出的计算跟观察而得到的真正轨道，具有一个微少的但是可以测量到的、仅仅 $2/60$ 度弧线的差异。对调查的崇敬是西方那里出来的。任何人而不仅仅是被圣明委任的人或地位崇高的人，都有权去调查世界，寻找真理，这也是西方那里出来的。

Besides the free market and the natural sciences, there must be other very important things that will propel a society to the head of human progress, that need to be discovered and invented. Hopefully, Chinese will discover and invent them. It's high time, isn't it, that Chinese do a bigger share of the work of uplifting mankind?

除了自由市场和自然科学外，一定还有尚待发现或发明的重要事物，能够令到一个社会走到人类进步的前面。希望华人们会发现和发明它们。华人们负担更大一部分提升人类水平的工作，应该是时候了，难道不是吗？

So Chinese culture needs to keep the good, that is, the culture of the supremacy of the relationship-defined obligations, discard the bad, that is, the culture of excessive government, adopt good things from other cultures, that is, the culture of the free market and the natural sciences, improve on them, and discover or invent new, good things that are not yet in existence. That is what we'll have to take as authentic Chinese culture. What is authentically Chinese now becomes a question of what should be, not what is.

所以中华文化需要保留好的东西，那就是人伦至上的文化，清除坏的东西，那就是政府过分统治的文化，采用其他文化的好东西，那就是自由市场和自然科学的文化，把它们更进一步改良，和发现或发明新的、好的、还未存在的东西。这就是我们需要接受为真正的中华文化。那么，真正的中华文化便变为我们应有的文化，而不是我们现有的文化。

Of course, even the best tradition in Chinese culture needs to be modified and re-stated in light of the modern world. For example, the doctrine of the Five Cardinal Relationships (五伦) should be modified to include a sixth Cardinal Relationship (六伦) of the buyer and the seller (买卖). Some of the relationship-defined obligations binding the Cardinal Relationships need to be restated in light of modern conditions. For example, the relationship between the ruler and the subject (君臣) needs to be restated as the relationship between the government and the citizens. All that is good in tradition and thought need to be updated; nothing should stay as is.

当然，中华文化最好的传统也需要按照现代社会的情况来修改和用新的方式陈述。例如，五伦的信条就应该修改，变为包括买者和卖者关系的六伦。有些人伦关系则需要按照现代情况来用新的方式陈述。例如，统治者和被统治者（君臣）之间的关系就需要重新陈述为政府和人民之间的关系。所有传统和思想里好的都需要更新，没有东西应该一成不变。

So the question, “What kind of culture is Chinese?” should become the question, “First, what is good from the past that should be updated and kept, second, what is good that Chinese culture doesn’t have yet that should be adopted, and third, what is good that no culture in the world has yet that need to be discovered or invented?” Being authentically Chinese then just means being true to the good things in the Chinese heritage, taking part in the adoption from other cultures of good things that Chinese culture doesn't yet have, and taking part in the discovery or invention of new, good things. So it means that the culture that should be Chinese really should be a new, hybrid culture that includes something of what has been Chinese previously and is still good and great (the relationship-defined obligations), plus something good and great that hasn’t been Chinese but has been present elsewhere in the world (the free market and the natural sciences), plus perhaps something new that hasn’t yet appeared anywhere in the world thus far but needs to be discovered or invented.

所以，“什么文化才是中华的？”这个问题，应该改为：“第一，什么文化是以前就是中华的、是好的，应该更新和保留的？第二，什么文化是好的但是中华文化本来没有的，应该从其他文化引进和采用的？第三，什么文化是好的但全世界文化都未拥有的，需要发现和发明的？”做个真正华人就只不过意味忠于中华传统的好东西，参加采用中华文化尚未有而其他文化拥有的好东西，和参加发现或发明新的东西。那么，这就意味中华应有的文化其实是一个新的、混合的文化，包括了一些一向是中华的而现在仍然是好的和伟大的东西，即人伦至上思想，加上一些好的和伟大的但不曾是中华的而是其他地方的东西，即自由市场和自然科学，也可能再加上一些全世界都没有出现过的而是尚待发现或发明的。

Well then, I've come full circle: it's not necessary to worry too much about being "authentically Chinese"; all that is needed is to embrace what is good, and embracing what is good automatically includes embracing some things that are Chinese, some things that have not been Chinese, and in the future, some things that do not yet exist but will hopefully be Chinese.

啊，我走了一个大循环：其实不需要太紧张做个“真正的华人”，只需要拥抱好的东西就行了。而拥抱好的东西，就自然包括拥抱一些曾经属于中华的东西、一些曾经不属于中华的东西，和一些尚未存在但希望将会是属于中华的东西。

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