

Prof. Joseph Raz, FBA

22nd July, 2020

Prof. Qiu Yong
President
Tsinghua University
<mailto:president@tsinghua.edu.cn>

Dear Prof. Qiu Yong

I hope you will forgive my writing to you regarding Tsinghua's recent treatment of Prof. Xu Zhangrun.

Even though I once had the honour to give a keynote paper at a conference hosted in Tsinghua, and I greatly appreciated the contacts I made on the occasion, I regret that I never had more contact with your university. I regret that because as a professor of philosophy specializing in legal and political philosophy I had tried for many years to break the barriers which divide philosophical traditions, and to overcome the cultural biases which unfortunately undermine the work of international organizations. This was a central theme of my work in international political theory, the rule of law, and international human rights, and a topic of the few lectures I was able to give in China.

My contacts with Chinese scholars whom I met in China, or in Britain or in the US, led me to think that the ambition to cultivate international collaborations and to develop integrated international institutions was common to all of them, and that they were eager to learn of the thought and traditions of non-Chinese cultures just as I and my colleagues are eager to learn of the thought and traditions in China and other parts of Asia.

I was therefore shocked and deeply disappointed to hear of Tsinghua's decisions regarding Prof. Xu, decisions which do him gross injustice, and which betray the ambition to promote academic and other international collaborations. We expect universities to advise their government, and that necessarily means that they have, when appropriate, to criticize their government. To fulfil their constructive role in their societies universities must protect the ability of their academics to openly study and evaluate the policies of their government, including their ability to criticize. In this case, Tsinghua did the opposite and instead of protecting Prof. Xu's ability to criticize the authorities, it interprets those criticisms as undermining the authorities, and punished him very severely. By doing so Tsinghua makes the rest of the world think that it is not a worthy partner for academic co-operation.

If there are any values that we shared and that made dialog and search for progress possible, you are no longer sharing in them.

I call on you to reverse those decisions, and once again join a common struggle for dialogue and cooperation.

Yours truly,

Joseph Raz

P.S. You will find information about me on my webpage
<https://sites.google.com/site/josephnraz/>