

Responsive and Responsible Mutuality between the Human Self and Her Ecosystem: A Perspective of Spiritual Humanism

Benlik ve Ekosistem Arasındaki Duyarlı ve Sorumlu Karşılıklılık: Mânevî Hümanist Bir Yaklaşım

Jian Bao WANG*

Abstract

This paper investigates possibilities for ‘responsive and responsible mutuality’ between the human self and her ecosystem from the perspective of ‘Spiritual Humanism’. Spiritual Humanism is a global discourse emerging out of third-epoch Confucianism (so-called ‘Contemporary Neo-Confucianism’). As a theoretical framework, Spiritual Humanism places Humanity (*ren*) in the center; all four dimensions - self, community, Earth and Heaven - are transfused with the active vital power (*qi*) of Humanity (*ren*). The implications of this discourse for ethical practice, particularly in the context of the global ecological movement, are significant: corresponding human reverence for the natural world, rooted in ‘spiritual’ or anthropocosmic rather than merely ‘secular’ or anthropocentric humanism, is a precondition for both environmental and intergenerational justice.

Keywords: Spiritual Humanism, Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, Ecology, Anthropocosmism

Özet

Bu makale, insan benliği ile ekosistemi arasındaki ‘duyarlı ve sorumlu karşılıklılık’ olanaklarını mânevî hümanizm perspektifinden araştırmaktadır. Mânevî hümanizm,


* Dr, phil. Research Fellow&Director, Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business, E-mail: jianbaowang@ckgsb.edu.cn.

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üçüncü dönem Konfüçyüsçülükten (ki Çağdaş Neo-Konfüçyüsçülük olarak adlandırılır) doğan küresel bir söylemdir. Teorik bir çerçeve olarak mânevî hümanizm, insanlığı (*ren*) merkeze yerleştirir; dört boyutun tamamı -benlik, toplum, yer ve gök-insanlığın (*ren*) aktif yaşamsal gücü (*qi*) ile aktarılır. Bu söylemin, özellikle küresel ekolojik hareket bağlamında, etik uygulamalar için çıkarımları önemlidir: Salt ‘seküler’ ya da insan merkezli hümanizmden ziyade ‘rûhânî’ ya da antropokozmik temellere dayanan, doğal dünyayla uyumlu insânî hürmet, hem çevresel hem de nesiller arası adalet için bir ön koşuldur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mânevî hümanizm, çağdaş Neokonfüçyüsçülük, ekoloji, antropokozmizm.

1. Three Epochs of Confucianism and Three Generations of the Third Epoch

The history of Confucianism is typically divided into three epochs: 1) from earliest times, not later than Duke Zhou of the Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C.E. -256 B.C.E.) through the Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.); Neo-Confucianism from the Song (960-1279 C.E.) through the Ming (1368-1644 C.E.) Dynasties, and Confucian thought from the Opium War (1840 C.E.) to the present as the third epoch.¹

In its first epoch, Confucius succeeded in developing a comprehensive system of morality, ethics and politics from primordial rituals and musical teachings.²

In its second epoch, owing to the fostering influence of Neo-Daoism and Buddhism from 220 CE to the 10th century, Confucianism enjoyed a renaissance, developing a system of metaphysics, expanding into Asia, and fostering a Confucian Culture Sphere.³

In its third epoch, Confucianism lost its ideological leadership, retreating to the background of daily life in Cultural China⁴ since the beginning of 20th century, or even

¹ Xinzhong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6-7.

² Tu Weiming, *The Global Significance of Concrete Humanity; Essays on the Confucian Discourse in Cultural China*, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2010), 219.

³ Op. cit., 229-283.

⁴ J. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy. Vol. III: The Problem of Historical Significance*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), v-vi.

as early as 1644 when mainland China was conquered by the nomad Manchu who built up the last dynasty in China called Qing (1644 CE-1911 CE).

The third epoch of Confucianism is represented by three distinct generations. The first generation was represented by Xiong Shili, Ma Yifu and Liang Shuming, who built on the scholars of the second epoch by referring to the spiritual resources of Buddhism and Daoism (and with relatively few Western references). The second generation was represented by Mou Zongsan, Feng Youlan, He Lin, Tang Junyi, Fang Dongmei and Xu Fuguan etc., who conducted their research mainly based on the Hellenic philosophical traditions, such as Mou vs Kant, He and Tang vs Hegel, Feng vs John Dewey and so forth, with relatively little reference to the Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).⁵

As a prominent member of the third generation of “New Confucians,” Professor Tu Weiming has deeply penetrated the mindset of the Western world, not only referring to Hellenic traditions but also Abrahamic traditions. In the words of Yao Xinzong, Tu Weiming “attempts to reshape the Confucian perspective on the meaning of life by tracing the humanistic understanding of life to transcendental sources, and therefore pinpointing the spiritual value of Confucianism for a twenty-first-century society.”⁶

2. Review of Spiritual Humanism and The Ecological Turn in Contemporary neo-Confucianism

Spiritual Humanism is the fruit of the continuous endeavors of the three generations, implying an ecological turn of Confucianism. In his 2018 Wang Yangming Lecture at the 24th World Congress of Philosophy, Tu defines Spiritual Humanism in the following terms:

- 1) From the perspective of Spiritual Humanism, each human being as endowed by the Heavenly decree is intrinsically free, equal, and able to realize what is great in us.
- 2) An equally crucial premise of Spiritual Humanism is sanctity of the earth. Our universe is saturated with intrinsic value and numinous beauty. This reality cannot be proven by empirical data. Nor can it be grasped by reductive logic

⁵ Tu Weiming, *The Global Significance*, xii.

⁶ Xinzong Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, 285.

from natural sciences such as neurobiology. Rather, it is a commitment, indeed a faith, which may or may not be theistic.

3) The grammar of theism strikes a sympathetic resonance in Spiritual Humanism. Sacred places (cathedrals, churches, temples, mosques, synagogues), hymns, songs, prayers, dances, festivals are beyond pretensions to scientific, philosophical, or theological control. All three great theistic religions have spiritual resources and intellectual depths to inspire us to sing songs of hope and express our gratitude to divine love. They have made profound contributions to human religiosity.

4) Nevertheless, Spiritual Humanism may be theistic or pantheistic, and it embraces atheism and a variety of vitalism characteristic of most indigenous traditions as well.

5) It is manifested in the four inseparable dimensions of Confucian humanism: self, community, nature, and Heaven. Only through dialogue can integration of the body and mind, fruitful interaction between self and society, harmony between humankind and nature, and mutuality between the human heart-and-mind and the Way of Heaven be attained.

Professor Tu's article "The Ecological Turn in New Confucian Humanism: Implications for China and the World"⁷ was also summarized by Joseph Camilleri in terms of "spiritual humanism":

Tu Weiming calls for 'a comprehensive spiritual humanism' capable of integrating the four pillars of human flourishing: self, community, Earth and Heaven. What distinguishes the neo-Confucian holistic vision are the four indispensable relationships that are said to connect the four pillars: (1) fruitful interaction between self and community; (2) harmonization of community, which encompasses regulation of family, governance of the state and maintenance of world order; (3) a sustainable harmonious relationship between the human species and nature; and (4) mutual responsiveness between the 'human heart-and-mind' and 'the way of heaven'.⁸

On August 5, 2002, a seminar was cohosted by the Association of China Philosophy History and China Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing to discuss Tu's article by gathering the most prominent Chinese scholars.⁹ Ecology has since become a hot topic in the academic world of Cultural China.

⁷ Tu Weiming, "The Ecological Turn in New Confucian Humanism: Implications for China and the World," *Daedalus* 130, 4 (2001): 244.

⁸ J. Camilleri, "A Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace: The Policy Imperative of Our Time," in *Towards a Just and Ecologically Sustainable Peace: Navigating the Great Transition*, ed. J. Camilleri, D. Guess, D., (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 34.

⁹ Tu Weiming, "Confucius and Ecology," *Chinese Philosophy History* 3, 1 (2003): 5-18.

On a practical note, in 2013, Professor Tu initiated the establishment of the International Confucian Ecological Alliance, a branch of the International Religious Ecological Alliance created by the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

In 2015, owing to the invitation of former French President François Hollande, Professor Tu delivered a speech on behalf of Confucianism at the Summit of Climate Conscience. This summit gathered more than 40 spiritual leaders from the world to steer the signature of the coming Paris Agreement. In this speech, Tu reminded his audience that

Spiritual Humanism can help to deepen the intellectual and moral depth of our environmental awareness. In order to change the ethos of international politics, we must engage in dialogue on core values across cultures. Universal values currently recognized such as liberty, rationality, legality, human rights, and the dignity of the individual can and should be fruitfully compared as substantially enriched by the universal values embodied in virtually all cultures past and present, notably brightness, justice, or fairness, civility, responsibility, and social solidarity. For spiritual humanism, the focus is on commiseration, sympathy, empathy, compassion, and of course, care.¹⁰

At the beginning of 2020, a research center on new Business Civilization was newly established at Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business (CKGSB) to explore the future of our New Era, New Business and New Civilization, especially the relationship between business and the ecosystem. Professor Tu is the chairman of the Humanity Committee of CKGSB. On October 14 2020, Professor Xiang Bing, who is also well known as the founding dean of CKGSB, delivered a speech on climate change on the webinar affiliated with the California-China Climate Institute which is housed jointly at UC Berkeley's School of Law. Professor Xiang emphasized that a key element of sustainable development in our time is to redefine the relationship between man and nature which has emerged in recent centuries.

In our political and economic systems, limited incentives have been provided to truly care for the long-term interest of humanity. This collective myopia may have contributed to our environmental degradation and global climate change. Considering today's advanced technologies, we must address this issue before collective myopia pushes humanity to extinction.

¹⁰ Tu Weiming's Speech in Paris on July 21 for a World Summit of Conscience, video, 2:59:49 to 3:07:22, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKqJAJC1dCI>.

Professor Xiang asserted.

3. Reflections on the Enlightenment and the Ecosystem

Born in Europe, the Enlightenment has established values which have been genuinely welcomed by individual people all over the world: freedom, equality, democracy, the rule of law and the scientific method all represent qualitative leaps for human civilisation, enabling comprehensive human development wherever they have been implemented, and allowing a global transformation from ‘ancient’ to ‘modern’ modes of economic and social life.

Despite their apparent universality, ‘Enlightenment values’ have spread around the world from specific origins in Europe and the United States; there have been periods in Asian intellectual history, for instance, where the word ‘modernisation’ has been taken as a direct synonym for ‘Westernization’ or even ‘Americanization’. The existence of ‘multiple modernities’, however -or at least an inherent pluralism in various countries’ efforts at modernization- has now been firmly established by empirical research. In China, the ‘May 4, 1919’ and ‘New Culture’ movements in particular, for all their shortcomings, played important roles in establishing local ‘sapere aude’ traditions. The ‘Enlightenment mentality’, inherited from the post-industrial West, has prevailed in much of China’s growth over the past half-century. Tang Ke, head of the Chinese delegation, made a declaration at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment and Development in Stockholm in June 1972, saying that we should not stop developing our industries out of fear of environmental pollution.

The Enlightenment indeed promoted human progress and rational science, while it also brought up many problems simultaneously, such as wealth inequality, the decline of social mobility, and ecological destruction. Furthermore, we will not solve these problems if there is only liberty without justice, only rationality without compassion, or only the rule of law without comity. Chinese influence on key Enlightenment figures such as Leibniz and Voltaire -a factor long neglected by academic researchers and perhaps now overplayed by them- should also not be completely ignored: the Enlightenment itself emerged out of a rich ferment and interplay of ideas in which Western thinkers borrowed liberally from each other and also from non-Western

sources. Tu Weiming has a beautiful statement regarding this on the kick-off ceremony of the 24th World Congress of Philosophy in 2018 in Beijing as follows:

I think that the Confucian Humanity, Rightness, Propriety, Wisdom and Sincerity are all universal values which can be put in equal and mutually beneficial dialogues with the universal values generated by the modern western Enlightenment, such as rationality, liberty, legality, human rights, and human dignity.

Rationality without sympathy will become hard calculation, liberty without justice will result in selfishness, law without propriety will fall into ruthless control, rights without responsibility will give excuse for plundering, and individual dignity will be left high and dry without social harmony.

Conversely, sympathy without rationality will descend to spoiling, justice without liberty will become compulsion, propriety without law will lead to corruption, responsibility without right will degenerate into oppression, and superficial social harmony without individual dignity will be experienced as a form of control.¹¹

Moreover, if there is only Pareto Improvement but no Confucian Improvement, then there will be no shared prosperity of all countries in the world.¹²

If we only talk about power, even ‘knowledge as power’ or ‘soft power’¹³, we will remain in dilemmas of hegemony, relying on power to solve our problems.

We must overcome the arrogance of Eurocentrism, as well as overcome the absolutist belief that science can solve everything. We should eliminate intellectual arrogance theoretically by recognizing that local knowledge and local beliefs are also knowledge. In a word, we need to understand the values of Enlightenment but ultimately surpass the ‘Enlightenment mentality’. Also, Liberalism cannot be slavishly followed but reshaped as per the continuity of being. Rationality is bounded¹⁴, whereas globalization is boundless.

¹¹ Tu Weiming, “The Confucian Universal Value,” *Chuanshan Journal* 17, 5 (2017): 1-4.

¹² Tingyang Zhao, *Redefining A Philosophy for World Governance*, trans. Liqing Tao, (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing Co., Ltd. & Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 59-64.

¹³ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: the Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

¹⁴ Herbert A. Simon, *Reason in Human Affairs*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 19-20.

4. Spiritual Humanism and the Ecosystem

Apocalyptic challenges, however -posed by environmental degradation, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, global epidemics, accelerated technological transformation and growing disparities in wealth- have led (and will continue to lead) to fundamental changes at all levels of human society in our century. As Professor Tu articulated,

Today virtually all Axial-age civilizations are going through their own distinctive forms of transformation in response to the multiple challenges of modernity. One of the most crucial questions they face is what wisdom they can offer to reorient the human developmental trajectory of the modern world in light of the growing environmental crisis.¹⁵

Among all these Axial-age traditions, Confucianism is facing the most direct existential threat. Joseph Levenson worried that Confucius would be put in a museum as a mummy.¹⁶ Levenson was sad for the miserable fate of all Axial traditions, including his own faith Judaism, yet he believed that the funeral of Confucius would be the first held. However, after more than half a century, all the Axial Age traditions including Confucianism are surviving and even flourishing. Nowadays, the Confucian Economic Sphere (CES) includes Mainland China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR and Taiwan of ROC. The overall GDP of these 8 countries or regions, as a sphere, surpassed the USA in 2015 after nearly two centuries lagging behind the modernized western bloc.¹⁷

Confucian spirituality is a restless horizon with over 5000 years of continuity. By transforming Buddhism to Chinese contexts, China avoided the fate of Buddhist countries like Myanmar or Thailand; Confucianism itself was enriched and enhanced by contact. Similarly, Spiritual Humanism is the second Renaissance of Confucius by learning from Hellenic and Hebrew spiritualities.

¹⁵ Tu Weiming, *The Global Significance*, 382.

¹⁶ Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, III: 76-82. Levenson paid condolence to Confucianism as well as other Axial age civilizations.

¹⁷ Xiang Bing, *Harmony without Uniformity for Confucian Economic Sphere*, 2018, <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001075787?archive>.

Tu Weiming's Spiritual Humanism brings together four dimensions of the commonly shared human experience (self, community, Earth and Heaven) in order to define the highest manifestation of human flourishing. Tu's Confucian approach to modernity transcends the Enlightenment mentality without rejecting its gains, reshaping but not blindly following liberalism for the 21st century, and rebuilding the identity of Cultural China via the practice of "Dialogical Dialogue" and center-to-center unisons with other civilizations.¹⁸ Confucianism, as a local value, could realize her global significance through dialogues among civilizations for the human community.

Spiritual Humanism realizes three layers of transformation of the core value of Confucian Humanity (*ren*). First, Confucians should learn from the best of Enlightenment values, such as rationality, justice, legality, human rights, and economic growth. Second, Confucian cultural entities should establish the identity of 'cultural man' via justice, sympathy, ritual and social harmony. Third, in a new era, all humanity should seek and embrace ecological humanism, learning to be 'ecological man'. Spiritual Humanism manages some unique contributions to this new "Trinity," which implies economic man, cultural man and ecological man. If economic man's rationality prevails, then there is no compassion and justice, but only capital remains and flows across the boundaries.

If a 'New Enlightenment' is indeed required, it will only be reached by standing on the shoulders of the giants who made the old one possible and infusing their wisdom with external impulses. This not only means the sons of Athens and Jerusalem, however, but more broadly the 'best that has been thought and said' in all axial civilizations and indigenous traditions. In this context, perhaps a few ancient Chinese concepts will finally attain global significance.

a. He-er-bu-tong ('Harmony without Uniformity')

The principle of *heerbutong* refers not only to the free expression of individuals, but also to the self-realisation of these free individuals as social beings within the human collective. All spiritual traditions have faced the arduous challenge of unleashing

¹⁸ Tu Weiming, "Spiritual Humanism: An Emerging Global Discourse," *Chuanshan Journal* 21, 1 (2021): 1-7.

individual creativity while also securing collective security and justice; if the recipes of the Axial civilisations may be more or less well known around the world, many indigenous resources continue to be neglected: a renewed cultural self-confidence among all peoples would allow positive examples to shine from everywhere, thereby keeping the proselytizing impulses of dominant cultures in check and preventing ‘universalism’ from collapsing into imported or imperialistic abstraction. A culture of global curiosity towards the new -of active welcoming of the different and unknown and potentially better- would then be allowed to triumph over nationalisms and particularistic ideologies of all stripes without succumbing to the traps of moral relativism or nihilism.

b. Tian-xia-da-tong (‘the Great Unity of All under Heaven’)

Theoretical resources for cultural identity and fiduciary community are enriched by Spiritual Humanism. Fiduciary Communities can surpass the limitation and boundaries of nation-states initiated from modern Europe, which are characterized by slogans such as “America First” and “Vive La France”. Due to the boundaries of nation-states, international peace cannot be guaranteed as long as nationalism and national interests are the first priority.

Tianxiadatong (‘the Great Unity of All Under Heaven’), unpopular among Western and other non-Chinese intellectuals for its historical associations with Chinese imperial power, can in fact be more charitably understood as an antidote to nationalism and a balm for intercivilisational wounds. Only a genuinely post-nationalist horizon, indeed, will allow human beings to address their common problems and assume their shared responsibilities instead of sinking back into ‘My Country First!’ sloganeering and Cold War-era zero-sum espionage. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the fact that our destinies are heavily intertwined; no single country, moreover, can hope to control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the acceleration of anthropogenic climate change, or questions of global justice and structural inequality on its own. The path of peace and ‘dialogue among civilisations’ is hence not to be understood as the calculated choice of the Chinese government among a smorgasbord of available options; now and for the foreseeable future, it is the only sensible choice that any individual country and its people can possibly hope to make. This dialogical imperative, however, falls most

heavily of all on those nations (none more so than China itself) who are responsible for avoiding the ‘Thucydides Trap’ of superpower conflagration which China’s meteoric economic rise presages.

c. Tian-ren-he-yi (Unity of Heaven and Man or Bringing Heaven and Humanity into Harmony [Without Uniformity])

The Confucian idea of the ‘unity of heaven and man’ is transformed into an ‘anthropocosmic’ doctrine or antropocosmicism to gain global significance. Tu Weiming regards the idea of the good life as

a continuous process of learning, which means self-realization, [an evocation of] a sense of the transcendent. In other words, it is not [fully realizable in] the secular age which Charles Taylor talks about, but lies beyond the secular age. [...] The fully human has to go beyond anthropocentricity to include both the anthropological and the cosmological. This is the anthropocosmic vision.¹⁹

Among other potential boons, this concept offers 21st-century humanity a chance to reorient its relationship with the natural world. The Cartesian dualism at the heart of the Enlightenment’s secular humanist desacralisation and instrumentalisation of nature may have opened up vital avenues of modern scientific inquiry, but by marginalising religious wisdom concerning the presence of the divine in everyday life, the Enlightenment unleashed a pathological and unsustainable Faustian drive to dominate nature which is as ruinous of individual human spirituality as it is of the environment. Without collapsing into premodern superstition, ‘disenchanted’ anthropocentric cosmologies must give way to new forms of spiritual life which reimbue the natural world with meaning. The wisdom of the African proverb ‘The Earth is entrusted to us by future generations’ is now being incorporated in one form or other into the Abrahamic traditions’ respective 21st-century theologies.

On the traditional Confucian view, meanwhile, human beings are subjects as well as objects in the creative transformation of the universe: the phrase *tian-sheng-ren-cheng* (‘Heaven engenders and humans complete’) summarises this proactive attitude to human agency in the world, but also represents a call to responsibility: if we are free to

¹⁹ Tu Weiming, et al, *Toward a Dialogical Civilization. Dialogues*, (-In prep.- Independently published, 2024), 145.

‘complete’ the will of Heaven, we are also free not to do so; in short, from Heaven’s less than omnipotent perspective, we are capable of terrible and irreversible harm as well as important and irreplaceable good. However, on the other side, not only the Enlightenment mentality but also the “theological mentality”, as Hossein Nasr has argued, has been guilty of excessive anthropocentrism:

In the whole world, Protestant evangelical Christians are the group least interested in preserving the environment. I had a debate the other day with someone. There’s at least two of these people have written three books on the idea that Christ is going to soon come, and the faithful are going to be uplifted, and everyone else is going to be destroyed. They make millions of dollars all the time, these evangelicals on television, and so forth.²⁰

Corresponding human reverence for the natural world, rooted in ‘spiritual’ or anthropocosmic rather than merely ‘secular’ or anthropocentric humanism, is a precondition for both environmental and intergenerational justice. Both Hellenic and Hebrew spiritualities could refer to Spiritual Humanism for their own great transformations and enrich their ecological dimensions.

Concluding Remarks: Responsive and Responsible Mutuality between the Human Self and Her Ecosystem

Spiritual Humanism promotes the global significance of Confucianism itself, yet Spiritual Humanism supplies a universal language of “learning to be human”. Let’s take software as an example. The Microsoft system is different from Apple system. The files with different formats cannot be opened and read by either side. But the content of the files are the same once the file is opened by either side. Nevertheless, the codes behind the software are still different. Similarly, religious languages are not universal languages, despite the attempts of Hans Küng and others to create grammars of interreligious dialogue. While many religious dogmas seek transcendence, Confucianism embraces the concrete living person here and now. ‘Heaven engenders; humans complete.’ Implicit in this proclamation of partnership is the idea that, through human effort, Heaven’s creative vitality can be brought to fruition on Earth. As a theoretical framework, Spiritual Humanism offers a theory of ecology by placing Humanity (*ren*) in the center; all four dimensions -self, community, Earth and Heaven-

²⁰ Tu Weiming, et. al., *Toward a Dialogical Civilization. Dialogues*, 98.

are transfused with the active vital power of Humanity (*ren*). Responsive and responsible communication between humankind and nature, beyond the logic of domination, is hence made possible. An important spiritual exercise in the practice of Confucian self-cultivation is to extend our sympathetic feelings so that they encompass an ever-expanding network of human and non-human relatedness under Heaven.

In this shared future, we are all one global family. Spiritual Humanism offers a language of learning to be human to overcome the dangers of narrow specialization and abstract inclusivism. The theme of the 24th World Congress of Philosophy was ‘Learning to Be Human’, which is the common spiritual humanist foundation for dialogue among civilizations. Hand in hand, let’s solve the problem of the ‘clash of civilisations’ through a dialogue which drives the Axial Civilizations towards a New Axial Civilization.

All great civilisations are in a constant state of mutual learning from each other and strengthening of each other. Despite important differences among the Axial civilisations and other indigenous traditions, in the long run an ‘overlapping consensus’ can be observed: namely, a common humanistic ethos of ultimate concern for the place of human beings -and the precious essence that they contain- in a wider scheme of cosmic meaning. The Habermasian call to reinspect and reexcavate the Enlightenment tradition is a valid and necessary one, but it will not be sufficient to achieve the horizon of a ‘New Enlightenment’ in the 21st century: for that, the worst of the ‘Enlightenment mentality’ must be excised via contact with foreign cultural elements. The result will not be an ‘End of History’ or one-size-fits-all global ideology, but rather a house fit for free individual personalities and civilisations to inhabit. China has a vital role to play in the building of this house, to be sure, but its influence will remain far smaller than that of the rest of the world combined. If a ‘New Enlightenment’ project is to succeed, the spirit of dialogue characteristic of all axial civilisations and indigenous traditions at their best must be encouraged to flourish everywhere.

“The anthropocosmic idea addresses the interplay between Heaven’s creativity as expressed in the cosmological process and humans’ creativity as embodied in Heaven’s

life-generating transformation.”²¹ Just as the great Jewish theologian Martin Buber pays tribute to *I and Thou*²², Mencius, the great Chinese sage, argued already in 300 B.C.E. for the idea of the “Great Body,” embodying a faith that “the myriad things are already in me”. This is not an imagined possibility but an achievable state. We can expand our active vital energy (*qi*) to enable it to fill the space between Heaven and Earth.

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²¹ Tu Weiming, “An ‘Anthropocosmic’ Perspective on Creativity,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2 (2010): 7305-7311.

²² Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, (Edinburg: T. &T. Clark, 1950), 3-4.

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