

- wise – just – brave – moderate // obedient – diligent – conscientious – humble // faith – hope – love -

SM 151101

## “On Humanity”

Spiritual Humanism:  
An Emerging Global Discourse  
Tu Weiming 151001 Peking University



- qualitative ? – innovative ? – prepared ? – flexible ? – competent ? – value conscious ? -

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See also <http://www.karl-schlecht.de/ksg-stiftung/ethik/weltethos-institut-beijing-weib>

..... <http://tuweiming.net/>



*Initiated by my “Chinetics-Dream” as outlined in SM 121028 our friend Prof. TU Weiming mailed me a high level memo “ON HUMANITY”.as shown below.*

*I read it with high interest and learning appreciation.*

*Knowing that it may be seen as impolite to enter **my yellow markings and comments** directly in the doc as shown below I take the liberty in my way of “active reading” to draft this document as attachment for my answering mal to our esteemed friend TU Weiming. Hope my markings and comments – and photos – find his understanding and excuse.*

*Sending it to some friends and back to Weiming might create further dialogue (following also our friend LEN SWIDLER) or steps to follow the actual mission of the “World-Ethics-Idea” (WEI) as we see it. It must not remain a philosophical issue and only subject of dialogs but create actions to realize its goal as a contribution to peace and social harmony based on good leadership – and “CHINESE Harmony” and heaven as TW describes it.*

*For us in KSG we defined our interpretation of WEI in SM 121126. Please find this and more in <http://www.karl-schlecht.de/en/foundations/ethics/>*

*And docs in <http://www.karl-schlecht.de/en/download/foundation-information-services>*

*Remember: This is an important message for what we as KSG founded and sponsor in the planned CCT (China Center Tübingen) with the integrated **CPI-China-Paulin Institute at University Tübingen** (earlier CIT) .*

*“On Humanity” is related to what we are striving for in China at BEIDA with our KSG-sponsored institutes WEIT and WEIB at BEIDA, which is directed by TU Weiming and cared for by Prof Leisinger as KSG external Consultant KBE- see*

*<http://www.karl-schlecht.de/en/foundations/ksg-foundation/ksg-bereichsexperten-kbe>*

*Assisted by the Chinese speaking Jun. Prof. Dr. Niefenführ acting as KSG-China Coordinator.. So please care for synergies!*

*Thank you - -Karl Schlecht 151115*

# On Humanity

*...In our hearts under our common heaven to first be demonstrated in the wide and differentiated China-World*

## Spiritual Humanism: An Emerging Global Discourse

Tu Weiming

Peking University 151001    <http://tuweiming.net/>

I would like to explore spiritual humanism rooted in the Confucian tradition as an emerging global discourse. On the surface, it does not seem to have any bearing on China's promise of a peaceful rise or of the so-called First **World's willingness to accept China as an important player in the multipolar world order**. However, from the perspective of the world of ideas, how we find a path toward peace and cultural understanding through dialogue among civilizations and a sustainable relationship with the Earth depends on a new way of thinking, a new ethic, and **a new cosmology**. Are there any **resources in the Confucian tradition** that might help us think through these issues? Is spiritual humanism a viable option to emerge (or re-emerge) from the current **Chinese ethos**? I am indebted to the eminent Indian philosopher R. Balasubramanian for the term "spiritual humanism."

Arguably, the most influential ideology in human history is the Enlightenment mentality of the modern West. Capitalism and Socialism, are variations of the Enlightenment theme. "Wealth and power" loom large in these theories and praxes. But they are basically at odds with the ways of learning to be human before the advent of modernity. In our secular age, presumably as a result of what Max Weber characterizes as the process of rationalization, **secular humanism** has become the dominant ideology. It is so common and prevalent that it now **overshadows virtually all religious and ideological persuasions**. For almost a century, the intellectual ethos in China has been overwhelmed by scientism, materialism, and instrumental **rationalism**.

We are desperately in need of formulating effective critiques of the unintended negative consequences of the Enlightenment mentality, such as aggressive anthropocentrism, imperialism, colonialism, the Faustian drive to dominate, and possessive individualism. By advocating the **"unity of Heaven and humanity,"** a sense of reverence toward **Heaven**, respect and care for the Earth, a fiduciary community (that is, a community based on trust), and **"peace All under Heaven,"** spiritual humanism underscores dialogue, reconciliation, and harmony. The **opposite of harmony is uniformity and sameness**. But a **precondition for harmony is difference**. These ideas resonate with the value orientations of what feminists, environmentalists, multiculturalists, religious pluralists, and communitarianists have been advocating for decades.

The emergence of an ecumenical and cosmopolitan consciousness is a precondition for us to envision a truly authentic culture of perpetual peace. I assume that all historical religions (originating in the Axial-Age) and indigenous traditions, when confronting the dual challenges of ecological degradation and dysfunctional global governance, will be encouraged to cultivate, in

addition to their particular religious grammars for action, the language of humanism. We choose to be Christians, Buddhists, or Muslims, but inevitably we are human as well. Put differently, we may choose to be human through the Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist ways, but we are obligated by the current state of the world to be responsible for the **well-being of the human community as a whole**.



*....built for all of us in Beijing, centuries ago, to lead our way to heaven.*

**Westerners:** – *follow Chinese, they may be first in heaven ! Why did you not listen to KUNG-fu-tse, who laid with his Golden Rule the roots for you religions ?...*

*Now in Oct 2012 KÜNG-futse remembered to it with his relevant World-Ethics message.*

The humanism that can guide us to survive and flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must broaden our intellectual horizons and deepen the moral depth of the Enlightenment mentality. A minimum requirement is that it **transcends secularity**. An obvious expression of secular humanism is nationalism. Nationalism is a major challenge to Americans, Russians and Chinese and, of course, to people of many other nations as well. The social thinker Ashis Nandy is deeply concerned about the emergence of **Indian nationalism**. For him true **Indian patriotism** is inconceivable **without the voices of Gandhi and Tagore**.

China's moral crisis is closely related to the **lack of faith** in something beyond the material world here and now. It is of great urgency that Chinese people, especially the young, cultivate a sense of awe (or reverence) toward Heaven, Earth, and the human world in between and beyond wealth and power. Spiritual humanism, a holistic vision for human flourishing, can help religions to become public-spirited. It is vitally important for Chinese political and intellectual elite to **become religiously musical**. This will definitely improve Sino-Western relations. It is also crucial for Chinese leaders to cultivate religious sensitivity through mutually beneficial dialogues with minorities, notably Tibetans and non-Chinese-speaking Muslims. This, in my opinion, goes beyond issues of security. It strikes at the heart of a Chinese cultural identity and

## global perceptions of China as a civilization-state.

Cultural China is currently undergoing a major, even unprecedented, spiritual renaissance. If we observe the Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Singapore, and the Chinese diasporic communities as a symbolic cultural universe, underlying their economic vibrancy and political dynamism there is a concerted effort to recover, retrieve, restore, reconfigure, reconstruct, and **renew Chinese traditional culture**. These dialogical encounters with the past are encouraging. They **enable Chinese to discover a rich reservoir of symbolic resources to share with the world**. The Golden Rule stated in the negative is an obvious example. Indeed, it is one of the most theoretically sophisticated and practically consequential principles for dialogue among civilizations: “Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you.”

In spiritual humanism, reciprocity, and the so-called Golden Rule stated in the negative, must be supported by the positive principle of “humanity” (*ren*), comparable to the Christian Golden Rule: “in order to establish myself, I help others to establish themselves; in order to enlarge myself, I help others to enlarge themselves.” By implication, in international communications, the global public good, such as **environmental protection** and the **establishment of a world order**, takes precedence over exclusive national interests.

I think that the time is ripe that we engage in **dialogues on core values**. Universal values embodied in the Enlightenment mentality of the modern West, such as **liberty, rationality, legality, rights, and the dignity of the individual**, should be fruitfully compared and substantially enriched by other universal values embodied in spiritual humanism, such as **rightness** (justice or fairness), **sympathy, civility, responsibility, and social solidarity**.



I have recommended in China that, given the severity of corruption and untrustworthiness in the public sphere, we learn to appreciate the values underlying *homo economicus* (economic man). This can be defined as the values of **freedom, rationality, rights, legality, and the dignity of the individual**. Obviously, in order for the human community to survive and flourish, these values must be augmented and **enriched by other universal values, liberty by justice, equality, and fairness, legality by civility, rights by responsibility, the dignity of the individual by social solidarity, and rationality by sympathy, empathy, and compassion**. This reminds me of Adam Smith. He considered that his most important contribution was the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, rather than his famous *Wealth of Nations*. Sympathy features prominently in his moral sentiments. It is worth noting that the leading European thinkers, such as Voltaire and Leibnitz in addition to Emerson and the American humanist Irving Babbitt, greatly appreciated and admired the **Confucian ideas of civility, harmony, and humane governance**.

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. The ideal in spiritual humanism is to “form one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things.” Wang Yangming offers an illustration indicating that the human capacity for sympathy, if properly cultivated, is **all-inclusive**.

From a cultural perspective, I envision the emerging global community to be highly differentiated by **primordial ties** (KS= Ur-anfänglich). As a result, plurality and multifacetedness will characterize the cultural scene throughout the world. The “future of history” strongly suggests that the international order will become multipolar. Any desire by a regime to achieve hegemonic non-polarity will inevitably fail. A dichotomous (dividing) mode of thinking, such as dividing the world in terms of socialist/capitalist, modern/traditional, religious/secular, progressive/regressive, liberal/conservative, democratic/authoritarian, and so forth, **is at best simplistic**. This denotes a visible trend toward what Shmuel Eisenstadt dubbed as “multiple modernities.” With a view toward the future, as the continuous presence of traditions in modernity and the modernizing process inevitably assumes different cultural forms, concepts such as “multiple modernities,” or even “many globalizations,” will be recognized as insuppressible trends.

As a beneficiary of the Christian–Confucian dialogue, I bear witness to the often experienced and yet rarely articulated case of a **truly significant intellectual illumination** because of a fruitful encounter with **radical otherness**. I used to take it for granted that Confucianism is rational, this-worldly, and pragmatic, and that it is **diametrically opposed** to any form of transcendent spirituality. Without my encounters with brilliant Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theologians, my research and thinking would have been confined to a rigorous but parochial (KS= narrow minded) domain of secular humanism as the most authentic way of understanding the Confucian tradition and **its modern transformation**.

The **great advances in communications** and information technologies have exponentially **broadened and deepened the human capacity to learn, to re-learn, and to unlearn**. Space and time have collapsed into a new reality of immediate accessibility to data, information, and knowledge about Heaven above, Earth below, and all things in between. In light of this, the opening lines of the *Western Inscription* by the 11<sup>th</sup> century Confucian thinker, Zhang Zai, far from being a romantic assertion about universal brotherhood, totally rejected by the advent of our disenchanted world, are a source of inspiration for all of us aspiring to the idea of **“forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things:”**

*Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother. Even such a tiny creature as I finds intimacy in their midst. All that fills the universe is my body and all that directs the universe is my nature. **All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions.***

This requires that fully developed humanity become involved in self-cultivation and in building a **fiduciary community based on dialogue**. This also requires that we embrace and respect nature as an integral part of our communion. In addition to self, community, and nature, there is

also a fourth dimension, that is, Heaven. A defining characteristic of spiritual humanism is the awareness that **we ought to show reverence for Heaven.**

I am pleased to note that in my interreligious and inter-civilizational dialogues, I have come to the realization that **Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, and Muslims can take the authentic Confucian humanistic stance without in any way losing their primary identities with their faith communities.** (KS: = The World Ethics Idea) Indeed, there is increasingly a group of believers who are willing and happy to call themselves, in the spiritual humanistic sense, Confucian Hindus, Confucian Buddhists, Confucian Jews, **Confucian Christians**, and Confucian Muslims. The presupposition is that the term **“Confucian” can be broadened and deepened to go beyond** the Sinic and East Asian world to **embrace true cosmopolitanism.** If so, I believe that many more **religionists will be willing to identify themselves as spiritual humanists.**

This humanistic vision presupposes that the ultimate meaning of life is realizable and ought to be realized in **ordinary human existence.** The lifeworld is **not merely secular**, but also creative, dynamic, vital, and noble. **“Heaven engenders and humans complete”** entails partnership. Implicit in this proclamation is the idea that through human effort, **Heaven’s creative vitality will be brought to fruition on Earth.** Indeed, as participants in the cosmic transformation and co-creators of the evolutionary process, we are capable of, and indeed **obligated to, realize Heaven’s creativity on Earth.** (KS- for this we care in KSG...- let’s find companions...)

Each one of us, and our community as a whole, are so intimately and inseparably connected with all other modalities of being in the cosmos that it is our human responsibility **to be cosmologically responsive and responsible.** The Chinese legend of Sage-King Yu, comparable to the story of Noah in the Hebrew Bible, is instructive. Through his scientific rationality, sympathy, charisma, courage, self-sacrifice, endurance, and humility, The Sage-King Yu transformed the disastrous flood into an ingeniously designed and engineered hydraulic system. He is revered as a paradigmatic personality **who brought together Heaven and Earth for the well-being of humanity.**

**In a deeper sense, the wholesome development of the human is our filial reverence to Heaven and our genuine respect for the Earth.**

This human reading of the Way of Heaven is **not** anthropocentric, but it is **laden with moral implications.** The flood is abnormal, but we are responsible for **and capable** of adapting ourselves to the disaster of the flood by restoring order out of chaos. **If we are the cause of major calamities, we should not expect Heaven to fix them for us.**

Let me summarize the salient (KS-outstanding) features of **spiritual humanism.** As a comprehensive and integrated humanism, **four dimensions** of the commonly shared human experience—**self, community, Earth (nature), and Heaven**—are brought together to define the holistic manifestation of human flourishing:

- (1) **integration of the body, heart, mind, soul, and spirit of the self,**
- (2) fruitful **interactions of self and community** (home, neighborhood, village, city, province,

- nation, world, and beyond),
- (3) sustainable and harmonious **relations between the human species and nature** (the animal kingdom, plants, trees, rocks, mountains, rivers, and air), and
- (4) **mutuality** between the human **heart and mind** and the Way of Heaven. (KS: The second Enlightenment – see R LAY)-

Since 2013 a consensus has been emerging in China that GDP is a very limited and limiting measure of development. **In addition** to economic factors, political, social, cultural, and ecological dimensions must also be included in **the overall development strategy**. This broad vision compels us to think courageously and creatively about **the cultural message that China is capable of delivering**. Will it be open, pluralistic, and self-reflexive? (KS: Will- can it be main part of the mission for CPI ?)

**China is at a crossroads**. It must pursue **its own** exceptionally unique path, but its path cannot be exclusively Chinese. Even if a broad consensus is reached, China cannot afford to be nationalistic. Rather, China **should live up** to its own cultural ideal to **be cosmopolitan** and spiritually humanistic.

### **K Schlecht: Thoughts...**

What is heaven? Heaven in our hearts?

Lets discover it there. Mind cannot understand it nor give home there. Only help.

It must be individual – and ennobled with LOVE (which we only have to discover it in us and cultivate it actively in daily life.

TW: Why not enhance this consciousness at home in China first to form an example, even to look at for the western world. Chinese people learn faster. So why not prove, demonstrate and realize this wisdom for harmony in the highly differing wide China World. Help there to realize a vision called “Chinethics” and sell it outside as “Goldethics” if Worldethics sounds too catholic?



We from KSG are in our modest way ready to share in caring for WEIB, harmonizing the Confucian based World ethics idea into “Chinethics”- knowing that it’s the same when we realize their roots and care for “Confucian Entrepreneurship” in our global businesses.

These deep roots are thick and strong as common human element -also symbolized in the Tree - Logo of UNI Tübingen. Their founders motto and mission is

“ATEMPTO” – meaning “LET’s TRY”

Why not ? Action counts in life !

**WEIB- WEIB – Hurrah !**