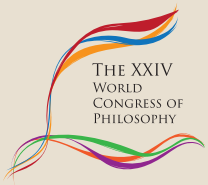

WANG YANGMING LECTURE
24TH WORLD CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY

SPIRITUAL HUMANISM: SELF, COMMUNITY, EARTH, AND HEAVEN

Speaker: Professor TU Weiming

Moderator: Professor CHEN Lai

Plenary Hall, China National Convention Center (Beijing)

6 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., August 18, 2018

Wang Yangming Lecture

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Spiritual Humanism:
Self, Community, Earth, and Heaven

By

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Confucius offered a comprehensive and integrated way of learning to be human. Confucian philosophy takes the concrete living person here and now as its point of departure. **Concrete** refers to the whole human being, body and mind. Since we are using English, a cautionary note is in order. The word "body" seems straightforward, but, as we shall see, it conveys subtleties beyond the physical body, but the word "mind" is highly problematical because what I would like to express is not simply the cognitive function of the mind but also the affective function of the heart.

To avoid misunderstanding, scholars in Confucian studies often use the compound "mind-and-heart" or "heart-and-mind." I prefer "heart-and-mind" to give emphasis on the importance of feeling in the Confucian tradition. To make the matter a bit more complex, the concreteness of the whole human being includes not only the physical form, heart, mind, but also soul and spirit. Thus, by concrete I do not mean to give the impression that all I refer to is the physical body only.

If you accept my notion of concrete, I urge you to pay more attention to the word **living**. Obviously, it does not refer to anything without life and vitality. The word concrete makes it clear that it is not merely an abstract idea. Concreteness, nevertheless, can still suggest

[1] I am grateful to Dr. John Ewell, Dr. Wang Jianbao, and Dr.Jonathan Keir for their comments and suggestions.

that something is tangible, like stone, but not necessarily alive. Of course, my reference to heart and mind already indicates that the concrete, unlike stone, or for that matter tree, is alive like an animal, dog or horse for example. At this juncture, I would like to introduce a philosophical idea. It is vitally important for my exploration: "lived concreteness." In any philosophical inquiry abstract concepts are unavoidable. By using the word concrete first, I would like to stress that while abstract conceptualization is unavoidable my purpose is to enable the concrete, immediately and experientially accessible. I may not be able to focus on the concrete all the time, but its presence is always assumed. I would like to make it explicit that it is a specific kind of concreteness that I am particularly concerned about. The specificity excludes virtually all things except living entities. In the vast universe, this is rare. With our immense observational capacity so far, we are only certain that our planet earth alone has the life-sustaining environment. Yet, among the concrete living things, there is a tiny set that I will refer to as "lived concreteness." We may attribute "lived concreteness" to all plants and animals, but what I mean to suggest here is that only human beings are aware of their lived concreteness. Furthermore, I choose the word **person** to give some texture to being human as differentiated from being any other animals.[2]

One of the most basic Confucian precepts is that learning to be human is to learn to become a person. Becoming a person entails a dynamic process of transformation. A distinctive feature of being human is that despite seeming inevitability of growth, we become persons through learning. We learn to acquaint ourselves with our bodies; each act of eating, sitting, walking, speaking, or sleeping requires constant learning. Strictly speaking, we do not own our bodies. We become our bodies. Bodies are not givens. They are attainments, indeed, amazing achievements. Bodies in all their dimensions, physical, physiological, emotional,

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[2] Confucianism stands for neither individualism nor collectivism but **personlism** as per Wm. Theodore De Barry, "Individualism and Personhood" in: idem., *Asian Value and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p.25.

psychological, mental, intellectual, and spiritual, define holistically who we are as lived concreteness.

We can imagine a concrete living person because we have encountered so many of them, from the closest kin to casual acquaintances. But, "here and now" refer to the spatial and temporary reality that we must acknowledge for it is not an imagined possibility but a presence. How do we deal with a concrete living person here and now? This is tantamount to our way of being aware of our own existence.

Surely, I can imagine that the concrete living person here and now is someone else, but most likely I recognize that it is myself. Others may be aware of my presence occasionally, but I alone, by choice, am always conscious of my presence here and now. The purpose of stating that Confucian philosophy takes the **concrete living person here and now** as its point of departure is to underscore the importance of self-awareness[3].

However, if you believe that Confucius' real concern is what sort of human beings we ought to become so we can be useful to society (indeed, social harmony depends upon the persons that we all learn to become; real human beings are those humans who have learned to become socially desirable and necessary), we may come up with a significantly different understanding of the Confucian project, namely human beings are relational, situated, contextualized, and functionally differentiated. Through learning we assume different social roles. If we play our roles adequately, effectively, and proficiently, we will all contribute to the public good and enhance the well-being of society.

On this view, the idea of the concrete living person here and now focusing on the centrality of self-awareness seems too self-centered. It has the tendency to slip into an individualistic trap. A person may become isolated, alienated from the others, and confined

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[3] TU Weiming, "Mencius: Self-Awareness of A Profound Person", in *TU Weiming Anthology*, (Wuhan: Wuhan Press, 2002),vol. 5, pp. 28-56.

to the domain of a privatized ego. The overly psychological reading of the Confucian heart-and-mind, as in the case of Mencius, may have departed from a more balanced Confucian approach to human flourishing. The quest for the inner self at the expense of social engagement is an unfortunate outcome. According to this line of thinking, Xunzi's insistence upon the discipline of external constraints through ritual and law is an appropriate corrective.

I am not going to burden you with the divergent trends of self-cultivation thought in the Confucian tradition. My option to follow Mencius' articulation of the essential difference between human nature and animal nature in general is to establish a solid basis for the primacy of self-awareness. I fully acknowledge that there is rich resource in Xunzi's conception of the mind and that his admonition on learning is shared by Mencius. Xunzi's theory on human nature is on the surface in conflict with Mencius' broad vision that moral feelings are innate, but there are many points of convergence between the two positions. Mencius and Xunzi both had faith in the perfectibility of human nature, the transformative power of learning, the efficacy of self-cultivation, the tradition of the sages, and good governance through ritual propriety. They both believed that human beings are never static structures but always dynamic and creative processes of becoming.

Why the insistence on self-awareness as a point of departure then? We can certainly come up with a coherent view that other-regard takes precedence over self-regard. It is because we are aware of others that we become aware of ourselves. Without acknowledging the existence of others, I may not be aware that I exist at all. It is conceivable that my relationship to the other is prior to my self-awareness. There are numerous examples in the Confucian tradition that we can cite to support this view. The value of filial piety, the obligation of the child to the parent, is central to humanity precisely because the love that flows from the parent to the child is natural. We learn the value of reciprocity through learning to acknowledge our indebtedness. As we grow up, we are increasingly aware how much other-regarding thought and action we ought to have cultivated to show our gratitude and suddenly for some of us, it is too late.

A person is a center of relationships. It is not possible to conceive of the center as totally isolated from its relationships. They give color, sound, sight and texture to that center as a concrete living person. The lived concreteness of a person, necessarily unique, involves ethnicity, gender, language, age, place of birth, social class, and faith, not to mention personality traits. Each of them symbolizes an extensive social network encompassing thousands and thousands of people. Each one of them is meaningful to me in variant degrees of intensity based on circumstances.

Self-awareness does not mean to suggest that we are aware of all these distinctive features as we evolve around all our relationships. Rather, it enables us to remain centered without falling into the disarray of total disintegration and fragmentation. It gives us a sense of direction, a point of orientation. It is a compass that helps us to navigate on troubled waters. This may have been the reason that Confucius urged us to "learn for the sake of the self."[4]

Learning ordinarily means the acquisition of knowledge or the internalization of skills. Knowledge and skills can be understood as learning for the sake of the self, but what Confucius had in mind is significantly different. What he proposed is the knowledge and skills that can transform us by becoming an integral part of our body. For the sake of convenience, I would like to define "learning for the sake of the self" as "embodied learning."[5] Let us take the example of learning a skill as an illustration. If we learn to play a musical instrument,

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[4] Peimin NI, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2017), pp. 338-339, "Among contemporary Confucian scholars, TU Weiming champions advocating the importance of 'learning for oneself,' saying that it embodies the Confucian view about the establishment of moral subjectivity, or simply put: to become human (cf. 1.15). To become human is dependent on oneself (12.1). Cf. TU 1985, 51–65.) Cf. also 1.16, 4.14, 8.7, 14. 42, 15.5, 15.21."

[5] TU Weiming, "The Dignity of Human Being from the Perspective of Embodied Knowing (Outlines)" in *International Confucian Studies*, vol. 6 (February 1998)

say the violin, we need to invest a great deal of time to familiarize ourselves with the bow and fingering, so we can produce relatively pleasing sounds. If we are talented and totally committed to the arduous task of becoming a musician, we will then devote our life to it. If we become a virtuoso, the violin, so to speak, is an extension of our body. We no longer play the violin as an instrument but express our artistic sensibility through it. In short, we have embodied knowledge of the violin. This is of course an exceptional case and only a handful of great musicians can attain it. However, if we can imagine that the instrument we are supposed to learn to play is not the violin but ourselves, our bodies can be holistically comprehended.

"Learning for the sake of the self" is vitally important because our whole life is at stake. The question is not simply what career I would like to have, how successful I want to become, how I plan to realize my ambition, what kind of social role will be most satisfactory, or how I can be rich and famous. Rather, given that I am a concrete living person here and now, the question is what kind of human being I would like to become.

Self-awareness so understood involves knowledge and skill to be sure, but it is primarily a transformative act rooted in our primordial awareness of humanity. The uniqueness of being human reveals itself at this level in its pristine form with brilliance and warmth. This is what Mencius referred to as the "Great Body."[6] The famous story about evoking a sense of commiseration upon witnessing a child is about to fall into the well is worth noting here. It may give the impression that we must be shocked to realize that we are all endowed with the feeling of commiseration (sympathy, empathy, and compassion). The real message is that it is so common that if we are incapable of feeling it, we are no longer human.

Learning for the sake of the self is character-building. It is totally compatible with our professional aspiration, our quest for excellence, our drive to improve our lots, our willingness to contribute to social harmony, and our desire to be recognized and live a comfortable life. However, it addresses a more fundamental dimension of our existence—the meaning of life.

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[6] James Legge, Works of Mencius in *Chinese Classics*, vol. 2, (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc. 1991), p. 417.

Implicit in the idea of the self as a center of relationships is subjectivity. It is critical that we do not reduce the center to relationships. A concrete living person is made of a multidimensional complex of relationships. Putting them all together, they cannot fully constitute the person. We should also take into consideration all the primordial ties (race, gender, language, age, and so forth). Neither can the center of the self be established by them. They are all relevant and significant. Each of them is both a constraint and an enabler. They are all enabling constraints. This requires an explanation.

A distinctive feature of Confucian humanism is the recognition that we are all fated to be a particular person. All our primordial ties are in a sense given. With determination, we may be able to alter some of them, such as gender and language, but by and large, they are determined. In many great religious traditions, this fact of life is considered, at best, constraining. They restrict our choice and freedom of action. We hope to change them, if not to get rid of them. At the very least we are instructed to liberate ourselves from these constraints. Some instructions are enforced relatively. In the Christian tradition, adherence to the real fellowship of faith should take precedence over family attachments. Others are highly restrictive. Buddhist monks are often asked to sever all family relationships. The Confucian choice is quite different. The fact that we are all fated to be a particular person should be accepted, and fully acknowledged. It may not be a blessing, but it calls for positive recognition and even celebration. The perceived constraints are at the same time vehicles or instruments for self-realization. Therefore, they are not simply constraints but enablers as well. In fact, it is these enabling constraints that make us concrete living persons. Confucian self-cultivation is a matter of substantially transforming constraints into enablers through personal effort.

I have published a few essays exploring the epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, and religious implications of self-cultivation as a mode of knowing. I coined a Chinese term to convey this widely used and yet rarely analyzed idea in traditional Chinese culture: *tizhi* ("embodied knowing").[7] It is neither knowing that nor knowing how, but a third type of

[7] TU Weiming, *Embodied Knowing Confucianism*, (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2012).

knowing which is necessarily a transformative act. Put this knowing involves figuratively, knowing involves not only the brain and mind but also the body in a holistic and integrated sense. Bodily engagement as well as the cognitive function of the mind and an affective response of the heart is required. Among the sports, Confucius singled out archery as an example. If we miss the mark, we need to adjust our physical position and mental state here and now. To learn the art of archery, our sense of presence is a prerequisite.

Self-awareness is essential for the kind of learning that Confucius recommended. Through self-reflection, self-examination, self-criticism, self-admonishment, and self-encouragement, we establish our self as a center of relationships. This selfhood, diametrically opposed to the private ego, is open, dynamic, creative, and transforming. It is forever open to the outside, dynamically interacting with people, creatively engaging with all things, and transforming the world around by transforming itself within. As Mencius' "Great Body" specifies, "the myriad things are already equipped in me."[8] This is not an imagined possibility but an achievable state. We can expand our vital energy to enable it to fill the space between Heaven and Earth. Specific physical disciplines, such as breathing technique, may have been involved, but Mencius avowed that he was able to do it through moral and spiritual exercise. This is not a figure of speech but an experienced reality.

This reminds us of the 12th century Confucian thinker Lu Xiangshan, who said that he "got" the gist of Confucian learning himself by reading *Mencius*.[9] The message from Mencius is precisely the idea of human greatness. This idea was so much embodied in Xiangshan that he could not approach it as a hypothesis to be argued for or to be proved. It simply manifested itself from within. And, as he believed, it should be self-evident to every concrete living

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[8] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 79.

[9] LU Jiuyuan, *Classical Quotation B in Lu Jiuyuan Collection*, vol. 35, (Beijing: China Publishing House, 2008), p. 471.

person here and now. The anecdote requires an explanation.

Lu Xiangshan often referred to Mencius' instruction, "to first establish that which is great in us,"[10] when he was asked about learning to be human. He repeated the statement so often that his critics queried that if Master Lu had any other important message to convey. Xiangshan responded bluntly that "there is no other more important message to offer than to establish that which is great in us."[11] Xiangshan is noted for his commitment to the Mencian line of thinking. He made it explicit that his experiential understanding of Mencius did not come from any other sources than reading the *Mencius* and that he got it by himself.[12] To him, reading the *Mencius* is not to read an ancient text to understand, through interpretation, the textual meaning of what the Master meant to say. Rather, it is a living encounter with Mencius in person who uttered these words to him personally and directly. This kind of utterance sounds like a religious injunction that is not subject to discussion, debate, or verification.

"That which is great in us" is available to every human being. There is greatness in each one of us. All we need to do is to establish it. There is no other condition than our willingness to do so. No external forces whatsoever, political, social, or cultural, can prevent us from establishing that which is great in us. Nor can we rely on anyone else to establish the greatness in us. Underlying this assertion is the conviction that each one of us, not just the human species in its entirety, is great. The first order of business for every concrete living person is to establish that which is already in us. In other words, learning to be human is to realize the greatness within by establishing it ourselves. It seems on the surface that the

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[10] James Legge, *The Works of Mencius in The Chinese Classics*, vol. 2, (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc. 1991), p. 418.

[11] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 582, "Recently someone has commented of me that aside from [Mencius'] saying, 'First build up the nobler part of your nature.'I had nothing clever. When I heard this, I said, 'Very true indeed.'(34:5a). "

[12] LU Jiuyuan, *Classical Quotation B in Lu Jiuyuan Collection*, vol. 35, (Beijing: China Publishing House, 2008), p. 471.

injunction is not a factual statement or a proposition but an encouragement. Strictly speaking, however, what Xiangshan, following Mencius, meant to convey was not wishful thinking but a truth, indeed, a reality about being human.

The Confucian tradition that Xiangshan advocated is widely known as the *xinxue* (learning of the heart). A distinctive feature of this school is the centrality of the heart. It is often rendered as mind as well. *Xin* (heart and mind) is both cognitive and affective. It can feel, will, sense, and know. The feeling, willing, sensing, and knowing capacities of the heart provide the basis for the "great body". The first order of business for self-realization is to be aware of the activities of the heart to establish the great body, to underscore the uniqueness of being human. The initial step then is to awaken the heart to make it sensitive to the world around us. The feelings that can be aroused by stimuli from the outside are only a superficial manifestation of the sensitivity of the heart. Xiangshan's learning of the heart is to have access to the "original heart" (*benxin*) underlying the great body. Strictly speaking, the original heart defines what human nature really is.

Human nature in turn expresses itself through the vitality and dynamism of the original heart. It is not only an idea but an activity. It feels, wills, senses, and knows in connection with an ever-expanding network of relationships. It is relational and its potential for connectivity is unlimited, but there is always a core, a center that cannot be reduced to its connections no matter how extensive they are. The original heart as the core of humanity is the culmination of the evolutionary process. It is not a static structure, but a continuously becoming activity. In this sense, human beings should not be conceived as being but becoming. Human beings as becoming are ceaselessly evolving. This has cosmological as well as anthropological significance.

Implicit in this reasoning is the ontological vision of the "continuity of being."[13] In this

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[13] TU Weiming, "Continuity of Being", in *TU Weiming Anthology*, (Wuhan: Wuhan Press, 2002), vol. 5, pp. 4-6.

vision, the human relates to all modalities of being; minerals, plants, and animals. If we probe deeply to find some linkages, we are part of a continuum. Yet, the uniqueness of being human is qualitatively different from all other modalities of being. The defining human characteristics are not reducible to any of the properties that have become constitutive parts of the human condition. This evolutionary perspective is widely shared in Chinese philosophy. An obvious example is found in *Xunzi*:

> Water and fire have *qi* but are without life. Grasses and trees have life but are without awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness but are without *yi*. Humans have *qi* and life and awareness, and moreover they have *yi*.[14]

This idea of the human is a combination of rootedness and emergence. The distinctiveness of the human is based on a paradox. It is an integral part of the same process that enables water, fire, grass, plants, and animals to come into being. Yet, as an emergent property, the human is unique; it is not reducible to its constitutive parts. This is of course true with life and consciousness as well. We cannot adequately understand an emergent property by reducing it to the genetic forces that have made it possible. This is not to deny that structurally it is always intertwined with all the elements that contribute to its form of existence. In the evolution, so to speak, nothing is lost. The cumulative process that eventually enables the human to emerge is holistic, dynamic, and continuing. In this sense, the "continuity of being" does not mean a linear progression but a process of transformation with increasing velocity of coordination, collaboration, and complexification. I would argue that in a subtle way it is not incompatible with some versions of creationism.

The vital energy (*qi*) that is present at all levels of the evolutionary process is spiritual as well as material. The spirit and matter dichotomy is not applicable here. By implication,

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[14] Eric L. Hutton, *Xunzi*, *the Complete Text*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 76.

spirituality is embedded in the life world. It is not defined exclusively by reference to the transcendent, let alone radical transcendence. It does, however, involve a transcendent dimension. The sharp contrast between the secular and sacred does not exist. Herbert Fingarette's characterization of Confucius, "the secular as the sacred,"[15] is suggestive, but the dichotomy is problematic. Indeed, all exclusive dichotomies, such as body/mind, mental/physical, and flesh/soul, are alien to the Confucian holistic thinking. Take the example of yin and yang. They are different, conflictual, and sometimes tension-ridden, but in principle and in practice, they are complementary. More significantly, they are co-existent and mutually infiltrating. There is no *yang* without *yin* and no *yin* without *yang*. There is always *yang* in the *yin* of the *yang* and so forth. This enables the Confucian to see unity in contradiction and to experience the world as both material and spiritual.

Life (*sheng*) symbolizes the emergence of an entirely different stage of coordination, collaboration, and complexification. In modern biological terms, it is reflected in an adaptive organizational structure, the capacity of metabolism, the ability to maintain homeostasis, the potency of growth, the potentiality of reproduction, and the responsiveness to the environment. We can maintain that between dead matter and life, there is discontinuity, even rupture. This challenge to the "continuity of being" is overcome, or at least mitigated, by the subtle observation that, from the perspective of the vital energy, the idea of "dead matter" itself is inappropriate. Take the example of stones. To the Confucians or Chinese in general, a piece of jade is not necessarily lifeless. This figurative expression does not negate the fundamental difference between life and death, but it is profoundly significant if we reject the notion that all inanimate things are simply "dead matter." I am reminded of the heated debate in the drafting of the Earth Charter decades ago when the representatives of the scientific community eventually were persuaded by the elders of many indigenous traditions

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[15] Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: the Secular as the Sacred*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

I am reminded of the heated debate in the drafting of the Earth Charter decades ago when the representatives of the scientific community everntually were persuaded by the elders of many indigenous traditions to inscribe the phrase 'the Earth is alive' into the final text. : “the earth is alive!” In other words, even so-called 'dead matter'. Even so-called “dead matter” is not merely materiality devoid of any spirituality.

The issue of *zhi* (consciousness and feeling) is much more intriguing. There is virtual agreement that animals have feelings. Whether or not they have consciousness is controversial. Some animal lovers believe that they (particularly dogs and horses) do. A few veterinarians insist that they also have “self-consciousness.” Xunzi uses rightness (*yi*) to differentiate humans from all other animals. He underscores the cognitive function of the mind, especially its ability to analyze and differentiate, as the basis for building stable social organizations. In this lecture, I follow Mencius’ line of inquiry. He makes it explicit that the difference between human nature and animal nature is slight. For example, like animals, the desire for “food and sex” (survival and reproduction) is inevitably human nature. The uniqueness of being human lies in a totally different magnitude. He does not want us to forget that human beings are animals. His strategy is to build the case on the slight difference. We can say that the slight difference is that human beings are the kind of animal that is capable of self-consciousness of a particular kind. Despite the necessity of “food and sex”, which are prerequisites for our physical existence (“the small body”), self-consciousness enables us to realize the full potential of humanity (“the great body”).

From the perspective of the “continuity of being,” the emergences of life and consciousness indicate the trajectory of the advent of the human. One can well imagine that human beings are interconnected not only with the human world but also with all members of the animal kingdom, the life world, the earth, and beyond. This connectedness enables the human to develop a vision of holism.

There is nothing in the cosmos that is totally irrelevant to the feeling capacity of the heart. Neither a distant star nor a blade of grass, not to mention human affairs, is outside the

scope of the sensitivity of the heart. In principle and in practice, its capacity for responding to all things is unlimited. It is not the result of wild imagination but of immediate recognition that Mencius asserts that "all the ten thousand things are there in me."[16] True to the Mencian spirit, Cheng Hao (1032-1085) and later Wang Yangming (1472-1529) maintained that humanity forms one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things.[17] They insisted that "forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things" is a human capacity realizable by every person in ordinary daily existence.

Wang Yangming tried to demonstrate this capacity by a series of illustrations. Our reactions to a child about to fall into a well, animals trembling with fear before they are slaughtered, trees cut down, and mountains denuded may vary in emotional intensity in evoking our responses, but they all, in diverse ways, affect us. We are, consciously or unconsciously, connected to family, community, nature, and the cosmos. By implication, he maintained that the full realization of humanity requires that we overcome not only egoism, nepotism, parochialism, ethnocentrism, and nationalism, but anthropocentrism as well.

This move from the concrete to the universal rejects both closed particularism and abstract universalism. The negotiation is between personal rootedness and public-spiritedness. The authentic possibility of such negotiation is predicated on their mutual intelligibility and potential complementarity. To be personal is not to be private. While I normally choose not to disclose my private thoughts, I often feel impelled to share values that I personally cherish. I am rooted in my primordial ties—ethnicity, gender, language, place, status, age, and faith, but I have no difficulty in recognizing that they are contextualized and historicized to the extent that they represent a unique configuration which defines, in the concrete, my own singularity. However, my self-understanding dictates that I appreciate what

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[16] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 79.

[17] Ibid, p. 524, "His brother (Ch'eng I) also said that 'The man of *jen* regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body.' And the doctrine is later fully developed in Wang Yangming,"

I am in the broader racial, gender, linguistic, economic, political, social, cultural, and religious contexts. This enables me to know that there are other singularities that are equally complex. I know that I can never fully understand the singularity that I recognize as myself, but I know for sure that it is my privilege and responsibility to try to do so. By analogy, I am aware that numerous singularities, like me, are in the same boat.

This is the human condition that is relevant to all spiritual traditions. The Confucian path, simply put, is that I am not what I ought to be and yet I am aware that I must work through the structure and function of what I am to live up to the highest standard of self-realization. The logic of the *Great Learning* can be stated as follows: My self is the point of departure. "From the emperor to the common person, each should regard self-cultivation as the root." In concrete terms, self-cultivation is to transcend privatized self-centeredness in preference for the public good. We may even say that I am private, my family is public; my family is private, the community is public; the community is private, the nation is public; the nation is private, the global village is public; the global village is private, the cosmos is public. Public-spiritedness can only be realized through self-cultivation. This move from the rooted private ego to the public-spirited relational self is open to all human beings. Human greatness lies in the infinite capacity of the human heart to embody the cosmos. The embodiment occurs through dialogical communication.

The dialogical mode is a defining characteristic of the Confucian way of life. 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. Dialogical encountering, rather than dialectical overcoming, enables the refinement and enlargement of the feeling of commiseration (sympathy, empathy, and compassion) inherent in all humans to be extended and expanded from the self, to family, community, nation, world, nature, and beyond.

Learning to be human is "for the sake of the self." The dignity, independence, and autonomy of the self are cherished Confucian values. Self-knowledge is necessary for political responsibility, social engagement, and cultural sensitivity. Confucius' disciple, Zengzi, remarked that an educated person must be broadminded and resolute, for the burden is heavy and the road long.[18] He carries humanity as his personal task. How can we say that the burden is not heavy? He ends his journey only with death. How can we say that the road is not long? Mencius used the metaphor of digging a well to convey his sense of "getting it oneself" as a proper way of learning. Only if we deeply immerse ourselves in self-understanding will we benefit from the flowing stream beneath to enrich our ways of life. The ability to accumulate rich poetic, political, social, historical, and metaphysical resources within is the precondition for embodying an ever-expanding network of relationships without.

Since the Confucian self is never an isolated individual but a dynamic center of relationships, it cannot but interact with other centers through dialogue. The recognition of and respect for the other is a point of departure for entering a fruitful relationship. All five basic relationships are reciprocal: the father is compassionate, and the son is filial; the ruler is benevolent, and the minister is loyal; the older brother is friendly, the younger brother is respectful; trust among friends and division of labor between husband and wife. The spirit of reciprocity pervades all relationships. The golden rule stated in the negative, "Do not do unto other what you would not want others to do unto you,"[19] is based on the self-awareness that the integrity of the other takes precedence over the desire to establish a relationship in one's own terms. The passive injunction must be augmented by a positive charge, "in order to establish myself, I must help others to establish themselves; in order to enlarge myself, I must help others to enlarge themselves."[20]

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[18] Peimin NI, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations,* p. 219: "Master Zeng said, 'Educated persons (*shi* 士) cannot do without being broad-minded and resolute. Their responsibility is heavy and their journey (*dao* 道) is long. Human-heartedness is their responsibility—is it not heavy? Only with death does their journey end—is it not long?' "

[19] Peimin NI, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations*, p. 281, p. 364.

[20] Ibid., p. 187.

This dialogical mode is applied to nature and Heaven as well. In the spirit of dialogue, nature is, in Thomas Berry's felicitous expression, "a communion of subjects," rather than "a collection of objects."[21] Nature so conceived is the mother earth enabling us to survive, grow, and flourish. Similarly, our relationship to Heaven is based on mutual responsiveness. In the Confucian perception, Heaven is omnipresent and omniscient but not omnipotent. It may have created all things, but it relies upon human participation to complete the magnificent work. Humans are supposed to appreciate all that the cosmic flow has engendered and to create a peaceful and harmonious abode for themselves and their environment. The dictum that "Heaven engenders, and humans complete"[22] suggests that human beings, as Heaven's partners, are co-creators of their universe. By implication, they are also powerful destroyers. As an old Chinese proverb says, "humans can survive all disasters except manmade catastrophes."[23]

The Han Confucian thinker, Dong Zhongshu, identified three great roots: Heaven is the root of creativity, Earth is the root of nourishment, and humanity is the root of completion. Zhang Zai's (1020-1077) *Western Inscription*, a foundational text in Neo-Confucianism, begins with a similar idea: "Heaven is my father and earth is my mother. Even such a tiny existence as I finds an intimate niche in their midst. That which fills the universe I take as my body and that which directs the universe I take as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions."[24] We learn to return to our human nature by discovering our interconnectedness with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things. We also learn that our "great

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[21] Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to The Ecozoic Era -- A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos,* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1992).

[22] Eric L. Hutton, *Xunzi, the Complete Text*, pp. 87, "Heaven and Earth produce them, but the sage completes them."

[23] James Legge, *The Works of Mencius in The Chinese Classics*, vol. 2, p. 199.

[24] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 497.

body" is great because of its capacity for this kind of interconnectedness. Mencius maintained that if we fully realize our own hearts and minds, we will know our nature. Through knowing our nature, we will know Heaven. He further contended that if we reflect upon ourselves and realize that we are sincere (true and authentic), this is the greatest joy in life. In short, he simply expounded the anthropocosmic vision in *Zhongyong* (*the Doctrine of the Mean*):

> Only those who are the most sincere (true and authentic) can realize their own nature. If they can realize their own nature, they can realize the nature of others. If they can realize the nature of others, they can realize the nature of things. If they can realize the nature of things, they can take part in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth. If they can take part in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth, they can form a trinity with Heaven and Earth.[25]

This is the reason that Confucius stated that "humanity can make the Way great; the Way cannot make the human great."[26] Lest this is construed as an anthropocentric assertion about human hubris, what Confucius believed in is human potential, promise, and responsibility. A salient feature of Confucian humanism, unlike the secular, anthropocentric, rational humanism of the Enlightenment, is its necessary connection with Heaven and Earth. Humanism, as Confucians would have it, is neither de-spirited nor de-natured. It is, in theory and practice, rooted in the spiritual realm and grounded in the natural world.

Our innate sense of being connected in a sympathetic resonance with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things may very well be the deepest and commonest source for human greatness.

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[25] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 107-108

[26] Peimin NI, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations*, pp. 366-367.

The faith in the continuity, indeed the consanguinity, of all modalities of being in making the human an integral part of our existence is cosmological as well as anthropological. It has the great ecological implication of making the earth our proper home. The "continuity of being" in a deeper sense is not merely a horizontal idea. The emergences of life and consciousness strictly speaking are not "ruptures," but they strongly indicate profound transformations evoking a sense of transcendence, at least self-transcendence. This symbolizes that the evolutionary process also entails a vertical trajectory. The sensitivity of the heart has depth as well as breadth. Its all-embracing holism is an inherent human capacity. Therefore, the original heart, rather than the consciousness and feelings we share with animals and the life we share with plants and grass, is distinctively human. It is the original heart that makes human beings great and enables us to have the great body. What is the verticality of the evolutionary process? Cheng Hao confidently asserted that his learning in general was indebted to his predecessors, but the true import of the two characters "Heavenly Principle" (*tianli*) was intimately embodied in him by himself. In other words, Cheng Hao experienced the full meaning of the Heavenly Principle by personally getting it himself. His subjectivity enabled him to realize that the Heavenly Principle is in his original heart. It was not revealed to him by an authoritative force from outside. He really got it himself.[27]

To him and indeed to all the thinkers in the learning of the heart, the Heavenly Principle is within our nature. This is in perfect accord with the opening statement of *Zhongyong*: "human nature is endowed by Heaven."[28] Since human nature is endowed by Heaven, the Heavenly Way (presumably how the Heavenly Principle functions) is encoded in human nature. Heaven makes humans human, but humanity ought to be responsive to Heaven as well. Having our nature conferred by Heaven, it is our obligation to enlarge it. This implies that humans have the capacity and responsibility to bring the Way to fruition in the world. The highest manifestation of humanity is cosmological and anthropological. In short,

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[27] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy,* p. 520.

[28] Ibid., p. 99.

it is “anthropocosmic,” predicated on a holistic and integrated humanism with profound reverence for Heaven. In the *Book of Change* the cosmos is always a dynamic process generating new realities by creatively transforming the existing order. The message for us is that we ought to emulate this Heavenly vitality by a continuous effort of self-strengthening. Our reverence for Heaven is not to worship a “wholly other” authority totally beyond our comprehension but to express a deep sense of awe for the source of life and creativity in itself.

The uniqueness of being human is our inner ability to learn to become worthy partners in the cosmic process. This is predicated on the assumption that we are empowered to apprehend Heaven through our self-knowledge. As Mencius avowed, “if we can realize the full measure of our heart, we can know our nature. If we know our own nature, we can know Heaven.”[29]

Understandably, the highest aspiration of self-realization is the “unity of Heaven and humanity.” Yet, we must acknowledge the asymmetry in the Heaven-human relationship. Although Heaven is creativity in itself, human beings learn to be creative through personal effort. Heaven’s genuineness is naturally brilliant, whereas human beings struggle to become true to themselves by means of knowledge and wisdom. But as co-creators, human beings can carry the Way in the world on behalf of Heaven. They are obligated by their own nature to realize the Way in their life world. In so doing, the Way is no longer out there as mere transcendence with no intimate relationship to human existence here and now. Rather, it is embodied in the common experience of everyday life, making ordinary people, without necessarily being aware of its far-reaching implications, personally connected with Heaven. There is a transcendent dimension of Heaven beyond human comprehension, but Heaven is also immanent in human nature. Mencius articulates this insight: “Our body and complexion are given to us by Heaven. Only a sage can give his body completion.”[30] Thus the way to

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[29] Ibid. , p. 78.

[30] Ibid., p. 80.

sagehood is a process of authenticating our body. Our mind, soul, and spirit are all embodied in the deep structure of our body. They are refined manifestations of selfhood because they radiate from the core of our nature which is inherent in our body. In other words, the human body is a microcosm of the cosmos. Through the cultivation of the heart, the body can open itself to the world and the entire cosmos.

This is succinctly captured by Wang Yangming (1472-1529) in his brilliant comprehension of Mencius' idea of *liangzhi* ("primordial awareness").[31] This "primordial awareness" is precisely what Lu Xiangshan identified as the "original heart" They all took it for granted that this is the greatness of being human and the potential expansiveness of human nature. To the learners of the heart, "primordial awareness" is "embodied knowledge." It is both cognition and affection. It is feeling with intrinsic reasonableness. It is knowing that entails a transformative act. The activity involves three trajectories.

It purifies the quality of the body, it affects the world, and it fulfills the Heavenly Decree. The self-discovery and conscientious activation of "primordial awareness" calls for joy and celebration. All humans at that moment exhibit sageliness. To say that people in the street are all sages, as several of Wang Yangming's followers were fond of saying, is an encouragement ("we should all learn to emulate the sages") and an ontological truth ("all human beings are not only potentially but really sages").[32] At the same time, it is easily understandable that every person (Confucius included) always falls short of attaining sagehood (existentially Confucius made it explicit that he was far from being able to attain it).[33] Therefore, learning to

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[31] James Legge, *The Works of Mencius in The Chinese Classics*, vol. 2, p. 456.

[32] Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yangming*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 239-241.

[33] Peimin NI, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius*, pp. 211-212. "The Master said, 'As for sageliness and human-heartedness, how dare I claim myself to have obtained them? Only being insatiable in working on it and being tireless in offering instruction to others—that much can be said of me.' Gongxi Hua [Zihua] said, 'This is exactly what we disciples are unable to learn.' "

be human requires a ceaseless process of self-cultivation.

In light of the discussion on human greatness, Heavenly Principle, and "primordial awareness", I would like to reiterate the centrality of subjectivity in Confucian humanism. While it seems reasonable to define Confucianism as a form of social ethics, it is vitally important not to reduce subjectivity to a set of social roles. One can argue that human-relatedness is implicit in Confucian subjectivity and that without the social dimension the distinctiveness of Confucian subjectivity is lost. Indeed, the Confucian person is always enriched by connectivity. We learn from the thesis "the continuity of being" that "forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things" is not an imagined ideal but an experienced reality. It is not through rational calculation or empirical proof that we know it is true. It is through a profound feeling, embodied in our original heart, that we know intimately and immediately that it is so. The feeling so conceived is not separable from ordinary feelings and emotions such as joy, anger, sadness, and happiness. Yet, it is fundamentally different because it is a constitutive part of our humanity. It expresses itself as empathy, sympathy, compassion, or, in Mencius' terminology, commiseration[34]. It is the very reason that human beings are great for it evokes the Great Body in us.

This feeling is not merely anthropological. It is also cosmological. Indeed, it is anthropocosmic. To reiterate Cheng Hao's reference to the Heavenly Principle (*tianli*). His ecstasy of experiencing it through intimate embodiment suggests a personal realization of the transcendent reality. He got it himself because it had always been laden in his original heart. We can imagine that for Cheng Hao it is precisely the embodied knowledge of the Heavenly Principle that enabled him to articulate the conviction that humanity forms one body with Heaven, Earth and the myriad things.

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[34] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 65-66.

Humanity so conceived is awareness. It is an internally generated awareness. It may be a response to an external stimulus, but it is not merely the consequence of an outside force. It has its own autonomous and independent agency. Unlike ordinary feelings, it is not merely passively responding but also actively probing. However, it does not function at the empirical level alone. Its connectivity is all-embracing. It connects by making contacts and forming linkages. In a deeper sense, it connects by participation and transformation. It is a cognitive function to be sure, but it is also affective. Indeed, all our bodily sensations (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching) are both cognitive and affective. Humanity as awareness, in the case of sympathy for example, is a transformative act. It is knowledge and, at the same time, action. The spontaneity with which it expresses itself makes action an integral part of knowledge. Unlike ordinary sensations, it naturally emanates from the heart without reflection or intention. It is empirical and transcendental. We can experience it as ordinary sensation, but we cannot sense its depth and breadth at that level. We should recognize that our original heart defines our true nature. It is of course the quality that we are born with, but more importantly it is conferred by Heaven. As the opening statement of *Zhongyong* specifies that human nature is decreed by Heaven. In other words, the original heart (our true nature) is where the Heavenly Principle resides.

The Heavenly Principle is omnipresent. It is present in humans, animals, plants and rocks, indeed all beings in the evolutionary process. It is the ultimate reason for their existence. However, Cheng Hao's personal experience of embodying the Heavenly Principle is significant in two senses. It is a vision of humanity and it is a confirmation of subjectivity. Humanity as Cheng Hao envisioned it is not merely an idea but an activity; dynamic, transformative, and productive. This is how the Heavenly Principle functions in human life. Its dynamism is ceaseless. It is always in the process of becoming. It displays tremendous transformative potency like the power of growth in nature. It produces and reproduces with inexhaustible inner strength.

As an activity, humanity expresses itself in feelings; sympathy, empathy, compassion, and commiseration, in short, a feeling of love. There are several attempts to define more precisely

the meaning of love in this connection. A prevalent position is "to love people" or "to love others." The etymology of *ren* (humanity) containing the graph two certainly lends strong support to this reading. The eminent Berkeley Sinologist, Peter Boodberg, strongly argues that the proper translation of *ren* should be "cohumanity."[35] However, I prefer the rendering of *ren* in the recently discovered bamboo strips from *Guodian*: body on top and heart below, indicating the inseparability of body and heart. I do not wish to enter an elaborate philological debate here. Suffice it now to point out that the two different readings have profound philosophical implications. If *ren* is rendered as cohumanity, human-relatedness is a constitutive element and sociality is an integral part of humanity. If humanity is made of body and heart, we can well conceive of it as individuality, indeed singularity. According to this reading, the primacy of love can very well be "self-love" which may serve as the basis for "making others love me" and "loving others." This is precisely the order of priority Confucius preferred as cited in *Xunzi*: "self-love" takes precedence over "loving others" which takes precedence over "making others love me".[36]

What is wrong with defining humanity in social terms alone? I can appreciate the effort to define humanity in social terms, but the danger of defining humanity exclusively in social terms is to miss an essential feature in the Confucian project of learning to be human.

Let us continue with the discussion on love. Confucian humanity expresses itself in differentiated rather than undifferentiated love. Universal love, as advocated by *Mozi*, is critiqued because of its impracticality. If we insist that one should take care of a stranger's father as intensely as one takes care of one' own, chances are most fathers will be not be properly cared for.[37] In family ethics, the practice of humanity must begin from parents and

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[35] Peter Boodberg, "The Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts." , in *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 2 (January 1953), pp. 317–332.

[36] Eric L. Hutton, *Xunzi, the Complete Text*, pp. 329-330.

[37] Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yangming*, pp. 56-57.

expand outward. This is true with sympathy, empathy, and compassion. The sequence is not arbitrary, but the pattern is established as a practical guide. The parent-child relationship is often cited to show the centrality of the family in Confucian ethics. Filial love is the first step in cultivating it. By emphasizing family relations, the rectification of names dictates: "let fathers be fathers and let sons be sons."[38] In concrete terms, the teaching of filial piety is to instruct the son to behave as son towards his father. This requires that the son is aware of his role as a son. This awareness precedes the son's ability to perform his role properly. If he is willing to obey his father or to submit himself passively to the orders of the father without being critically aware of what a proper father-son relation ought to be, he has already abandoned his responsibility as a son. Therefore, Confucius was furious when Zengzi asked him "how about following the orders of the father?" Confucius stated that the Son of Heaven is surrounded with seven censors, a lord with five and a sub-lord with three. Their sole responsibility is to remonstrate with their rulers. If the son does not remonstrate with the father, he is abdicating his duty as a son. This is tantamount to setting a trap for his father to fall into unfatherly behavior. Obeying the father blindly is diametrically opposed to filial love.[39] Underlying the reasoning is that the son's self-cultivation demands that he is aware of his obligation to see to it that his father behaves in a fatherly way. The father-son relationship is mutually beneficial. The centrality of self-awareness is obvious.

Humanity is also communication. I have already mentioned that humanity's connectivity is positive engagement and active transformation. It communicates not as an outside observer but as an inside participant. Implicit in subjectivity there is also intersubjectivity.

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[38] Peimin NI, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations*, p. 289. "The role of a father requires the person to love and take good care of his children, to nurture them and educate them. Reciprocally, the children must treat the father with due respect and filial piety (xiao). Most translators only catch one of the two meanings and hence the reciprocity is lost in their translation. "

[39] Henry Rosemont Jr. and Roger Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of Xiaojing*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), pp. 113-114.

The recognition of the other is not an imposition of my selfhood on the other. Nor is it an appropriation of the other into my selfhood. The other is not only tolerated or recognized but also respected. The integrity of the other cannot be compromised even if I strongly believe what I do is for his benefit. I need to first understand his wishes as a precondition to persuade him to follow my way. I do not prematurely do to him what I hope that he will do to me. It is after I have fully appreciated his situation that I begin to interact with him positively. This may sound therapeutic in a doctor-patient relationship, but the ethical reason is considerateness. The Golden Rule stated in the negative precedes the active charge of doing unto others what you would want the others to do unto you. Observing the rule, "do not do unto others what you would not want to do unto you,"[40] may avoid unnecessary clash of faiths. Interfaith dialogue challenges conversion as the only purpose of missionary work. This does not mean that one is no longer obligated to share the "good news." It merely recommends more expedient ways (skillful means) to convey the message. The crucial point is that the interest of the other is already in my self-awareness.

Humanity as awareness assumes a transcendent significance. Since we are inseparable from and holistically interconnected with all things, we find a common source. It is not the objective reality of the common source alone, but the human awareness and capacity of participation in it that enables us to assert greatness as human beings. Subjectivity is critical in this connection. No relationship can generate the light and warmth of self-awareness. Every form of vital energy that makes a thing embodies a principle. All principles emanate from the Heavenly Principle. They are endowed in the original heart. This is in perfect accord with Mencius' claim that "all the myriad things are equipped in me." His following statement that the greatest joy in life is that "upon reflection, I find that I am true to myself"[41] can thus

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[40] Peimin NI, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations*, p. 281, p. 364.

[41] Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 79.

be interpreted to imply that the ultimate happiness is the realization that I am an authentic human being forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things. We should add that there is subtlety in this seemingly thorough monism, namely "oneness of principle and multiplicity of its manifestation."[42] For example, humanity as universal love should be encouraged but in actual practice differentiated love, beginning with the closest kin and extending outward is the appropriate method of realizing it in family, community, nation, and beyond.

In recent decades, various significant attempts have been made to revitalize humanism as an underlying concern for reconfiguring a world order that enables human beings to live together in an inclusive society. The deliberate effort to transcend abstract universalism, in which harmony is misinterpreted as uniformity and the seemingly all-embracing idea of common destiny is merely disguised as a strategy of domination, makes all sophisticated advocates of humanism in the 21_{st} century wary about unilateralism. Understandably, the recognition of cultural diversity features prominently in humanistic thinking today. Many humanists consider difference as a precondition for harmony. Harmony without uniformity, or more positively, harmony that tolerates, recognizes and respects difference is the right path, whereas the demand for conformity to a preconceived and often ideologized pattern of control is a distorted version of harmony.

Globalization is arguably a more intensified process of modernization, but in a deeper sense, it is also a profoundly significant departure from modernization, not to mention Westernization. The spatial idea of the west and the temporal idea of the modern both imply a developmental strategy that leads to convergence and even homogenization. Yet, globalization also enhances localization, nationalization and regionalization. It enables us to see a whole new spectrum of color, sound, smell, taste, mood, emotion, and sentiment

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[42] Ibid., p. 544, Ch'eng I: Principle is one but its manifestations are many.

associated with ethnicity, gender, language, age, place, class, and faith. Human community has never been so differentiated and at the same time, due to advances in science and technology, especially information and communication technologies, has never been so interconnected.

How do we envision harmony in diversity in a differentiated and interconnected community? I would like to offer Spiritual Humanism as a response. From this perspective, humanity is differentiated from and simultaneously interconnected with all modalities of being in the universe. It is unique but inseparable from everything else. The evolution of the human, in its most authoritative story known to the scientific community to date, is a microcosm of the macrocosmic narrative of the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago involving the emergence of the sun and the earth. In the planetary scale, the emergence of life, animals, and the human species is also an integral part of the same narrative. In this sense, to say that "Heaven and Earth are our parents" is not a romantic assertion but an empirical statement.

Each human being as endowed by the Heavenly decree is intrinsically free, equal, and valuable to realize that is great in us. Our dignity is guaranteed by our subjectivity. It is our noble mission to cherish our individuality (singularity). No outside authority should or can take the "original heart," "Heavenly Principle," or "primordial awareness" from us: "the authority of the commander of the three armies can be taken away, but the will of a commoner cannot be taken away."[43]

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[43] Peimin Ni, *Understanding of the Analects of Confucius: A New Translation of Lunyu with Annotations*, pp. 242-243, "During the Cultural Revolution in China (1966–1976), Liang Shuming(1893–1988), known as "China's last Confucian" because he defended Confucianism in the wake of the New Culture Movement in the early twentieth century, was criticized for refusing to attack Confucianism, and he openly responded with this quote from 9.26! This spirit is also well captured in Mencius' famous saying, 'Those who cannot be led into excesses when wealthy and honored, or deflected from their purpose when poor and obscure, or be made to bow before superior force—this is what I would call great persons (Mencius, 3B: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 proved by empirical data. Nor can it be grasped by reductive logic from natural sciences such as neurobiology. Rather, it is a commitment, indeed a faith, which may or may not be theistic. The critical issue is to recognize that it has taken billions of years with fine tuning of all the elements—air, water, soil, and numerous other factors for us to emerge for so brief a moment. We can dismiss the whole story as senseless. We can follow major and minor creation stories to accept the thesis that there is teleology in our existence. Of course, there are numerous other options. The onto-theology underlying Spinoza's philosophy which was a source of inspiration for Einstein seems to be an excellent candidate for articulating such an idea. Also, Paul Tillich, and Carl Sagan as mentioned by Ronald Dworkin all supported his thesis that we should have faith in the 'objective reality' that there is meaning in life and that nature has intrinsic value (*Religion without God*; Harvard University Press).[44] However, I do not accept his outright rejection of materialism and naturalism and I am strongly opposed to his anti-theistic position.

I agree with Ronald E. Osborn that the onto-theology that Dworkin advocates lacks "deeply humanizing community or life-sustaining joy" despite its "decorum and dignity" (*Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Winter/Spring 2015)[45]. I also have major reservations concerning Dworkin's hope that physicists and astronomers eventually will answer the ultimate question when they discover the theory of everything. It is not only too optimistic, but simplistic. If "we live in a strange universe: atoms make up only 4 percent of the visible universe, dark matter makes up 24 percent, and dark energy – energy associated with empty space -- makes up 72 percent" (David N. Spergel, *Daedalus*, Fall 2014, 125),[46] it is reasonable to assume that there

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[44] Ronald Dworkin, *Religion without God*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[45] Ronald E. Oborn, "Ronald Dworkin's Onto-Theology", in *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, vol. 43, Nos. 1 & 2 (Winter/Spring 2015).

[46] David N. Spergel, "Cosmology Today", in *Daedalus*, vol. 143 (October 2014), pp. 125-133.

is always mystery beyond human understanding.

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.

Nevertheless, Spiritual Humanism may be theistic or pantheistic, and it embraces atheism and a variety of vitalism characteristic of most indigenous traditions as well. It differs from monotheistic religions in several essential ways. It takes the sanctity of the earth for granted. It subscribes to the idea of the continuity of being. By implication, it does not believe in radical transcendence such as the "Wholly Other" which alone is the numinous in Rudolph Otto's sense.[47] To use Herbert Fingarette's felicitous phrase, it regards "the secular as sacred." In other words, the life world is intrinsically meaningful. It is where the ultimate meaning of life is realizable and ought to be realized. To a spiritual humanist, we are rooted in earth and community, especially the family. Our body is the proper home for our mind, soul and spirit. We learn to be fully human through earth, community and body. Our spiritual transformation is not a departure from where we are but a journey to the interiority of our being. Paradoxically, the innermost core of our being, the source of our self-knowledge, is none other than the macrocosmic reality ingrained in our existence. Surely, earth, community, and body constrain us. They shape us into concrete forms. We are inescapably earthly, communal, and bodily. Hitherto, spiritual traditions in general have instructed us to free ourselves from these constraints. A great human aspiration is to be liberated from mundane bondage, to escape from the prison house of the soul. In Spiritual Humanism, these are

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[47] Based on Rudolf Otto's idea of "*mysterium*" in his concept of the "*numinous*", see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923; 2nd edition, 1950).

enabling constraints, the vehicles that carry us forward to our destiny. They are instrumental in offering each of us the unique path for self-realization. Without them we cannot exist in any concrete sense. They are our incarnations.

A human being so conceived is not a creature but an active agent in the cosmic transformation as an observer, participant, indeed co-creator. Even though there may not be a Creator, the creativity since the Big Bang has never been lost but accumulated in every segment of the evolutionary story-- sun, earth, life, animal, and human. We are the inheritors of this cosmic energy. We are charged with the responsibility to see to it that what has been endowed in our nature continues to give generative power to new realities and life forms. Spiritual Humanism believes that human life has transcendent meaning, that there is always mystery to be comprehended, and that theism as well as other manifestations of human religiosity teach us to rise above secularism. We are finite beings, but in our finitude, there is the constant presence of infinite divinity. Spiritual Humanism is a faith in Humanity: the task of learning to be fully human is to “form one body with Heaven, Earth and the myriad things,” for there is intrinsic unity between immanence and transcendence.

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