

**Humanity as a Universal Value
– CCT Speech –
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Are there still universal values that bring Humanity together? More essential, I suppose, is the question: Is Humanity itself a universal value that can evoke a sense of togetherness in the global community? Various significant attempts have been made to revitalize humanism as an underlying concern for reconfiguring a world order that human beings can 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 21st 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 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 light 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.

The sanctity of earth is taken for granted. Our Universe is saturated with intrinsic value and numinous beauty. This reality cannot be proved by empirical data. Nor can it be gasped by reductive logic from natural sciences such as neurobiology. Rather, it is a religious 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. In Ronald Dworkin's *Religion without God* (Harvard University Press), in addition to Einstein, he also cites Paul Tillich and Carl Sagan to support his thesis that we should reject naturalism and materialism and have faith in the "objective reality"

that there is meaning in life and that nature has intrinsic value.

However, Spiritua' Humanism accepts Dworkin's religious premise but rejects his anti-theistic position. I find Ronald E. Osborn's concluding observation in his review of "Ronald Dworkin's *Onto-Theology*" (*Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Winter/Spring 2015, 80-84) persuasive:

In the final analysis, this is why onto-theology must always be resisted: there is dignity and decorum in it, but no deeply humanizing community or life-sustaining joy.

Indeed, the hope that physicists and astronomers eventually will answer the ultimate question when they discover the theory of everything is too optimistic, if not 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), it is reasonable to assume that there is always mystery beyond human rationality.

The grammar of theism strikes a sympathetic resonance in Spiritual Humanism. Sacred places (cathedral, church, temple, mosque, synagogue), hymns, songs, prayers, dances, festivals are beyond the 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 contribution to human religiosity.

Nevertheless, Spiritual Humanism may be theistic or pantheistic but 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. To use Herbert Fingarette's felicitous phrase, it regards "the secular as sacred." In other words, the lifeworld is in itself 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 see ourselves from these
[redacted] A great human aspiration is to be
liberated from the mundane bondage, to escape
from the prison house of the soul. In Spiritual
Humanism, these are enabling constraints, the
vehicles that carry us toward to our destiny. They
are instrumental in offering each of us the unique
path for self-realization. Without them we cannot
exist in a concrete sense. They are our
callings.

A human being so conceived is not a creature
but a 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
cumulated in every segment of the evolutionary
story- sun, earth, life, animal, and human. We are
the inheritor of the cosmic energy. We are charged
with the responsibility to see to it that what has
been endowed in our nature continue to give
generative power to new realities and life forms.
Spiritual Humanism believes that human life has

transcendent meaning, that there is always only truth to be comprehended, and that theism as well as other aspects of human religiosity tend to help 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.

On Humanity

Spiritual Humanism: An Emerging Global Discourse

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Why should we care about Heaven above, earth below and the world in between? Simply put, the viability of the human species is at stake. Is spiritual humanism a practicable option to emerge from the current human condition, as a new way of thinking, a new cosmology, and indeed a new ethos?

In our modern age, secular humanism has become the dominant ideology. It is so 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. Even now, it is characterized by economism and consumerism with profound negative

impact on the environment. But a pivotal change is in the offing.

We are desperately in need of formulating effective critiques of the unintended negative consequences of the advent of modernity, such as aggressive anthropocentrism and possessive individualism. By advocating the "unity of Heaven and humanity," a sense of reverence toward Heaven, respect and care for the Earth, and "peace All under Heaven," spiritual humanism underscores harmony through dialogue and reconciliation. The opposite of harmony is uniformity, but a precondition for harmony is the recognition and celebration of difference.

The emergence of an ecumenical and cosmopolitan consciousness is a precondition for us to envision a truly authentic culture of harmony. All organized religions when confronting the dual challenges of ecological degradation and dysfunctional world order are impelled to cultivate, in addition to their particular religious traditions for

action, the language of
humanism for global citizenship.

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 cultivating a
sustainable relationship with the earth. Spiritual
humanism can guide us to
survive and flourish in the 21st century
by deepening the intellectual and
moral depth of our
environmental awareness.

In order to change the ethos of
international politics, the time is ripe
that we engage in dialogues on core
values across cultures. Universal
values embodied in the Enlightenment
mentality of the modern West, such as
liberty, rationality, legality, human
rights, and the dignity of the individual,

should be fruitfully compared and substantially enriched by other universal values embodied

in virtually all cultures past and present, notably rightness (Justice or fairness), civility, responsibility, and social solidarity.

For spiritual humanism the focus is on commiseration, sympathy, empathy, and compassion. An important spiritual exercise in this connection is to extend our sympathetic feelings so that they encompass an ever-expanding network of human and non-human relatedness. The ideal is to "form one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things."

The great advances in communications and information technologies have substantially enhanced the human capacity to learn, to re-learn, and to unlearn. Space and time have collapsed into a new reality enabling us immediate accessibility to data, information, and knowledge about Heaven above, earth below, and all things in between. This also provides us with a great opportunity to enlarge

the scope and refine the quality of our conscience. The opening lines of the *Western Inscription* by the 11th century Confucian thinker, Zhang Zai 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 ■ 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 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. Heaven is

omnipresent and omniscient but not omnipotent. We are obligated to assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth. In so doing, we can form a trinity with Heaven and Earth.

In my interreligious and inter-civilizational dialogues for the last four decades, I have come to the realization that Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, and Muslims can take the authentic spiritual humanistic stance without in any way losing their primary identities with their own faith communities. Indeed, increasingly there is a group of believers who are willing and happy to call themselves Humanists. The presupposition is that the term "Humanist" embrace true cosmopolitanism that is spiritual as well as natural.

As a comprehensive and integrated humanism, four dimensions of the commonly shared human experience-

self, community, Earth (nature), and
Heaven-are brought

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province,

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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 ofHeaven.

China is at a crossroads. It must pursue
its

own exceptionally unique path,

but its path cannot be

is the realization of a two-sided idea: 2
exclusively Chinese. China should live up
to broad and cosmopolitan and spiritually humanistic.

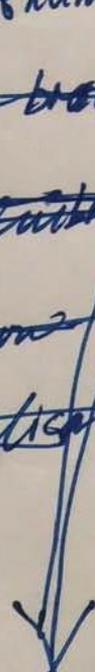
Germany and, through scholarly 1
communication, to enhance a mutual
understanding of our common destiny in
a restless world.

~~I am a beneficiary of~~

This joint venture ~~between~~ between
an eminent university, life & the
dedicated to self-cultivation, self-improvement
and the Taij School foundation
noted for its commitment to the
work ethics that will ^{help} build a
glorious world, ~~community~~ community
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significant and important.
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Rector Engel, Chairman Schlect, |
Dr. Dong Zi, Professor Schmidt-Glintzer,
Distinguished guests, and fellow participants
of this celebratory event.

I am greatly honored to have
this rare opportunity to witness the
establishment of the China Center
at Tubingen University. China Center
Tubingen (CCT), an interdisciplinary
and cross-cultural forum, ^{as well as an institute of} ~~is~~ the realization
of the ~~twofold~~ idea: to broaden the ~~horizons~~ ^{the realization}
life of the mind to ~~enhance~~ ^{become sensitive}
to the Chinese phenomenon not only as
all economic and political reality but
also as a cultural.



Manufactures, I would like to
have an idea for your critical
reflection

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Collection of
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Heaven
God, Sta, Yakve
Brahman logos

mutual responsiveness

omnipresent

omniscient

omnipotent

human
spirit