Confucianism and Ecology

The Interrelation
of Heaven, Earth, and Humans

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The Enlightenment mentality underlies the rise of the modern West as the most dynamic and transformative ideology in human history.[1] Virtually all major spheres of interest characteristic of the modern age are indebted to or intertwined with this mentality science and technology, industrial capitalism, market economy, democratic polity, mass communication, research universities, civil and military bureaucracies, and professional organizations. Furthermore, the values we cherish as definitions of modern consciousness— (including liberty, equality, human rights, the dignity of the individual, respect for privacy, government for, by, and of the people, and due process of law—are genetically, if not structurally, inseparable from the Enlightenment mentality. We have flourished in the spheres of interest and their attendant values occasioned by the advent of the modern West since the eighteenth century. They have made our life-world operative and meaningful. We take if for granted that, through instrumental rationality, we can solve the world's major problems and that progress, primarily in economic terms, is desirable and necessary for the human community as a whole.

We are so seasoned in the Enlightenment mentality that we assume the reasonableness of its general ideological thrust. It seems self-evident that both capitalism and socialism subscribe to the aggressive anthropocentrism underlying the modern mind-set: man is not only the measure of all things but also the only source of power for economic well-being, political stability, and social development. The Enlightenment faith in progress, reason, and individualism may have been challenged by some of the most brilliant minds in the modern Western academy, but it remains a standard of inspiration for intellectual and spiritual leaders through-

out the world. It is inconceivable that any international project, including those in ecological sciences, not subscribe to the theses that the human condition is improvable, that it is desirable to find rational means to solve the world's problems, and that the dignity of the person as an individual ought to be respected. Enlightenment as human awakening, as the discovery of the human potential for global transformation, and as the realization of the human desire to become the measure and master of all things is still the most influential moral discourse in the political culture of the modern age; for decades it has been the unquestioned assumption of the ruling minorities and cultural elites of developing countries, as well as highly industrialized nations.

A fair understanding of the Enlightenment mentality requires a frank discussion of the dark side of the modern West as well. The "unbound Prometheus," symbolizing the runaway technology of development, may have been a spectacular achievement of human ingenuity in the early phases of the industrial revolution. Despite impassioned reactions from the romantic movement and insightful criticisms of the forebears of the "human sciences," the Enlightenment mentality, fueled by the Faustian drive to explore, to know, to conquer, and to subdue, persisted as the reigning ideology of the modern West. It is now fully embraced as the unquestioned rationale for development in East Asia.

However, a realistic appraisal of the Enlightenment mentality reveals many faces of the modern West incongruous with the image of "the Age of Reason." In the context of modern Western hegemonic discourse, progress may entail inequality, reason, self-interest, and individual greed. The American dream of owning a car and a house, earning a fair wage, and enjoying freedom of privacy, expression, religion, and travel, while reasonable to our (American) sense of what ordinary life demands, is lamentably unexportable as a modern necessity from a global perspective. Indeed, it has now been widely acknowledged as no more than a dream for a significant segment of the American population as well.

An urgent task for the community of like-minded persons deeply concerned about ecological issues and the disintegration of communities at all levels is to insure that both the ruling minorities and cultural elites in the modern West actively participate in a spiritual joint venture to rethink the Enlightenment heritage. The paradox is

that we cannot afford to accept uncritically its inner logic in light of the unintended negative consequences it has engendered on the life-support systems; nor can we reject its relevance, with all of the fruitful ambiguities this entails, to our intellectual self-definition, present and future. There is no easy way out. We do not have an "either-or" choice. The possibility of a radically different ethic or a new value system separate from and independent of the Enlightenment mentality is neither realistic nor authentic. It may even appear to be either cynical or hypercritical. We need to explore the spiritual resources that may help us to broaden the scope of the Enlightenment project, deepen its moral sensitivity, and, if necessary, transform creatively its genetic constraints in order to realize fully its potential as a worldview for the human condition as a whole.

A key to the success of this spiritual joint venture is to recognize the conspicuous absence of the idea of community, let alone the global community, in the Enlightenment project. Fraternity, a functional equivalent of community in the three cardinal virtues of the French Revolution, has received scant attention in modern Western economic, political, and social thought. The willingness to tolerate inequality, the faith in the salvific power of self-interest, and the unbridled affirmation of aggressive egoism have greatly poisoned the good well of progress, reason, and individualism. The need to express a universal intent for the formation of a "global village" and to articulate a possible link between the fragmented world we experience in our ordinary daily existence and the imagined community for the human species as a whole is deeply felt by an increasing number of concerned intellectuals. This requires, at a minimum, the replacement of the principle of self-interest, no matter how broadly defined, with a new Golden Rule: "Do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you."[2] Since the new Golden Rule is stated in the negative, it will have to be augmented by a positive principle: "in order to establish myself, I have to help others to enlarge themselves."[3] An inclusive sense of community, based on the communal critical self-consciousness of reflective minds, is an ethico-religious goal as well as a philosophical ideal.

The mobilization of at least three kinds of spiritual resources is necessary to ensure that this simple vision is grounded in the historicity of the cultural complexes informing our ways of life

today. The first kind involves the ethico-religious traditions of the modern West, notably Greek philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity. The very fact that they have been instrumental in giving birth to the Enlightenment mentality makes a compelling case for them to reexamine their relationships to the rise of the modern West in order to create a new public sphere for the transvaluation of typical Western values. The exclusive dichotomy of matter/spirit, body/ mind, sacred/profane, human/nature, or creator/creature must be transcended to allow supreme values, such as the sanctity of the earth, the continuity of being, the beneficiary interaction between the human community and nature, and the mutuality between humankind and Heaven, to receive the saliency they deserve in philosophy, religion, and theology.

The Greek philosophical emphasis on rationality, the biblical image of man having "dominion" over the earth, and the Protestant work ethic provided necessary, if not sufficient, sources for the Enlightenment mentality. However, the unintended negative consequences of the rise of the modern West have so undermined the sense of community implicit in the Hellenistic idea of the citizen, the Judaic idea of the covenant, and the Christian idea of fellowship that it is morally imperative for these great traditions, which have maintained highly complex and tension-ridden relationships with the Enlightenment mentality, to formulate their critique of the blatant anthropocentrism inherent in the Enlightenment project. The emergence of a communitarian ethic as a critique of the idea of the person as a rights-bearing, interest-motivated, rational economic animal clearly indicates the relevance of an Aristotelian, Pauline, Abrahamic, or Republican ethic to current moral self-reflexivity in North America. Jürgen Habermas's attempt to broaden the scope of rational discourse by emphasizing the importance of "communicative rationality" in social intercourse represents a major intellectual effort to develop new conceptual apparatuses to enrich the Enlightenment tradition.[4]

The second kind of spiritual resource is derived from non-Western, axial-age civilizations, which include Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, Confucianism and Taoism in East Asia, and Islam. Historically, Islam should be considered an essential intellectual heritage of the modern West because of its contribution to the Renaissance. The current practice,

especially by the mass media of North America and Western Europe, of consigning Islam to radical otherness is historically unsound and culturally insensitive. It has, in fact, seriously undermined the modern West's own self-interest as well as its own self-understanding. Islam and these non-Western ethico-religious traditions provide sophisticated and practicable resources in worldviews, rituals, institutions, styles of education, and patterns of human-relatedness. They can help to develop ways of life, both as continuation of and alternative to the Western European and North American exemplification of the Enlightenment mentality. Industrial East Asia, under the influence of Confucian culture, has already developed a less adversarial, less individualistic, and less self-interested modern civilization. The coexistence of market economy with government leadership, democratic polity with meritocracy, and individual initiatives with group orientation has, since the Second World War, made this region economically and politically the most dynamic area of the world. The significance of the contribution of Confucian ethics to the rise of industrial East Asia offers profound possibilities for the possible emergence of Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, and Islamic forms of modernity.

The Westernization of Confucian Asia (including Japan, the two Koreas, mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam) may have forever altered its spiritual landscape, but its indigenous resources (including Mahāyāna Buddhism, Taoism, Shintoism, shamanism, and other folk religions) have the resiliency to resurface and make their presence known in a new synthesis. The caveat, of course, is that, having been humiliated and frustrated by the imperialist and colonial domination of the modern West for more than a century, the rise of industrial East Asia symbolizes the instrumental rationality of the Enlightenment heritage with a vengeance. Indeed, the mentality of Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore) is characterized by mercantilism, commercialism, and international competitiveness. The People's Republic of China (the motherland of the Sinic world) has blatantly opted for the same strategy of development and has thus exhibited the same mentality since the reform was set in motion in 1979. Surely the possibility for these nations to develop more humane and sustainable communities should not be exaggerated; nor should it be undermined.

The third kind of spiritual resource involves the primal traditions: Native American, Hawaiian, Maori, and numerous tribal indigenous religious traditions. They have demonstrated, with physical strength and aesthetic elegance, that human life has been sustainable since Neolithic times. The implications for practical living are far-reaching. Their style of human flourishing is not a figment of the mind but an experienced reality in our modern age.

(A distinctive feature of primal traditions is a deep experience of rootedness.) Each indigenous religious tradition is embedded in a concrete place symbolizing a way of perceiving, a mode of thinking, a form of living, an attitude, and a worldview. Given the unintended disastrous consequences of the Enlightenment mentality, there are obvious lessons that the modern mind-set can learn from indigenous religious traditions. A natural outcome of indigenous peoples' embeddedness in concrete locality is their intimate and detailed knowledge of their environment; indeed, the demarcations between their human habitat and nature are muted. Implicit in this model of existence is the realization that mutuality and reciprocity between the anthropological world and the cosmos at large is both necessary and desirable. What we can learn from them, then, is a new way of perceiving, a new mode of thinking, a new form of living, a new attitude, and a new worldview. A critique of the Enlightenment mentality and its derivative modern mind-set from the perspective of indigenous peoples could be thought-provoking.

An equally significant aspect of indigenous lifeways is the ritual of bonding in ordinary daily human interaction. The density of kinship relations, the rich texture of interpersonal communication, the detailed and nuanced appreciation of the surrounding natural and cultural world, and the experienced connectedness with ancestors point to communities grounded in ethnicity, gender, language, land, and faith. The primordial ties are constitutive parts of their being and activity. In Huston Smith's characterization, what they exemplify is participation rather than control in motivation, empathic understanding rather than empiricist apprehension in epistemology, respect for the transcendent rather than domination over nature in worldview, and fulfillment rather than alienation in human experience. As we begin to question the soundness or even sanity of some of our most cherished ways of thinking—such as regarding knowledge as power rather than wisdom, asserting the desirability

of material progress despite its corrosive influence on the soul, and justifying the anthropocentric manipulation of nature even at the cost of destroying the life-support system—indigenous perspectives emerge as a source of inspiration.

Of course, I am not proposing any romantic attachment to or nostalgic sentiments for "primal consciousness," and I am critically aware that claims of primordiality are often modernist cultural constructions dictated by the politics of recognition. (Rather, I suggest that, as both beneficiaries and victims of the Enlightenment mentality, we show our fidelity to our common heritage by enriching it, transforming it, and restructuring it with all three kinds of spiritual resources still available to us for the sake of developing a truly ecumenical sense of global community.) Indeed, of the three great Enlightenment values embodied in the French Revolution, fraternity seems to have attracted the least attention in the subsequent two centuries. The re-presentation of the *Problematik* of community in recent years is symptomatic of the confluence of two apparently contradictory forces in the late twentieth century: the global village as both a virtual reality and an imagined community in our information age and the disintegration and restructuring of human togetherness at all levels, from family to nation.

It may not be immodest to say that we are beginning to develop a fourth kind of spiritual resource from the core of the Enlightenment project itself. Our disciplined reflection, a communal act rather than an isolated struggle, is a first step toward the "creative zone" envisioned by religious leaders and teachers of ethics. The feminist critique of tradition, the concern for the environment, and the persuasion of religious pluralism are obvious examples of this new corporate critical self-awareness. The need to go beyond the Enlightenment mentality, without either deconstructing or abandoning its commitment to rationality, liberty, equality, human rights, and distributive justice, requires a thorough reexamination of modernity as a signifier and modernization as a process.

Underlying this reexamination is the intriguing issue of traditions in modernity. (The dichotomous thinking of tradition and modernity as two incompatible forms of life will have to be replaced by a much more nuanced investigation of the continuous interaction between modernity as the perceived outcome of "rationalization" defined in Weberian terms and traditions as "habits of the heart" (to borrow

an expression from Alexis de Tocqueville), enduring modes of thinking, or salient features of cultural self-understanding.) The traditions in modernity are not merely historical sedimentation passively deposited in modern consciousness. Nor are they, in functional terms, simply inhibiting factors to be undermined by the unilinear trajectory of development. On the contrary, they are both constraining and enabling forces capable of shaping the particular contour of modernity in any given society. It is, therefore, conceptually naïve and methodologically fallacious to relegate traditions to the residual category in our discussion of the modernizing process. Indeed, an investigation of traditions in modernity is essential for our appreciation of modernization as a highly differentiated cultural phenomena rather than as a homogeneous integral process of Westernization.

(Talcott Parsons may have been right in assuming that market economy, democratic polity, and individualism are three inseparable dimensions of modernity.⁵) The post–Cold War era seems to have inaugurated a new world order in which marketization, democratization, and individualism are salient features of a new global village. The collapse of socialism gives the impression that market rather than planned economy, democratic rather than authoritarian polity, and individualist rather than collectivist style of life symbolize the wave of the future. Whether or not we believe in the "end of history," a stage of human development in which only advanced capitalism—characterized by multinational corporations, information superhighways, technology-driven sciences, mass communication, and conspicuous consumption—dominates, we must be critically aware of the globalizing forces which, through a variety of networks, literally transform the earth into a wired discourse community. As a result, distance, no matter how great, does not at all inhibit electronic communication and, ironically, territorial proximity does not necessarily guarantee actual contact. (We can be frequent conversation partners with associates thousands of miles apart, yet we are often strangers to our neighbors, colleagues, and relatives.)

The advent of the global village as virtual reality rather than authentic home is by no means congenial to human flourishing. Contrary to the classical Confucian ideal of the "great harmony"

(*ta-t'ung*), what the global village exhibits is sharp difference, severe differentiation, drastic demarcation, thunderous dissonance, and outright discrimination. The world, compressed into an interconnected ecological, financial, commercial, trading, and electronic system, has never been so divided in wealth, influence, and power. The advent of the imagined, and even anticipated, global village is far from a cause for celebration.

Never in world history has the contrast between the rich and the poor, the dominant and the marginalized, the articulate and the silenced, the included and the excluded, the informed and the uninformed, and the connected and the isolated been so markedly drawn. The rich, dominant, articulate, included, informed, and connected beneficiaries of the system form numerous transnational networks making distance and, indeed, ethnic boundary, cultural diversity, religious exclusivism, or national sovereignty inconsequential in their march toward domination. On the other hand, residents of the same neighborhood may have radically different access to information, ideas, tangible resources (such as money), and immaterial goods (such as prestige). People of the same electoral district may subscribe to sharply conflicting political ideologies, social mores, and worldviews. They may also experience basic categories of human existence (such as time and space) in incommensurable ways. The severity of the contrast between the haves and the have-nots at all levels of the human experience—individual, family, society, and nation—can easily be demonstrated by hard empirical data. The sense of relative deprivation is greatly intensified by the glorification of conspicuous consumption by the mass media. Even in the most economically advanced nations, notably North America, the Scandinavian countries and other nations of Western Europe, and Japan and the Mini-Dragons, the pervasive mood is one of discontent, anxiety, and frustration.

If we focus our attention exclusively on the powerful megatrends that have exerted shaping influences on the global community since the end of the Second World War—science, technology, communication, trade, finance, entertainment, travel, tourism, migration, and disease—we may easily be misled into believing that the world has changed so much that the human condition is being structured by newly emerging global forces without any reference to our

inherited historical and cultural praxis. One of the most significant *fin-de-siècle* reflections of the twentieth century is the acknowledgment that globalization does not mean homogenization and that modernization intensifies as well as lessens economic, political, social, cultural, and religious conflict in both inter- and intranational contexts. The emergence of primordial ties (ethnicity, language, gender, land, class, and faith) as powerful forces in constructing internally defensive cultural identities and externally aggressive religious exclusivities compels practical-minded global thinkers to develop new conceptual resources to understand the spirit of our time. The common practice of internationalists, including some of the most sophisticated analyzers of the world scene, of condemning the enduring strength of primordial ties as a parochial reaction to the inevitable process of globalization is simple-minded and ill-advised. What we witness in Bosnia, Africa, Sri Lanka, and India is not simply "fragmentization" as opposed to global integration. Since we are acutely aware of the explosive potential of ethnicity in the United States, language in Canada, and religious fundamentalism in all three major monotheistic religions, we must learn to appreciate that the quest for roots is a worldwide phenomenon.

Nowadays we are confronted with two conflicting and even contradictory forces in the global community: internationalization (globalization) and localization (communization). The United Nations, which came into being because of the spirit of internationalization, must now deal with issues of rootedness (all those specified above as primordial ties). While globalization in science, technology, mass communication, trade, tourism, finance, migration, and disease is progressing at an unprecedented rate and to an unprecedented degree, the pervasiveness and depth of communal (or tribal) feelings, both hidden and aroused, cannot be easily transformed by the Enlightenment values of instrumental rationality, individual liberty, calculated self-interest, material progress, and rights consciousness. The resiliency and explosive power of human-relatedness can be better appreciated by an ethic mindful of the need for reasonableness in any form of negotiation, distributive justice, sympathy, civility, duty-consciousness, dignity of person, sense of intrinsic worth, and self-cultivation.

In the Confucian perspective, human beings are not merely rational beings, political animals, tool-users, or language-manipulators. Confucians seem to have deliberately rejected simplistic reductionist models. They define human beings in terms of five integrated visions:

1. Human beings are sentient beings, capable of internal resonance not only between and among themselves but also with other animals, plants, trees, mountains, and rivers, indeed nature as a whole.

2. Human beings are social beings. As isolated individuals, human beings are weak by comparison with other members of the animal kingdom, but if they are organized to form a society, they have inner strength not only for survival but also for flourishing. Human-relatedness as exemplified in a variety of networks of interaction is necessary for human survival and human flourishing. Our sociality defines who we are.

3. Human beings are political beings in the sense that human-relatedness is, by biological nature and social necessity, differentiated in terms of hierarchy, status, and authority. While Confucians insist upon the fluidity of these artificially constructed boundaries, they recognize the significance of "difference" in an "organic" as opposed to "mechanic" solidarity—thus the centrality of the principle of fairness and the primacy of the practice of distributive justice in a humane society.

4. Human beings are also historical beings sharing collective memories, cultural memories, cultural traditions, ritual praxis, and "habits of the heart."

5. Human beings are metaphysical beings with the highest aspirations not simply defined in terms of anthropocentric ideas but characterized by the ultimate concern to be constantly inspired by and continuously responsive to the Mandate of Heaven.

The Confucian way is a way of learning, learning to be human. Learning to be human in the Confucian spirit is to engage oneself in a ceaseless, unending process of creative self-transformation, both

as a communal act and as a dialogical response to Heaven. This involves four inseparable dimensions—self, community, nature, and the transcendent. The purpose of learning is always understood as being for the sake of the self, but the self is never an isolated individual (an island); rather, it is a center of relationships (a flowing stream). The self as a center of relationships is a dynamic open system rather than a closed static structure. Therefore, mutuality between self and community, harmony between human species and nature, and continuous communication with Heaven are defining characteristics and supreme values in the human project.[6]

Since Confucians take the concrete living human being here and now as their point of departure in the development of their philosophical anthropology, they recognize the embeddedness and rootedness of the human condition. Therefore, the profound significance of what we call primordial ties—ethnicity, gender, language, land, class, and basic spiritual orientation—which are intrinsic in the Confucian project, is a celebration of cultural diversity (this is not to be confused with any form of pernicious relativism). Often, Confucians understand their own path as learning of the body and mind (*shen-hsin-chih-hsüeh*) or learning of nature and destiny (*hsing-ming-chih-hsüeh*). There is a recognition that each one of us is fated to be a unique person embedded in a particular condition. By definition, we are unique particular human beings, but at the same time each and every one of us has the intrinsic possibility for self-cultivation, self-development, and self-realization. Despite fatedness and embeddedness as necessary structural limitations in our conditionality, we are endowed with infinite possibilities for self-transformation in our process of learning to be human. We are, therefore, intrinsically free. Our freedom, embodied in our responsibility for ourselves as the center of relationships, creates our worth. That alone deserves and demands respect.

In discussing the "spirit" of the Five Classics in the concluding section of *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, Benjamin Schwartz, referring to the central issue of the Neo-Confucian project, observes:

> In the end the root problem was to be sought where Confucius and Mencius had sought them—in the human heart/mind. It is only the human heart/mind. . .which possesses the capacity to "make itself

sincere" and having made itself sincere to extend this transcendent capacity to realize the *tao* within the structures of human society. When viewed from this perspective, this is the essential gospel of the Four Books. At a deeper level, the Four Books also point to an ontological ground for the belief in this transcendental ethical capacity of the individual in the face of the ongoing challenge of a metaethical Taoist and Buddhist mysticism.[7]

The ontological grounding of the Neo-Confucian project on the learning of the heart-and-mind enabled Confucian intellectuals in late imperial China, premodern Vietnam, Chosŏn Korea, and Tokugawa Japan to create a cultural space above the family and below the state. This is why, though they never left home, actively participated in community affairs, or deeply engaged themselves in local, regional, or "national" politics, they did not merely adjust themselves to the world. Max Weber's overall assessment of the Confucian life-orientation misses the point. The spiritual resources that sustained their social activism came from minding their own business and included cultivating themselves, teaching others to be good, "looking for friends in history," emulating the sages, setting up cultural norms, interpreting the Mandate of Heaven, transmitting the Way, and transforming the world as a moral community.

As we are confronted with the issue of a new world order in lieu of the exclusive dichotomy (capitalism and socialism) imposed by the super powers, we are easily tempted to come up with facile generalizations: "the end of history,"[8] "the clash of civilizations,"[9] or "the Pacific century." The much more difficult and, hopefully, in the long haul, much more significant line of inquiry is to address truly fundamental issues of learning to be human: Are we isolated individuals, or do we each live as a center of relationships? Is moral self-knowledge necessary for personal growth? Can any society prosper or endure without developing a basic sense of duty and responsibility among its members? Should our pluralistic society deliberately cultivate shared values and a common ground for human understanding? As we become acutely aware of our earth's vulnerability and increasingly wary of our own fate as an "endangered species," what are the critical spiritual questions to ask?[10]

Since the Opium War (1840–1842), China has endured many holocausts. Prior to 1949, imperialism was the main culprit, but

since the founding of the People's Republic of China, erratic leadership and faulty policies must also share the blame. Although millions of Chinese died, the neighboring countries were not seriously affected and the outside world was, by and large, oblivious to what actually happened. Since 1979, China has been rapidly becoming an integral part of the global economic system. More than 30 percent of the Chinese economy is tied to international trade. Natural economic territories have emerged between Hong Kong and Chuan Chou, Fujian and Taiwan, Shantung and South Korea. Japanese, European, and American, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwanese, investments are present in virtually all Chinese provinces. The return of Hong Kong to the PRC, the conflict across the Taiwan Straits, the economic and cultural interchange among overseas Chinese communities and between them and the motherland, the intraregional communication in East Asia, the political and economic integration of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations, and the rise of the Asia-Pacific region will all have substantial impact on our shrinking global community.

The revitalization of the Confucian discourse may contribute to the formation of a much needed communal critical self-consciousness among East Asian intellectuals. We may very well be in the very beginning of global history rather than witnessing the end of history. And, from a comparative cultural perspective, this new beginning must take as its point of departure dialogue rather than clash of civilizations. Our awareness of the danger of civilizational conflicts, rooted in ethnicity, language, land, and religion, makes the necessity of dialogue particularly compelling. An alternative model of sustainable development, with an emphasis on the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human flourishing, must be sought.

The time is long overdue to move beyond a mind-set shaped by instrumental rationality and private interests. As the politics of domination fades, we witness the dawning of an age of communication, networking, negotiation, interaction, interfacing, and collaboration. Whether or not East Asian intellectuals, inspired by the Confucian spirit of self-cultivation, family cohesiveness, social solidarity, benevolent governance, and universal peace, will articulate an ethic of responsibility as Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese emigrate to other parts of the world is profoundly meaningful for global stewardship.

We can actually envision the Confucian perception of human flourishing, based upon the dignity of the person, in terms of a series of concentric circles: self, family, community, society, nation, world, and cosmos. We begin with a quest for true personal identity, an open and creatively transforming selfhood which, paradoxically, must be predicated on our ability to overcome selfishness and egoism. We cherish family cohesiveness. In order to do that, we have to go beyond nepotism. We embrace communal solidarity, but we have to transcend parochialism to realize its true value. We can be enriched by social integration, provided that we overcome ethnocentrism and chauvinistic culturalism. We are committed to national unity, but we ought to rise above aggressive nationalism so that we can be genuinely patriotic. We are inspired by human flourishing, but we must endeavor not to be confined by anthropocentrism, for the full meaning of humanity is anthropocosmic rather than anthropocentric. On the occasion of the international symposium on Islamic-Confucian dialogue organized by the University of Malaya (March 1995), the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, quoted a statement from Huston Smith's *The World's Religions*. It very much captures the Confucian spirit of self-transcendence:

> In shifting the center of one's empathic concern from oneself to one's family one transcends selfishness. The move from family to community transcends nepotism. The move from community to nation transcends parochialism and the move to all humanity counters chauvinistic nationalism.[11]

We can even add: the move towards the unity of Heaven and humanity (*t'ien-jen-ho-i*) transcends secular humanism, a blatant form of anthropocentrism characteristic of the Enlightenment mentality. Indeed, it is in the anthropocosmic spirit that we find communication between self and community, harmony between human species and nature, and mutuality between humanity and Heaven. This integrated comprehensive vision of learning to be human serves well as a point of departure for a new discourse on the global ethic.

The case against anthropocentrism through the formulation of an anthropocosmic vision embodied in the Neo-Confucian learning of the heart-and-mind is succinctly presented by Wang Yang-ming. Let

me conclude with the opening statement in his *Inquiry on the Great Learning*:

> The great man regards Heaven and Earth and the myriad things as one body. He regards the world as one family and the country as one person. . . . That the great man can regard Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things as one body is not because he deliberately wants to do so, but because it is natural to the humane nature of his mind that he do so. Forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things is not only true of the great man. Even the mind of the small man is no different. Only he himself makes it small. Therefore when he sees a child about to fall into a well, he cannot help a feeling of alarm and commiseration. This shows that his humanity (*jen*) forms one body with the child. It may be objected that the child belongs to the same species. Again, when he observes the pitiful cries and frightened appearance of birds and animals about to be slaughtered, he cannot help feeling an "inability to bear" their suffering. This shows that his humanity forms one body with birds and animals. It may be objected that birds and animals are sentient beings as he is. But when he sees plants broken and destroyed, he cannot help. . .feeling. . .pity. This shows that his humanity forms one body with plants. It may be said that plants are living things as he is. Yet even when he sees tiles and stones shattered and crushed, he cannot help. . .feeling. . .regret. This shows that his humanity forms one body with tiles and stones. This means that even the mind of the small man necessarily has the humanity that forms one body with all. Such a mind is rooted in his Heaven-endowed nature, and is naturally intelligent, clear and not beclouded. For this reason it is called "clear character."[12]

For Confucians to fully realize themselves, it is not enough to become a responsible householder, effective social worker, or conscientious political servant. No matter how successful one is in the sociopolitical arena, the full measure of one's humanity cannot be accommodated without a reference to Heaven. The highest Confucian ideal is the "unity of man and Heaven," which defines humanity not only in anthropological terms but also in cosmological terms. In the *Doctrine of the Mean (Chung yung)*, the most authentic manifestation of humanity is characterized as "forming a trinity with Heaven and Earth."[13]

Yet, since Heaven does not speak and the Way in itself cannot make human beings great—which suggests that although Heaven is omnipresent and may be omniscient, it is certainly not omnipotent—our understanding of the Mandate of Heaven requires that we fully appreciate the rightness and principle inherent in our heart-minds. Our ability to transcend egoism, nepotism, parochialism, ethnocentrism, and chauvinistic nationalism must be extended to anthropocentrism as well. To make ourselves deserving partners of Heaven, we must be constantly in touch with that silent illumination that makes the rightness and principle in our heart-minds shine forth brilliantly. If we cannot go beyond the constraints of our own species, the most we can hope for is an exclusive, secular humanism advocating man as the measure of all things. By contrast, Confucian humanism is inclusive; it is predicated on an "anthropocosmic" vision. Humanity in its all-embracing fullness "forms one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things." Self-realization, in the last analysis, is ultimate transformation, that process which enables us to embody the family, community, nation, world, and cosmos in our sensitivity.

The ecological implications of the Confucian anthropocosmic worldview are implicit, yet need to be more carefully articulated. On the one hand, there are rich philosophical resources in the Confucian triad of Heaven, Earth, and human. On the other hand, there are numerous moral resources for developing more comprehensive environmental ethics. These include textual references, ritual practices, social norms, and political policies. From classical times Confucians were concerned with harmonizing with nature and accepting the appropriate limits and boundaries of nature. This concern manifested itself in a variety of forms cultivating virtues that were considered to be both personal and cosmic. It also included biological imagery used for describing the process of self-cultivation. To realize the profound and varied correspondences of the person with the cosmos is a primary goal of Confucianism: it is a vision with vital spiritual import and, at the same time, it has practical significance for facing the current ecological crisis. This volume itself begins to chart a course for realizing the rich resources of the Confucian tradition in resituating humans within the rhythms and limits of the natural world.

Notes

1. I wish to acknowledge, with gratitude, that Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong were instrumental in transforming my oral presentation into a written text. I would also like to note that materials from three published articles of mine have been used in this paper: "Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality," in *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 19–28; "Global Community as Lived Reality: Exploring Spiritual Resources for Social Development," *Social Policy and Social Progress: A Review Published by the United Nations, Special Issue on the Social Summit, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (New York: United Nations Publications, 1996), 39–51; and "Beyond the Enlightenment Mentality: A Confucian Perspective on Ethics, Migration, and Global Stewardship," *International Migration Review* 30 (spring 1996):58–75.

2. *Analects*, 12:2.

3. *Analects*, 6:28.

4. Jürgen Habermas, "What Is Universal Pragmatics?" in his *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 1–68.

5. Talcott Parsons, "Evolutionary Universals in Sociology," in his *Sociological Theory and Modern Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 490–520.

6. See Thomé H. Fang, "The Spirit of Life," in his *The Chinese View of Life: The Philosophy of Comprehensive Harmony* (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 1980), 71–93.

7. Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 406.

8. Francis Fukuyama's use of this Helena expression may have given the misleading impression that, with the end of the Cold War, the triumph of capitalism necessarily led to the homogenization of global thinking. Dr. Fukuyama's recent emphasis on the idea of "trust" by drawing intellectual resources from East Asia clearly indicates that, so far as shareable values are concerned, the West can hardly monopolize the discourse.

9. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (summer 1993):22–49.

10. These questions are critical issues for my course, "Confucian Humanism: Self-Cultivation and the Moral Community," offered in the "moral reasoning" section of the core curriculum program at Harvard University.

11. Quoted by Anwar Ibrahim in his address at the opening of the international seminar entitled "Islam and Confucianism: A Civilizational Dialogue," sponsored by the University of Malaya, 13 March 1995. It should be noted that Huston Smith's remarks, in this particular reference to the Confucian project, are based on my discussion of the meaning of self-transcendence in Confucian humanism.

If we follow my "anthropocosmic" argument through, we need to transcend "anthropocentrism" as well. See Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 182, 193, and 195 (notes 28 and 29).

12. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Wing-tsit Chan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 659–60.

13. *Chung yung* (Doctrine of the Mean), chap. 22. For a discussion of this idea in the perspective of Confucian "moral metaphysics," see Tu Wei-ming, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung-yung* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 100–141.