

Toward a Confucian Pluralism: Globalization in Dialogue

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On Pluralism

Hawaii is a unique example of East meets West in a Polynesian setting. Contemporary Hawaiian¹ culture means eating Portuguese sausage, eggs and rice from McDonalds for breakfast, going to a luau for lunch, and eating sashimi for dinner before attending an evening performance of Les Miserables. All of this is not to say that Hawaii is the perfect example of a pluralistic society. It definitely has its share of problems, but for the most part, the combination of cultures has not transformed into physical clash and confrontation. With so many civilizations being represented, and a new blend of 'Hawaiian' culture formed, it could be argued that the homogenization is an unavoidable fact of so many cultures living in one small place. Could this could be a sign of things to come as the world's size continues to grow inversely proportional to technological development? The odd thing, however, about Hawaii is that although Hawaiian pride runs deep (just ask anyone that has spent more than a few weeks there) one still finds a China Town, a Kamehameha School for Native Hawaiians only, and a predominantly Caucasian part of the state. It seems that many of the people there have learned how to exist as an individual living in a diverse society. In some ways the people of the friendly islands, for over a century have been facing the same question that many civilizations are facing today. For them it was, how am I Chinese (or Caucasian, or Philipino, etc), but Hawaiian at the same time? Or how am I Hawaiian, yet American in the same breath? For the rest of us, the question is quite the same, but all of the inquiry meets at the point

¹ 'Hawaiian' I use to refer to anyone claiming Hawaii as their home, regardless of ethnicity. This is to be distinguished sharply from 'Native Hawaiian', which is the indigenous culture and people of the islands. When speaking of the latter I have tried to consistently use 'Native Hawaiian'.

we begin to ask, “What does it mean to be American (or Asian, Indian, African, etc) and a human being at the same time?”

This paper is obviously not about Hawaii as a model for globalization. Besides my childhood experience growing up there, I am hardly qualified to put forth such a hypothesis; rather, I hope this to become part of the dialogue for harmony among human beings—who are fast finding this planet we live, “a small world after all.” I write this, not for the scholar of Confucianism, but rather to those that wish to know, what other cultures can contribute to the time period called ‘Modernity’. Of course the word ‘modernity’, is strikingly different from ‘modernization’. The former connotes a temporal setting that those alive cannot help but live in. The latter refers to a process, defined simply as a movement from production by animate forces, to inanimate; and in this sense is amoral, but in the context of complex societies, becomes imbued with emotion that warrants further discussion. ‘Modernization’ is a term that has arisen only in the last 100 years of human existence. ‘Modernity’ on the other hand, at least conceptually, has always been around. Modernity however, is now faced with the question of modernization; and for most of the world, modernization has become as imminent as modernity. Thus, this paper hopes to forward the possibility of “multiple modernities”, each addressing the question of modernization differently.

Equating ‘modernization’ with ‘modernity’ is a central concern in determining one’s standing in modernity. Operating under this mentality the West has been the trendsetter for the past 250 years, and the rest of the world has ‘struggled’ to keep at their heels. It has turned into an international game of ‘king of the modern mountain’, with only one peak, and therefore only one winner. In this framework modernization

ultimately can be only Westernization or Easternization, or another ‘-ization’ whose shadow from the mountain of modernization inherently looms large over the rest of the world. The result is not only “culture-war” with inevitable conflict, but corporate war, and very likely, military war as well. The truth of the matter is that any singular centrism denotes a chase for the other 360 points surrounding the center. Hence the problem is found in the model used for comparison; and question becomes, can a new model arise? One that promotes modernization without singular-centeredness. Is there such a thing as a multi-centered world? And in an age where the most powerful nation in the world is hardly bilingual, how realistic is developing the globalized language necessary for a pluralistic model of modernity to exist?

Scholars of Confucianism have been dealing with this issue for decades. While many useful interpretations have come forth, some continue to play by the rules of singularity. Nathan Gardels, in discussing modernization as empirically defined above, divides the world into ‘First comers’ and ‘Latecomers’, with the West as the First comer and the rest of the world as Latecomers. He explains-

The problems involved in modernizing were fundamentally different for first-comers than for latecomers. The development of individualism as an ideal was almost certainly an essential factor for the first-comers. It is almost certainly not essential for latecomers, who, if they are to be successful, require higher levels of coordination and control along with radical shifts toward a meritocracy and the like that sometimes pass as individualism. Individualism, while a vital element for the first-comers, is a romantic focus for latecomers.... Confucianism would never have led to first-comer emergence of modernization. It could not become effective as a religious, ethical stimulus to modernization even for latecomers until these latecomers had achieved a viable national corporate state. Once this had been achieved, the Confucian ethic became a very important factor in the countries whose success we find so spectacular.²

² Nathan Gardels, “Looking East: The Confucian Challenge to Western Liberalism,” *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Winter 1992, Vol. 9 Issue 1), 60.

While helpful in justifying a less individualistic process of modernization, Gardels, also forwards the harmful dichotomous notion of ‘the West and the rest’. Perhaps his problem lies in defining modernization merely in terms of the use of inanimate objects; but failing to take into account the cultural air of superiority tied into the developmental process that then equates enhanced modernization with an enhanced modernity. In other words, by empirical standards the West has done a better job in modernization; but that does not mean they are a better overall society in modernity. With this in mind, it seems most helpful to create a distinction between ‘modernization’ and ‘modernity’.

However, simply separating the two terms will not provide a pluralistic form of modernity. From a philosophical perspective the dilemma of singleness continues to arise whenever ‘truth’ is viewed singularly. In other words, metaphysically speaking, if there is only one truth (sometimes known as ‘truth’ with a capital ‘T’), there are no other Truths. Thus if one were to lay hold on this Truth, anyone in disagreement is ultimately incorrect. In this system, the most others can hope to add is a new perspective on the Truth—to see it in a new light. But never at any time do they provide anything ontologically ‘new’. Practically speaking, with this in mind, in a Euro-Truth-centered world, all other nations can do is appeal themselves to the Truth, and search for congruency from within their own indigenous tradition to justify Westernization. The end result is Westernization with a Chinese flavor in China; Westernization with Indian flavor in India, and so forth. It becomes an all or nothing situation where those that resist are seen as ‘backward’ for not having ‘woken up’ to the Truth; while the rest of the world unifies in the true form of modernity.

A plurality of truth allows an open door for multiple modernities. At the same time though, this is not to create a new notion of pluralism being the one Truth that all societies must conform to. I am asserting quite the opposite. My hope is for all traditions of the world to look within their own system of belief, and ask the question—in order to maintain my faith, must I hold to a singularity of truth? Or is there an alternative way to see things that allows me to hold to my correctness, but also permit reasonable disagreement between traditions? A minority of individuals from religious cultures have begun to address this very issue. Christian theologian Ronald Thiemann expressed this idea when he stated,

Fundamental to the philosophical acceptance of pluralism is the conviction that we have no self-evident, incorrigible means of establishing the truth of our assertions. This is not to say that we have no means available; however, the means at our disposal will not necessarily convince those with whom we disagree. Consequently, we must hold open the possibility that those who disagree with us do so rationally. This position implies neither relativism nor indifferentism to truth. It simply suggests that we cannot coerce others into believing as we do. We can offer our reasons for so believing, but these reasons, even if sufficient to support our claims, will not compel others to accept our beliefs.³

Therefore ‘pluralism’ does not mean relinquishing one’s claims to truth; rather it implies that “communities of faith must come to recognize the compatibility between deep and abiding commitment to the truth claims of one’s tradition and an openness to and respect for the claims of another tradition.”⁴

Adjusting truth claims is most difficult for religions. Corrigibility often must come from within the tradition; and even when such is the case, accusations of heterodoxy are almost sure to arise. Thus I am not counseling “change” in any religious

³ Ronald F. Thiemann, *Religion in Public Life* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 162.

⁴ Thiemann, 161.

doctrine; but instead I am encouraging introspection for the possibility of pluralism—as it is the most harmonious language of globalization.

In developing this mindset it is important to realize that a plurality of truth does not inherently lead to accepting all purported truths as equal—thereby giving way to relativism. The distinction need not be blurred between right and wrong. The concept of truth therefore must be understood in light of two important elements—a quantitative factor, and a qualitative factor. In the quantitative dimension, truth can be claimed as either singular or plural. As asserted above, singularity in its simplest form is antithetical to pluralism; but that does not rule out the possibility of reconciling the two. In other words, singularity does not necessarily have to be viewed as an eternal singularity; meaning the oneness of truth is constant through time. It can also be seen in an ultimate sense; referring to a state of truth existing in plurality in this world, but in the ‘world to come’ circumscribed into one great whole. The latter position usually places the responsibility on one tradition, or sometimes on every tradition, to seek out the truths in other systems of belief and incorporate them into their own.

In the qualitative dimension truth can be absolute or relative; and does not have to be in an either/or dichotomy. In other words, a given tradition can accept a plurality of numerous absolute truths, while still affirming certain relative truths. Absolute and relative must be seen functioning across time and space; so that absolute truths are those that do not change with time and are universal in purpose, and relative truths are those that vary in one or both of these aspects. The difficulty occurs in attempting to separate the absolute from the relative.

Creating this type of cross-section means that the foundation of pluralism lay in the quantitative rather than qualitative dimension. Once truth is seen in plurality the possibility then arises that other traditions *may* have something unique to offer. It is this potentiality that serves as the point of departure for a pluralistic project. The quantitative dimension, of course, is much more complex but acts as the setting for dialogue built on the foundation of pluralism. It is this essence of plausibility that must be accepted in order to avoid the “clash of civilizations” predicated on the assumption that every culture is predisposed to believing their way is the only way. Thus, I put forth the thesis of pluralism as the language of globalization.

In the end, my call is not to request giving up truth claims from one’s own tradition; but rather to accept pluralism as the global dialogue. Tu Wei-ming has been resolute in declaring the need of being bilingual—the primary language being the language of one’s own tradition, and the secondary language being a universal tongue. In my view, pluralism is this ‘universal language’. Therefore, any significant participant of globalized dialogue must accept the pluralistic (or at least the ultimate singular) quantitative dimension of truth in order to provide the openness of contribution from all participants of modernity. In this setting there is no ‘king of the modern hill’; and no ‘Euro-centrism’, or ‘Sino-centrism’, but a series of sincere offerings from all cultures of the world.

To this discussion, the West has undoubtedly provided the notions of equality, justice, and freedom. One cannot help but believe, as significant as these contributions are, every tradition has something equally valuable to offer. In developing the language of globalization, each culture must look within, and extend that which is core to their

being. In doing so, certain virtues will be in opposition to those presented from other groups. While this dynamic tension is full of debate, it must also be accepted as healthy in providing a plethora of options for those attempting to relate, or address similar issues in modernity. Besides contributing to the dialogue, each participant must also make the shift from a “teaching culture into a learning culture.”⁵ Wholesale adoption of the other is not my purpose; but every tradition should at least express a commitment to understand their partners in modernity. If the end result is homogenization, at least it will be a consensual homogenization, put into practice only after a full exploration of other alternatives.

In Confucianism, this pluralistic discourse of differences is central to its third epoch of development. Its ability to engage issues at the global level will forecast its future to become a globalizable tradition. One of the purposes of this paper is to offer my view of the Confucian contribution in shaping the universal language. The Confucian tradition has perhaps impacted the lives of more people that have lived on the Earth than any other. Although the experience for mankind has undoubtedly been bittersweet the future holds opportunities that are beneficial to all.

Confucianism is equipped to engage in a pluralistic dialogue. The idioms of “harmony and not conformity”, “a confusing variety of notes... woven together into a seamless whole”, and “the negative golden rule”, have all become hallmarks of pluralism. Perhaps of equal import but of less notoriety is the analogy of the stew from the *Zuo Zhuan*. Although somewhat lengthy, it is worthy of reflection as it embodies the necessity of a pluralistic exchange-

⁵ Wei-ming Tu, “Multiple Modernities: Implications of the Rise of “Confucian” East Asia,” *The Formation and Development of East Asian Cultural Zone: Treatises on Confucian* (Taipei: National Taiwan University Department of History, 2003), 16.

The Marquis of Qi had returned from a hunt, and was being attended by Master Yan at the Chuan Pavilion when Ran Qiu came galloping up the them at full speed. The Marquis remarked, “It is only Ran Qiu who harmonizes with me!” Master Yan replied, “Certainly Ran Qiu agrees with you, but how can you say that he harmonizes with you?” The Marquis asked, “Is there a difference between agreeing and harmonizing?” Master Yan answered, “There is a difference. Harmonizing is like cooking soup. You have water, fire, vinegar, pickle, salt, and plums with which to cook fish and meat. You heat it by means of firewood, and then the cook harmonizes the ingredients, balancing the various flavors, strengthening the taste of whatever is lacking and moderating the taste of whatever is excessive. Then the gentleman eats it, and it serves to relax his heart.... Now, Ran Qiu is not like this. What his lord declares acceptable, he also declares acceptable; what his lord declares wrong, he also declares wrong. This is like trying to season water with more water—who would be willing to eat it? It is like playing nothing but a single not on you zither—who would want to listen to it?”⁶

In regards to the issue at hand, the stew can be seen in light of a global dialogue. Each civilization has their ingredients to add. Some ingredients may seem less ‘tasty’ than others, but even the lack of something as repulsive as onions, could cause the whole meal to go bad. The additives may initially not taste right together, but without a diversity of flavors, it would be like “trying to season water with more water”. Thus, they provide a full taste and full experience to those eating the stew.

Taken from another angle, and carrying the analogy further; all of the ingredients go through a ‘cooking’ process. In this procedure there are inevitably parts of the ingredients that change. They go through a transformation in which they absorb the essence of other ingredients, lose some of their own, and experience a process of maturation by heat. Thus, while most ingredients remain identifiable and uniquely themselves they also lose and gain attributes in contributing to something entirely new.

⁶ Duke Zhao, Year 20 (521B.C.E.); James Legge trans., *The Chinese Classics*, (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, Vol. 5, 1960), 684.

The Confucian Contribution to Pluralism

History has shown that any ideology can be harmful; perhaps just as much as it could be helpful. Rather than turning to the past to historically prove the pluralism within the Confucian tradition, which is arguably non-existent; and be forced to dispute the despotism sometimes accompanying the tradition, I leave historical investigation for another time, and draw from readily available aspects of the tradition as it exists in modernity.⁷ Some of my observations may not be immediately identified as traditional Confucian concepts. The reason for these differences are two fold—first of all, as traditions interact with others, they are asked new questions, and are forced to either evade the issue or provide a new answer. Thus, although ‘truth’ never played as central a role as it did in Western thought, it is an important topic in regards to pluralism. Hence I attempt to provide a Confucian interpretation of the nature of truth. Secondly, in light of the new questions posed to Confucianism, the answers I provide may be seen as evidence of the third epoch of Confucian humanism—the tradition extending beyond the borders of Asia, and functioning in the mind of a Western educated, multi-ethnic, Christian-raised Harvard graduate student.

In addressing the issue of pluralism as the global dialogue, Confucianism has numerous things to offer. I merely put forth what I see as three principles that are the most beneficial at this stage of globalized development. One almost hopes that in a decade these values will be so well understood on the international level that others will need to be discussed.

⁷ I do not mean to simplify what ‘Confucianism’ means. Many find it a Western assigned misnomer, and thus disqualify it. Today, however, something undeniably exists that labels itself ‘Confucianism’. It is from this perspective that I write. It centers around the thought and teachings of individuals such as Confucius, Mencius, Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, and more contemporarily, Tu Wei-ming.

The first virtue is the Confucian concept of humanity. Much has been said in regards to *ren*, and I attempt to add nothing new; but rather put it in perspective of globalization. Secondly, I will discuss the Confucian notion of truth; its lack of strict dichotomies, and its conception of having an absolute facet in combination with a processual dimension. The traditional absence of emphasis on truth leaves the door open for free flowing debate and dialogue. This dialogue, perhaps relates to the third characteristic—an emphasis on learning and culture.

The Confucian usage of ‘humanity’ is strikingly different than one would normally use the term in English; where it refers to the group of species called ‘human beings’, or the qualities of compassion and kindness. This is not to say that *ren* does not encompass these attributes; but rather it reaches them from a much deeper angle. The graph for humanity, expressed as 仁, perhaps explains it best, depicting the sign for man, 人 (or woman), in combination with the graph for two (二); thus inferring not only the connection two people should have between each other, but also the lowest common denominator that two people share—the quality of being human. Thus, *ren* addresses the primal question of what it means to be man. The minimum requirement for being humane is met simply by existing, and it is realized only as one understands the complexities of life. Comprehension is gained not only through a cognitive process of classroom learning, but also experientially as one journeys through existence. The individual is the starting point of humanity; but is never understood as a single self. Instead the person is always enmeshed in a pattern of relationships; and one’s goal becomes to extend one’s humanity from the self outward to interact with others guided by norms of propriety, eventually seeing others as they see themselves. The Confucian concept of humanity actually

extends beyond the anthropocentric realm, into what has been called the ‘anthropocosmic’, inferring a connection not only extending from man-to-man, but also from man-to-thing and man-to-cosmos.

In terms of the global dialogue, this concept of humanity emphasizes the interconnectedness of mankind’s journey, and the need to not only sincerely understand the other, but to empathize and sympathize with those that live in this global village. The starting point of humanity is ‘feeling’; and serves to balance the rational drive to simply connect through an intellectual enterprise. This is not to say that rationality is unimportant. Confucianism lacks the distinction between the heart and mind. Both are expressed by the same character, 心. Perhaps this equal emphasis on the cognitive and affective will be helpful in dealing with cultures that do not put forth the traditional instrumental rationality. The anthropocosmic outlook of Confucianism allows one to see the Earth as a main participant on the human journey, and inherently calls for addressing issues of ecology and other problems that may threaten the sanctity of the planet. Notions of humanity are easily combined with issues of equality, and perhaps even bring new meaning to the term. The Confucian saying “humanity is the heart/mind of man” (仁人心也) emphasizes the natural quality of humanity, existing primordially in all.

The Confucian conception of truth is an interesting addition to the globalized dialogue. The lack of an eternal singular thing called ‘Truth’ provides for more toleration and openness of debate. No eternal singular truth also means no strict dualism; thus, no situation that leads to ‘all others being wrong if I am right’. In particular, three dichotomies have been the most harmful in the past—“traditional/modern, the West/the

rest and the local/global.”⁸ Eliminating the bold distinction gives access to a multiplicity of options. It also provides the opportunity to see things in complement to each other rather than being diametrically opposed. This dualistic mentality has created what can be called an ‘either/or complex’. In this situation, an individual can be only traditional *or* modern; American *or* Asian. The Confucian alternative (which is readily found in many other traditions as well) is a ‘both/and compound’; thus providing the flexibility to be both traditional *and* modern, or American *and* Asian. The result, is viewing the tension created by opposing identities, as a thing that must be cherished, rather than something that must be eliminated.

Concepts such as *li* (理), often translated as ‘principle’, or Yin and Yang do come close to a singularity and dualistic response; but it is important to note that Yin and Yang are never seen as eternal polar opposites; rather they are much more responsive, and embody the ‘both/and compound’. Zhou Dunyi’s *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* depicts a much more interactive process, with both having their source in the same object; as opposed to ontological notions of eternal forces of good and bad. Principle may be the one unifying pattern that underlies all activity, but the saying “Principle is one, its manifestations are many” (理一分殊) reveal at least an ultimate sense of singularity, if not the possibility that the entire cosmos is holistic and no one can escape the reach of principle—thus everyone, one way or another is searching for *li*. All of this is further reiterated by the lack of an ontological connection to evil. Hence evil arises situationally rather than absolutely; and this provides the option of understanding circumstances

⁸ Tu, *Multiple Modernities*, 2. Wei-ming Tu, “Multiple Modernities: Implications of the Rise of “Confucian” East Asia,” *The Formation and Development of East Asian Cultural Zone: Treatises on Confucian* (Taipei: National Taiwan University Department of History, 2003), 2.

behind an affair before pronouncing judgment. The Confucian downplay on most types of law may be partially a result of this concept. Whereas in the Judeo-Christian tradition, law has an eternal metaphysical nature, Confucians see reliance on law as an over-essentialization of the complex human condition. I would never go so far as to advocate doing away with a legal system, but this healthy tension created by emphasis on subjective claims could serve as a check and balance system for traditions normally relying on the objective.

Another important Confucian concept in regards to truth is the *ti/yong* (体/用) distinction. Most prominently used in Wang Bi's commentary on the *Laozi* during the third century, the notion has become central to Confucianism for the past 1500 years. Based on defining things in an absolute versus processual dimension, the *ti/yong* distinction provides the user the opportunity to see truth as being both absolute and relative. *Ti* refers to the unchanging portion of a concept, usually expressed in broad terms that allow for flexibility. *Yong* refers to the application of the absolute virtue, and varies across time and space. Confucius, although never specifically mentioning the words '*ti-yong*' expressed this idea when he stated, "A ceremonial cap made of linen is prescribed by the rites, but these days people use silk. This is frugal, and I follow the majority. To bow before ascending the stairs is what is prescribed by the rites, but these days people bow after ascending. This is arrogant, and—though it goes against the majority—I continue to bow before ascending."⁹ For Confucius ritual propriety is a relative function that serves absolute virtues. Thus he does not see conflict in changing the outer forms of ritual as long as he holds to the principles of frugality and humility. In

⁹ Edward Slingerland trans., *Confucius Analects*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 87. *Analects* 9.3.

other words, while in one circumstance one's actions may be a certain way; in another circumstance one may be called to do the exact opposite in order to hold to the same standards. Or, as Mencius expressed it, after being accused of acting contradictory to past behavior—"that was one time, this is another" (彼一時此一時也). Admittedly, this makes Kant's categorical imperatives almost impossible; but it does allow for a diversity of manifestations of the same principles that could form an overlapping consensus of civilizations. For instance all traditions may agree that human rights are an important, and perhaps an absolute value; but what form it takes would vary from people to people. The acceptance of the absolute as the root for various relative branches is what is meant by a 'celebration of diversity.' Some branches may be stronger than others, or better suited to tackle certain challenges; but in the Confucian spirit all things are open to debate. Hence Zhu Xi could replace the *Five Classics* with the *Four Books*, and Wang Yangming could challenge Zhu Xi's emphasis on external investigation.¹⁰ Philosophically, Confucianism allows for a plurality of truth.

The third contribution the Confucian tradition can make to the global dialogue is an emphasis on learning and culture. From the first passage of the *Analects* the importance of learning is enunciated—"To learn and then have occasion to practice what you have learned—is this not satisfying?" Besides introducing the overall concept of study, this passage also addresses the two aspects of learning in the Confucian tradition. Comprehending something must not be only a cognitive process, but an experiential process as well. When Wang Yangming spoke of 'the unity knowledge and action' (知行

¹⁰ See Wei-ming Tu, "Confucianism and Liberalism," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, (December 2002, Vol. II, No. 1), 18-19.

合一) he very well could have had this verse of the *Analects* in mind. In the Confucian sense, knowledge must be tied with practice. Thus it follows that to cognitively understand something without experiencing it is not to fully comprehend it. It also follows, that to experience something but not cognitively grasp its mechanics is not to reach full comprehension. Although Wang Yangming and Zhu Xi disagree on where learning begins, neither deemphasized the importance of it. Zhu Xi, also believed that “knowing something’s essentials is not the same as practicing it”.¹¹ The equal emphasis of on subjective affective understanding and objective cognitive understanding provide a well rounded view of the human experience. Thus, comprehending another’s problems not only means being able to repeat what he has said in one’s own words; but also ‘walking in his shoes’ so to speak, or experiencing the misery and triumph as he does. Zhu Xi’s notion of ‘the investigation of things’ (格物), being a process of learning how things function from beginning to end in a temporal as well as spatial existence is on par with a true love of learning. Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming provide the essence of education.

The lack of this type of education is a major ailment of society. In a day with the gap between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ growing all the time, knowledge of how to produce and leverage opportunity to live the ‘good life’ seems to be the missing ingredient. In America, there is a constant feeling of the erosion of society; documented by a higher crime rate, and family break down. At this point it does not seem that any number of non-education based programs will solve these problems. In the past these troubles have been exacerbated by those attempting to fix things without first understanding those who need

¹¹ Daniel Gardner, *Learning to Be a Sage*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 180.

the fixing. The current Native American dilemma is evidence of this. These things have prompted individuals such as Tu Wei-ming to assert that “education ought to be the civil religion of society”.¹² The goal of course, is a world of understanding; a world that knows how to listen to the ‘other’ and communicate its message. It has been said that personal coaching (not in the sports sense, but in the personal development sense) is the fastest growing industry in the Western world; second only to Information Technology. It seems that the world is turning to education, and Confucianism could have a voice in that. From its roots the Confucian tradition viewed education as the saving grace of society. Where other movements have relied on advancement through economic, or military force, Confucianism is a tradition that calls for enlightenment through education.

Culture or *wen* (文) is closely related to education. Culture can only be expressed as one learns how to express it. The character 文 must also be understood as ‘a pattern’, implying a pattern of the way things should be. Thus, when one is learning of culture, he is implicitly learning the pattern of what it means to be man. Rather than taking the philosophical approach to culture, and its subtle implications for social civility, I choose to examine the topic from a very practical angle, and simply state that the desire for culture relates to the desire for being; not to mention a dual desire for autonomy (a personal cultures) and membership (a group culture). Culture in no way is simply relegated to ethnicity. In the world of today, businesses and organizations have developed what they call culture. Besides serving as evidence that it is possible to belong to multiple organizations at the same time, they also open the door to seeing culture in a state of constant flux and transformation.

¹² Tu, “Multiple Modernities,” 12.

The world must develop a desire for culture in combination with the principles discussed above. The tolerance of multiple cultures can only harmoniously exist in the context of a plurality of truth. Culture is a flexible manifestation of humanity, and is perhaps parallel to the academic department of most colleges bearing the title ‘humanities’. This can only function in combination with learning of one’s roots as well as the situatedness of others.

Culture must not be exalted to the point it is incapable of exportability. Confucianism is sometimes accused of being unable to move beyond the Sinic cultural zone. This emphasizes a much larger point that this pluralistic project is not without its challenges. If anything, I openly admit that the picture I have painted is idealistic and heavy on theory but lacking in practice. Part of the challenge of multiple modernities is for each tradition to point out, not only that which is helpful for a harmonious globalization, but also be critically self aware of those things that are harmful. Only the combination of critical self awareness, and the attempt to extend one’s self beyond any type of anthropocentrism will move this cause in the right direction.

Conclusion

In the end, it seems that the people of Hawaii may have already found the answer to many problems faced in the world today. The West cannot continue to act as ‘king of the modern hill’. While they are advanced in terms of ‘modernization’, they are not better players in modernity. The first step in pluralism is to look within one’s own tradition and see if there is room to accept truth in plurality. Sometimes this means seeing singular Truth in an ultimate sense, and placing the responsibility of gathering that truth on one’s

own shoulders. Accepting the quantitative dimension of truth as pluralistic is the point of departure in moving towards a globalized dialogue. Every tradition has the responsibility to contribute to this inter-cultural language. Some of the values will undoubtedly be in opposition to each other, but the result is a dynamic tension that serves as a check and balance system to provide opportunities for discussion and refinement by other traditions.

The contributions of Confucianism at this point are a sense of interconnectedness and humanity; that teach the self as not an single individual, but a complex series of relationships enmeshed in society. Also a pluralistic concept of ‘truth’; seen not in strict duality but complementarily and interrelated with each other. Not to mention having an absolute and relative dimension allowing for flexibility and pragmatic application. Lastly, is the Confucian emphasis on education and culture. Understood not simply as ‘book learning’, but experientially as well, learning is a process of seeing people and things as they see themselves. A desire to create culture and comprehend other cultures is the primary reason for learning. Culture acts to create a higher order dependant on civility rather than absolute law. While much theory has been put forth in this work, my hope is for initiative and action to follow in creating a pluralistic dialogue among civilizations.

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