

# TU WEIMING & DAISAKU IKEDA

## New Horizons in Eastern Humanism: Buddhism, Confucianism and the Quest for Global Peace

*Nevad Kahteran*

UDK 165.742(294.3+299.512)  
294.3:172.4  
299.512:172.4

**Tu Weiming** (杜维明, more information on: <http://tuweiming.net/>) has until recently been Professor of Chinese history, philosophy and Confucian studies at Harvard University, as well as the director of Harvard Yenching Institute from 1996 to 2008. He is professor of philosophy and director of the Institute of Advanced Humanistic Studies at Peking University (IAHS, [http://english.pku.edu.cn/News\\_Events/News/Focus/7179.htm](http://english.pku.edu.cn/News_Events/News/Focus/7179.htm)). Daisaku Ikeda (池田 大作, born in 1928) is president of Soka Gakkai International Buddhist network, which actively promotes peace, culture and education, with membership from more than 190 countries. At the same time Ikeda is the author of more than a 100 books on Buddhist themes, and the winner of more than 300 academic awards given by universities from all over the world. He wrote a large number of books in the dialogue form focusing on leaders and scientists from various fields, including, among others British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Ji Xianlin, Ba Jin, Chang Shuhong, Jin Yong, and other prominent Chinese personalities. For more information on his organization promoting world peace, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) see the following link: <http://www.sgi.org/>, whereas information about Ikeda himself can be obtained at <http://www.sgi.org/cgi-president/president-overview.html>, or at his own website <http://www.daisakuikedada.org/>.

Both authors have a deep belief that dialogue can transcend the borders of ethnicity, religion and ideology, and that it is certainly the best and surest method to achieve a peaceful solution for any problem, since it includes a continuous discussion with various world leaders and other people, representing various culturological, educational and religious organizations. This is why this book opens with a statement derived from a conversation of these two mighty and strong spiritual men: that the 21<sup>st</sup> century represents a Chinese era, and in accordance with Arnold J. Toynbee's announcement, the belief that China holds the keys for a future solidarity of people around the world, namely that this great country will greatly contribute to this goal

213

through its culturological strength and power. As a matter of fact, this book, written as a series of conversations between Tu Weiming and Daisaku Ikeda, tells about the dialogue between civilizations concerning globalization and culturological pluralism, that is, it discusses the importance of dialogue as a mechanism for conflict resolution between civilizations, stressing the constant engagement and effort within the civilizational dialogue as a path towards social and cultural reform.

Together with the previously mentioned, both authors agree about three essential issues in leading a dialogue to affirm and respect cultural diversity: 1) a true listening to what the dialogue partner has to say; 2) the importance of direct dialogue; and 3) studying and embodying the wisdom of our predecessors in philosophy, since *kanji* (the Chinese sign used for a sage) is written so that it unifies the signs designating the ear and mouth, put above the element designating the ruler, or in other words, a sage is the ruler of good listening and responds only after that. In the process of achieving such wisdom professor Tu stresses the importance of his mentor Mou Zongsan, and Mr. Ikeda his mentor Josei Toda (1900 — 1958) who fought against Japanese militarism, thus introducing us to the sources of Confucian humanism, Confucian renewal and *comeback* stimulating the spiritual renewal throughout Asia. These two renowned thinkers (one from the Confucian and the other from the Buddhist Mahayana tradition) try to explore this renewal of Confucian ethics in the most urgent issues of the modern world such as those: Chinese–Japanese–American relationships, transformation of societies through education and dialogue, and the role of major religions in promoting human happiness and welfare. This is why the pages of this book mirror fascinating correspondences of Confucian and Buddhist worldviews in discussing Mencius, Zhang Zai, Spinoza, Gandhi, Max Weber, Levinas, Tang Junyi, Habermas, and others. Their research and views focus on vital aspects of dialogue culture and peace culture, as well as reforms they offer to the modern world — through the process of dialogue and more than meticulous textual analysis, namely interpersonal and intercultural exchanges based on respect of differences, openness and tolerance.

The function of the dialogue is not only in search for sameness or uniformity, but it is also an enriching way to learn how to be human. Namely, through dialogue we cultivate the art of listening, the ethics of caring and the feeling of self–discovery through the meeting of various lifestyles. We are all the children of Enlightenment and this fact is especially important in inventing a new paradigm of thinking in international relations, as well as inventing new vision for the rising world order of harmonic coexistence, since it is obvious that we must redirect the modern world to liberate it

from its obsession with progress and individualism, inspired by Enlightenment itself. This opens the issue of a build-up of a dialogical civilization for the total global community. Opposed to this intention is Huntington's dichotomy "West and the rest", which includes ethnocentrism, chauvinistic nationalism, culturological imperialism, expansionism, and religious fundamentalism. If there is an immanent danger of civilizational clash, the promotion of dialogue among civilizations, at least in the sense in which these two thinkers advocate, is imperative and an urgent need.

Here we reach the insight that an original understanding of culturological diversity demands an art of listening, the cultivation of which might require years. This is the first step in realization of a true dialogue and the building of a culture of peace in the present radically complex world of conflicting hatreds, contradictory interests and conflicts. In it, at least in the opinion of these two thinkers, the most significant bilateral relationship in constructing a healthy world order is the Sino-American connection, whereas the position that China is only a threat truly and greatly hinders such efforts.

Further on, in this series of dialogues between Tu Weiming and Daisaku Ikeda a new ethos of understanding and cultivating the civilization of dialogue is being developed, since the true philosopher and the religious leader destroy the conventional barriers to create pioneering new forms of thinking and new ways of acting. Of course, they realize that religion plays a crucial role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, namely that the religious leaders have to take a greater responsibility for the welfare of the global community, and not allow the relegation of such issues to the private sphere, in spite of the fact that secularization was often marked as a defining characteristic of modernization. Yet, religions continue to be present in the modern world as an important aspect of contemporary society, having a powerful influence on economy, politics and culture. No doubt we shall have to learn and demand criteria to evaluate religious spirituality which gives a philosophical basis for coexistence, namely standards that are necessary for the religion of our age, which implicitly include the building of peace as the prime responsibility of world religions, while the realization of such demands and criteria necessitates the promotion of intercultural dialogue and creation of a worldview of harmony and coexistence, overcoming the extremely negative history.

Namely, the secular humanism of European Enlightenment marginalized religion as a vibrant power in modern Western political culture so we have to drift away from the already worn-out dogma that human history advances from religion (prejudice) to philosophy (metaphysics) and science (rationality) which is still prevalent in many parts of the world and in the academic

community as well, even in philosophers such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, who take it for granted that religion, as a thing of the heart, has to be relegated to private sphere, out of political process, that it should not be an issue in the public discourse. On the other hand, the present day has obvious tendencies of desecularization of the society and discussion how the spiritual resources which religions possess must be activated to revitalize contemporary civilization and the philosophical–theological bases for the building of a harmonious society of peaceful coexistence, great harmony (*datong*) or the harmony of differences, with the aim of achieving and building a contemporary society on the more hopeful basis of here strongly advocated dialogical civilization to be contrasted to Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations.

An example of such efforts is the above mentioned Confucian *come-back* whose complete acceptance came only in 1987, after centuries of rupture with this ancient tradition, as a legitimate subject of serious scientific research of thinkers such as Mou Zoonsan, Xu Fuguan, and Tang Junyi, in spite of the fact that September 28, 2014 was actually Confucius’ 2565<sup>th</sup> birthday, which rather obviously shows the temporal depth of this tradition deeply embedded in the soul of Chinese people (let us remind ourselves that Voltaire praised Confucius as a supreme model, and Kant considered him the “Chinese Socrates”, while Dewey himself spent two years in China, spreading the influence of American pragmatism there). For instance, the Confucian golden rule (“don’t do to others what you would not want to be done to yourself”), expressed in a negative way, considers the existential situation of the Other. Therefore this seemingly passive principle includes an active view to the welfare of others through acknowledging and honoring ideas which they advocate, i. e. promoting the welfare of others through Confucian reciprocity and the Chinese ideal of self–ennoblement, that is ‘interior wisdom and exterior kingdom’ (*naisheng waiwang*). Moreover, this insistence on caring for the others could be connected to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, modern Jewish thinker (through the inclusive philosophy of ‘radical otherness’ which advocates the promotion of culture of peace).

These dialogues address the issue of globalism and antiglobalism as well and it seems that the only possible and practical solution as well is the balance of global integration which does not limit culturological diversity. The disease of the modern society can be healed only through a spiritual revolution in human hearts and minds, since an opposite action can only be artificial, superficial, of a controlling character, or mere imitation. This is an important question for the development of a culturological pluralism *hic and nunc* to stand against the prevailing tunnel images of the

world and the parochial consciousness of small-town philosophy or the philosophy of a Muslim residential alley. For these reasons, this is much simpler and more feasible from the perspective of Confucian or Buddhist humanism, which is not anthropocentric or anthropological but anthropocosmic.

But are we participants in the same kind of humanism advocated by Sakyamuni and Confucius, namely the one about widening the conversational circle, that is the developing of 'dialogical community'? Unfortunately, that is not the case. In spite of the already established Confucian institutes in the region, we fail to use such opportunity because we do not want to be a part of an established network and such an indispensable cooperational conversation, although it is an imperative of deeper understanding.

Finally, if we take into account the fact that in three last decades three among the leading neo-Confucian thinkers (Qian Mu from Taiwan, Tang Junyi from Hong Kong and Feng Youlan from Peking) independently concluded that the most important contribution Confucian tradition can offer to the global community is precisely the idea of unity of Heaven and the human race, that is the vision of anthropocosmic worldview in which man is put into the cosmic order, rather than the one in which man is alienated, either because of his own choice or because of ignoring nature. According to this the remark of Daisaku Ikeda and Tu Weiming that Chinese philosophy deepened and caught in language this feeling of symbiosis seems to us quite interesting, namely that the essence of this philosophical tradition is contained in the concepts *tian ren he yi*, or Heaven and humankind as one. It didn't come as surprise that FISP (*Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie / International Federation of Philosophical Societies*,: <http://www.fisp.org/index.html>) did not miss this development, and it decided that its next world congress will take place precisely in Peking (XXIX WCP, Peking University, 2018), due to, among other things, to Professor Tu who is one of its most eminent members and advocates of cooperative conversations between neo-Confucian thinking models and Western philosophy.

And last but not least, let me express my extraordinary pleasure for being able to witness such activities at the foundation stage of his Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies at Beida (Peking University, 2010) as a guest professor, as a part of exchange at his personal invitation, an activity that was already announced by the appearance of his work *The Global Significance of Concrete Humanity: Essays on the Confucian Discourse in Cultural China* (Centre for studies in civilizations, New Delhi, 2010.), while the book that is here under review only witnesses that the time has



finally come for Chinese intellectuals to transcend the Western-oriented modernist mentality and formulate their own cultural identity. They need to completely acknowledge the value of openness and culturological diversity and revitalize the Confucian discourse, especially the one about living according to the golden mean, the philosophy of the middle way (*zhongyong*) in accordance to the mandate of Heaven, hoping that China will create a new spiritual culture of symbiosis and harmony adapted to the needs of global society of the 21st century, but according to the teaching of the three today's inheritors of this Chinese wisdom: Ji Xianlin from Peking, Jao Tsung-I-ju from Hong Kong, and precisely Tu Weiming, the Harvard-Yenching professor of Chinese history and philosophy and undoubtedly the leading neo-Confucianist of the third generation.



