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MULTIPLE MODERNITIES AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

I. The theme of our Forum talks about "multiple modernities". This is the name of a new paradigm of global development, which replaced the classical modernization theory based on the Enlightenment dogmas. This long-dominant theory stated that the Western way of modernization is the only possible one, and hence the Western modernity is the universal and normative model of structural evolution. All societies and civilizations must ineluctably follow this model and in the course of this process their mutual rapprochement and convergence take place in all basic aspects, institutional, cultural, political etc., so that global planetary civilization becomes more and more homogeneous. In contrast to this, the new paradigm states that each society can develop its own sound and self-consistent interpretation of modernity, which takes fully into account its specific historic, cultural and religious characteristics. Such interpretation makes a certain selection out of rich pool of cultural and institutional patterns of modernity and produces a new and original project of modernity, which can be extremely far from the Western one. Thus the global reality of contemporary world is now represented as a heterogeneous and pluralistic ensemble of multiple modernities.

However, it is only the theoretical model of multiple modernities that is new, while the phenomenon itself was present practically since the beginning of the era of modernity. The development of the modernization always had deep distinctions in various European countries: e.g., England had the idea of the state and state power different from that in continental Europe, France developed a specific sociocultural model of so called laicization, some of European societies were quite uniform and homogeneous, and some pluralistic, etc. After World War I new processes in some countries made these distinctions much deeper and gave rise to the first alternative models of modernity, soviet, fascist and nazist, during the 20s and 30s of the 20th c. In the next phase, in the middle of the 20th c., there was the formation of new modernities in North America and Latin America, which were within the Western civilizational framework, but much different from European modernities and even opposing them in many respects. Thus there is not one Western model of modernity, but a large spectrum of such models. Then non-Western modernities begin to emerge, which process is often called the dissociation or decoupling of the modernity and the westernization. This process started with the formation of Asian modernities, first in the East Asia (Japan, India, China), and somewhat later in the Middle East and Islamic world. At the last stage Africa joined the trend and African societies developed their own modernities so that by the end of the 20th c. the net of multiple modernities encompassed nearly the entire world.

Surely, these variegated projects were all projects of *modernity* and so they possessed a certain common set of basic features, a common core of modernity conceived both as a historical period and as a certain social and political condition. First of all, the social and political order became radically more flexible and changeable, while the consciousness achieved a new level of reflexivity rejecting the postulate of God-established world and state and authority. Next, people became aware of a great variety of new social roles and strategies besides the old traditional ones. They also became aware of the possibility to belong to many new communities and to change these communities as well as have diverging views on the most fundamental matters. Thus a new level of autonomy and emancipation of the individual was achieved, with the continuing expansion of the sphere of personal and institutional freedom. On the other hand, however, there was also the opposite trend of the growing formalistic bureaucratization in all institutional spheres, economic, political and cultural. This trend led to the increasing restrictive control and generated *tension between freedom and control* inherent in all modernities. Another tension arose unavoidably between the dominant trend of the modernization and more traditional

and conservative trends and/or sectors of society, guardians of traditional values. One more inevitable tension is provided by the permanent oscillation between the poles of global, cosmopolitan and local, national goals and interests.

In spite of this common core, the scale and scope of distinctions between multiple modernities is such that, contrary to the classical theory of modernization, the development of modern societies or civilizations does not produce their convergence. Similarly, this development does not follow two other popular scenarios, the postmodernist Fukuyama's model of the "end of history" and Huntington's model of the "clash of civilizations". The first of these models predicts the subsidence of ideological contradictions between different programs of modernization, and the increasing political uniformity of contemporary world. The second model describes the confrontation between the West and the rest, the West following the paradigms of secularization and modernity and the rest rejecting these paradigms. As for the multiple modernities model, it does not uphold such simple scenarios, and is more realistic. Reviewing all the spectrum of new phenomena, new social structures and political movements in contemporary world, the main author of the conception of the multiple modernities, S.N.Eisenstadt comes to the conclusion that "these new movements… have reconstituted the problem of modernity in new historical contexts, in new ways", but they "have not gone beyond modernity"[1], so that the conception fits the present-day reality well enough. The ensemble of multiple modernities demonstrates great variety of forms and wide spectrum of positions in all basic aspects of sociopolitical reality. Some of these modernities are Western, and some other non-Western, but of Western orientation, some are moderately and selectively anti-Western, and other sharply anti-Western, etc. Their religious situation varies not less radically: there exist deeply secularized modernities and deeply religious ones (for example, Charles Taylor discussed the phenomenon of "Catholic modernity"), there is a paradoxical and important category of fundamentalist modernities, and so on.

With all their sharp distinctions, multiple modernities hardly can keep smooth and harmonious relations between them. Their mutual relations always conceal many seeds of hostility and conflict, and these seeds often give vigorous shoots. S.Eisenstadt stressed repeatedly that "contrary to the optimistic visions of modernity as inevitable progress, the crystallization of modernities were continually interwoven with internal conflict and confrontation", and due to this, it is these new modernities that were "generating specifically modern modes of barbarism, [t]he ideologization of violence, terror and war… The Holocaust … took place in the very centre of modernity… and became a symbol of its negative, destructive potential".[2] These destructive forces in the ensemble of modernities have already their history. They manifested strongly themselves after World War I and reached their peak in World War II, but then abated noticeably for a few decades. In this quiet period social and political philosophy virtually did not take them into account, and many optimistic projects and theories were created. However, to the end of the Millennium they emerged again with frightening intensity, and often in some specifically modern forms, involving new trends and movements, ethnical, fundamentalist, other religious extremist and so on.

Seized by growing conflicts and confrontations, the ensemble of multiple modernities might seem to resemble the world situation as it is described by Huntington, only the clash of civilizations is now replaced by the clash of modernities. However, there is one more important difference between the two models: as Eisenstadt especially tries to demonstrate, "One of the most important characteristics of modernity is … its potential for self-correction, its ability to confront problems not even imagined in its original program"[3]. It means that in the framework of the multiple modernities model quite different, "non-Hungtintonian" strategies can be

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[1] S.N.Eisenstadt. Multiple Modernities // Daedalus. Winter 2000. Vol.129(1). P.21-22.
[2] Ib. P.12.
[3] Ib. P.24.

elaborated: the strategies directed to activating the self-correction potential and neutralizing with its help the worst conflicts, dangers and risks. Discussion of such harmonizing strategies is also an important part of the design of our Dengfeng meetings.

II. The theme of our Forum talks also about the "unity of Humanity and Heaven". This poetic formula of Chinese and Confucian wisdom is a laconic expression of religious worldview, and it reminds us that there is another new paradigm characterizing contemporary reality. It is *postsecular paradigm,* which states that the age of radical secularization trying to drive religion out of all public sphere is finished, and a certain "return of religion" takes place or, in more precise terms, the de-privatization of religion, granting it some place in the public sphere, from which it was superseded to the private sphere. The domains of the secular and the religious in social set-up gradually stop their long-standing confrontation and start to develop relations of a new kind based on active non-confrontational contacts and "postsecular dialogue". The principles of this dialogue formulated mainly by Jürgen Habermas, and partly also by Charles Taylor demand, in the first place, openness to mutual communication on the part of both religious and secularized citizens. The transition to the postsecular condition, as described by Habermas, "reflexively alters religious as well as secular mentalities" and represents essentially "a complementary learning process", in which "both sides … take seriously each other's contributions to controversial themes in the public sphere"[4].

The multiple modernities and postsecularity are two new nonclassical paradigms of the global order, and they were frequently discussed in parallel and compared. Evidently, they do not contradict each other and are compatible, since they both oppose the classical model of modernization and are connected with processes of the advancement to greater diversity and pluralism. More concretely, liberal (or neoliberal) secularization draws on "evolutionary universals" and brings forth uniformity and homogenization; contrary to it, the postsecular "return of religion" favors (to some extent, at least) the coming to public sphere of the motley crowd of religious traditions, old and new religious movements. The "return of religion" leads to a more diversified and pluralistic global order, in which modernity is inevitably pluralized too. Indeed, "religions are usually considered as one element that can account for the differentiation of pathways to modernity"[5]. Thus the transition to postsecularity can be considered as one of mechanisms of the formation of multiple modernities. As the just quoted authors demonstrate, the strict logical implication takes place: "Multiple modernities… are a necessary condition for the emergence of postsecular societies"[6].

On the other hand, the postsecular paradigm deals more specially with the religious dimension of the global order prescribing a certain place and role to religion within this order. Due to this, this paradigm makes it possible to examine more closely inner mechanisms of multiple modernities as well as interactions between them. In particular, we discover the important connection between the postsecular condition and the mobilization of the self-correction potential of multiple modernities, the presence of which was stressed by Eisenstadt. Indeed, this condition implies the deprivatization of religion, which contributes, in its turn, to the resurgence of religion and release of inner forces and creative potential of religious and spiritual traditions. Now, we saw in the preceding section that there is quite a long list of negative and destructive phenomena in the ensemble of multiple modernities, the list, at the top of which we must put the growth of violence and terror in contemporary world. Clearly, it is highly desirable that the potential for self-correction of multiple modernities would be mobilized and directed to

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[4] J.Habermas. On the relations between the secular liberal state and religion // Political Theologies. Public Relations in a Post-Secular World. Ed. by E.Mendieta and J. Van Antwerpen. Columbia Univ. Press. 2006. P.258.
[5] M.Rosati, K.Stoeckl. Introduction // Multiple Modernities and Postsecular Societies. Ed. by M.Rosati, K.Stoeckl. Surrey: Ashgate. 2012. P.2.
[6] Ib. P.8.

restraining and neutralizing these phenomena. And it was already noticed by scholars that traditions created by the world religions when they are released by virtue of the postsecular condition, can make valuable contribution to the achievement of this goal or even become motors of such achievement.

Among these scholars, it is Professor Tu Weiming who must be mentioned in the first place. In the basic text on the conception of multiple modernities he is already named as the main advocate of the idea of the correcting and healing role of great traditions. S.Eisenstadt writes as follows: "In coping with these problems [new kinds of conflicts in contemporary world – *S.H.*], different contemporary societies can draw in ever more varied ways, as Tu Weiming notes, on the cultural resources of their respective civilizational traditions"[7]. In terms of the postsecular paradigm, great traditions, civilizational, religious and spiritual, can help to establish the postsecular dialogue between multiple modernities, enriching them with their wisdom and drawing them into "complementary learning process" directed to the desired goals of curbing conflicts and confrontations, reducing tensions both within modernities and between them and concentrating on common values and tasks. These common values are, in the first place, ethical and ecological such as common care of Earth.

At this point, however, somebody will surely remind us the old, but still popular viewpoint, according to which the role of religion is diametrically opposite to unifying and harmonizing influence, and religions were always the main source of divisions and clashes between human communities. The answer is that in the boundless universe of the religious one can easily find phenomena of all sorts. However, great religious and spiritual traditions keep a special place in this universe: as distinct from innumerable sects and movements, old and new, they were able in their long history to elaborate ways and means, which protect them from lapsing into gross deviation and inhuman misuse. In no way they are perfect in their establishment and their practices, but nevertheless they are keepers of basic ethical principles and they guard the presence of measure, balance and harmonizing spirit among all perturbations of this mad world. And especially this is true for their core, the spiritual practices, which we shall briefly discuss below.

Thus our characteristic of postsecular dialogue and the role of religion in it is not utopian. Obviously, such dialogue will produce some convergence of the modernities, but it will not efface their diversity. The advancement to planetary unity is unavoidable, but we should try to avoid its devastating and dehumanizing variants. As Professor Tu Weiming puts it, "a major challenge confronting the human community is to harmonize, and respect difference at all levels"[8]. The idea of dialogical civilization propounded by Professor Tu Weiming and discussed at our meetings in Dengfeng is one of strategies leading to this goal.

III. The ancient principle of the "unity of Humanity and Heaven" can surely contribute to salutary strategies. Discussing multiple modernities, it is appropriate to interpret this Confucian principle in a generalized way as a universal religious principle, which conveys the "economy of the transcendent", the relation to a certain spiritual reality inherent in human mind and human communities. In such interpretation, the principle can be considered as present in all religious traditions in changing forms. In all its forms it has profound implications in social life, in patterns of social and personal communication, and also, in the world of multiple modernities, in politics and practices of those of them, which have some background in religious traditions. What are these implications? As Tu Weiming shows, in its original Confucian context the principle of the unity of Humanity and Heaven unfolds "the anthropocosmic vision in Confucian

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[7] S.Eisenstadt. Loc.cit. P.25.
[8] Tu Weiming. The Global Significance of Concrete Humanity. Essays on the Confucian Discourse in Cultural China. New Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations. 2010. P.337.

humanism", which "presupposes a unity between anthropological and cosmological perceptions on the human condition"[9]. *Mutatis mutandis*, in its generalized interpretation this principle turns out to be closely connected with a special class of anthropological practices, which are present in world religions and are called spiritual practices. They are devoted entirely to the cultivation and preservation of quintessential spiritual experience of corresponding religions, and are characterized by a certain set of specific structural properties[10]. Their important anthropological and personalistic distinction is their constitutive nature: in these practices human constitution is formed-up, the structures of human personality and identity. For this reason they demand the utmost concentration and are cultivated in small usually secluded communities, but exert deep and wide influence. Thus they cultivate directly the "economy of the transcendent" and we can consider them as practices, which actualize and support the "unity of Humanity and Heaven" in a wide sense. Professor Tu finds in the Confucian tradition some similar phenomena when he writes about "self-cultivation, a form of spiritual exercise", which "is open, dynamic, transformative, and unceasing"[11].

Largely speaking, the core of the principle of the unity of Humanity and Heaven can be seen in the message: Humanity establishes its own unity and identity when it establishes unity with Heaven (in whatever sense). Some parallels or analogues to this message can be found in all great religious and spiritual traditions. In my Christian tradition, it is expressed in many variegated forms, and in conclusion I shall give two illustrations.

Eastern-Orthodox Christianity created ancient spiritual practice called hesychasm (from the Greek *hesychia*, quiet God-oriented concentration). Although it is essentially a spiritual art of the ascension to the union with God, it includes also an original model of communication and strategy of socialization, which serve the harmonization of social fabric. This harmonization is demonstrated by a simple, but striking image suggested by one of hesychast teachers, Abba (Father) Dorotheos (6th c.). The image known as the "Abba Dorotheos' Circle" represents a circle with many radii going to its centre and as the radii are nearing the centre they become near to each other as well. The centre of the Circle is God, the radii are people who ascend to the union with God, and the obvious message of the image is that those who strive for God become close between themselves. Thus says Dorotheos: "As much as saints are nearing God, so much they are nearing each other… Such is the nature of love: as much as we are nearing God by our love to Him, so much we become united in love with our neighbor"[12]. Clearly, what we have here is the practical hesychast transcription of the general Christian principle, according to which love to one's neighbor has its foundation in love to God.

Another example belongs to Western Christianity. In European metaphysics of the Renaissance an ontological principle or model has been introduced, which had the Latin name *exglomeratio and conglomeratio centri*, the unwinding and the winding of the centre. It stated that the connection between humans as well as human communities has the structure of a double act: it includes the connection of the first partner with God and then God's connection with the second partner. This structure is represented again with the help of circle: all humans are points on the periphery of a Circle, whose centre is God; and the connection between any two of them, say (a) and (b), is represented by the two rays, one going from (a) to the centre, and the other from the centre to (b). Thus any communication between individuals or communities is mediated by God. In our context, this model belonging to Nicolas of Cusa (15th c.) and Giordano Bruno (16th c.) can be seen as a straightforward graphic expression and practical realization of the principle of the unity of Humanity and Heaven. Its core is the idea of the omnipresent mediation

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[9] Ib. P.332.

[10] For the detailed discussion of spiritual practice including its exact definition see S.Horujy. On Things Old and New. St.-Petersburg, 2000 (in Russian). In English: Id. Spiritual Practice as an Anthropological Paradigm: Universal and tradition-dependent structures. http://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/hor_spiritual_ppractice.pdf.

[11] Tu Weiming. Loc. cit. P.333.

[12] Abba Dorotheos. Beneficial Homilies and Messages. Tula, 1991. P.88 (In Russian.)

of God, while the Confucian principle, as Professor Tu explains, implies that "Heaven… is omnipresent"[13]. And in a very natural way, this idea led Nicolas of Cusa to his theories of universal peace and dialogue of religions (mentioned briefly in my talk at the First Dengfeng Forum).

Both examples refer to kindred phenomena. They both include the ancient symbol of the circle and use it to demonstrate the unifying mission of Heaven: to show that the unity of Heaven and Humanity is a pledge of the unity of Humanity. Thus they are valuable contributions of Christian spirituality into dialogical civilization, which is now forming-up.

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The paradigms of multiple modernities and postsecularity present the basic framework, which modern social and political philosophy can offer for describing the foundations of this emerging type of civilization. They are sound and helpful, but not sufficient. In order to cope successfully with growing risks and dangers of contemporary world they must be complemented with other principles and paradigms, helping to activate and mobilize all the self-correction potential concealed in the present-day reality. These new conceptual resources must take into account not only social, but also anthropological dimensions of this reality, because postsecular global situation generates new anthroposocial configurations, in which anthropological, personological, existential factors are of ever growing importance. And, in the first place, such resources can be provided by great religious and spiritual traditions. New approaches to their experience outlined in the neoconfucianism by Professor Tu and theory of spiritual practices in synergic anthropology based on Eastern-Christian discourse create new context, in which this experience is seen as anthropological and anthropocosmic message suggesting valuable harmonizing strategies.

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[13] Tu Weiming. Loc. cit. P.333.