A New Global Humanity and the Calling of a Post-colonial Cosmopolis: Self-development, Inclusion of the Other and Planetary Realizations
Ananta Kumar Giri

Journal of Human Values 2009; 15; 1
DOI: 10.1177/097168580901500101

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://jhv.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/15/1/1
A New Global Humanity and the Calling of a Post-colonial Cosmopolis: Self-development, Inclusion of the Other and Planetary Realizations

ANANTA KUMAR GIRI

The discourse and practice of humanism is at a cross-road, now challenged by posthuman reflections on what it means to be human. Our understanding of human and humanism is also challenged by transformations in nation-state and citizenship. In this context, the present article explores pathways of a new global humanity emerging out of cross-cultural reflections and new intellectual and social movements.

In Africa recognition of our interdependence is called ‘ubuntu’ in Nguni languages, or ‘botho’ in Sotho, which is difficult to translate into English. It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness; it speaks about compassion. A person with ubuntu is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share (Tutu 2005: 26).

Kant does think that we can hope for peace, in part because it is to the advantage of all; but he does not think that we can hope for benevolence that supports basic life opportunities for all the citizens of the world, or even for all in a given nation. This lack of moral ambition is surprising, given that all these thinkers are surrounded by, and in some cases adherents of, a Christian culture that predominantly advocated spiritual reform and self-change in respect of benevolence and other basic sentiments [...] (Nussbaum 2006: 410).

The Problem: Introduction and Invitation

The discourse of humanism is at a cross-road now. Many contemporary thinkers such as Michel Foucault tell us about the death of man...
and the dangers of talking in the name of human progress. Such a view of death of man is inspired by Nietzsche’s conception of death of God. But when God dies, the place does not remain empty. It is accompanied by, at least, three processes of being and becoming: divinization of the human, humanization of divine and acknowledgment of radical evil lying in between the lines. Understanding such a process is enriched by dialogue with and participations in many traditions of the world, particularly Asian traditions, where being human involves a process of human–divine formation.

Asian traditions, of course, are varied and it is helpful to understand reflections on humanity and humanism not only in different traditions but also the inner conversations and contestations within each of them (cf. Sen 2005). We can here take, for example, the case of Buddhism and Confucianism—two major traditions of discourse and practice from Asia. In its reflections on humanity, while Confucianism focuses on webs of relationships, Buddhism emphasizes the need to transcend the limits of social relationships, particularly anthropocentrism. But both traditions have gone through many inner debates as well as contestations among them, giving rise to movements such as Neo-Confucianism which urges us to pay simultaneous attention to webs of relationships as well as nurturance of self-realization in our quest of human realization (cf. Dallmayr 2004: 152–71).

Such a simultaneous attention to webs of relationships and practices of self-realization where self does not mean only the sociological self, the self of the role occupying individuals but also the transcendental self is an important help in rethinking humanism now and realizing a global humanity. Our conception of humanity in modernity was confined to nation-state bounded conception of self and citizenship and the current processes of manifold globalization and cosmopolitanization challenges us to overcome such a bounded conception of humanity and realize a global humanity facilitated by post-national transformations and rise of varieties of transnational public spheres and communities of feeling (cf. Ezzat 2005). Our existent conception of humanity including much of the anti-humanist declarations in self-certain postmodern masters is eurocentric as well as anthropocentric and thus the realization of a global humanity calls for a planetary conversation on the meaning of being human and the place of the human in the journey of our cosmos. The calling of a new global humanity is thus confronted with the challenge of overcoming anthropocentrism and realizing what Martha Nussbaum (2006) calls ‘cross-species dignity.’ It is also confronted with a foundational rethinking of the human not only as agents of immanence but also as seekers and embodiment of transcendence—in fact of immanent transcendence—but such a realization challenges us to go beyond eurocentric Enlightenment which arbitrarily cuts off the human and the social world from its integrally linked relationships with transcendence.

The present essay explores the outline of such an emergent new global humanity. It begins with a brief encounter with the limits of modernistic humanism—its conceptualization of the human knowledge and human interest. But I wish to make it clear at the outset that I myself fully realize the limits of an adjectival mode of thinking and use of language such as modernistic humanism. After this brief encounter the essay presents an outline of self-development, inclusion of the other and planetary realization for the realization of a new global humanity and a post-colonial cosmopolis.
Overcoming the Limits of Modernistic Humanism and the Calling of Planetary Conversations

Modernistic humanism privileges individualism. But this is individualism of a particular kind—egotistic and possessive. While this privileging had a contingent historical necessity during the early period of European modernity, now individualism needs to be transformed into a relational individuality animated by a multi-valued logic of autonomy and interpenetration. This is accompanied by transformations in both individualism and communitarian logic. Realization of a dignity of relationship between individual and community can learn from multiple traditions of humanism—the emphasis on individual in Euro-American post-Enlightenment tradition and the emphasis on communities and webs of relationships in many Asian traditions. This in turn challenges us to rethink the dualism between individual and community, which becomes a starting point of rethinking and reconstituting varieties of dualisms in our lives and work towards non-dual realization of humanity (cf. Bhaskar 2002a; 2002b; Bocchi and Ceruti 2002; Loy 1988).

Modernistic humanism has been animated by a quest of scientific knowledge. Science and rationality have been the guiding inspiration and method in this primacy of knowledge in modernity. Now this needs to be fundamentally rethought beyond the crises of European sciences where knowledge does not mean only ‘knowledge of’ but also ‘knowing with’ going beyond the dualism of subject and object (cf. Giri 2004a; Sunder Rajan 1998). We also need to think of the human condition beyond the prism of modernistic rationality. Human beings are not only rational they are also infrarational as well as suprarational. While Nietzsche and Freud have challenged us to acknowledge the infrarational dimension of modernistic humanism, Sri Aurobindo (1962) urges us to realize that human beings are also suprarational and supramental. Their suprarational and supramental mode of existence does not dismiss the significance of rationality in human development and evolution but it seeks to transform the inherent tendency of rationality towards dualistic classifications into a more inclusive understanding and realization.

Modernistic humanism has been primarily anthropocentric. This has influenced our discourse and practice in modernity, for example, our conception of justice. Theories of justice from Marx to Rawls have been primarily anthropocentric and now there is an epochal need to work towards a frame of inclusive justice which also includes the rights and dignity of non-human animals. In recent years Martha Nussbaum (2006) has probably gone farthest in proposing a political conception of justice for non-human animals. But her approach to this still remains ethnocentric as she states that she does not want to promote ‘uncritical nature worship.’ Her move beyond modernistic anthropocentrism does not sufficiently embody a cross-cultural realization of different relationship between human beings, nature and non-human animals in different traditions, for example, as it is in indigenous traditions all over the world such as Indian traditions and Japanese traditions (cf. Clammer 1995; 2009).

Thus rethinking humanism now challenges us to ask many foundational questions. One such question is that of what Habermas calls knowledge and human interest. Habermas (1971) has brought the issue of knowledge and human interest—cognitive interest, emancipatory interest and interest of reason to protect itself—to the forefront
of modernistic humanism. But a further critical question before humanism is now a critique of valorization of knowledge itself, especially its one-sided epistemological fixation without accompanying ontological critique and nurturance (Giri 2004b). Such a foundational critique of knowledge is suggested in the following lines of Ishopanishada—one of the foundational texts of spiritual universality coming from India: Andham Tamah Prabishyanti Jo Avidyam Upasate, Tato Vuya Ibate Tamah Jo Vidyaam Ratah. It means: those who worship ignorance are steeped in darkness but those who are steeped in knowledge are also steeped in darkness. Therefore to be steeped in the valorization of knowledge and communication to the exclusion of other practices of self-cultivation such as listening, silence and self-emptying vis-à-vis one’s will to power and will to arguments, and connectedness with the world—not only the human social world but also with the world of nature and transcendence—is to be steeped in blindness, and we now need a new critical theory which helps us to understand the limits of knowledge and human interests (cf. Bhaskar 2000; Dallmayr 1984; 1987; Giri 2004c; Irigaray 2002; Joas 2000).

Habermas talks about knowledge and human interest but does not pay sufficient attention to the calling of human liberation—liberation from social domination as well as liberation from one’s own self, especially that part of the self which wants to dominate and annihilate the other. Modernistic humanism suffers from a cult of mastery and now it needs to be transformed into an ethics and aesthetics of servanthood where human beings reconceptualize and realize their calling as that of being servants of each other as well as of non-human animals, Nature, god and cosmos rather than as the lord of all that one surveys.8

Such a foundational critique of human knowledge involves a radical critique of self along with systems and structures. It also involves a planetary conversation on the meaning of being human which interrogates presuppositions such as those of Habermas that human beings are primarily agents of justification and Weber and Foucault that they are agents of power. Consider, for instance, the following lines from Bhagvad Gita—a text of spiritual seeking from India: ‘Sraddha Maya Ayam Purusha Jo Jat Sraddha Sa Ebasa: This Purusha [the human person] is characterized by sraddha—capacity for love and reverence—one is what one who loves or reveres’. These lines also offer some presuppositions about being human, which is different from both the Habermasian presupposition of justification as well as Weberian and Foucauldian presuppositions of power. These thoughts challenge us to realize that it is not enough just to be able to justify oneself or to acquire power, what characterizes human beings is their capacity for sraddha—love as well and reverence (Giri 2003). This also urges us to go beyond a one-sided determinism that all knowledge is reducible to the dynamics of power.

But reference to relationships in the Confucian traditions, Anatta (no-self) in the Buddhist traditions or sraddha in Indian traditions is not meant to make us blind to the work of power in the dynamics of human life in self, culture and society. In other words, what is called for here is a mutually interrogative dialogue as to the meaning of being human involving a festival of presuppositions in which we do not suffer from enthusiastic totalitarianism of love or power, tradition or modernity, in our conceptualization of being human. On the other hand we are confronted
A New Global Humanity: Self-Development and Inclusion of the Other

As can be appreciated from the previous discussion a new humanity involves a new conceptualization of self and the path of self-development. But what is self? Does self refer only to the egoistic dimension of individual? Does it mean only *homo sociologicus, homo economicus,* or the ‘technopractitioner’? Self is all these but at the same time is not exhausted by these and has a transcendental dimension, a dimension of transcendental and transversal connectivity to the other, society, nature, world and cosmos, what Roy Bhaskar (2002a) calls ‘transcendently really self.’ In a recent work, I have submitted a plural and multi-dimensional conceptualization of self as consisting of overlapping and concentric circles of unconscious, technopractitioner and transcendentally real self (Figure 1) (Giri 2004a). Self-development means development of all these dimensions of self in a spirit of autonomy and interpenetration and non-dual realizations (see Giri 2008a).

Self-development thus includes processes of capacitation in various techno-practical fields of life such as economy, polity, organization, state, civil society and now in the field of interlinked globality and a cosmic humanity. Self-development involves the capacity for freedom as well as responsibility; in the economic field, it means gaining economic independence and market freedom; in the political field it involves development of the capacity for appreciation.
for as well as realization of rights, justice and citizenship and deepening and broadening these from their earlier state-centeredness to fulfil the needs of a global humanity (Beck 2002; Benhabib 2002; 2004).

The project of self-development is linked with a project of inclusion of the other which in Habermas’s recent formulations is not just universalistic10 but sensitive to difference, defending ‘a morality of equal respect and solidarity responsibility for everybody’ (Habermas 1998: 5) (cf. Anderssen and Siim 2004). But both the projects of self-development and inclusion of the other can be locked in a self-justificatory closure, for example authenticity in the case of the former, and emancipation in the case of the latter. For example, the movement of self-study in India, Swadhyaya, can do a lot in terms of inclusion of the other, especially the low-caste (cf. Giri 2004b). Similarly, the project of inclusion of the other as articulated by Habermas needs a lot more self-development in order that it can realize its own aspiration of respecting the otherness of the other.11 Similar is also the challenge for a thinker such as Charles Taylor (1991) whose ethics of authenticity needs a project of radical self-criticism so that it also takes part in a transcivilizational journey of realizing the well-being of all.

An important challenge here is to overcome the binding of the concentration of power and to strive towards realization of what Dallmayr (2001), building on Heidegger, calls ‘power free existence.’ This aspect of self-development has a longer lineage in philosophical and spiritual traditions of the West as well as the rest of the world, for example, in the Christian concept of kenosis, of self-emptying (cf. Vattimo 1999; Wilfred 2000), Confucian emphasis on self-cultivation (cf. de Barry 1991) and Foucault’s (1986) plea for developing self-restraint on the parts of holders of power (also see Toynbee 1956).12

Modernistic humanism has been limited by nation-state. Though in the modern world many humanists have tried to overcome the limits of nationalism and strive towards flourishing of humankind, the predominant identity of being human has been one of being the citizen of a nation-state. This now needs to be transformed into our realization of being the citizen of the world and member of the human family.

**A New Global Humanity, Cosmopolitanism and Beyond**

The vision and striving that we are not just members of our tribes and nations but belong to the whole world—we are children of Mother Earth—have a long genealogy in many different cultures and traditions of the world—from the stoic conception of human beings as citizens of the world in ancient Greece to Vedic vision of Vasudheiva Kutumbakam (the Vasudha which not only means world but also Mother Earth)—the whole world is a family. The vision and strivings of Buddha deepen and interrogate such conceptions of cosmopolitanism by submitting the ideal of universal self-realization, which is not confined to the human realm and has challenged seeking human beings to realize the bodhisattva nature of all beings. There is a revival of cosmopolitanism now in both discourse as well as practice, but much of this revival draws inspiration from only one trajectory of cosmopolitanism—from stoic cosmopolitanism to Kant and on to the ‘post-national’ sensitivity of Habermas. However, this revival does not build upon different traditions of cosmopolitan thinking and experimentations of the world.

The contemporary revival of cosmopolitanism is a response to the challenges of living in an
interdependent world and reflects efforts to go beyond the limits of both relativism and universalism. As K. Anthony Appiah argues: ‘As a position in ethical theory, cosmopolitanism is distinct from relativism and universalism. It affirms the possibility of mutual understanding between adherents to different moralities but without holding out the promise of any ultimate consensus’ (Appiah 2006 quoted in Gray 2006). But this cosmopolitan pointer to our common humanity in the prevalent discourses do not fully embody the pain and suffering of our crying humanity, as it has been and being subjected to series of violations and colonial violence. Thus realization of our global humanity is now confronted with the challenge of building a post-colonial cosmopolis which builds upon centuries of anti-colonial and post-colonial struggles as well as cosmopolitan strivings towards our common humanity. Though stoic cosmopolitanism always laid emphasis upon education and enlightenment of passions for cultivating cosmopolitanism—what Nussbaum (1997) passionately calls ‘passional enlightenment’—modern projects of cosmopolitanism from Kant to Jurgen Habermas and onto Ulrich Beck have been primarily epistemic and have not sufficiently addressed the ontological challenges of appropriate self-preparation and self-transformation for belonging to and creating a cosmopolitan world.

For example, Ulrich Beck pleads for a methodological cosmopolitanism as an important part of self, science and society to realize his cosmopolitan manifesto of going beyond the monologic imagination of the nation-state but is it adequate to realize what Beck himself sets for himself and all of us? For Beck, ‘Methodological cosmopolitanism rejects the either-or—principle and assembles this-as-well-as that principle [...]’, thinking and living in terms of inclusive oppositions...’ (2002: 19). But is this possible only epistemologically or does it also involve appropriate ontological nurturance? In this context, philosopher J.N. Mohanty argues that ‘multi-valued logic’ of realizing that ‘every point of view is partly true, partly false and partly undecidable’ calls for a simultaneous practice of non-injury in thought and non-violence in practice and it is facilitated by multiple traditions of human seeking—the Jaina tradition of Anekantavada, Gandhian experiments with non-violence and Husserlian phenomenology, especially the ‘Husserlian idea of overlapping contents’ (Mohanty 2000: 24). The problem with Beck as well as many of the enthusiastic cosmopolitans of our times is that they are not only self-confidently epistemic to the neglect of any project of ontological nurturance they also lack an engagement of transcivilizational and trans-cultural dialogues. They also do not open their projects to a quest of transcendence, even of a kind of immanent transcendence. The cosmopolitan inclusion of the other lacks a spiritual striving and, as we have seen in Habermas (cf. endnote 13), despite best political intentions it can lead to not a very generous approach to other cultures, religions and traditions.

Beck speaks about the need for cosmopolitanism to address the issues of global inequality. This is in tune with Habermas’s (2002) recent reflections: ‘The burning issue of a just global economic order poses itself primarily as a political problem [...] The unjust distribution of good fortune in the world was certainly a central concern of the great world religion. But in a secularized society, this problem primarily belongs on the political and economic table, not in the cupboard of morality [...]’ (Habermas 2002a: 166). Both Beck and Habermas have a
predominantly political approach to the problem and this is not accompanied by any project of radical self-realization and self-transformation as, for instance, hinted at in Gary Cohen’s provocative *If You’re an Egalitarian, How Come You Are So Rich?:* ‘[...] egalitarian justice is not only, as Rawlsian liberalism teaches, a matter of the rules that define the structure of society but also a matter of personal attitude and choice [...]’ (Cohen 2000: 3). Addressing global inequality now is a matter of multi-dimensional struggle involving both socio-political struggles as well as socio-spiritual struggles to transform one’s relationship with power, money and freedom, as for instance, suggested by Gandhi. Going beyond the colonization of the life world then calls for multi-dimensional transformation of both politics and self.

Beck himself makes a critical distinction between action and consciousness by urging us to understand the ‘crisis of institutionalized action:’ ‘global consciousness of a shared collective future is a consciousness that does not incorporate forms of action. Forms of action—in the spheres of politics, science, law, etc.—are past-based’ (Beck 2002: 27). For Beck, though cultivation of global consciousness is facilitated by ‘transnational forms of action designed for a shared collective future’ this may not be solely dependent upon action. This itself can be a significant inspiration for multiple strivings towards planetary realizations. As Sri Aurobindo had written nearly a century before Beck in his *Ideals of Human Unity:* ‘Even cosmopolitan habits of life are not uncommon and there are a fair number of persons who are as much or more citizens of the world as citizens of their own nation. [...] Only man in his heart is ready, a profound change in the world conditions cannot come’ (Sri Aurobindo 1971: 528, 531).

For Sri Aurobindo, spiritualization of religion and humanity, especially religion of humanity, can transform internationalism and cosmopolitanism into many fold planetary realizations helping us overcome the limits of ethnocentrism, nationalism, egoism and anthropocentrism.

Cosmopolitan realization thus has a spiritual dimension. It is this spiritual dimension which seems not to have received enough attention in the dominant discourses of contemporary cosmopolitanism such of that of Nussbaum, Beck and Habermas. Here we can look at Nussbaum’s global capabilities list with another visionary document of creative global will formation such as the Earth Charter. But fortunately for us we have intimations of the interlinked spiritual horizon of a post-colonial cosmopolis in the striving of savants such as Daisaku Ikeda, Johan Galtung and Fred Dallmayr. Ikeda is the leader of the Soka Gokkai movement which believes in value creation. Ikeda has carried out transformative conversations across boundaries and borders. These dialogues are valuable contributions to the generation of knowledge for a post-colonial cosmopolis. Some of these dialogues are *Planetary Citizenship: Your Values, Belief And Actions Can Shape a Sustainable World* (Ikeda and Henderson 2002); *Moral Lessons Of The Twentieth Century: Gorbachev and Ikeda on Buddhism and Communism* (Ikeda and Gorbachev 2005); *Global Civilization: A Buddhist Islamic Dialogue* (Ikado and Teheranian 2000); *Choose Peace* (Ikeda and Galtung 1995) and *Choose Life* (Ikeda and Toynbee 1976).

Galtung is also involved with many trans-border conversations and reconciliation. He has founded the group TRANSCEND which is involved with peace education and reconciliation around the world. Exemplary here is also Dallmayr’s work. His *Alternative Vision: Pathways in the Global Village* (1998), *Achieving our World* (2001),

[...] achieving does not suggest a form of technical construction or social engineering; rather, the term here has the connotation of practical labor or engagement—a labor in which the ‘achieving’ agents are continuously challenged (or called into question) by what needs to be achieved. Far from designating a linear-strategic line, achievement hence carries a round about or mediating significance, operating steadily in the ‘middle voice’ (between speaking and listening, moving and being moved). This significance carries over into the sense of ‘our’—which in no way should be taken as a possessive pronoun. If the goal of ‘achieving’ involves the simultaneous transformation of achieving agents, then the world to be rescued from slippage cannot simply be the target of managerial appropriation. Despite the need to resist slippage into automatic self-regulation, the world can be ‘ours’ only in a highly complex and mediated way—assigning to human beings only the task of responsible guardianship rather than mastery or possession. (Dallmayr 2001: xi–xii)

One important area of transcivilizational dialogue and planetary conversation is vision of cosmopolitanism itself—being a citizen of the world and being a member of the human family. The first vision of cosmopolitanism comes from the Greek tradition which has influenced modern European conceptions of cosmopolitanism. The second is the vision of cosmopolitanism which comes from Indian traditions as well as many other traditions of the world. The second vision also permeates many religious traditions such as Christianity which emphasizes the significance of family (Tutu 2005). As Bishop Desmond Tutu writes: ‘How I pray that in our world we can learn to emulate a true family perhaps then we could address the injustices that cause a small percentage of our world to consume the vast majority of its resources [...]’ (ibid.: 23). Tutu furthermore writes: ‘An equal you can acknowledge once and then forever thereafter ignore. God’s dream wants us to be brothers and sisters, wants to be family’ (ibid.).

What is helpful is that both the traditions of cosmopolitanism—of citizenship and human family—work with images of concentric circles and now this needs to be supplemented by a vision and practice of overlapping circles. In this area of emergent multiversality our vision and practice of being a cosmopolitan is that of being a citizen of the world as well as a member of the human family. Such a multi-dimensional self-conceptualization as well as institutional figuration of cosmopolitanism would help us overcome the limitations of both polis and family, open them to mutual critique and transformation and inspire them to embody a multi-valued existence of autonomy, interpenetration and responsibility.

Planetary Realizations

Writes Alberto Melucci in his The Playing Self: Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society:

We live on a planet that has become a global society, a society totally interconnected by its
capacity of intervening on its environment and on social life itself, and yet still dependent on its natural home, the planet Earth. This twofold relation to the Earth, as the global field for social action and physical boundary, defines the ‘planetary society’ in which personal life takes place. (Melucci 1996: 2)

But for Melucci, planetary realizations are not unitary and simplistic processes: Melucci speaks of complexity, difference and uncertainty which demand from ‘individuals the capacity to change form (the literal meaning of metamorphosis)...’ (ibid.: 2–3). This is in tune with de Chardin’s stress on ‘complexification of consciousness’ as an important part of the evolutionary unfoldment of ‘noosphere’ a ‘growing new organ of consciousness’—‘an interlinked system of consciousness and information, a global net of self-awareness, instantaneous feedback, and planetary communication’ (Melucci 1996: 1). Melucci speaks of the inner planet ‘consisting of the biological, emotional and cognitive structures that underlies the experience and relations of us all’ (ibid.: 56). Melucci also challenges us:

An ecology of economic, political, and technological choices cannot operate independently of an ecology of the everyday, of the words and gestures with which we call into being or annihilate the inner planet. To pay attention and respect to details; to be aware that we are part of a whole and we need to connect the different elements into this whole, to value the path and not only the end [...]’. (ibid.: 69; emphases added)

This calling for planetary realizations is in tune with emerging developments in science, philosophy, religion, spirituality and mysticism. As Lynne McTaggart writes presenting us a recent view from the sciences:

At our most elemental, we are not a chemical reaction, but an energetic charge. Human beings and all living things are a coalescence of energy connected to every other thing in the world [...]. There is no ‘me’ and ‘not-me’ duality to our bodies in relation to the universe, but one underlying energy field’. (McTaggart 2002: xiii)

Planetary realizations thus call for overcoming egoism, dualism and anthropocentrism apart from ethnocentrism. As Roy Bhaskar presents us challenges of planetary realizations from the shores of philosophy, mysticism and spiritual strivings:

For if mankind is implicit in an amoeba, then self-realization for that amoeba can mean anything from maximum fulfilment for an amoeba (of its particular type, always potentially unique), to attaining the level of self-realization for an explicitly conscious and potentially self-conscious being such as man, into which that amoeba may evolve through various levels and thresholds of realization, some of which may depend upon the wakening of powers and potentials, which are at present only implicit in man and only awakened in species of which we have no knowledge or awareness. (Bhaskar 2002b: 26; cf. Bocchi and Ceruti 2002)

Planetary realizations then calls for multi-dimensional transformations in self and society, which can build upon struggles for freedom and dignity coming both from traditions of post-colonial struggles and criticism as well as
A New Global Humanity and the Calling of a Post-colonial Cosmopolis

post-modern cosmopolitan reflections. It also challenges us to build upon different traditions of realization of being human and strive for a new global humanity which strives to overcome anthropocentrism and nation-state centered rationality. Thus the calling of a new global humanity is intimately connected with the project of a universal self-realization.

A New Global Humanity as A Calling and An Invitation

A new global humanity is a calling and an invitation, and the adjective ‘new’ here is not one of ahistorical arrogance but one of invitation to realize that this has also been a quest with humanity but one that has also been confronted with varieties of violations and violence. A new global humanity challenges us to overcome this violence—violence of not only modernistic historical colonialism but all sorts of violence in the struggle for building a non-violent self and society. This is a very fragile journey, as fragile as the journey of the human in the cosmos itself. As Habermas urges us to realize: ‘Only when philosophy discovers in the dialectical course of history the traces of violence that deform repeated attempts at dialogue and recurrently closes off the path to unconstrained communication does it further process whose suppression it otherwise legitimates; mankind’s evolution toward autonomy and responsibility’ (Habermas 1971: 315).

NOTES

1. Escobar writes in almost the last sentence of his much discussed book, Encountering Development: ‘For what awaits both the First and the Third World, perhaps finally transcending our difference, is the possibility of learning to be human in post-humanist (post-man and postmodern) landscapes’ (Escobar 1995: 226). But what is the meaning of posthuman here? Should Foucault’s critique of humanism be taken at face value or should we explore the link between Foucault’s critique and the humanistic strivings of savants such as Erasmus especially as Erasmus urges us to move beyond a power-model of the human condition and cultivate shraddha, reverence for life (cf. Das 1991; Dallmayr 2004; Giri 2002)? It is Foucault himself who has written: ‘...for Nietzsche, the death of God signifies the end of metaphysics, but God is not replaced by man and the space remains empty’ (Foucault quoted in Carrette 1999: 85).

2. I do not elaborate these three processes in this essay especially the issue of evil but in another recent paper, ‘The Calling of a Practical Spirituality’ (Giri 2008b). I touch upon this.

3. According to Tu Wei-ming, Neo-Confucianism involves a ‘continuous deepening of one’s subjectivity and an uninterrupted broadening of one’s sensitivity’. It also involves a

...dynamic interplay between contextualization and decontextualization. Hence, the self as a ‘center of relationships’ finds itself simultaneously in the grip of an ongoing decentering or displacement [...] Just as self-cultivation requires self-overcoming, so cultivation of family and other relationships demands a transgression of parochial attachments such as ‘nepotism, racism and chauvinism’ and ultimately a transgression of narrow ‘anthropocentrism’ in the direction of the ‘mutuality of Heaven and man and the unity of all things’. (ibid: 164)

4. More on this in the later section of the essay on self-development and inclusion of the other.

5. It must be noted here that many contemporary thinkers such as Habermas (2002b) and Nussbaum (1990) are comfortable with some conception of internal
transcendence but they would like to confine themselves only to the shores of immanence. Consider here what Nussbaum writes in the chapter on ‘Transcending Humanity’ in her Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature she writes:

[...] there is a great deal of room for transcendence of our ordinary humanity [...] transcendence, we might say, of an internal and human sort [...] There is so much to do in this area of human transcending (which I also imagine as a transcending by descent, delving more deeply into oneself and one’s humanity, and becoming deeper and more spacious as a result) that if one really pursued that aim well and fully I suspect that there would be little time left to look about for any other sort. (Nussbaum 1990: 379)

6. I do not consider modernistic humanism as a monolithic project but it is used here to draw our attention to its dominant constellation in modernity.

7. Nussbaum states:

The whole idea of justification that looks for a reflective equilibrium and uses the idea of overlapping consensus is an anthropocentric idea. The holism in ethics that Rawls and I share may be contested at this point by a reasonable Benthamite [follower of utilitarian philosopher Bentham] that what justifies changes in our treatment of animals is not the coherence of a family of human theories and judgments, even bolstered by reasonable agreement and overlapping consensus; it is, instead, a fact external to the human point of view, namely animal suffering. This challenge raises profound metaethical issue. (Nussbaum 2006: 390)

8. Consider here what John Ruskin (2004: 17) wrote more than a century ago: ‘I know not if a day is ever to come when the nature of right freedom will be understood, and when men will see that to obey another man, to labour for him, yield reverence to him or to his place, is not slavery.’

9. Faubion (1995) presents this model of the subject building upon the works of Habermas and Bourdieu.

10. Consider here also the following comments of Arjun Appadurai (2005: 18) on humanism and universalism: ‘What is called for is some sort of tactical humanism, a humanism that is prepared to see universals as asymptotically approached goal, subject to endless negotiation, not based upon prior axioms [...] a humanism prepared to negotiate across borders unaccompanied by any non-negotiable universals.’

11. A case in point is Habermas’s approach to other religions. Habermas writes in his Religion and Rationality: ‘We no longer confront other cultures as alien since their structures still remind us of previous phases of our own social development. What we do encounter as alien within other cultures is the stubborn distinctiveness of their religious cores’ (Habermas 2002a: 156). When pressed to the limits despite his post-metaphysical thinking Habermas acknowledges the significance of the Judeo-Christian tradition for the project of modernity but he seems not to be offering the same acknowledgment to other traditions such as Buddhism.

12. What Toynbee (1956: 74) writes deserves our careful attention:

In human life, Suffering is the antithesis of Power, and it is also a more characteristic, and more fundamental element in Life than Power is. [...] Suffering is the essence of Life, because it is the inevitable product of an unresolvable tension between a living creature’s essential impulse to try to make itself into the center of the Universe and its essential dependence on the rest of creation and on the Absolute Reality on which all creatures live and move and have their being. On the other hand, human power, in all its forms is limited and, in the last resort, illusory. Therefore any attitude towards Life that idolizes human power is bound to be a wrong attitude towards Suffering and, in consequence, a wrong attitude towards Life itself.


14. Anekantavada refers to a mode of thinking that truth has many dimensions and many roads of arrival.

15. Dallmayr (1999) also writes in Border Crossing: Towards a Comparative Political Theory:

[...] the reflective theorist in the global village must shun spectatorial allures and adopt the more modern stance of participant in search for truth; by opening mind and heart to the puzzling diversity of human experiences and traditions... and also to the possibility of jeopardising cherished preoccupations or beliefs.
A New Global Humanity and the Calling of a Post-colonial Cosmopolis

REFERENCES


——— (2005), Global Power and its Discontents (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).


Habermas, J. (1971), Knowledge and Human Interest (Boston: Beacon Press).
Tutu, Desmond (2005), God Has a Dream (London: Rider).