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NEW INSPIRATION FROM CHINA'S PHILOSOPHY OF "UNITY OF MAN AND HEAVEN": CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNDER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Abstract: *The danger of the novel coronavirus has not yet come to an end, and new variants have begun to attack the world. What philosophy should humankind's strategy be based on when human society as a group is fighting against Covid-19, as the pandemic ravages the world? Unfortunately, political leaders of various countries have failed to achieve the overall awareness of attacking the pandemic for a shared future for mankind so far. In the face of the pandemic, mankind as a whole urgently needs to break through the narrow nation-oriented ideology of seeking only self-protection. The International Community should establish a new type of international cooperation featuring the concept of harmony of "all things under heaven as a unity". The international relations system dominated by the power of western discourse is now in a bottleneck. The main aim of this article is to study the ancient Chinese wisdom of "the Unity of Man and Heaven" philosophy and build a global harmonious community. The author argues that the "export" of the aforementioned wisdom must be a priority for Chinese scholars.*

Keywords: *Tao; Unity of Man and Heaven; Novel Coronavirus; Anthropocentrism; Harmony.*

Introduction

Covid-19 suddenly arrived and caught humanity off guard. In the face of the ravages of the disease, human beings have become so fragile and powerless. Every day, there are stories of illness and death. This microscopic organism has not only changed the pattern and rhythm of the world, but has also suddenly awakened our awareness of impermanence. Mankind has not been able to find the specific source of this virus or a radical effective cure. No matter where the virus originated, the culprit behind the global pandemic of novel coronavirus must be humans whose ignorance and fearlessness has caused the outbreak to spread. The pandemic has forced people, countries, and nature into a hopeless situation. People think they are the masters of nature. They do whatever they want and use all kinds of cruel means to kill wild animals to meet their own desires. They do not understand that the ecological chain is interlinked, and that once the chain breaks, causing ecological

imbalance, nature's merciless punishment will come to the human body. Under the influence of Covid-19, many human activities have had to slow down and even come to a stop, and people's expectations for a variety of bright futures have been shattered. It is impossible to predict how many people will be infected and how many will die and how long the virus will continue to spread. The pandemic will pass one day, and human society will return to normal after a period of great depression, but at such a terrible cost that we have to ask ourselves: How do we live with nature? What is the future of mankind? Does human society have a common basis for stability? In the era of globalization and modern technology, how should different ethnic groups get along with each other, and how should human beings treat the earth on which we live? What is the meaning and value of life?

Man lives between heaven and earth. We should have the ability to worship and observe the laws of heaven and earth, and harmoniously resonate with them. Human beings suffer such abuse because there is something wrong with our hearts and the way we act. The virus's visit may be nature's wake-up call. Reflecting on the origin of the virus, we need to re-understand the reality of the universe, nature and life, abandon anthropocentrism, establish a harmonious world outlook that corresponds to the laws of nature and life, and open a new chapter of human awakening with the help of the three-dimensional philosophy concept of the ancient wisdom of Chinese civilization, "the Unity of Man and Heaven"!

When absorbing knowledge and thinking and analyzing problems, we should not distinguish between Chinese and Western. Instead, we should look at things from the human perspective and put aside national boundaries and ethnic differences. We should work for one purpose to keep our earth more beautiful and peaceful, because mankind shares the same earth which is our common home.

What are the Consequences of Covid-19 for All of Humanity?

So, what are the consequences of this global outbreak for all of us? I think it can be analyzed from the following aspects:

In terms of human life, it will cause human death on a certain scale. As novel coronavirus transmission is strong, and the fact that the development and popularization of vaccines will take some time, it is extremely likely to cause a certain scale of human death.

Especially in countries with relatively backward medical infrastructure, once large-scale infection occurs, the death toll will be incalculable. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) is now paying close attention to the pandemic and promoting China's successful experience around the world. At the same time, many countries, including China, have donated money to the WHO to fight Covid-19.

The WHO has been sending personal protective equipment and laboratory supplies to the countries where the COVID-19 has occurred and is confident that the scale of deaths will gradually be brought under control.

Economically, there will be incalculable losses: The Covid-19 pandemic is a human problem facing all mankind and no country or region has immunity to it. At present, it is the era of a global economy, and the production and economy between countries are more and more closely connected. The upstream and downstream supply chains of many manufacturing industries are distributed in different countries. The global outbreak of the pandemic will cause the supply chains of various industries to break, and in addition, tourism and transportation of various countries will be restricted. It is bound to cause significant economic losses to many industries such as manufacturing, tourism, air traffic and service industries in various countries. If the situation is not effectively controlled, a world-class economic crisis will occur, affecting the whole world. In its World Economic Outlook released on April 14, the International Monetary Fund named the global public health crisis "The Great Lockdown", comparing it to The Great Depression, which has dealt a fatal blow to the functioning of the highly globalized world economy. In the United States, for example, unemployment levels exceed those in the past decade, reaching their highest levels since the Great Depression, and output fell more in the first two quarters of 2020 than during the Great Recession of 2008-09¹. Millions of Americans who are hours away from losing unemployment aid or the small business they have spent years building have a simple plea to President Trump and Congress: Please help us. The Washington Post has been inundated with messages and phone calls from people on the verge of losing their homes and cars and going hungry this holiday who are stunned that President Trump and Congress cannot agree on another emergency aid package. Several broke down crying in phone interviews².

Human eating and living habits: The cause of this outbreak is the spread of a wild animal virus. We believe that through this epidemic, all mankind will strengthen the protection of wild animals, resolutely avoid eating wild animals, and put an end to the sale and trade of wild animals.

¹ Fernandes N, *Economic Effects of Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19) on the World Economy*, 2020, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3557504

² Heather Long and Rachel Siegel, *Families on brink of eviction, hunger describe nightmare Christmas as \$900 billion relief bill hangs in limbo*, Dec. 25, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/12/24/trump-congress-stimulus-unemployment-reaction/>

Now many people are used to excessive consumption and luxury consumption, many families need to bear the mortgage, car loan, credit card consumption. The epidemic affects all walks of life, and the income of many families will be affected. Overconsumption, which can be affordable when income is stable, may become a burden for many people. Through this global epidemic, people's outlook on life consumption may change, and they will be more rational about excessive consumption and luxury consumption.

Social interaction: America is a country that advocates individualism. It is also the foundation of American democracy, the basis of the “American dream”, promoting the development of the economy and the progress of society. Excessive emphasis on individualism, however, without constraint, inevitably brings hidden trouble to society and crisis too. Advocating personal freedom during the outbreak constitutes one of the main obstacles to preventing the disease.

“Social distancing”, telecommuting, and distinctions between “essential” and “non-essential” workers make a difference in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, education, occupation, etc. The most vulnerable groups are at greater risk, including low-income workers, the elderly, people with chronic diseases, and those living in confined spaces such as prisons or detention facilities for migrants.

Covid-19 forces a rapid shutdown of the normal patterns of social interaction that drive economic and social activity³. Most people experience interruptions in the normal rhythm of daily life because of enforced social distancing and may continue to experience interruptions in work, school, social and family relationships⁴. As a result, education, health, social services and faith-based organizations, government, criminal justice, the law, and many other infrastructures that rely on human connections have been forced to change their practices rapidly, moving some practices quickly online⁵. The pandemic has led to an increase in the practice of working from home and has greatly accelerated and maintained greater use of the Internet⁶. Although these trends predate Covid-19 and were predicted in the 1980s, when Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (was still in its infancy, Covid-19 accelerated them⁷. Whether

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Clement A Tisdell, *Economic, social and political issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic*, Economic analysis and policy vol. 68 (2020), 17-28.

⁷ Darton D. O'Neill G., *The changing role of the household economy in a world of expanding technology*, In: Tisdell C.A., Maitra P., editors. *Technological Change, Development and the Environment: Socio-Economic Perspectives*. second ed. (Routledge; London and New York: 2018), pp. 217–238.

all these trends are socially and psychologically desirable remains an open question⁸.

Reflection on the Pandemic Situation of Covid-19

Human beings need a metamorphosis: The sudden arrival of the pandemic has forced human society to press the pause button. The pandemic has profoundly changed the way people live and work and dealt a fatal blow to the highly globalized world economy. It has accelerated the global recession since the 2008 financial crisis. This once-in-a-century pandemic has brought unprecedented difficulties in value selection, social pressure, psychological shock and livelihood damage to human society⁹.

How can the virus be so rampant? Today's human beings lack reverence for nature and do whatever they want to challenge the limits of nature. As Engels pointed out in *Dialectics of Nature*, "We should not be too intoxicated with the victory of human beings over nature." For each such victory, nature takes revenge on us. Hawking once said that if the human race cannot limit greed and desire, it will start to die in 200 years. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution 200 years ago, human society has entered a period of unprecedented rapid development. The more advanced technology becomes, the more damaging it will be to the environment. People's endless pursuit of economic benefits has led to the degradation of human beings without a bottom line. The urgent issue facing mankind today is how to conduct deep reflection and collective correction, and how to avoid collective extinction in arrogance. However, it is regrettable that so far, mankind has failed to realize the overall awareness of mutual support and joint action. In the dilemma of viral determinism, many countries and regions have constantly politicized the pandemic and delayed the best opportunity for the global fight against it, resulting in countless innocent lives lost.

The novel coronavirus is a great disaster for human society, but it is also a rare respite for the planet on which human beings depend. According to the hexagrams in the *Book of Changes*, human beings have entered the stage of flying dragons in the sky and have mastered enormous energy. On the surface, human beings seem omnipotent, but in actuality they are in danger. However, it is difficult for them to detect this. If we continue to develop without restraint, the slightest mistake will make human beings shattered. At this time, only by careful reflection, staying true

⁸ Tisdell. *Economic, social and political issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic*, 2020, 17-28.

⁹ Zhu Yunhan, *Why Globalization is Irreversible -Explore the World after the Crisis of Novel Coronavirus [J]. Cultural Frontiers*, (2020 (03), 34.

to our original aspiration and forging ahead, can we safely enter the next stage of development?

To worship heaven and earth: "The Unity of Man and Heaven" is a philosophical thought in China, which is expounded by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Heaven refers to the sky, also refers to the way of heaven, but also refers to the natural road. The unity of Man and Heaven refers to the harmony of Man and Tao, and the state of "heaven and earth are born together with me, and all things are one with me". It also refers to the harmony of man and nature¹⁰. The "Unity between Heaven and Man" reflects the profound and unique cultural essence of the Chinese people, and the philosophical views that "Providence is so great and from Heaven, which is unchanged"¹¹. Therefore, observe Providence, to educate man to be good, would be the most fundamental way to solve natural disasters and man-made misfortunes, whether in ancient China or in other parts in the earth. This is because "man who accords with Heaven can be preserved and man who rebels against heaven can perish"¹².

Human beings are ordained between heaven and earth, so they should respect the way of heaven, respect life and abide by the laws of heaven and earth. The trend of the world is mighty and overwhelming. Those who follow it will prosper while those who resist will perish. Observing the Way leads to prosperity, contrary leads to ruin.

Taoism or Daoism is a philosophical tradition of Chinese origin which emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao (Chinese: 道; pinyin: Dào; lit. 'Way', or Dao)¹³. The Tao is a fundamental idea in most Chinese philosophical schools put forward by the sage-Lao Tzu¹⁴ who embodies the Way and perfectly realizes his nature through it. Pure and empty he preserves himself. He acts without depending on others and without exceeding norms. He leads but does not dominate others. Therefore, without belaboring his intelligence, the people transform themselves.

¹⁰ Zhaohe Chen, *The ecological concept and enlightenment-the "unity between heaven and man*, International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah, 2015.

¹¹ Dong Zhongshu, *The strategy for recommending virtuous man, in the Various Revelation of Spring and Autumn*, 1st ed., (Jinan: Shandong Friendship Press, 2001), 255.

¹² Liu Zhongzhong, *Lilou section one in the works of Mencius*, in *The Four Books*, 1st ed. Changsha, (Hunan People's Press, 1993), 398-394.

¹³ Elizabeth Pollard, Clifford Rosenberg, Robert Tignor, *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the World - From the Beginnings of Humankind to the Present*, (W.W. Norton, 2014), p. 164.

¹⁴ Laozi was an official historian of the Zhou who lived during the Spring and Autumn era (770~476 BCE). He was about thirty years older than and a contemporary of Confucius.

Without relying on his own efforts, tasks are accomplished. His hidden virtue is far-reaching, ineffable and inconceivable.

In Taoism, however, it denotes the principle that is the source, pattern and substance of everything that exists. Dao is called the “Mother of Myriad Things” and is characterized by potentiality and infinity. As a function, Dao is the law of order below forms, the objective law that governs all existence in the universe; it is also called the “Constant Way”¹⁵. It runs from ancient times to the present and includes everything in the created world. It is so big that nothing is beyond it; it is so small that nothing can fill it. It embodies the true structure of the cosmos and its internal rhythm.

In Chapter 25 of Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu put forward the important argument: “Dao begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures”¹⁶. Tao is the mother of all things under the world, the source of all energy, the foundation of heaven and earth, and the source of all things¹⁷. All living things under heaven are the sons of Tao, and human beings and all living things under heaven are the same kind of life. Human beings should treat all living things with equality and compassion, instead of excessive killing, stealing and adultery. Human beings must revere heaven and earth. In general, “Tao” is the driving force and law for the growth and development of all things. If we follow the principle, we will prosper; if we go against it, we will perish. Confucianism endows “Tao” with the content of benevolence and righteousness and puts forward that “the cause of justice is supported by many people, while the cause of injustice is not supported by people”¹⁸. In the face of the global pandemic, only by respecting, obeying, and letting nature take its course can we achieve harmony in our own body and mind, in our families, in our nations and even in the world.

The human race on Earth is one body that shares a common destiny. Political leaders in Today's world should focus on the common aspirations and missions of the world instead of blaming each other for the benefit of one country and missing the opportunity to fight against the pandemic. All mankind should face the consequences of breaking the law of nature. We should follow the way of heaven, return to the lost path as soon as possible, cross over the existing planar thinking,

¹⁵ Fuchen He and Zhonghu Yan, *The General Theory of Taoism*, (Paths International Ltd), 2013.

¹⁶ Tao Te Ching, Chapter 25.

¹⁷ Chen, *The ecological concept and enlightenment-the “unity between heaven and man*, 2015.

¹⁸ Raphals Lisa, *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013), 337.

and regain the philosophical concept of "unity of Man and Heaven" of ancient Chinese civilization for seeking the well-being of mankind.

Abandon Anthropocentrism and Build a Harmonious Relationship between Man and Nature

The Enlightenment ignited the light of human reason. People were liberated from the repression of medieval beliefs and began to control the world with reason. But serious problems followed. People mistakenly believe that man is the center of the world. Relying on increasingly developed scientific means, the uncontrolled exploitation and utilization of natural resources has resulted in the imbalance of the overall ecological chain and led to the emergence, one after another, of a variety of natural disasters.

Man has cruelly destroyed nature, and nature is taking merciless revenge on man. The "greenhouse effect" makes the world's climate more and more volatile. The sky is increasingly expanding the ozone hole. Forest grassland is in rapid retreat and the desert is advancing step by step. Unrestricted and destructive mining is making man kill the goose that lays the golden egg, drain the water to fish, and unknowingly become his own gravedigger. To a large extent, the root of this crisis is caused by human factors, the alienation of human nature and the advocacy of anthropocentrism in western culture.

Anthropocentrism holds that human beings are separated from nature and higher than nature. It holds that human life has intrinsic value, while other entities (including animals, plants, mineral resources, etc.) are resources that can be rationally developed for human interests¹⁹. Many ethicists find the roots of anthropocentrism in the creation story told in the Judaic-Christian Bible, Genesis²⁰. In the creation story, humans are created in the image of God and instructed to "conquer" the earth and "rule" all other creatures²¹. This idea is not confined to Jewish and Christian theology, and can be found in Aristotle's Politics and Immanuel Kant's Moral Philosophy²².

Anthropocentrism believes that humans are the most important entity in the universe. Anthropocentrism explains or looks at the world in terms of human

¹⁹ Boslaugh Sarah E., *Anthropocentrism*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 11 Jan. 2016,. last modified 23 May, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/anthropocentrism>

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

values and experiences²³. In Western civilization, the emphasis on humanistic modernization has actually caused havoc for human civilization. In the 21st century, especially in the current pandemic caused by novel coronavirus, people must reflect on the problems in the process of modernization. How to avoid the huge risks posed by the pandemic? How to solve the disease of today's world? The author thinks that the answer is in the Chinese philosophy of Confucianism, Chinese Buddhism and Taoism, which is completely perfect. Western learning is now in a bottleneck state, and the ancient Chinese wisdom is “dredging” rather than “blocking”. The forbearance spirit of embracing all rivers in Chinese culture is lacking in the western theory of unification.

The Virtue of Centrality and Harmony in Chinese Philosophy

The rich traditional cultures left behind by Chinese ancestors are called the “Three Teachings and Nine Streams,” each of which has a different orientation toward value. From a bird’s eye view of Daoxue, there is a commonality among these schools of thought. The fulcrum of commonality lies in the two Chinese characters called “zhong he” (centrality and harmony 中和). The characteristic Chinese philosophical thoughts can be summarized in one word. The word is “zhong” (centrality 中), one part of two characters that describe the characteristics of Chinese philosophy. There must be reasons why all schools of thought, including Buddhism from India, were assimilated by Chinese culture and civilization. Though they differ in many ways, they are voices that come from the spiritual apertures of the Chinese mind. These voices “are liver and gall, Chu and Yue, if we look at them from the point of view of their differences. But if we look at them from the point of view of their sameness, then the ten thousand things are all one.” (“Dechongfu” in Zhuangzi 庄子·德充符). “zhong” and the name Zhongguo (Middle Kingdom or China 中国) was not derived from China as pottery, nor from Китай in Russian; rather, it was a crystallization of the Chinese soul and national character. Therefore, the core teaching that most represents Chinese wisdom is “centrality and harmony.” At this point, Confucian culture gives the best expression. Zhongyong (中庸 Centrality and Equilibrium or The Mean), one section in the Liji (Book of Ritual 礼记) said: “Before pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy have arisen, this is called centrality. After they have arisen and have attained their appropriate degree, this is called harmony. Centrality is the

²³ Merriam-Webster e-dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anthropocentrism>

great root of the world, and harmony is the pervasive Way of the world. Once centrality and harmony are realized, Heaven and Earth take their proper places and all living things are nourished.” Yizhuan (Commentary of the Book of Changes 易传) talked about “taking centrality as an aspiration...(and) as a guide for one’s right conduct.” Mencius advocated “taking the middle way to establish oneself.” In the Confucian “Actions of the Great Yü” in the Book of Documents (DaYümo in Shangshu 尚书•大禹谟), considered to be an authentic transmission of “sixteen characters” from the tradition tracing back to Yao and Shun, we have this: “The heart of man is indeed in danger. The heart of the Way is indeed subtle. One must be sincere. One must be persistent. Hold to that centrality without bias.” Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism thus all gave prominence to the philosophy of “centrality and harmony”²⁴.

It encompassed Heaven and Earth. Dr. Stephen T. Chang of the American Tao University said in *The Integral Management of Tao: Complete Achievement: The Yellow Emperor used the principle of Dao as a guideline for administering and developing the state. From the Eastern Zhou onward, independent regimes emerged which provided opportunities for Confucianism, Legalism and the other six schools to contend against one another. From Taoism came Confucianism, Legalism, Mohism, Agriculturalism, the School of Names, Militarism, the Yin-Yang School, and the School of Diplomacy*²⁵.

Daoxue undoubtedly possesses many meanings and values relevant to the modern, global world. Taoism is reasonable, legitimate and fair, and has a five-thousand-year lineage dating back to the Yellow Emperor. It opens up new ideas for our world of the 21st century. The conflicts between East and West will surely be reconciled and unified by the Great Dao; and the relevance of Daoxue has generally been recognized by the modern international academic community. International research generally recognizes that “Dao” will be the “guiding principle of the world” in the 21st century²⁶.

Chinese youth now shoulder the responsibility to establish the heart-mind for secure life for the people, continue the learning of past sages, and bring about peace in the world²⁷. The Chinese philosophy is to study human beings, society,

²⁴ Hu Fuchen and Zhonghu Yan, *The General Theory of Taoism*, (Paths International Ltd, 2013), 79-82.

²⁵ Ibid, 58.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Stephen Chang, *Management Gist of Daoism -- Wisdom of Life and the Road to Success*, trans. Wang Hu and Wang Jinshun. (Sichuan University Press, 1992), 19.

nature and the universe as a whole. The idea of "unity of man and heaven" makes it easy to harmonize all things in the world into harmonious coexistence.

The essence of Chinese philosophy lies in penetrating the objective laws that govern nature, society and human life. It uses Taoist methods to hold to the essential and know the roots in order to pursue harmony between human beings and nature, and to achieve the transcendence of life itself. It implements the strategy of using softness to overcome the hard, weakness to overcome the strong and regression in order to progress. It sets the goal of opposing human alienation and returning to nature. The essence of Religious Taoism lies in understanding the value of life in the context of the natural world and society. It further raises the motto: "My life is in my own hands, not in the hands of Heaven." It develops the potential of life and soul to an optimal level and seeks an identity between human beings and Dao, optimal relations between human beings and society, and between man and nature.

It uses "life" as the source, "transformation" as its precondition, "adaptation" as the hub, "Zhong (centrality)" as the essential, "he (harmony)" as a means of accommodation, and "forbearance" as the true course of coping with the world²⁸. There are two orders in this world. One is the law of nature, the other is the law of society. In the short run, social rules may work, but in the long run, natural rules must work. People in today's world should consider more based on natural rules instead of shadow knowledge and shortsighted views.

There is no reason why human civilization should always let the European and American civilization bear huge responsibilities. With the development of human civilization today, various problems have emerged, and mankind needs new ways of governance. China has become an important player in world governance. Chinese people should involve the wisdom of sages in the construction of modern civilization and show the mind of benevolent government when dealing with relations with other countries. In his book *The Silk Road: A New History of the World*, Peter Frankopan, a professor at Cambridge University in England, mentioned this story: "In Greek mythology, Zeus, the father of the gods, sent eagles from each end of the earth and sent them flying towards each other. A sacred stone - the Omphalos ("navel of the earth") - was erected at the spot where the two eagles would meet, where they would communicate with the gods. The two eagles set off from the western coast of the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific coast of China, then flew inland to meet somewhere between the Black Sea and the

²⁸ Hu Fuchen and Zhonghu Yan, *The General Theory of Taoism*, 86.

Himalayas. The story of the sacred stone has been a source of inspiration for philosophers and theologians²⁹.

This story has given us the general direction of human thinking: the future of the new axis era must carry out dialogues based on mutual respect among civilizations and seek the Gospel of mankind under the same canopy.

A Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind proposed by Chinese leaders has broken through the constraints of Western theoretical paradigms of realism and liberalism. Its inspiration derives from the philosophy of unity of Man and Heaven.

Against the background of globalization, humanity's current political system and governance structure have been unable to solve the contemporary human crisis. The scholars in international relations should broaden their research perspectives and be forward-looking, put their theoretical research above the realistic dilemmas facing the world, and establish the principles and paths of a new world pattern and governance system. A theory of international relations with Chinese characteristics can be derived from Chinese culture with a unique Chinese perspective.

It is necessary for Chinese scholars of international relations to continue to dig and deepen their research, improve their own style by paying attention to the fate of mankind and philosophical introspection of Chinese style, and further develop international relations theories that belong to both China and the world.

Conclusion

Human beings rely on increasingly developed scientific means to exploit natural resources without restraint, resulting in the imbalance of the overall ecological chain. A variety of natural disasters emerge one after another. If human beings cannot deeply reflect on their misconduct, make timely corrections, human society will certainly face greater disasters and crises. Disease knows no borders. To defeat the current pandemic, which poses a global threat, requires all mankind to fulfill their obligations and help each other. There is only one earth on which mankind can live. If the balance between man and nature is destroyed, the survival of mankind and different groups will be put in jeopardy. Now the international community should transcend race, nationality, skin color, region, language, culture,

²⁹ Peter Francopan, *The Silk Road: A New World History*, trans. Shao Xudong and Sun Fang, (Zhejiang University People's Publishing House, 2015), VI.

religion, sex, nation, class limitation and cooperate with a common purpose of fighting against the pandemic. The wisdom of the Chinese ancestors has expanded the community of human life into one between man and all creation. As mankind enters the 21st century, all kinds of opportunities and challenges coexist. How to address the health, development and survival challenges facing human society? Fifty years ago, the historian John Toynbee publicly and boldly predicted that in the future, China would be the most qualified and likely nation to create a new civilization for human society, and that Chinese civilization would unify the world. The future of the world lies in China, and the way out for mankind lies in Chinese civilization. Coincidentally, at the First International Conference of Nobel Laureates "Facing the 21st Century" held in Paris in 1988, 75 Nobel Laureates discussed the topic of "Challenges and Hopes of the 21st Century", and one of the important conclusions was that mankind must draw on the wisdom of Confucian sages 25 centuries ago if it is to survive. It seems that the ancient and modern world has a basic consensus on the prediction of mankind³⁰. The philosophical wisdom of the unity of Man and Heaven in China is not only a transcendental ideal world and the source for all human order and value, but also it is the ultimate and only absolute Truth. It is one foundational element of Chinese culture. It is also the trunk that can receive grafts of cultural branches from abroad, thereby serving as a meeting point for different cultures³¹. One day, I hope, the ideas put forward here will be proven true by the development of modern science and philosophy and will assist the progress of world civilization. Chinese scholars have the obligation to pass on this wisdom to the world and give a voice that resonates with the world in the field of international relations.

³⁰ People's Daily: Chinese traditional culture is bound to benefit mankind!, Zhongshan Chinese Academy <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/iYxJ2MT2q7A4JtetoLWNUg>

³¹ Hu Fuchen and Zhonghu Yan, *The General Theory of Taoism*, p. 79.