

Preface

Torbjörn Lodén

Stockholm China Center at ISDP, Sweden

Luiz Oosterbeek

Polytechnic Institute of Tomar, Portugal

Diogenes

2022, Vol. 64(1–2) 3–4

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DOI: 10.1177/03921921211068234

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One of the specific contributions of Human Sciences for academic research and societal concerns is to assess, interpret and promote exchanges across different cultural traditions, communities' mindsets and epistemological frameworks. While global encounters have become the dominant feature that characterizes contemporary times, attempts to deal with such differences are often restricted to superficial, limited, and often caricatural perceptions. Understanding cultural complexity allows us to assess those differences, while acknowledging that all traditions are composed of internal diversity, and to recognize convergent trends across cultures, despite those differences. The Humanities also help contextualize those processes in time and space, stressing the connections between ways of living and perceptions and narratives in relation to them, including cultural interaction and mutual influence.

Building on this reasoning, the CIPSH International Academy on Chinese Cultures and Global Humanities was set up in 2018, with financial support from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Cooperation, in order to promote studies of Chinese cultures in a global context.

Following a call for proposals, the Union Académique Internationale (UAI), founding member of CIPSH, proposed to organize the Academy's first seminar. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic it soon became clear that this would have to be organized online, and the UAI accepted the suggestion to prepare a first online event. Professor Torbjörn Lodén, who represents the UAI as a member of the executive committee of CIPSH, was entrusted with the task to coordinate this first digital seminar. At his suggestion, it was decided that the topic would be "Chinese and European Resources for a Global Ethic". The rationale behind this topic was explained as follows:

Like two big rivers, the cultural traditions of China and Europe flow through the historical landscape. They have collected their waters from different sources and have also themselves given rise to innumerable tributaries, linking up with other cultures and with each other. For more than two thousand years there have been contacts between them.

Corresponding author:

Luiz Oosterbeek, President of CIPSH, Polytechnic Institute of Tomar, Tomar, 2300-313, Portugal.

Email: oost@ipt.pt

In many ways these two traditions are different, and there are also considerable differences within each respective tradition. Indeed, in comparing “China and Europe” or even “the East and the West” one often underestimates the internal diversity of the two, while exaggerating the differences between them. No matter whether we speak about differences within one of the traditions or between them, the differences seem to be not so much absolute dichotomies as variations on common themes. There is no unbridgeable gap that separates them.

The traditions of China and Europe reflect the evolution of a considerable part of the history of humankind from prehistoric times until the present, and they have also, to a great extent, shaped the course of human history. Today they represent rich intellectual and ethical resources at our disposal for dealing with the problems and threats that are now facing humankind: climate change, the corona pandemic, nuclear war, the unequal distribution of wealth, etc.

One challenge that emerges from this historical and global context is the urgency of improving cross-cultural understanding, and one important way of doing this is, in our opinion, to define a global ethic rooted in different cultural traditions, such as the Chinese and European traditions, among others. Much has already been done in this regard. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 is one important example. The Global Ethic Project of Professor Hans Küng and his associates is another example. Yet much remains to be done in order to approach a definition of a global ethic, which is anchored in the Chinese, European and other traditions and which can promote a sense of unity across borders, thus promoting mutual understanding and decreasing tension. A Global Ethic has a fundamental role to play not only in defining basic values but also in reaching transcultural consensus about the meaning of key notions such as “well-being” and “good governance”. This is particularly timely at a moment when societies face an unprecedented environmental crisis and a pandemic threat, which, in absence of short-term delivery of technical solutions, have triggered a public debate on behavior patterns and on how to balance dimensions like health and well-being, or individual concerns and collective interests, i.e., a debate on the choice of values and strategic options for the future.

The webinar on Chinese and European Resources for a Global Ethic took place on 11–12 November 2020, organized by the Stockholm China Center at the Institute for Security & Development Policy (ISDP) in Stockholm. Fourteen scholars from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Finland, France, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland presented papers at the seminar, and it is now our great pleasure to be able to make twelve of these papers available to a wider audience by publishing them in this issue of *Diogenes*.

In addition to the twelve papers presented at the Stockholm webinar, we are honored to include two more articles, one by Professor Ping-Chen Hsiung, Secretary General of CIPSH, on views of children’s play in Chinese culture, and one by the Hungarian art historian Professor Zoltán Somhegyi on the fragility of our cultural heritage.

On the basis of the Stockholm webinar, CIPSH will continue to explore different aspects of global ethics, next at a digital conference on “Global Challenges and Global Ethics in a time of Pandemic and Climate Change” in December 2021, again hosted by the Stockholm China Center.

In conclusion, we would like to express our gratitude to all scholars who took part in the webinar “Chinese and European Resources for a Global Ethic” in November 2020 and agreed to let us publish their contributions, to Professor Luca Maria Scarantino for publishing these articles in *Diogenes* and to Professor Nina Allen in Cambridge, Massachusetts for polishing the English of all contributions.

Stockholm and Mação in November 2021.