

Research Trends

“Discourse on Confucian Entrepreneurs: Role Models and Wealth”

The Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies and the World Ethics
Institute Beijing, Peking University, May 12–13, 2014

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1 Background

Prof. Tu Weiming previously proposed that the notion of the Confucian entrepreneur could be developed as a new promising domain of discourse. With that in mind, the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies and the World Ethics Institute Beijing sought to shape this public sphere by promoting dialogue between Confucian scholars and entrepreneurs, and to create a new identity for entrepreneurs in a world shifting from an axial age to an dialogical age.

“Discourse on Confucian Entrepreneurs 2014,” the second annual conference held by the two institutions, discussed “Role Models and Wealth.” The first one held in October 2013, focused on the theme of “Confucian Entrepreneurs as Public Intellectuals with Spiritual Humanism.”

2 Vision of the Conference

The inspiration for initiating a discussion on “Role Models and Wealth” comes from the following two concrete events:

- 2014 was the 100th anniversary of a visit to China by the Japanese Confucian entrepreneur Shibusawa Eiichi (1840–1931). We were honored to have Mr. Shibusawa Masahide (b. 1925), Eiichi’s great-grandson, visit the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies to commemorate this event. We took this opportunity to host a day of talks on “East Asian Confucian Entrepreneurs as Role Models,” such as Zhang Jian (1853–1926), Shibusawa Eiichi, etc., and a day of discussion on “Wealth and Life.” We expected to derive rich

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resources for cultivating model business leaders in East Asia and to enrich the meaning and significance of Confucian entrepreneurship in the context of globalization.

- In 2012 the German entrepreneur Mr. Karl Schlecht used his “birthday present” from Sany Group as seed money for establishing the World Ethics Institute Beijing at Peking University to develop a notion of world ethics that seeks to transform private wealth into public wealth for the purpose of bringing people together. It is this notion that we seek to discuss and highlight as a source of value.

This conference was a part of the series designed to initiate a public discourse on the key concept of Confucian entrepreneurs, which has been reemerging nowadays in east Asian societies, especially in business communities.

3 Agenda

Part 1: Talks, May 12

“East Asian Confucian Entrepreneurs as Role Models”

The notion of Confucian entrepreneurs not only emerged from the traditions of East Asian businessmen; it also encompasses local knowledge with modern and global significance. Relying on scholarly analysis of historical paragons of the Confucian entrepreneur, along with contemporary entrepreneurs who embody Confucian qualities, we hope help shift society towards the Confucian entrepreneurial approach. With this model we can address issues that all people face in an age of globalization, by enriching our spiritual, moral, ethical, and organizational resources. This discussion of the Confucian entrepreneur emphasized cross-cultural and interdisciplinary investigations that combine the resources of East and West, ancient times and modernity, to collectively discuss individuals of the business world who exemplify the spirit of humanism.

Keynote talks

- Tu Weiming, “On Confucian Entrepreneur”
Director of the World Ethics Institute Beijing, Peking University
Director of the Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies, Peking University
- Zhang Weiyong, “The Power of Idea”
Professor of Economics, Guanghua School of Management, Peking University
- Shibusawa Masahide, “On Shibusawa Eiichi”

- President of the Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation, Japan
- Xiang Bing, “The Global Influence of the Rise of China”
Professor of Chinese Business and Globalization
Founding President of the Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business, Beijing
 - Klaus M. Leisinger, “The Role of Business Ethicists in a World of Cultural Pluralism”
Founder and President of the Global Value Alliance Foundation
 - Tao Demin, “The Ethical Conceptions of Zhang Jian as a Top Scholar Turned Entrepreneur: An Analysis of His 1903 Japan Diary”
Professor of History, Kansai University, Japan
Founding President of the Society for Cultural Interaction in East Asia
 - Janet Hunter, “Typical Confucian Entrepreneurs and East Asia Civilization: Shibusawa Eiichi in the Global Context”
Professor of Economic History, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom
 - Kimura Masato, “Shibusawa Eiichi’s View of Business Morality in Global Society”
Director of the Research Department, Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation, Japan
 - Melissa Williams, “The Economy of Virtue”
Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto, Canada
Founding Director of the Centre for Ethics, University of Toronto, Canada
 - Yao Xinzong, “Tradition, Modernity, and Confucian Entrepreneurs”
Dean of the School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China
Vice Director of the World Ethics Institute Beijing, Peking University
 - Alan Chan, “Entrepreneurship Enhanced by Confucian Concepts”
Director of the Qufu Confucius Institute
Chairman of Petroships Investment, Singapore
 - Fan Heping, “The Ultimate Worry and Ultimate Concern of Wealth”
Vice Director of the World Ethics Institute Beijing, Peking University
Professor of Ethics and Director of the Humanities School, Southeast University, China

Part 2: Discussion, May 13

“Wealth and Life”

Confucianism possesses a broad understanding of wealth (“What gathers humans together? Wealth”—*Book of Changes*). This understanding can shatter the narrow-minded focus on individual, material wealth. Confucianism also presents a unique approach to dealing with wealth (“The benevolent cultivate selves through wealth”—*Great Learning*). Here wealth is fused with the

concept of self-cultivation, as a major asset that enables us to realize ourselves by embodying family harmony, beneficent governance of state, and peace under Heaven. These two basic perspectives are key to molding the characters of the East Asian entrepreneurs. In recent years, people have upheld a wide variety of philosophies of wealth. These generally emerge from the influence of economic views of the European Enlightenment and the popularity of pluralistic cultures. This dialogue on the Confucian entrepreneur seeks to engage with the notion of wealth from such perspectives as religion, economics, business management, and philanthropy in the hope of presenting a comprehensive view.

Session 1: Cultural Paradigms of Wealth: A Dialogue Based on Historical Experience and Modern Life

Moderator: Tao Demin

Discussants:

- Fan Heping, Vice Director of the World Ethics Institute Beijing, Peking University
- Shibusawa Masahide, President of the Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation, Japan
- Sato Takayoshi, Director of Moral Rearmament House, Japan
- Tao Demin, Professor of History, Kansai University, Japan
- Kimura Masato, Director of the Research Department, Shibusawa Eiichi Memorial Foundation, Japan
- Zhou Shengchun, Professor of History and Executive Director of the Confucian Entrepreneur and East Asian Centre, Zhejiang University, China
- Moriya Atsushi, popular writer and commentator, Japan

Session 2: The Philosophical Values behind and Practical Significance of Multiple Conceptions of Wealth

Moderator: Yao Xinzhong

Discussants:

- Yao Xinzhong, Dean of the School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China, and Vice Director of the World Ethics Institute Beijing, Peking University
- Melissa Williams, Professor of Political Science and founding Director of the Centre for Ethics, University of Toronto, Canada
- Janet Hunter, Professor of Economic History, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom
- Klaus Leisinger, founder and President of the Global Value Alliance Foundation
- Alan Chan, Director of the Qufu Confucius Institute and Chairman of

Petroships Investment, Singapore

- Liu Zhiwei, General Manager, Member of the Board of Tianshuo Investment Co.
- Xue Zhaofeng, Researcher Fellow and Codirector of the Institute for Law and Economics, National School of Law Development, Peking University

Session 3: Wealth, Education and Welfare

Moderator: Yao Zhongqiu

Discussants:

- Yao Zhongqiu, Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences, Institute of Advanced Studies, Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics
- Li Honglei, Professor of Philosophy and Dean of the Philosophy Department, Zhongshan University, China.
- Wang Jue, Professor of Ethics and Vice Director of the School of Humanities, Southeast University, China
- Zhang Zhifeng, Chairman of the Board and Art Director of NE TIGER Fashion Company
- Yu Zihua, Managing Director of COFCO Futures Co.



May 12–13: Mr. Shibusawa Masahide and his team, a SCIEA delegation, joined the conference “Discourse on Confucian Entrepreneurs, 2014” at Peking University.

- Shi Yongmin, Chairman of the Board of Julink Investments Co.
- Ji Yu, Host of CCTV2
- Wu Xuesong, Member of the Board of Tianji Technology Co.
- Gao Bin, Chairman of the Board of Sanzhi Cultural School, Beijing



A commemorative photo of the conference participants, with Mr. Shibusawa Masahide and Prof. Tu Weiming sitting in the center of the front row.