

Welcoming Remarks Delivered at the Humanities World Report (HWR) Workshop⁺

Chun-chieh Huang^{*}

Dear friends, colleagues, distinguished guests,

It is my distinct honor and privilege—as Dean of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (IHS) at National Taiwan University—to welcome you here; and to open this Humanities World Report (HWR) Workshop to discuss the current status and future direction of the humanities in East Asian and Global Perspective.

First, I wish to point out that this Workshop is part of the "Humanities World Report" led by Professor Poul Holm of the Long Room Hub Institute for Advanced Studies at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. (Let us give Poul a warm welcome.) In compiling this report, Poul has been gathering and analysing the views of humanities scholars around the world in meetings and questionnaires on vital, life-and-death issues

facing the humanities disciplines today. In a moment, Poul and his team will introduce their ideals, methods and goals to us in more detail.

Now, for a brief introduction to this Institute. IHS operates 6 core long-term, East Asia centered research projects in the humanities and social sciences. The 5 social science projects are interdisciplinary and cover regional developments in law, democracy, notion of self, economy, etc., throughout East Asia. The humanities project is focused on the Confucian Classics as expressing core ideas and values of the classical civilizations of not just China but East Asia as a whole, and we are concerned to study the contemporary significance and relevance of the Confucian Classics. Without going into detail, we have a wide range of projects and activities. We publish many research books in our fields, an academic journal, the *Taiwan Journal*

⁺ Delivered at the Humanities World Report (HWR) Workshop: "The Humanities in East Asia: Current Situation and Future Direction," which was hosted by the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, NTU and led by Professor Poul Holm, Long Room Hub (IAS), Trinity College, Dublin, held at NTU on May 14-15, 2013.

^{*} Distinguished Professor and Dean, Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University / National Chair Professor, Ministry of Education / Research Fellow, Academia Sinica.

of *East Asian Studies* and our Institute Newsletter; we host several platforms, such as on Digital Humanities, Studies of Japan and Korea, Studies of European Union, Health and the Humanities etc.; we host an active visiting scholar program, hold international seminars, workshops and conferences on vital topics, and engage in cooperative research with sister institutes globally, etc. Please consult our IHS website, dvd, and brochures for further details.

The issues to be addressed in this Workshop are fundamental and should be the concern of every humanities scholar. We at IHS regard these issues as vital not only for maintaining the vitality and development of the humanities themselves but also for sustaining the reflective and critical role played by the humanities in academia and society. Indeed, we feel appalled at the blindness of education officials in not weighting A&HCI publications in the various world university ranking schemes and for the subsequent discounting of humanities curricula and publications by university administrations and bureaucrats. Moreover, we feel disappointed at the self-destructive attitude of some humanities scholars themselves who misguidedly critique and undermine the intellectual grounds and justification of the humanities disciplines. To what end?

As a humanities scholar and administrator, I increasingly find myself in the position of having to defend the value of the arts and humanities in this increasingly utilitarian society, institution and bureaucracy. Often, nowadays, it is solely the civility and polish offered by humanities education that attracts university administrators to add a thin veneer of civilization to their pragmatically minded peers and graduates. At the same time, these same administrators find themselves reluctantly having to turn to humanities scholars at crucial junctures in order to get wider, more nuanced perspectives, understandings and statements of their own goals

and directions. To paraphrase Immanuel Kant, these administrators and bureaucrats are forced to see that pure scientific and technical knowledge without the perspective and judgment provided by the humanities is mindless and easily misguided, just as Kant held that intuition without concepts is empty. Already in classical times, Socrates and Plato in Athens and Mencius in China demonstrated that practical wisdom and decision-making need to be grounded in and guided by deeper values and logical thinking, all of which require the home ground of cultural sensibility and social stability. Indeed, as the early Confucian thinker Xunzi said, "Without civility (and culture), there could not be rule by law." This sentiment could be extended to affirm, "Without refined culture, firm values and clear thinking, there could not be steady scientific progress and technological and economic development." Does this idea sound quaint to you? Without a doubt, Adam Smith—whose economic theory was grounded in a theory of the moral sentiments—and Albert Einstein—who cherished the mystery of the universe—would have agreed to it.

In response to the problems and issues facing the humanities and humanities scholars around the world, Poul and his team are bringing a wide range of reflections and considerations to the table. We look forward to a rich feast of presentations, questions, discussions, insights, and—hopefully—positive ideas to stir not only the revitalization of the humanities but the rehumanization of the university, as we venture deeper into the brave new world of the 21st century.

Well, there is much for us to reflect upon and discuss during these two days, so let's get started. Thank you very much.