

Ikeda's Philosophy of Human Revolution

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Abstract

In this paper I will consider and examine the figure and work of Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese Buddhist master, philosopher and writer. It seems impossible to separate within it creed from argument, faith from reason, and religion from philosophy. In particular, Ikeda's philosophy of human revolution is the contemporary re-elaboration of Nichiren's interpretation and practice of the Lotus Sutra. I will introduce a specific historical approach to evaluate this case, because remembering that our western history of ancient, modern, and contemporary philosophy is full of non-academic and non-rigorous speculative figures is not of secondary importance; and 'religious philosophers' and religious movements in philosophy or philosophical movements in religions are not rare. The novelty of Ikeda's figure requires a work of re-constructive analysis, which is certainly complicated by the variety of his discursive styles and domains. However, his philosophy of action clearly expresses a new humanism that is theoretically and practically linked to a specific conception of the human being, which is at the basis of Ikeda's philosophy of human revolution.

Key Words: Action, Human Revolution, Buddhism, Pedagogy, Peace Studies

1. Introduction

If thinkers have no relationship with government, or philosophy is isolated from people's life, or men of power lack philosophy or thought, then the human being will be unhappy unto eternity. This is a matter of course.

Ikeda, *Politics and Religion* (1968)

The figure and work of Daisaku Ikeda (b. 1928) – a Japanese religious master, social reformer, creator of institutions, thinker, writer, as well as an educator and poet – is extraordinarily rich and articulated. His doctrinal books, essays, and novels are many; and among his more than two thousand dialogues with religious and political leaders, scientists, writers, intellectuals, and activists, about fifty are published books translated into different languages.¹ As editor, the Seikyo Shimbunsha has planned to realise the *Ikeda Daisaku Zenshū*, Ikeda's complete work, in 150 volumes (this project started in 1988 and 140 volumes have been so far edited).² This extraordinary commitment is known to be deeply related to the life and activity of Soka Gakkai International³ (SGI), an NGO recognised by the United Nations and inspired by Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, to which all Soka Gakkai's religious organisations and institutions are directly or indirectly related (it is an articulated movement of about 13 million people in 192 countries and areas of the world). Winner of an important UN peace prize in 1982, Ikeda has received thousands of tributes such as honorary academic degrees, citizenships, plaques, and recognitions of other kind. His actions, speeches, and texts are undoubtedly religiously rooted.

1 Among them, I remember: Ikeda & Toynbee, 1976; Ikeda & Peccei 1985; Ikeda & Wilson, 1985b; Ikeda & Galtung, 1995; Ikeda & Gorbačëv, 2005b; Ikeda & Krieger, 2002; Ikeda, Simard & Bourgeaul, 2002b; Ikeda & Tehranian, 2003; Ikeda & Henderson, 2004; Ikeda & Swaminathan, 2005c.

2 See: <www.daisakuikeda.org>.

3 See: <www.sgi.org>.

They are so strongly inspired by Nichiren's doctrine and vision that it seems impossible to separate within it creed from argument, faith from reason, and religion from philosophy (this latter even tends to complicate things, because of the multivalent uses of the concept and idea of 'philosophy' throughout history and cultures). In fact, the concept of philosophy in its speculative sense cannot be used to synthetically resume the meaning and entity of this work and action. Being a work and action clearly and explicitly inspired by faith, the unifying religious perspective is its true spiritual, cultural, and moral source. Ikeda's philosophy of *human revolution* is the contemporary re-elaboration of Nichiren's interpretation and practice of the Lotus Sutra. It in fact encloses and expresses the following ideas: the idea of eternity and innate sanctity of life; the idea that earthly life is the best and unique condition to promote one's self-reform and personal and collective realisation and salvation; the idea that potentially and essentially everyone is a Buddha, including all animals and living beings; the idea that all human beings have the capacity to extract and express their own true nature of Buddha, changing their destiny or karma, realising a happy (spiritual and material) life, and positively affecting others and all things; the idea of interconnection and interdependence of all living beings, and the moral responsibility of each one with regard to and in defence of all living beings and the Earth as a living whole.

For Ikeda, human revolution is the starting point of all things. The individual is the basis of everything; and because of this, a change in our life will provoke a positive, concatenated reaction through families, environments, communities, and societies. History will change, the epoch will change, and human kind and the world will progress and change. It is obvious that only a religious approach, an approach of faith instead of reason, may judge and consider this vision and perspective as non-utopian or unrealistic. In his essay *For the Sake of Peace* (Ikeda 2001), he states with more emphasis that the human spirit has the capacity to transform even the most difficult situations, creating value and producing richer and richer meanings, and that when all people will flourish to their full spiritual potential of enlightenment and will jointly progress, a new culture of peace and a new era of life will arise. Spiritual self-reformation and religious commitment are the alpha and omega of such a conception and vision. Therefore, there is no room for a rational, argumentative philosophy. If there is any place for such a philosophy, then the question of under what argumentative logic is it possible to separate it from the doctrinal/religious corpus arises. Except for the disciplinary sectors of sociology of religion, peace studies, and environmental philosophy, Ikeda is currently of little or no significance in speculative philosophy. This is so even in his own country where he is not even counted among those Japanese philosophers who connect philosophy and Buddhism, like the case of Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945).

An explanation perhaps lies in the fact that, unlike Ikeda, Nishida was not only a professor at the Imperial University of Kyōto but also someone who developed a large theoretical research on Idealism, Neo-Kantianism, and Phenomenology, connecting it with Zen. However, we have to introduce another historical approach to evaluate this case, because remembering that our western history of ancient, modern, and contemporary philosophy is full of non-academic and non-rigorous speculative figures is not of secondary importance; and 'religious philosophers' and religious movements in philosophy or philosophical movements in religions are not rare. One of the first articulated interconnections and dialectics was, during the Hellenistic era, between the Judeo-Christian tradition and Mosaic philosophy, Neoplatonism, Hermetic philosophy, Patristics, and the centuries of the Middle Ages, where Christianity and philosophy prevalently worked together in many ways. Even in modern and contemporary philosophy, some authors and schools retain closed connections, making it very difficult to separate speculative and argumentative discourse from religious and inspired discourse. Some representatives of Spiritualism and Existentialism, for example, are of this kind; and among them, one of the most significant cases is certainly that of Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950).

As a non-academic philosopher, he not only founded the journal *Esprit* (still active) but also became the father of a new philosophical movement, the Personalism, a movement able to attract and connect a certain part of the academic philosophical world in France. Inspired by Christian theology and anthropology, this movement expresses a particular conception of person, community, and social life, a conception in which politics represents a central domain of reflection and commitment and is understood through the perspective of a Christian social theory, that is in the perspective of a good community or an ideal community of saints. Another excellent case of a philosopher who developed a new perspective through her religious sensitivity is of Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), a well-known pupil of Edmund Husserl.

Ikeda does not seem to have a comparable movement of philosophers or a community of research. However, the novelty of his figure requires a work of re-constructive analysis, which is certainly complicated by the variety of his discursive styles and domains related to texts of doctrinal exegesis, poems, novels, essays, speeches, dialogues, reflections, editorials and articles, proposals, notes, and memorials. What is genuinely 'philosophical' must be literally extracted. However, we face two problems here: identifying what is 'philosophical', and, if it is clear that there is something independently 'philosophical' in Ikeda's work, a method to extract it.

It is certainly not sufficient for now to list, remember, and re-track the series of philosophers quoted from Ikeda.

1. What is philosophy?

The way through which the dialectic is done between philosophy and spirituality, in western as well as in oriental culture, is still not clarified and shared; on the contrary, it is contradictory and vexed. An expert of esoteric and oriental thought, René Guénon, in his book *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védānta* (1925), conceives philosophy as an exclusive western 'perspective', and therefore like an obstacle to the correct understanding and experience of the *Vēdānta* – which is a pure metaphysical doctrine opened to a truly unlimited possibility of conception and, because of that, not susceptible to be systematised. However, referring to this, Guénon reveals to have in mind a certain partial conception of theoretical philosophy. We may easily find many examples like this, even specifically in reference to Buddhism, from western scholars experienced in oriental practices of life. For example, in his book *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture*, Tang Yi-jie writes the following:

Western philosophy has its own categorical system; its characteristics and the different levels of development of its philosophical thinking at different historical stages are reflected in the development from Aristotle's *Categories* to Hegel's *Logik*. The categories used in the primitive Indian Buddhism and the categories of the Kunya and Bhava sects of Mahayana, more or less in succession and each with its striking features, represent the fairly high level Indian Buddhism attained in logical thought and categorical analysis. Traditional Chinese philosophy has its own concepts and categories which gradually formed a fairly comprehensive system. Because of this it will not do just to take them in terms of the concepts and categories of Western philosophy, nor will it do to take them in terms of the Marxist philosophical concepts and categories (Yi-jie, 1991, p. 19).

There is a prejudicial tendency to reduce philosophy to a rationalised and theoretical approach or abstract speculation around life and the world, as a research of truth and understanding essentially detached from the research of wisdom and moral and spiritual emancipation. It is certainly true that the question of what philosophy is was a philosophical problem in itself since the first use of this ancient Greek word *φιλοσοφία*. However, even though it is linked to its entire history, it received a different approach, interpretation, and use in relation to (1) different traditions and methodological procedures (dialectics, analysis, intuition, contemplation, expression/revelation, critics, explication, understanding, *epochè*, reflection, etc.), (2) different disciplinary domains (logics, ethics, politics, metaphysics, aesthetics and so on), and (3) different research programs or ideological perspectives (materialism, physicalism, nominalism, scepticism, rationalism, idealism, realism, nihilism, pragmatism, positivism, etc.).

Therefore, what philosophy is does not simplistically emerge from a unique representation of the typical form of western thinking. If in Heraclitus, and generally in Presocratics, where philosophy is conceived as a speculative research around the first cause (*πρώτη αἰτία*) or principle (*ἀρχή*), it has an effective character of abstractness and detachment from the pragmatic aspects of the world, then in Plato, it is understood and practised simultaneously as a *practical wisdom*, that is the use of knowledge for human advantage (*Eutyphron*), and as ascesis (*ἀσκησις*); in his conception, the first aspect refers to the concrete level of living well according to common sense and insight and the second refers to metaphysics and the speculative plane of the research of Truth, essentially conceived as a Supreme Good. A different interpretation, this speculative aspect is present even in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Both philosophers would influence western philosophy for hundreds and thousands of years, variously intertwining, nourishing, and articulating the religious discourse. For example, for Patristics and Neoplatonism, Plato's philosophy would be a central 'religious' source, even for mystic philosophers like Plotinus or (many hundreds of years later) Eckhart; and Aristotle would be central for theology, particularly through the extraordinary doctrinal and philosophical work of Thomas Aquinas. This double line (Platonism and Aristotelianism) could find the common element of a connection to the idea of a *free*, speculative, practical, spiritual, technical, and scientific *research*, as can be found, for example, in Montaigne (one part) and in Kant (the other part).

However, this aspect cannot be considered as characterising philosophy. In fact, the history of philosophy is even a history of the instrumental use of philosophy as (a) *ancilla theologiae*, as submitted to theology and religion; (b) a way to preserve a *corpus* of knowledge dogmatically conceived as accomplished and absolute; and (c) a manner to define, propagate, and defend a certain ideological construction. The Italian historian Nicola Abbagnano collects the latter under the same notion of *scholastics*, composing it with ‘almost all oriental philosophies.’ He explains in the following manner:

The philosophical-religious sects of the second century B.C. (e.g., the Essenes), the doctrine of Philo of Alexandria (first century A.C.) and of many Neoplatonists, the Islamic and Judaic philosophy, the Patristics and Scholastics, and even the modern world, with the Occasionalism, the Immaterialism, the Hegelian Right, and a large part of contemporary Spiritualism, are scholastics in this clarified sense: in other words, they are philosophies that consist in using a determinate doctrine (Platonism, Aristotelianism, Cartesianism, Empiricism, Idealism, etc.) in order to defend and interpret beliefs that cannot be turned into doubt, rectified, or negated through this work. [...] However, many such philosophies may achieve significant results, which enter into the common patrimony of philosophy; their domain is closely determined by the issues for which they are pre-arranged, that is the defence of traditional beliefs. Their possibilities have no extension along the rectification and renewal of these beliefs (Abbagnano, 1993, p. 393; the trans. is mine).

It is perhaps necessary to have an in-depth analysis and an additional vast discussion, but the philosophical attitude, and then the notion of ‘philosophy’, could be already subjected to a generalised depiction, beyond all distinctions between West and East. Philosophy should be considered as referring to an approach (or set of approaches), a procedure (or set of procedures), and a technique (or set of techniques), which theoretically, practically, and spiritually concern specific objects of knowledge, intuition, reflection/contemplation, and emancipation, and which are applicable to different domains of research, experience, and life, according to a general/generalizable principle of practical sensitivity, rationality, and communicativeness. Among such a large number of philosophies and philosophers, Immanuel Kant seems to offer the most general and generalizable questions as a key point of reference for all philosophical works. In his book *Critique of Pure Reason*, he says that all his research interests are synthetized by three questions: ‘What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope?’ In his book *Logic*, he adds a fourth question: ‘What is the human being?’ The way to answer these questions may be re-interpreted more openly in a multidirectional way, being critical instead of hermeneutical and vice versa, or spiritual instead of speculative and vice versa, and so on.

In a certain manner, the times we are living in, which are characterised by globalisation, work as a favourable instrument to spread a more comprehensive and articulated conception of philosophy. Since globalisation has its roots deep in past cultural imperialism, it simultaneously presents a diametrically opposite possibility and risks a reduction, levelling, and misrecognition. Nobody knows whether or not there is an alternative way to think, practise, experience, feel, and so on, which could completely overturn the discourse that we are developing here, one that, although strongly wants to and is trying to implement the quintessential philosophical character of western and eastern cultures, remains a discourse deeply nourished and rooted into the ground of western tradition, vocabulary, language, discourse, and culture. However, ‘occidentalism’ is a multi-sided phenomenon, as demonstrated by globalisation itself, which is promoted and practised by eastern as well as western actors, cultures, and realities. Moreover, Robert C. Solomon (University of Texas) enlightens as follows:

[...] For most of this century, Anglo-American and most European philosophers have simply ignored the rich philosophical traditions of Africa, Asia, Latin and Native America, and the rest of the world. Some leading African American and African European philosophers have dismissed “ethnophilosophy” as “not philosophy,” presumably to protect their own analytic credentials. Universities as far flung as Singapore, Sierra Leone, and New Delhi have prided themselves on their fidelity to Oxbridge philosophy. It seems that the globalization of free market economics goes with the globalization of one brief moment in philosophy, with similarly devastating effects on local cultures and the rich varieties of human experience (Solmon, 2001, p. 100).

However, it is clear that our times are marked by challenges for mutual recognition (of the value of respective traditions, cultural minorities, and gnoseological and spiritual experiences) and also by the new challenge of a ‘global epoch’, the cornerstone of which will be the definition of a shared framework of values, principles, conceptions, and knowledge. Additionally, philosophy cannot be exonerated.

A significant percentage of the value and importance of Ikeda's work lies, in the example that he offers through his new humanistic conception and generalised/globalised approach. The fact that a Japanese person who interprets this new enterprise does not seem accidental, since Japan has had a rich cultural oriental foundation, a remarkable sensitivity, and a disposition toward western culture since the Meiji era. One of the basic elements of this dialectical and intercultural approach is the idea that *global civilization* constitutes the new horizon of action and realisation for humanity. It is a challenge and a cultural gamble in itself, which is simultaneously intercultural, multicultural, confessional, inter-confessional, international, inter-popular, moral, as well as spiritual.

On the one hand, this vision of Ikeda has its foundation in Nichiren Buddhism, that is in a specific creed, and on the other hand, in its (1) thematic and problematic development, (2) reflective references, and (3) domains of use and application, it reveals the form of a general *active humanism* (that is a new form of humanism), and, more than a doctrinal development and configuration, it offers the platform of a globalising and globalised reflective philosophy where the essential commitment is in argumentation and counter-argumentation, in humanistic and value approach, and before anything else, in believing and faith. His references to thinkers, philosophers, writers, spiritual figures, intellectuals, and activists of all time and beliefs are in fact vast and continuous. Among his main references of philosophers, we may recall the following names: Socrates, Plato, Confucius, Nāgārjuna, Michel E. de Montaigne, Blaise Pascal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Søren Kierkegaard, Henri Bergson, Ralph W. Emerson, Alain [Émile-Auguste Chartier], John Dewey, Nikolaj Berdjajev, Henry David Thoreau, Max Weber, Rabindranāth Tagore, Gabriel Marcel, José Ortega y Gasset, Martin Buber, Simone Weil, Karl Jaspers, Hannah Arendt, Arnold J. Toynbee, Edgar Morin, C. Jung, Alan Watts, and J. Galtung. And among the writers, we may recall: Dante Alighieri, Johann W. Goethe, Jane Austen, Aleksandr S. Puškin, Herman Melville, Lu Xun, Saint-Exupéry, Fëdor Dostoevskij, Paul Valéry, Walt Whitman, Lev Tolstoj, Stefan Zweig, Anatole France, Victor Hugo, Romain Rolland, Thomas S. Eliot, Chingiz Aitmatov, Wole Soyinka, Boris L. Pasternak, André Malraux, and José Martí.

It is true that his work has an essential focus and function in relation to the religious interpretation, actualisation, and practice of Nichiren's teachings, necessary for the practitioners and for the life and activities of Soka Gakkai. However, at the same time, the possibility of all this being put into 'brackets' with the likelihood of his philosophy, reasoning, and approach being followed without any engagement at a religious level is not of secondary interest. All his philosophical enterprise leads to a type of philosophy from which the actual mention of the Mystic Law is absent and in which the philosophical question of the object of cult and belief itself remains in a suspension that could not be accepted without having the effect of losing the sense, value, and consistency of the discourse. The rational basis of this philosophy definitely lies in a humanism which is conceived from a universalistic perspective. It is founded in a general vision of innate dignity, the sacred value of the human being, and the philosophy of universal human rights. Ikeda did not create a closed system, playing with the strategy of covering his ideology or creed with an intercultural, speculative, and scientific 'cover.' He has not created, and does not promote, a new *scholastics*. Beyond the excommunication that he received from the Nichiren Shōshū (the official Nichiren School) – a fact which is meaningful in itself – there is a series of elements that prove his non-scholastic approach: first, the contents of his exegetic works; second, the role played in it by philosophers and alternative philosophies; third, the development of his analysis, critical considerations, and proposals; and fourth, the argumentations, which aim to bring on reflection, take on a responsible position, and renew the sense of human dignity, value, and empowerment. Ikeda works with the purpose of developing dialectical and cultural exchanges with all traditions, using a typical western approach: rational and pragmatic, never esoteric or mystic. The general configuration of his speculative oeuvre is that of a *new philosophy of action*.

From the perspective of his religious sensitiveness, Ikeda, as a philosopher, may be brought closer to (1) *existentialist spiritualism* – particularly that of Marcel – (2) the spiritualistic evolutionism of Bergson, and (3) the humanism of Emerson. From the perspective of the philosophy of culture and education, his main and more direct reference is to, without any doubt, Dewey. From the perspective of the philosophy of peace and peace studies, Buber and Habermas are really important to him, as explained by Olivier Urbain in his book *Daisaku Ikeda's Philosophy of Peace* (2010). Urbain underlines that Ikeda's conception of peace has to be connected to ideas concerning global citizenship and cosmopolitan democracy – as developed by Daniele Archibugi among others (see Urbain, 2010, p. 7) – and to the work, research, and method of Johan Galtung, concerning peace studies.

Finally, from the perspective of direct inflowing figures, Ikeda had an important friendship with the historian Arnold Toynbee – who is incorporable into philosophy for having been a representative of contemporary historicism with Spengler and others. Toynbee's last published work is in fact the book of dialogue with Ikeda (Ikeda & Toynbee, 1976; translated in 27 languages).

These direct and explicit connections are certainly important to configure Ikeda's work as philosophical, but they are not sufficient for a correct and proper collocation of it in evident and clear connection with someone of the contemporary philosophical traditions. In fact, as previously underlined, it has the configuration of a humanistic philosophy placed between the philosophy of action and pragmatism, not of an existentialism or spiritualistic evolutionism, or historicism.

In the history of philosophy, research around the question of action and its correlated problems and dilemmas is long and varied. Merely recalling the main philosophers involved in specific speculative research on action seems enough to offer the vast dimension of this philosophical domain: Plato, Aristotle, Th. Aquinas, Duns Scoto, Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Th. Reid, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Nietzsche, Blondel, James, Weber, Arendt, Wittgenstein, Dewey, Sartre, Nagel, Ryle, Ricœur, Anscombe, Davidson, Habermas, von Wright, Sellars, Ch. Taylor, A. Goldman, Strawson, Searle, and McDowell. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the disciplinary area of the 'philosophy of action' does not refer to a spiritual tradition that took place in the continental area from the second part of the nineteenth century.

Contemporary interests are differently oriented. The contemporary philosophy of action roughly moves through three major domains of research: (1) acts and actions – where logical-linguistic and ontological questions are studied in connection to basic actions, individuation, speech acts, bodily movement, causal theory of action, habitual action, collective action, and so on; (2) agency and causation – where the object of study and research are questions like volition and will, cause and motivation, intention, practical reasoning, desire and disposition, mental acts, agent causation, agency and patency, deliberation and decision, irrational acts, etc.; and (3) issues connected to specific, disciplinary, domains of application – essentially, theory of knowledge, ethics, law, cognitive psychology, history, social sciences, animal philosophy, cognitive ethology, and others (see O'Connor, Sandis, 2010). However, this synthesis overlooks another branch of philosophy of action, which is currently of less interest to the philosophical community but is nevertheless of great importance. This different and particular branch was developed within the Francophone area, thanks above all to the work of Léon Ollé-Laprune and Maurice Blondel, who developed Fichte's moral idealism of action, applying it onto a religious philosophy of Christian nature. Philosophers like John H. Newman and Georges Sorel may be put into the same line. A somehow connected but different articulation subsequently took place in France, subsuming in different ways a series of elements from practical philosophy, existentialism, pragmatism, psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology, etc. With his phenomenological-existential analysis, Sartre was, in a certain manner, the epitome of it. However only a philosopher like Paul Ricoeur can be directly and strongly connected to this religious philosophy and be simultaneously considered a contemporary developer of it in the same sense as Sartre, that is interdisciplinary and multi-methodological. As a Christian and philosopher, Ricoeur was involved in phenomenological-hermeneutical research, biblical hermeneutics, and hermeneutics applied to structuralism, to linguistics, to ethics and law, and to the philosophy of action and of the self.

Compared to Ricoeur, Ikeda's philosophy expresses a comparable spiritualistic and religious sensitivity, even if it is more or less stronger than his theoretic and speculative commitment. From this perspective, it seems to be more close to figures like Mounier rather than Ricoeur. Mounier was a spiritual leader in the personalist movement; he was in fact an example of *philosophe engagé*, engaged philosopher. With a group of friends he founded the monthly journal *Esprit*, gradually transforming it into the heart of the movement and the principal agency for the propagation of his religious philosophy and the group's point of view and proposals. As personalism and spiritualism, the philosophy of action has a religious structure and interest, but it interprets consciousness and the human being in the perspective of the voluntary and the emancipative commitment, that is the religious and moral acting which creates social value. Therefore, the philosophy of action is a practical philosophy as well as a philosophy in practice, and is spiritually inspired as well as pragmatically oriented. Ikeda's new humanism has all of these elements.

If so, the question of what are its main aspects arises.

2. A Philosophy of Human Revolution

Ikeda's philosophy of action expresses a new humanism that is theoretically and practically linked to a specific conception of the human being. Different speculative concepts and perspectives are traceable in it, starting from the idea of human creative power, which is at the basis of Ikeda's philosophy of human revolution and has a significant relationship with the concept of self-empowerment. In this regard, in his book *Soka Education: For the Happiness of the Individual*, Ikeda writes the following:

No matter how complex global challenges may seem, we must remember that it is we ourselves who have given rise to them. It is therefore impossible that they are beyond our power as human beings to resolve. Refocusing on humanity, reforming and opening up the inner capacities of our lives – this kind of individual human revolution can enable effective reform and empowerment on a global scale (Ikeda, 2010, p. 17; see Ikeda & Marinoff, 2012).

The anthropological-philosophical idea underlying this view does not lie as much in a conception connected to Nietzsche's concept of *will to power*, but rather in a conception of Ricoeur's philosophy of the *capable human being*. It arises more clearly by carrying out and making explicit the ontological implications of Ricoeur's philosophy of the self, as summarised in one of his major works, *Oneself as Another* (1990). In this book, which largely synthesises Ricoeur's research, he musters Aristotle's ancient notion of Being as *power*, or better, as power (*δύναμις*)/act (*ενέργεια*) dialectic or dynamism. His hermeneutic phenomenology of the self identifies and describes four constitutive aspects of the capable human being, all of them functioning according to the logic of such dialectic or dynamism. David M. Kaplan explains in the following manner:

Echoing Kant, Ricoeur believes that to be a human being is to be capable of thinking, choosing, and acting for oneself. Yet he goes beyond Kant and affirms a wider range of human capabilities. He does so by analyzing the various ways that the verb *I can* is modified and realized in the ways that *I can speak*, *I can act*, *I can tell a story*, and *I can be responsible*. Ricoeur argues that the notion of capability forms a link between our actions, our language, and the worlds we live in. It relates actors to patients, agency to suffering, and capability to vulnerability. Capabilities are always bound to various figures of otherness (such as other people and our own bodies) that both enable and constrain us, delimiting who and what we are, as well as what we may hope to become (Kaplan, 2010, p. 113).

Therefore, the capacity to speech, the capacity to act, the capacity for recounting history and time, and the capacity for imputation of responsibility – in shortly, to speak, to do, to tell, and to impute – are the four load-bearing axis of Ricoeur's philosophy of the human being. It subsumes and expresses the spheres of expression and understanding, action and recognition, personal (historical) growth and personal emancipation, and imputability and responsibility. It is precisely the capacity or power to make the man a man. The man is *ερμηνευτική δύναμις*, the power to express.

Ikeda, who may relate to this way of conceiving a human being, emphasises the aspect of emancipation, which is interpreted as the personal research on moral perfections of the self and the development and reinforcement of character and capacities. This explains and justifies why the reflexive and ethical-practical perspective is strongly intertwined with the philosophy of education in his work. Its philosophy of the human revolution simultaneously expresses a theoretical conception, a practical-social and practical-political conception, and an educative conception. It is not by chance that he persistently refers to Plato's *Republic*, which summarised the quintessential philosophical view of Plato, precisely through the form of a philosophical *παιδεία*: a practical-philosophical pedagogy. A fir, this philosophy is a practical and educational philosophy, and also engaged philosophy, because all forms of applied knowledge and methodologies and all kinds of commitment into society or into world come with personal development and emancipation.

For Ikeda, all effective and durative progress and development may arise only by a spontaneous and voluntary inner determination and strength, because 'norms that are not inner-generated and do not encourage the development of individual character are ultimately weak and ineffective. Only when external norms and inner values function in a mutually supportive manner can they enable people to resist evil and live as genuine advocates and champions of human rights' (Ikeda, 2001, p. 24). Plato's *Republic* is an extraordinary exemplification of the validity of this perspective; first, because it focuses on the close connection between emancipation and self-control (that is the control of the spirit by its rational part), and second, because it conceives and practises philosophy as an emancipative practice.

The analysis developed in it between psychological and moral human dynamics and the critique of social-political dynamics may certainly be differently interpreted, from an ethical-anthropological perspective rather than a philosophical-political one. However, the way to consider and treat it as a philosophical *παιδεία* (pedagogy) offers its essential and more comprehensive point of synthesis, because in *Republic*, Plato defines a philosophy of freedom and human responsibility. Beyond the temporal and cultural gap, it is something that is significantly comparable to Ikeda's philosophy of human revolution.

It is well known that Plato substantially sketched a negative picture of democracy. His pessimism had its roots in the idea that democracy is easily corruptible and subjected to degeneration. Beyond its little positive elements, democracy is oriented to anarchy (*Republic*, 557e-558) because the interior life of the man of democracy is weak. In an abstract sense, democracy sustained by laws is a positive creation (*Politics*, 291d-e), but if individuals do not make efforts to control egoism and to improve self-control, then democracy will be transformed into an anarchy dominated by servitude to passions, desires, negative values, and injustice. At the beginning, with the instauration of democracy, there is the blessing of freedom: the city becomes full of freedom to speak and act (*Republic*, 557b); 'in this regime especially, all sorts of human beings come to be' (557c), and people, 'doesn't care at all from what kinds of practices a man goes to political action' (558b). It is sufficient that he says he is a friend of the people. Democracy's supreme end of liberty is its strong point as well as its weak point, because of its interpretation of this end. Plato had the following to say on this matter:

'For surely in a city under a democracy you would hear that this is the finest thing it has, and that for this reason it is the only regime worth living in for anyone who is by nature free' (562b-c); but, 'when a democratic city (...) it's thirsted for freedom, gets bad winebearers as its leaders and gets more drunk than it should on this unmixed draught' (562c-d). The incessant research of an ideological and boundless liberty provokes corruption and the degeneration of desires and reduces life to greed and moral degradation. The first victims of this process or metamorphosis will be young people. The appetites will gain the control of the citadel of their soul. Moreover, by confusing what is liberty and what is value, and 'naming shame simplicity, they push it out with dishonour, a fugitive; calling moderation cowardliness and spattering it with mud, they banish it; persuading that measure and orderly expenditure are rustic and illiberal, they join with many useless desires in driving them over the frontier' (560c-d). The chaos created by a freedom without limits and rules will at a certain moment be uncontrollable, because 'anything that is done to excess is likely to provoke a correspondingly great change in the opposite direction – in seasons, in plants, in bodies, and, in particular, not least in regimes' (563e). Therefore, an excess of freedom will (always) turn into an excess of servitude. Moreover, democracy will turn into tyranny, because to regain order, people will go in search of a strong leader. Once they find one, this leader will inevitably fall down to the seductions of power and become a tyrant.

Through his analysis, Plato underlines the risks of an excessive freedom or the risks and consequences of a false and distorted idea of liberty. True liberty in fact comes with the capacity to control and dominate instincts, to win one's weaknesses, and the capacity and disposition to form one's character and personality through education, morality, social commitment, and responsibility. The comparability with Ikeda's emancipatory perspective of the human revolution is strong here. As Plato's *παιδεία* (pedagogy), it considers the dilemma of how to reach an inner equilibrium and harmony, and how to conquer a higher level of true freedom, wisdom, and happiness. However, there are also some differences. One of the most important differences is that the philosophy of human revolution does not exclusively prospect the possibility of emancipation via philosophy and education.

Ikeda strongly underlines the importance and centrality of having a strong and active commitment of a spiritual and moral nature. On the one hand, this philosophy of human revolution is focused on the power of the creative-transformative potential of each person; on the other hand, it considers the relation and commitment *with* and *for* others equally essential. We are not simply relational and communicative Beings – and communitarian persons, as Mounier said – but Beings whose happiness and realisation is deeply related to the happiness and realisation of others and the personal commitment for them. These latter are the aspects that articulate Ikeda's philosophy of action between a kind of contemporary (globalised) *παιδεία* (pedagogy) and an active humanism which looks for a global transformation of society and human reality through the emancipation and personal and direct commitment of every individual.

3. A New Humanism

The keywords of Ikeda's humanism are *recognition*, *commitment*, and *dialogue*. These three words are circularly interconnected: recognition to create an epoch of peace, commitment, and dialogue; commitment to create an epoch of education, recognition, and dialogue; and dialogue to create an epoch of culture, commitment, and recognition. In a certain way, the primary source of this circular movement is the dialogic commitment. As Ikeda explains, 'we are not born human in any but a biological sense; we can only learn to know ourselves and others and thus be "trained" in the ways of being human. We do this by immersion in the ocean of language and dialogue fed by the springs of cultural tradition' (Ikeda, 2001, pp. 41-42). The pedagogical relationship makes this possible – first, within the family; second, within the school; and third, within the society and the 'school of life' in itself. However, according to oriental tradition, for Ikeda, the first and the most important pedagogical relationship is the mentor-disciple relationship, something very close to the Socratic way. Education generally has to be involved for the active development of human resources and it must be simultaneously practised to give rise to the latent potential of individuals. He declares the following:

I believe strongly in the latent power of people. To awaken people to their own power, education is necessary. People need teachers. Today, it seems to me, we are hearing the call for education in global form. In more concrete terms, this course of education must include such currently vital problems as environment, development, peace and human rights. Education for peace should reveal the cruelty of war, emphasize the threat of nuclear weapons and insist on the importance of arms reduction. Education for development must deal with the eradication of hunger and poverty and should devote attention to establishing a system of economic welfare for approximately five hundred million people who suffer from malnutrition today and two-thirds of all nations that are impoverished. Harmony between humanity and nature should be the theme of education in relation to the environment. It is important to bring the most serious consideration to the extent to which nuclear explosions harm the ecosystem. Learning to respect the dignity of the individual must be the cornerstone of education in relations to human rights (p. 84).

Dialogue is a difficult art with a direct connection to personal morality and sensitiveness. Using the image of Martin Buber, Ikeda compares dialogue to 'an encounter "on the narrow ridge" in which the slightest inattention could result in a precipitous fall. Dialogue is indeed this kind of intense, high-risk encounter' (Ikeda, 2005, p. 12). True dialogue, which is oriented to construct something and progress on something of value, is always a challenge against one's selfishness, closeness, prejudices and all negative and aggressive tendencies. From another perspective, dialogue even needs elements of another kind: the critical-reflective ability; the disposition to share and examine all aspects, implications, and consequences; and the *a priori* recognition of the intrinsic dignity and legitimacy of the other as a counterpart. Too much attachment to the differences is always a wrong strategy. It obstructs an honest and open exchange; it impedes the change, a true mutual recognition; and it turns in an obstacle for transcend (Galtung) problems, dogmatic or radical positions, prejudices, and so on.

Therefore, the cornerstone of Ikeda's humanism can be presumed as follows: (1) the recognition and defence of the intrinsic and innate dignity and sacredness of life; (2) the recognition of the pre-eminence and central importance of the common people, and the importance of personal responsibility; (3) the idea of global citizenship as concretely practised in the real context of the community; (4) the pre-eminence of inter-cultural relationships and the recognition of the intrinsic value of all positive religious and philosophical creeds; (5) the centrality and pre-eminence of the power of common people on the sovereignty of states and the centrality of human rights; (6) the importance of social solidarity and the commitment in education for the promotion of growth and autonomy, and for progress; (7) the recognition of the educative and emancipative role of historical knowledge and reflexive and critical philosophy, literature, and arts; (8) the critique of power and against technical rationality and the attribution of moral responsibility to the community of scientists; (9) the research of a global ethics and the education for sustainable development; (10) the commitment for non-violence and the faith for the disarmament.

The first point expresses the positive orientation of Ikeda's humanism, not simply in defence of life, but rather to the research on the realisation of life in dignity and happiness. The second point affirms and reveals the universal perspective of this humanism. The third point expresses the aspiration of a new epoch of global civilization. The fourth point offers more than a cultural or inter-cultural openness to realise it. The fifth point indicates a certain reference and consideration to political-juridical implications *of* and *for* this humanism. The sixth point focuses on the inspired character of this humanism, which has its bases in a personal and voluntary commitment. The seventh point focuses on culture in all its expressions as a linchpin of a true global humanism.

The eighth point underlines the importance of a constant, public, and critical exercise upon power and science and the responsibility of a scientist in a practical-moral sense. The ninth point underlines the importance is of planning an articulated programme for the development of a global ethics and simultaneously for the deepening of the sense of value, intrinsic dignity, and sacredness of human beings, life, nature, and earth.

As a demonstration of his real and full commitment, every single year since 1983, when he won the UN peace prize, Ikeda has been sending a peace proposal to the UN. This proposal is read, studied, and applied by millions of people around the world. This seems to demonstrate that, with his philosophical humanism, Ikeda is truly trying to not simply understand and criticise the world but also to change it.

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