

## **From the Symposium Cosponsored with The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

### Message

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I wish to express my heartiest congratulations on the opening of this symposium, sponsored jointly by the Research Centre for Chinese Philosophy and Culture of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Institute of Oriental Philosophy of Tokyo, and the Hong Kong Centre of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, which was founded ten years ago. I extend my deepest thanks to all the scholars of these various academic institutions who, despite their busy schedules, have come to participate in these proceedings.

The title of the symposium is “Eastern Culture and Modern Society: Philosophical Dialogue among Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.” You have come together to meet with scholars who are authorities on various aspects of Eastern thought to pursue topics of research, approaching them from a variety of viewpoints and seeking to shed the light of wisdom upon the search for the kind of reliable guidelines demanded by the twenty-first century. Your efforts, I have no doubt, will yield results that not only stand the test of time but shine with increasing brilliance with the passing years.

Looking back, I recall that I first visited Hong Kong some forty-five years ago, in January of 1961. That was just one year after, in accordance with the dying wishes of my mentor, Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, I had succeeded him as third president of that organization. At that time, Hong Kong was my first step on a trip that took me to a total of five countries, including Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

It was a journey that brought me into contact with various phases of Eastern culture, and I became aware of the need for an organization devoted to the study of the multiple aspects of the thought, philosophy, and culture of Eastern Asia and of the world as a whole. Such an organi-

zation, it seemed to me, could help to encourage dialogue among various civilizations and religions and further the aims of world peace and the coexistence of humankind. When I visited Buddha Gaya, the site of Shakyamuni's achievement of enlightenment, I made up my mind to set up the organization that in time became known as the Institute of Oriental Philosophy.

Thirteen years after that first trip to Hong Kong, in January of 1974, as the founder of Soka University in Japan, I paid my first visit to this university, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. At that time I met with Dr. Choh-Ming Li, the Founding Vice-Chancellor of the university. I proposed to him that the faculty and students of our two universities should engage in a program of mutual exchange. Dr. Li readily agreed to enter into such a program with the newly founded Soka University, and the following year we drew up a formal agreement for academic exchanges between the two institutions.

Since then, Soka University has for its part expanded such arrangements to include exchange of faculty and students with a hundred universities in forty-four countries or regions of the world. But I can never forget that the starting point for such activities of academic exchange was none other than that first agreement with the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

I myself participated in such activities, in 1992 coming here to deliver a lecture under the title "Traditional Chinese Humanism Will Shine in the New Century." At that time, your university honored me with the title of distinguished visiting professor, and in 2000 it went a step further by awarding me an honorary doctorate of social science. To this day I remain deeply grateful for these marks of esteem bestowed on me by your university. I am confident that the present symposium will initiate a new page in the history of the exchanges taking place between our two universities.

Dr. Jao Tsung-I, professor emeritus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and an outstanding authority on many aspects of Chinese culture, kindly wrote an introduction for the Chinese translation of my work entitled *Watakushi no Shakuson-kan*, or *The Living Buddha*. In his introduction, he compared the dominant way of thought of the people of India, who have as their ideal a life of peace and tranquility to be gained in some future existence, with that of the Chinese, who stress the importance of filial piety and place great emphasis upon our present existence. And he asserts that it is the Buddhist concept of the Middle Way that has succeeded in bringing these two views into harmony with one another. "The respective cultures of China and India," he writes, "are basically

very disparate in nature, and this has made it difficult for the two to react with one another. But the Buddhist concept or ideal of the Middle Way has, though unintentionally perhaps, made it possible for the two to act in harmony. The Buddhism transmitted to China from India reached its flowering in the form of Mahayana thought and practice, and it is no mere accident that this has proved to be a major contribution to Chinese culture in particular and to other fields in general.”

The Middle Way of Buddhism teaches that one should reject any attachment to the two extremes of sensual indulgence or severe asceticism, to the absolutes of either existence or nonexistence. It counsels a path that represents a mean between these two extremes of practice or belief. Shakyamuni Buddha, we are told, rejected both self-indulgence and self-mortification, and taught a way of life that avoided both of these one-sided approaches. He sought instead a middle path, which he believed to be the only correct one.

This ideal of the Buddhist Middle Way, once it was introduced to China, underwent further development there. Jizang, the leading thinker of the Three Treatise school of Buddhism in China, with regard to the word “Middle,” stated: “Middle means that which is true, Middle means that which is correct.”

Tiantai, founder of the influential Tiantai school of Buddhism in China, discussed the concept of the Middle Way in terms of the so-called “three truths.” The first two are the truth of emptiness or non-substantiality, the inner reality of human beings and all other phenomena, and the truth of temporary existence, the aspect of phenomena in their temporal or transient manifestations. The third truth, that of the Middle Way, while embracing both these truths of inner reality and temporal existence, represents an unchanging principle, a true and correct view ultimately arrived at through sublation of the two preceding truths and embracing both of them. This is the Middle Way.

I recall in this connection a work of calligraphy that I was given by Dr. Jao Tsung-I two years ago, which reads *Zhongyong Zhi Zhonghe* (*The Doctrine of the Mean Leads to Equilibrium and Harmony*). The concept of moderation as expressed in the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean, which from early times runs throughout Chinese thought, without a doubt is basically very similar as a way of thinking to the Buddhist Middle Way. Both refer to the virtue of moderation in human behavior.

Regarding the *Zhongyong* or “Doctrine of the Mean,” one of the *Four Books* of Confucianism, a commentary explains the two Chinese characters of the book title as follows: “Being without inclination to either side is called *zhong*; admitting of no change is called *yong*.” The correct

course to be followed by all under heaven, which deviates neither to one side or the other, is designated as *zhong*. And the fixed principle regulating all under heaven, which is unchanging in nature, is designated as *yong*. You can find this passage in the book itself: “While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of harmony. This equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and this harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue.”

That is, the state of equilibrium, the Mean or Middle Way, is the source or “great root” of the inner world that exists before the emotions of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy come forth, one that inclines neither to one side or the other. The state of equilibrium becomes manifest as a “universal path” that acts upon and regulates human activities, resulting in a state of harmony.

Comparing this with Tiantai’s doctrine of the three truths, we see that the concept of equilibrium or the mean represents a fundamental and eternal principle governing all the myriad phenomena of the universe. In the “Doctrine of the Mean,” this principle of the inner world becomes manifest and finds its expression in the regulation and harmonizing of human activities.

In Tiantai’s teaching, which is based on Buddhist philosophy, the eternal principle of the Middle Way emerges from the state of emptiness or non-substantiality and becomes manifest in the phenomenal world of temporary existence. Maintaining a state of balance or equilibrium that does not go to one extreme or another, it then acts to guide all beings and phenomena into the true and correct path, which is the Middle Way.

This concept of the virtue of moderation, the Middle Way, the Doctrine of the Mean, unites both the inner world of truth and the outer world of manifest existence of human beings and all other phenomena, and through a process of sublation, makes it possible for people to live in a state of balance or regulation, the true way of life for human beings.

In our present age, this concept of the Middle Way or the Doctrine of the Mean can be used to correct the overemphasis placed upon the material culture of the West and bring it into harmony or equilibrium with the spiritual culture of the Eastern world, thus achieving a correct and truly Middle Way. Through a process of sublation, the two, East and West, can be fused to produce a new culture of humanity as a whole, one that, based upon a sense of balance or moderation, represents a fusion of the wisdom of both.

In the concluding sessions of my dialogue with Dr. Arnold Toynbee, the British historian, I asked him if he had any advice for human beings of the twenty-first century. He replied in the following fashion. In the twentieth century, he believed, human beings had become unduly infatuated with the power of technology. But technological advancement can lead to pollution of the environment and even bring about the self-destruction of the human race. People must look within themselves and acquire the wisdom needed to control their desires. To do that, they must guard against both extreme self-indulgence and extreme asceticism and learn to walk a middle path. He said he believed that that was the direction to be taken by human beings of the twenty-first century.

It is my sincere hope that this symposium, through its philosophical dialogues among Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, will, by bringing into sharper focus the wisdom of Eastern culture, help to make clear the initial steps in the proper path that human beings should follow. I would like to conclude my message by expressing my sincere and heartfelt prayers for the health and well being of the scholars from many different institutions who have come together for this occasion.