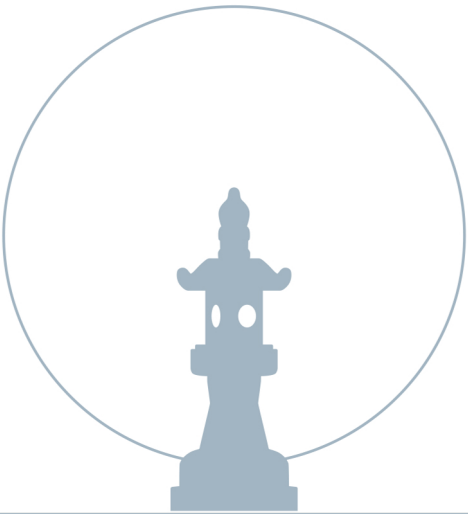
静心学堂 丛书
The Mindful Peace Academy Collection
中英双语 Chinese-English Edition

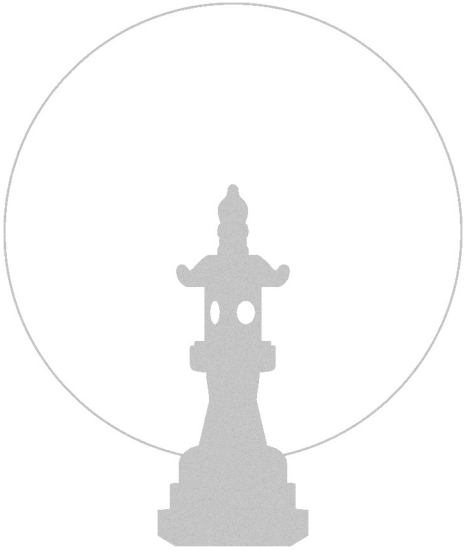
传承国学，为现代人安身立命

Carrying Forward Classical Chinese Wisdom to Bring Peace and Purpose to Modern Life

济群法师 著
Master Jiqun



大千出版社



【静心学堂丛书】

文化篇

人生篇

社会篇

信仰篇

实践篇



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随喜国学会骨干义工长期以来为传承、传播国学所做的努力。我们这个国学会的定位，是以传承、传播中华优秀传统文化为使命。作为中国人，我们的传承来自两方面：一是血统的传承，身体发肤，受之父母，由此形成生命的物质层面；一是道统的传承，中国是四大文明古国之一，有着悠久的历史、深厚的传统、璀璨的文化，由此造就国人的精神生活、人格和生命品质。所以，我们不仅要有中国人的外在形象，更要具备相应的精神内涵。

不少海外华人担心自己的孩子成为香蕉人，事实上，很多孩子已然如此：皮肤是黄的，东方的；内核是白的，西方的。即便我们生活在中国，如果不能传

承优秀传统文化，同样会缺乏应有内核，成为徒有其表的中国人。

身处物质文明高度发达的今天，整个社会都在推动我们向外寻找幸福、价值和依赖。但当我们全身心投入其中时，却发现，所依赖的外在世界充满变数，越来越不确定，从而引发抑郁、焦虑、无意义感等心理问题。在这样的背景下，特别需要找到人生的意义和价值。究竟是依外在物质安身立命，还是从生命内在安身立命？如果不解决这个问题，是不容易过好的。

一、现代文明的困境

在全世界
被消费主义席卷的今天
保持清醒格外重要
否则就会落入盲目消费的陷阱
浪费金钱
浪费为赚钱付出的时间和生命

现代文明是在人本主义思潮下发展起来的，由文艺复兴、启蒙运动，推动了文化、艺术、哲学、科学的全面发展，同时也催生了资本主义制度。在私有制和市场经济的双重刺激下，工具理性和消费主义大行其道。前者代表了高效生产，企业为了获取更多利润，必须提高效率，扩大产量。相应地，要有永续消费与之匹配，才能消化不断被生产出来的各类物资。简单地说，有需要，就满足需要；没需要，就制造需要。

1．消费主义的特点

我们过去的消费，主要来自衣食住行等生活所需。但现在的很多消费，往往和身份挂钩。比如开什么车，在什么区域买房，代表你的社会阶层；用什么型号的手机，喝什么级别的咖啡，体现你的生活品位。这就把商品从使用价值转为符号价值，人为制造等级。似乎你有什么消费能力，就会成为什么阶层的人。这一观念又会导致身份认同的危机，使人为了实现阶级跃升，产生不必要的消费。

在交通不便的过去，人们基本以本土消费为主，这在一定程度上限制了消费欲。而在今天，消费异地甚至异国的商品，不过是点点手机而已。在商家构建的消费矩阵中，购物的节日化、网络直播的白热化，时刻都在刺激人们的冲动。如“618”“双 11”等，把购物变成一次次集体狂欢，使许多人迷失在消费浪潮中。此外，降价、打折的诱惑，广告、主播的话术，更会让人不由自主地买单，囤积很多暂时还不需要、甚至根本就不需要的物品。

电子产品的快速迭代，也制造了大量需求。比如手机，过去是用坏了才会更换，而现在每年甚至几个月就推出新款。虽然老款还能用，也未必比新款质量差，却因为厂商们的利益，被计划性过时了。对厂商们来说，如果一个手机用上五年、十年的话，产品就会过剩，也无须制造那么多。但为了增长利润，又必须生产更多，所以他们会通过种种方式，人为地制造不满足感，让你觉得，不跟上潮流就落伍了。你以为在给自己买单，其实也在为厂商的利润买单。

又如信贷绑架，是通过降低门槛，让人提前消费。现在很多人贷款买房买车，因为欠债，就要努力工作，赚钱还贷。工作后继续消费，消费后又必须工作，结果把自己困在工作、消费的轮回中，不得不成为房奴、车奴。

大平台的精准推送，则是制造信息茧房、算法围城，将人裹挟其中，无法逃脱。你喜欢什么，平台就会不断给你推送什么。有些东西本是可买可不买的，但天天看到相关的消费场景，就挡不住诱惑，觉得非买不可了。

这些商业模式，使人在向外追逐的过程中迷失了自己，甚至无暇思考，这些消费究竟是为了什么？又给自己带来了什么？对此，西方哲学家也有很多反思。比如马克斯·韦伯提出工具理性和价值理性，认为现代商业追求利益最大化，在逐利过程中，忽略了价值理性。如果大家只是为了赚钱，不去考虑这些行为对社会道德、生态环境的影响，不去考虑地球的未来，将给人类带来难以承受的后果。早在两千年前，中国古人就提出义利之辩，只有处理好道德和利益的关系，才能保持平衡，永续发展。

2．现代文明的困境

随着科技的发展、生产力的提升，人们的物质条件不知比过去富足了多少，但幸福感并没有因此提升，反而出现了种种问题，主要体现在以下几点。一是抑郁症等心理疾病患者逐年增多，不论在发达国家还是发展中国家，都很普遍。二是价值空洞，只求眼前经济效益，无视道德价值，更不知人生终极意义。三是

内卷严重，许多行业都要面对激烈竞争，甚至是恶性竞争，必须加倍努力，才能生存和发展。四是贫富悬殊，据说全世界 1% 的富豪，却占有了 45% 的财富。西方人本主义原本要建立一个平等、自由的社会，却因为资本主义盛行，片面追求经济发展，造就了贫富悬殊的阶层差异。而理想中的自由，也因为陷入理性铁笼，不能自已。五是人际关系异化，许多美好的人际关系，因为染上商业色彩，就会变成利益关系。而单纯的亲情、爱情、友情，也会因为利益关系而变味。六是生态危机，包括对地球资源无节制的开发，生产、消费过程中制造的污染和垃圾，使空气、土地、水源等遭受一系列破坏。近年来，极端气候不断刷新历史极值，地震、洪水等灾害频频发生。相信大家对这些问题都不陌生，因为其中有些是切身感受到的。即使那些没有发生在自己身边的，也会从媒体看到大量报道。

从佛法角度来说，所有这些现象都不是偶然的，而是有它的缘起。我们制造什么样的因缘，就会招感什么样的生活和环境。现在政府提倡科学的发展观，

这点特别重要。虽然我们生活在不同地区，但离不开整个地球的生态系统。如果把系统破坏了，我们又何以为家？如何解决困境？需要看清以下几个问题。

首先，是存在与拥有。我常说：你是什么，比你拥有什么更重要。为什么总提这一点？因为现代人对拥有的关注，远远大于“我是什么”。社会考量一个人的成功，也主要基于物质。如福布斯、胡润百富等排行榜，都是通过财富多少来排名。在这一导向下，人们把笑贫不笑娼视为常态，觉得赚钱才是硬道理，拥有才是真本领。与此相比，道德值多少钱？智慧值多少钱？这就使得大家对内在品质越来越不当回事。到底你是什么重要，还是拥有什么重要？这是我们必须认真思考的。

其次，是真实需求和虚假需求。生活的真实需求是有限的，并没有多少，但虚假需求是无限的，再多都可以制造。想一想我们买的东西，是真正需要吃、需要用的，还是在平台和广告刺激下产生的需求？如果不具备辨别的智慧，分不清什么是真实需求，什么是虚假需求，就会不停地买买买、忙忙忙，把生命消

耗在不必要的购买中。

第三，是真实身份和虚假身份。前面说到，现代人会把消费和身份联系起来，通过消费来显身份，立人设。其实，不管什么身份，首先是人，要从人自身来考虑问题，而不是被社会制造或自己臆想的虚假身份捆绑，觉得必须如何才符合“我的身份”，结果为了维持一个幻象虚度人生。

在全世界被消费主义席卷的今天，保持清醒格外重要，否则就会落入盲目消费的陷阱，浪费金钱，浪费为赚钱付出的时间和生命。

二、心与物，孰轻孰重

心虽有无明、烦恼
但也有自我拯救的能力
而且这个能力是我们本自具足的
关键是认识它，开启它
这就必须重新估量价值
正确认识心和物的关系

认识到现代文明的问题，又该如何在这个时代健康地活着？需要传承东方智慧，重新审视世界。尼采在十九世纪提出：上帝死了，要重新估量一切的价值。事实上，我们今天同样面临这个问题。世界有两大组成，一是精神，一是物质。在东西方传统中，都很重视精神世界的建设。但随着科技的发展，人们在物化的道路上奋力前行，迷己逐物，又因逐物进一步迷失自己。心和物，究竟孰轻孰重？这是必须重新审视的。

1．从幸福层面审视

我曾讲过《心灵创造幸福》，为什么探讨这个话题？在社会发展过程中，我们经历了从贫穷到富有，从物质匮乏到极大丰富的转变，在座每个人都是见证者。当我们贫穷时，总以为有钱就能过上幸福生活。现在不少人确实富起来了，房子好几套，存款一辈子都用不完，是不是幸福了呢？其实未必。更有甚者，烦恼越来越多，心理问题越来越多，也越来越感觉不到幸福。

我们不否认幸福和物质有关，如果没吃没喝，那也不行。但满足基本生存需求后，幸福的关键，更多是取决于心态。儒家讲孔颜乐处，孔子和颜回的快乐在哪里？从孔子自述的“饭疏食，饮水，曲肱而枕之，乐亦在其中矣”，以及他赞叹颜回的“一箪食，一瓢饮，在陋巷，人不堪其忧，回也不改其乐”可以看出，这种快乐是来自精神的富足，并不会因为生活清贫而减少。

佛教也有很多类似记载，禅者们在水边林下过着

极其简朴的生活，却不觉得任何匮乏，还留下“一池荷叶衣无尽，数树松花食有余”的动人诗句。因为他们已体认生命内在的圆满，不论什么条件下都能安然自处。

相反，现代人虽然拥有很多物质，甚至亿万身家，却由于内心匮乏，依然不觉得满足，依然需要通过购买、囤积来增加安全感，依然会有抑郁、焦虑等心理问题。可见，心才是幸福的根源，物质只是辅助条件。

2．从社会认可审视

近几十年来，人们心中羡慕的，往往是那些有钱有权者。重视事业的成功、财富的拥有，成为社会大众的价值取向。但回顾东西方历史，能够流芳千古、影响至今的，是些什么样的人？不论中国的老子、孔子，还是印度的佛陀、古希腊的哲人，都是因为有道德，有智慧，有慈悲，才能在千百年来，不断被人学习、效仿、追随。儒家以立德、立功、立言为三不朽的人生，最高是道德成就，其次是利益社会，第三是

著书立说，这些才是有长久价值的。

所以，我们要从历史的眼光，而不是当下的现象，看待社会的尊重和认可。从个体生命来说，拥有道德、智慧、慈悲，意义远远大于财富。因为财富只有暂时的使用价值，随时可能失去，但道德、智慧、慈悲能使我们改变心态，提升生命品质。不仅当下受用，还能生生世世从中获益。

3．从心物关系审视

生活在这个世界，必须拥有基本的物质条件，这对每个人非常现实。那么，心和物到底是什么关系？心是物质的产物，抑或，物质是心的影像？这是人们关心了千百年的哲学问题。

从佛法角度看，心才是一切的源头，心的本质就是宇宙的本质。但我们所能看到的世界，是取决于自己的认知系统。现代科学发现，我们所能观察、探测到的物质世界，不到宇宙总质能的 5%，还有超过 95% 属于不可见的暗物质和暗能量。这是很难想象的，

同时也说明，相比无限的心，我们的认知系统极其狭隘，所见极其有限。

不仅如此，它还会产生偏差。大家有没有戴过VR眼镜？戴上后，看到的一切都很逼真。当眼前显现为悬崖时，即使我们明知不是，也不敢往前迈步，因为心已被VR传递的错误信息左右。五蕴生命体，就是我们与生俱来的VR系统。我们以为，世界就是自己看到的这样，其实那是你的VR系统所决定。可能有人会问：既然如此，为什么我们看到的差不多？因为我们的VR系统都由人道的业力而成，有一定共性。如果换上猫狗的VR系统，就是猫狗的世界了。

人本主义思潮倡导的理性，就是让人在认识世界的过程中保有自主性，保有判断、批判的精神，这点非常重要。但很多时候，人面对平台、手机推送的海量资讯时，会不知不觉地迷失其中。如何在物欲横流的世界，保持内心的清醒，保持生命的自主权？如果没有修行，是很难做到的。

佛法告诉我们，心虽有无明、烦恼，但也有自我拯救的能力，而且这个能力是我们本自具足的，关键

是认识它，开启它。这就必须重新估量价值，正确认识心和物的关系。政府也在倡导两个文明建设，让我们在提高物质文明的同时，积极建设精神文明。这种建设离不开对中华优秀传统文化的传承、传播。

三、传承东方智慧
重建人本精神

佛法在提出道德要求的同时
对生命现象、心和世界的关系
作了深入剖析
让我们知道
践行道德并不是社会或外部的要求
而是生命自身的需要

西方重视人本思想，要发扬人的理性、自由、平等，让人能在这个世界做自己的主人。中国儒家也属于人本思想，是立足于学以成人的道德哲学。首先要学做合格的人，成为具备仁义礼智信、温良恭俭让的仁人君子，进而成贤成圣。我们以前觉得，这些观念在今天似乎有点过时，有点迂腐。但想一想，如果一个人能具备爱人如己、行事公正、举止规范、明辨是非、言行一致的道德品质，及温和、善良、谦恭、节制、礼让的行为修养，是不是很美好？我们是不是希望身边有这样的人？

1．修身为本，造福社会

社会是由无数个体组成的，如果人人身心健康，社会自然和谐安定。儒家《大学》的哲学思想，就是以修身为本，进而齐家、治国、平天下。不论做什么，承担什么样的社会责任，前提就是修身。靠什么修身？《论语》中，是通过孔子的言传身教，引导我们怎么做人。《大学》中，则提出正心、诚意、格物、致知，所谓“欲修其身者，先正其心；欲正其心者，先诚其意；欲诚其意者，先致其知；致知在格物”。

从佛法角度看，正心类似于正知。每个人都有自身的认知模型，包括错误观念、好恶情绪等，这些都会让人产生偏执，无法客观。正心是要让心始终保有清明，不带情绪，这样才能客观看待并处理一切问题。

怎么才能正心？必须诚意，即真诚、不欺人，也不自欺。儒家重视慎独，哪怕一个人独处时，也要谨言慎行，不放松自我要求。在我们的态度模式中，强调真诚、认真、老实，说的也是这个道理。

怎么做到诚意？必须格物、致知。在朱熹理学和

阳明心学中，对格物的理解有些不同。朱熹理学认为物即理，格物就是在物上去格，通过研究外物总结规律，所谓“即物穷理”。而阳明心学认为心即理，格物就是端正心念，格出内心的污垢、偏执、烦恼，在物上是格不动的。其实他们说得都对，因为物的背后就是理，心的背后也是理。只是在心上格相对容易，在物上格，必须有空性见，看到一切现象只是因缘假相，本质是无自性的。就能像云彩那样，既能与虚空共存，又不妨碍虚空。如果没有缘起的智慧，把一切看得实实在在，桌子就是桌子，竹子就是竹子，硬要把它空掉，确实是格不通的。所以阳明先生觉得朱熹思路不对，就从心上去格。

阳明先生讲的致知，就是致良知。正心、诚意、格物，都是为了开启内在良知，然后带着良知去生活，去做事。这也体现了儒家与佛法的融合，是阳明哲学的核心思想。关键在于，如何才能开启良知？王阳明在龙场悟道，被尊为圣人，但通过学习阳明哲学悟道的有几个？因为悟道要有操作方法，这点正是佛法的长处所在。我们看《景德传灯录》等典籍记载，开悟

的祖师比比皆是。

正心、诚意、格物、致知，又是修身的前提。在今天这个时代，因为缺乏尊崇道德的大环境，单纯的道德教条并没有多少力量。这就必须有相应的心理基础，才能自我驱动，自觉修身。然后带着这样的人格，再去齐家、治国、平天下，从完善个人道德，进一步造福社会。

从做人到做事，是中国传统文化的理路。一个人能够修身，才能在做事过程中保有做人的道德。一方面，在追求道德、完善人格的目标下做人做事；另一方面，做人做事又服务于追求道德、完善人格。如果没有这个基础，在做事过程中，往往会把利益当作目的，追求利益的最大化。当逐利和做人产生冲突时，也会毫无顾忌地见利忘义。而在大众生活紧密联系的今天，这么做的结果，就是在伤害他人的同时，使自己也成为受害者。

2．从心净到国土净

在做人做事的问题上，佛法和儒家思想有相通之处，所以传入中国后，能和本土文化水乳交融。儒家思想中，修身、立德代表个人修养，齐家、治国、平天下和立功、立言代表社会责任，提倡从做人到做事，从独善其身到兼济天下。而佛教是以自觉觉他、自利利他为目标。尤其是大乘佛教，特别强调发菩提心，要像佛菩萨那样，以利益众生为使命，不仅自己解脱，还愿带领众生共同解脱。地藏菩萨的“我不入地狱，谁入地狱”，观音菩萨的“千手千眼，大慈大悲”“千处祈求千处应，苦海常作渡人舟”，充分体现了利他的愿心和实践。

不论在个人修行还是利他实践上，佛法都可以弥补中国文化的不足。因为佛法是人生的大智慧，在提出道德要求的同时，对生命现象、心和世界的关系作了深入剖析，让我们知道，践行道德并不是社会或外部的要求，而是生命自身的需要。如果我们希望提升自己，就要遵循道德，完善道德。

佛法认为，生命有两个层面。有妄心，有真心；有烦恼，有菩提；有迷惑，有觉醒，所以首先要直面生命的弱点。西方重视法律，正是针对人性弱点制定的，以此阻止这些弱点对自己和他人的伤害。如果不能解决人性弱点，道德也可能被利用。我曾和哲学家周国平讨论佛教和西方人本主义思想的异同。西方人本主义提倡个性解放，佛教也是人本主义，讲的是个人解脱。解放和解脱看似相通，不同在于，西方人本主义是对中世纪封建神权的反抗，要把人从宗教的压抑中解放出来，在带来文艺复兴、启蒙运动及现代文明的同时，也把人性中的负面因素放了出来。只要不伤害他人，不违背法律，做什么都是被允许的。这就使得不少人因为缺乏约束而颓废、沉沦、自毁。

佛教所说的解脱，是基于对人心人性的充分了解，摆脱不良因素，开启良性潜质。佛教有句话叫“勤修戒定慧，息灭贪嗔痴”，在做人的修行上，提供了一套切实可行的方法。当我们通过持戒、修定，开启内在觉性，就能彻底摆脱无明烦恼，摆脱无始以来的劣根性。有了这个基础，就能进一步迈向觉醒、解脱。

在利他方面，现在不少人热心慈善，做起来却后继乏力。复旦大学心理学系曾面向慈善工作者，举办“让爱心更有力量”为主题的论坛，请我做了演讲，并和心理学教授们展开对话。在做慈善的过程中，有些受助者素质欠佳，虽然得到帮助，却没有感恩心；也有人做慈善的动机不纯，就会患得患失。怎么看待这些问题？必须明确慈善的定位。我的定义是——慈善是慈悲心的修行。

首先要对社会大众有一份关爱和慈悲，带着爱和慈悲做事，才能称为慈善。从佛法角度看，同样做一件好事，可能成就慈悲，也可能成就我执，区别就在于用心。怎么才能让慈善成为利他和慈悲的修行？既要善用其心，也要有良好的机制来支持。佛法就为我们构建了这样一套方法。

我在前两年讲了《开启正念与慈悲大爱》，这是自利和利他的两个关键。我们想要自利，要走向觉醒，必须具足正念，否则就无法开发觉性；我们想要利他，要帮助众生，必须具足慈悲，不是做点好事就行了。在自身成长和人格建设上，佛法让我们从心理层面建

立修行，而不只是靠外在道德来约束，否则就会缺乏内驱力。

国学包含儒释道三家，具有互补作用。作为国学的传承者，我们都需要去学习，才能重塑文化血统，充实精神生活，建立精神追求，进一步，为服务社会提供有效支持。

四、用禅的智慧返璞归真

禅的智慧
可以帮助我们找回自己
如果看到自己本来就是圆满的
还会有失去的恐惧吗
还会在向外寻找依赖的过程中
不能自主吗

《楞严经》说：“一切众生从无始来迷己为物，失于本心，为物所转。”在向外追逐的过程中，我们不断前行，结果把自己给丢了。西方也有句谚语，叫作“让灵魂跟上脚步”。怎么才能在物欲横流的社会，安住本心，保持心的自主？关于这个问题，西方人文主义思想也在吸收东方智慧，反思现代文明带来的问题，提出工具理性和价值理性的平衡。此外，极简主义风格也深受禅的启发，以简化空间、器物、生活为手段，使人专注内心的真实需求。

我们知道，现在是末法时代。为什么这么说？所谓末法，并不是没有法。从学习经教的角度看，现代人阅读经文、查找资料，比过去方便百千万倍。打开

网络，随时可以聆听善知识说法。这都是以前无法想象的。虽然有了这么多便利，但修行并不容易，反而比以往更难。因为社会有太多的诱惑，环境有太多的干扰，让心难以平静。

如何在喧嚣的世界保持自主？需要传承禅的智慧。在中国传统文化中，佛法和本土的儒、道二家一起，为国人正确看待世界、建立精神追求，起到了不可替代的重要作用。因为儒家积极入世，在宦海沉浮中，特别需要保有超然的心态，否则就会在得失成败中备受打击。学习佛法智慧，就能从容面对世事变幻，进退安然。所以《金刚经》《心经》《维摩诘经》《六祖坛经》等佛典，成为很多文人的必读典籍。苏东坡就是佛儒兼修的典型代表，他的仕途并不顺利，但生活一直过得有滋有味。因为他和禅者多有往来，自己也参禅修行，能以佛法智慧保持从容、稳定的心态，这种精神在今天尤其重要。对现代人来说，禅的智慧有以下几方面作用。

1．看清“我是谁”

禅宗有个话头，是追究“父母未生前本来面目”，追究“我是谁”。究竟什么代表“我”？如果认为青春美貌代表“我”，可青春美貌转瞬即逝；认为财富代表“我”，可财富生不带来，死不带去；认为身体代表“我”，可这个身体几十年后就一把火烧掉了……

《楞严经》有句话，叫作“诸可还者，自然非汝，不汝还者，非汝而谁”。因为“我”是代表生命最本质的存在，在寻找生命真相，探究“我是谁”的过程中，会不断解构对拥有的执著。凡是可以被解构的，都不是真正的“我”，不过是自己或社会设定的身份标签。经历重重解构，那个不能被解构的，才是“我”的本来面目。

禅就是帮助我们揭穿虚假的身份，直达本质。

2．回归简朴的生活

为什么我们的生活需要那么多东西？事实上，其中很多并不是生活的需要，而是内心制造的需要。现代人觉得没手机不行，没电脑不行，没汽车不行，可这些东西不但古代没有，仅仅三十年前还没有普及。那时候，我们根本不知道生活中还有这些需要，同样过得挺好。

可见，需要什么，其实和内心的需求有关。禅的智慧就是帮助我们摆脱虚假的需求，体会内在的富足。因为生命本来就是圆满的，只要内心没有匮乏，不去制造需求，就不会觉得缺了什么不行。禅者们过着简单朴素的生活，却因为没有闲事挂心头，随时都是人间好时节，可以安享春花秋月、夏风冬雪的美好。

就像我们很多信众，之前也会在意穿着打扮、名牌包包，但学佛后，大家穿得差不多，百来块、几十块就能解决。过去会觉得：我穿成这样，别人会怎么看？每天都得想着如何穿搭，现在却根本不会在意这些。因为生命的重心已经改变，需求也随之改变。可见，当我们不再制造需求时，这些需求就不存在了。

3．回归本心，自我疗愈

相当一段时间，“被控”这个词非常流行，如手机控、游戏控等等。所谓被控，就是身不由己，消费也是同样。不少人热衷消费，毫无节制，是想通过消费来缓解压力，或作为心理补偿，感觉干得那么辛苦，买点东西是对自己的犒劳。如果不对此加以审视和控制，就会在内心形成工作、消费、再工作、再消费的串习。

生命之所以轮回，就是因为我们一直向外追逐，看不清生命的真实需求。尤其是今天，从厂家到商家，从平台到主播，都在费尽心机地制造诱惑，鼓动欲望，让人更加身不由己。

禅修最重要的作用，就是帮助我们开启内在觉知，回归本心，让生命能够自觉、自主。心有制造各种问题的能力，也有自我拯救、自我疗愈的能力。开启觉知，便是帮助我们获得这种能力，不再被心理问题困扰。

4．让心自主

我们的心本具自主能力，这种能力就是觉知。我们构建的正念禅修中，初级是培养专注，开启觉知。中级是拓展觉知，在生活中随时保持觉知。这样的话，所有的念头、影像都会在觉知中被化解，心就不会陷入念头，跟着惯性跑。高级是依空性正见，解除二元执著。心本身具备这些能力，但必须通过禅修来开启。所以说，正念和觉知是让我们在物欲洪流中保持自主的有效方法。

我们的选佛场有个牌匾，叫“本来面目”。什么是我们的本来面目？现在很多人活在虚假的身份中，并执著于此。有执著，就会有失去的恐惧，由此带来不确定感。禅的智慧可以帮助我们找回自己。如果看到自己本来就是圆满的，具足一切，还会有失去的恐惧吗？还会在向外寻找依赖的过程中不能自主吗？

5．建立心生活

我们现在构建的禅意生活，是以心灵为中心。很多人讲生活禅，讲禅茶一味，很容易停留在一个说法。如何让生活和禅真正发生关联？走路怎么和禅关联？吃饭怎么和禅关联？喝茶怎么和禅关联？

为此，我们通过各种项目，帮助大家在走路、吃饭、喝茶时，把禅带进去，建立正确的用心方式。比如走路时，每一步都要保持觉知，把心带回当下，只有当下。吃饭、喝茶，乃至行住坐卧的一切时、一切处，同样要带着觉知。当我们安住当下，保持觉知，就能从物欲中跳出来，不再落入西方哲学家所说的理性铁笼，即理性为商业社会构建的铁笼。

我们总是忘记已经拥有的，追求自己没有的，就会不断忙碌，无休无止。通过传承禅的智慧，构建一种以心灵为中心的生活，在今天特别需要。关于禅在当代的运用，我们重点推出了禅意生活项目，包括对建筑空间、生活用品、生活方式的重新设计。甘露别院就是禅意生活的完整体现，立足于这样的生活，可以帮助我们安顿身心。

五、为现代人安顿身心

大家不是为利益走到一起
而是立足于文化学习
和心性提升
这种关系非常美好
是当今社会的一股清流

我们的东方静心文化研究所研发了很多项目，如正念球、八段锦、按导、健康大循环等养生项目，还有素食、禅茶、正念咖啡等生活项目。这些都是根据现代人的实际需求量身打造的，推出后就成为爆款。这是我们现成的优势，不需要再去开发。希望大家发心学习，这也是让国学落地运用和践行菩萨道的方便。作为国学会，我们要以项目为中心，创造条件，从总会到各分会，培养更多项目人才，以此服务社会。

1．传承国学，弘扬禅意生活

现在不少地方政府重视社区建设，提供了各类场所。如何让这些场所服务民众？需要有实际内容。我们这些项目的定位，首先是有益身心健康，然后是有品质的禅意生活，最终是走向觉醒。其中，前两部分没有任何宗教性，非常适合服务社会，与民众结缘。近年来，我们已带着这些项目走进海内外的展会、学校、企业、社团，在各地深受欢迎。

最近，马来西亚新纪元大学为我们设立了东方静心文化研究中心，可以招收硕士、博士。可见，不管在海内外，以传承东方智慧服务社会，都是时代的刚需。所以我们也鼓励大家扬帆出海，灯灯相续，让中华优秀传统文化走向世界，造福人类。政府提出文化强国，因为在世界的地位不只是靠经济，文化的影响才更持久。

去年以来，北美、欧洲、大洋洲、亚洲、非洲已成立几十个静心小院和学堂，势头正好，希望更多同学参与其中。我们的出海方式有两种，一是项目支持，

以项目组的方式参与；一是直接创业，自己组团到一个城市去做小院或学堂，以静心文化服务海外华人，进一步，让外国人领略东方文化的魅力。

2024 年，我们在意大利米兰参加国际设计周，做了七天茶会，百分之八九十的体验者都是意大利人。现在，伦敦、巴黎、纽约、墨尔本、奥克兰等城市都在做茶会。一方面，茶会能体现东方美学和传统文化，体验感很好；另一方面，茶会又是安心的方便，是当今大众特别需要的。

2．推广安心茶室，构建和谐家庭

同时，也希望国学会能致力于安心茶室的推广。儒家讲的“齐家”，就是处理好家庭关系。中国传统文化中，特别重视“家”这个单元。但现在的家，因为缺少文化的传承和连接，每个人都活在自我感觉中，家人之间的关系越来越疏离。

在家中建立安心茶室，就能和家人一起体验禅茶，学习儒释道典籍，如《论语》《大学》《中庸》《老子》

《静心学堂丛书》等。此外，每个人还有同学、同事、亲戚、朋友，如果定期举办茶会，把这些人邀约过来，一起读书、体验正念球，或吃一顿素菜，一定会受到欢迎，同时也能为自己建立良好的生态圈。因为大家不是为利益走到一起，而是立足于文化学习和心性提升，这种关系非常美好，是当今社会的一股清流。

希望大家共同努力，让更多人通过传承传统文化，真正地修身、齐家，为社会安定、世界和平作出贡献。





Carrying Forward Classical Chinese Wisdom to Bring Peace and Purpose to Modern Life

Master Jiqun

Translated by MPI Translation Center

A Lecture for the Association for
the Application of Classical Chinese Culture
May 2025

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I would like to rejoice in the dedicated efforts of the volunteers of the Association for the Application of Classical Chinese Culture in inheriting and promoting traditional Chinese culture. The Association is committed to this very mission: carrying forward the valuable traditions of Chinese culture. As Chinese, our inheritance stems from two aspects: one is the bloodline, which is our physical traits inherited from our parents, forming our material bodies; the other is the moral tradition. As one of the Four Great Ancient Civilizations, China boasts a long history and rich cultural heritage, which shape our spiritual life, character, and quality of

life. Therefore, it is not enough to just possess a Chinese-looking appearance; we should also embody the spiritual heritage of Chinese culture.

Many overseas Chinese are concerned that their children may grow up disconnected from Chinese cultural roots. But many children already do. They inherit the skin color from the East, but inside, they possess a completely Westernized mentality. However, if we fail to carry forward the valuable Chinese culture, despite living in China, we similarly lack the essential traits and are Chinese in appearance only.

As material life reaches new heights, society pressures us to seek happiness, meaning, and security from the external world. However, when we immerse ourselves in this pursuit, we realize that the external world we depend on is increasingly uncertain—causing many to feel anxious, depressed, or devoid of meaning. In such times, we must ask ourselves where life's true peace and purpose lie—in external material conditions, or in the

inner life itself? Without a proper answer to this question, it is impossible for us to live a meaningful and fulfilling life.

I

The Dilemma of Modern Civilization

Modern civilization has developed under the influence of humanism. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment advanced culture, art, philosophy, and science, while also giving rise to the capitalist system. Under the dual forces of private ownership and the market economy, instrumental rationality and consumerism have become dominant trends in society. Instrumental rationality emphasizes high efficiency, where businesses strive to expand output to maximize profits. Consumerism ensures that, to absorb the ever-growing supply, demand must keep pace. Simply put: when there's a need, we meet it; when there isn't, we

create one.

1. Characteristics of Consumerism

In the past, our consumption was rather simple, mainly to fulfill basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, and transportation. However, much of today's consumption is linked to identity. For example, the type of car we drive and the neighborhood we live in now signify our social class; the model of phone we use and the grade of coffee we drink now reflect our lifestyle and taste. Goods have gone from functional to symbolic, creating artificial hierarchies. Our social class has also shifted to be highly dependent on consumption abilities. This notion can lead to identity crisis, causing individuals to engage in unnecessary consumption to achieve upward mobility.

In the past, due to inconvenient transportation, people primarily engaged in local consumption. This, to some extent, limited their desire to consume. However, today, purchasing goods from distant places or even from other

countries is just a few taps away on a smartphone. By turning shopping into festivals and pushing intense, non-stop live streaming, businesses keep consumers in a cycle of impulse-driven consumption. Events like "618" and "Double 11" turned shopping into a collective frenzy, leaving many lost in a tide of consumption. Additionally, the temptations of sales and promotions, plus the persuasive language used by advertisements and influencers, drive people to make irrational purchases, hoarding things they don't need now—and perhaps never will.

The rapid upgrades of electronic devices have also created significant demand. Take phones, for example—people used to replace them only when they broke. Now, new models are released every year, sometimes even every few months. Although older models still work and may not be any worse in quality, they're rendered obsolete by design, all for the sake of profit. From a manufacturer's perspective, a phone that lasts five or ten years means fewer sales and less profit; but to maintain profit growth, they have to keep producing more. Therefore, they

intentionally create a sense of dissatisfaction, making you feel left behind if you don't keep up with the trends. You think you're buying for yourself—but in reality, you're also footing the bill for the company's profits.

Another example is credit entrapment, which lowers the borrowing threshold and encourages people to spend in advance. Nowadays, many people take out loans to buy houses and cars, which puts them in debt. To repay these loans, they must work hard to earn money. At the same time, their consumption doesn't stop. So they must keep working—trapping themselves in a cycle of work and spending. In the end, they become slaves to their mortgages and car loans.

Moreover, the precise recommendations of major digital platforms trap consumers in an information cocoon and an algorithmic fortress, making it nearly impossible to escape. Whatever you like, the platform will keep feeding you more of it. Some items may not be necessary at all, but when you're constantly surrounded by related

advertisements, it's hard to resist the temptation—and you start to believe the purchase is essential.

Such business models are causing people to lose themselves in the endless pursuit of external desires, leaving little time to contemplate what their consumption is really for—or what it actually brings them. Western philosophers have reflected on this issue. For example, Max Weber proposed the concepts of instrumental rationality and value rationality. He argued that modern businesses prioritize maximizing profit through instrumental rationality, while neglecting value rationality in the process. Unbearable consequences await humanity if we care only for profit while turning a blind eye to ethics, the environment, and the world's future. Two thousand years ago, ancient Chinese were already thinking about the relationship between morality and profit, suggesting that only by balancing the two can we achieve sustainable development.

2. The Dilemma of Modern Civilization

As technology advances and productivity improves, people now enjoy far better material conditions than ever before. However, people are not becoming happier; instead, various problems have arisen, especially in the following areas:

First, there is an increasing number of patients with mental illnesses. For instance, the number of people diagnosed with depression increases every year. This phenomenon is common in both developed and developing countries.

Second, there is a sense of emptiness among people. As people solely focus on pursuing immediate economic benefits while ignoring moral values, they are clueless about the ultimate meaning of life.

Third, excessive internal competition has become a serious problem. In many industries, individuals face intense—even cutthroat—rivalry, and must work twice

as hard just to survive and grow.

Fourth, there is an increasing wealth disparity. Allegedly, 1% of the world's population holds 45% of the world's total wealth. Humanism of Western philosophy initially intended to establish an equal and free society. However, the prevalence of capitalism and the excessive pursuit of economic growth have led to wealth disparity and social stratification. The ideal of freedom has become unachievable—confined in the iron cage of rationality.

Fifth, interpersonal relationships are becoming increasingly alienated. Many wholesome relationships have turned into interest-based connections under the influence of commercialization. Innocent, pure love in family, romantic relationship and friendship have turned sour when they are linked with self-benefits.

Sixth, there is an ecological crisis. The unrestrained exploitation of the earth's resources, along with the pollution and waste generated during production and

consumption, has caused widespread damage to the air, land, and water. In recent years, extreme weather has repeatedly broken historical records, and disasters such as earthquakes and floods have occurred with increasing frequency.

I believe we are all familiar with the issues above. We may have experienced them ourselves or have seen them reported in the media.

From the perspective of Buddhism, none of these phenomena are accidental—they arise from causes and conditions. The causes and conditions we create will lead to corresponding living conditions and environments. This is especially important today, as the government encourages having a "scientific outlook on development." Although we live in different parts of the world, we share the earth's ecosystem. If the system is ruined, where else can we call home? To resolve these dilemmas, we need to examine the following questions:

First, being versus having. As I often say: "Who you are is much more important than what you own." Why do I always emphasize this? Because modern people focus too much on their possessions rather than on "who they are." Our society tends to measure success primarily by material wealth. Rankings like Forbes and the Hurun Report rank individuals according to their net worth. Under this societal influence, people have begun to normalize the idea of "despising the poor rather than the immoral," believing that money-making is the ultimate truth and that accumulating possessions is the definition of success. Under this standard, how much are morality and wisdom worth? This leads to a growing neglect of inner qualities. Thus, we need to seriously reflect on which is more important— "who we are" or "what we possess."

Second, true needs versus false needs. The true needs of life are few, while false needs are limitless and ever-invented. Consider the products we buy: are they truly necessary, or are they merely desires created by social

media and advertisements? Without the wisdom to distinguish true needs from false ones, we will be stuck in an endless cycle of buying and earning, eventually exhausting our lives on unnecessary purchases.

Third, real identity versus false identity. As mentioned earlier, modern people often associate consumption with identity. We believe that what we purchase signifies our identity or status. But in the end, no matter our identity, we are human beings first. We should think from the perspective of our true selves, rather than being bound by the false identities created by society or our imaginations. These identities make us feel that we must act in certain ways to conform to "our identity," eventually wasting our lives living in an illusion.

In today's world swept by consumerism, it is extremely important to remain clear-headed. Otherwise, we risk falling into the trap of meaningless consumption—wasting not only money, but also the time and life we spend earning it.

II

Mind or Matter: Which Is More Important?

Realizing the problems with modern civilization, how can we live a healthy life in this era? We need to inherit Eastern wisdom and re-examine the world. In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche said that "God is dead," and called for a re-evaluation of all values. Today, we face a similar question. The world consists of two dimensions: the spiritual and the material. Traditional wisdom from both the East and the West emphasizes the importance of the spiritual world. However, with the advancement of technology, people are increasingly focused on material pursuits, losing themselves in the

process. Thus, we must ask ourselves: which is more important, the material or the spiritual? This is a crucial question.

1. From the Perspective of Happiness

I once gave a talk called "Happiness Comes from the Mind." Why did I choose to explore this topic? As society progressed, we have witnessed a shift from poverty to wealth, from material scarcity to abundance. Many of us were once convinced that financial security was the key to a happy life. Many people today have indeed become wealthy—owning several properties and having savings that could last a lifetime. The question arises: Are they truly happy? The answer is often no, with many experiencing an increase in personal troubles and mental health issues, and a growing sense of unhappiness.

We do not deny that happiness is related to material conditions—after all, without necessities like food and water, happiness is hardly possible. However, once our

basic survival needs are met, the key to happiness increasingly depends on our mindset. Confucianism speaks of the joy of Confucius and Yan Hui—where does their happiness lie? From Confucius' own words, "Eating simple food, drinking water, a bended arm for a pillow—there's happiness in these things too," and his praise of Yan Hui, "Living in a narrow alley, sustained by a basket of grain and gourd full of water—other people could not have borne such hardship, yet it never spoiled Hui's joy," we can see that this kind of happiness arises from inner spiritual richness, and is not diminished by material poverty.

Buddhism also contains many similar accounts, with Chan masters living in extreme simplicity by rivers and in forests yet feeling no lack. As captured in the beautiful lines, "In a pond of the leaves of water lotus, I never worried about clothing; with the flowers of a few pine trees, my food was abundant." This is because they have realized the inner completeness of life, which allows them to remain at peace under any circumstances.

In contrast, modern people, despite possessing great material wealth—even fortunes worth billions—often feel unfulfilled due to inner emptiness. They continue to seek security through constant consumption and accumulation, yet psychological issues such as depression and anxiety persist. This shows that the true source of happiness lies within the mind, while material goods are merely supporting conditions.

2. From the Perspective of Social Endorsement

In recent decades, the people most admired in society have often been those with wealth and power. Career success and material wealth have become dominant values for the public. But when we look back through history, both the East and the West, who are the figures that have truly stood the test of time and left lasting influence? Whether it is Laozi and Confucius in China, the Buddha in India, or the ancient Greek philosophers, it is their virtue, wisdom, and compassion that have allowed them to be studied, emulated, and followed for centuries. In

Confucianism, the ideal of a meaningful life is captured in the concept of the "Three Imperishables"—to establish one's merit, virtue, and teachings. Among these, moral accomplishment is considered the highest, followed by contributions to society, and then by the legacy of writing. These are the things of enduring worth.

Therefore, we should view social respect and recognition from a historical perspective, not merely from the lens of the present moment. Possessing morals, wisdom, and compassion carries far greater meaning than wealth for our life. That's because, unlike wealth, which only has temporary value and can be lost at any time, morals, wisdom, and compassion have the power to change our mindsets and improve our quality of life. They benefit not only our present moment but can bring lasting value over many lifetimes.

3. From the Perspective of the Relationship Between Mind and Matter

To live in this world, one must have basic material conditions—this is a practical concern for everyone. So, what is the relationship between the mind and material things? Is the mind a product of material existence, or is material nothing more than images arising from the mind? This has been a philosophical inquiry for centuries.

According to the Dharma, the mind is the source of everything—the very essence of the mind is the essence of the universe itself. However, the world we perceive is shaped by our own cognitive system. Modern science has discovered that the observable material universe accounts for less than 5% of the total mass-energy of the cosmos. The rest—over 95%—consists of dark matter and dark energy, which are invisible to us. This is almost unimaginable—and it also reveals how extremely limited our cognitive system is in comparison to the boundless nature of the mind. What we see is a tiny fragment of what truly exists.

Furthermore, our cognitive system can also create

distortions. Have you ever worn a VR headset? Once you put it on, everything you see feels incredibly real. If what appears in front of you is a cliff, even though you know it isn't real, you still hesitate to take a step forward—because your mind has already been influenced by the false information projected by the VR. In Buddhism, the five-aggregate body is like an inborn VR system. We assume the world is just as we perceive it—but in truth, it is shaped and filtered by our own "VR system." Some may ask: if that's the case, why do we all see more or less the same world? Because our VR systems are all generated by shared karmic forces of the human realm, and have certain common features. If you were to switch to the VR system of a cat or dog, you would experience an entirely different world—their world.

Western humanism advocates for rationality, which emphasizes autonomy in how we understand the world—the capacity of thinking critically and making one's own judgments. This is extremely important. However, in today's world, where we are constantly overwhelmed by

information pushed through digital platforms and smartphones, we often get lost without realizing it. So, how can we remain clear-minded and maintain the autonomy of our lives in a world overflowing with material desire? Without spiritual practice, it is extremely difficult.

Buddhism teaches that although the mind is clouded by ignorance and afflictions, it also possesses the innate capacity for self-liberation. This ability is not something external—it is inherently present within us. The key lies in recognizing it and unlocking this potential. To do so, we must re-evaluate our values and gain a correct understanding of the relationship between mind and matter. The government has also been promoting a two-fold civilization initiative, urging us to improve material well-being and cultivate spiritual culture. Such development is rooted in preserving and promoting our rich traditional Chinese culture.

III

Carrying Forward Eastern Wisdom to Rebuild Humanistic Spirit

The West values humanism, which emphasizes reason, freedom, and equality, and empowers individuals to become masters of their own lives. Similarly, Confucianism in China also embodies a humanistic spirit, but it is rooted in a moral philosophy with the aim of "learning to be human." The first step is to learn how to be a worthy person—to become a noble individual who embodies the qualities of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness, as well as gentleness, kindness, courtesy, restraint, magnanimity. From there, one

may advance toward becoming a sage. In the past, we may have thought these ideals were outdated. But think about it: If someone truly possesses such moral qualities—loving others as themselves, acting with fairness, behaving properly, distinguishing right from wrong, and being consistent in their words and actions, while also demonstrating refined conduct of being gentle, kind, modest, disciplined, and courteous—wouldn't that be beautiful? Wouldn't we all hope to have such people around us?

1. Cultivate the Self to Serve the World

Society is made up of countless individuals. When each person is physically and mentally healthy, society will naturally be harmonious and stable. The Confucian classic the *Great Learning* presents a philosophy that begins with self-cultivation, and from there extends to regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world. Self-cultivation sets the foundation for everything, including the social responsibilities one

assumes. How does one cultivate oneself? In the *Analects*, Confucius teaches us through both his words and personal example—guiding us in how to be a person of virtue. In the *Great Learning*, the method is laid out more systematically through four steps: rectifying the mind, making thoughts sincere, extending knowledge, and investigating things—as the text says: "Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things."

In Buddhist teachings, "rectifying the mind" is similar to cultivating "right understanding." Each person has their own cognitive framework, which includes mistaken views, personal likes and dislikes, etc. These elements can lead to distorted perceptions and make it difficult to view things objectively. To "rectify the mind" means to maintain clarity and awareness, free from emotional agitation. This allows one to perceive and respond to

situations objectively.

How to rectify the mind? We must start with sincerity, being truthful without deceiving others or ourselves. Confucianism places great importance on self-discipline in solitude—even when one is alone, one should speak and act with caution, never lowering their moral standards. The attitude guideline at Mindful Peace Academy also highlights the importance of being honest, earnest, and committed, which aligns with this principle.

How does one achieve sincerity of thoughts? It must be done through investigating things and extending knowledge. In Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism and Wang Yangming's School of Mind, the interpretation of *gewu* (investigating things) differs. Zhu Xi believed that principle (the universal law) is inherent in things, and therefore gewu means to explore and understand the principles through the study of external objects—this is the idea of "investigating things to the utmost." Wang Yangming, however, taught that the mind is principle. In his view,

gewu is not about studying external things, but about rectifying the mind, clearing away inner defilement, attachments, and afflictions. In fact, they are both correct, because principle exists both behind external things and within the mind. It's just that investigating the mind is relatively easier, while investigating things requires the insight of emptiness—the understanding that all phenomena are conditioned and provisional, without inherent self-nature. They are like clouds in the sky—they coexist with the sky, yet never obstruct the vastness of space. Without the wisdom of dependent origination, people tend to see things as solid and real: a table is just a table, bamboo is just bamboo. However, if one holds onto their fixed identity, the insight of emptiness cannot arise. That's why Wang Yangming felt Zhu Xi's approach was misguided, and instead chose to investigate principle through the mind.

What Wang Yangming referred to as "the extension of knowledge" is, in essence, the realization of one's innate moral conscience. The practices of rectifying the mind,

making thoughts sincere, and investigating things—all aim to awaken this inner conscience, and to live and act by it. This also reflects the integration of Confucianism and Buddhist teachings, and it is the core idea of Yangming philosophy. The key question is: How can one awaken this conscience? Wang Yangming attained enlightenment at Longchang and was revered as a sage. But how many people have truly attained enlightenment through studying his philosophy alone? The reason is that enlightenment requires a practical method—and this is where Buddhism excels. In Buddhist texts such as the *Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp*, accounts of awakened masters are abundant.

Rectifying the mind, making thoughts sincere, investigating things, and extending knowledge are the foundations of self-cultivation. Today, due to the lack of a broader environment that honors morality, moral doctrines alone hold little power. Therefore, we need to develop inner motivation for self-cultivation. With a cultivated character, one can then go on to bring harmony

to the family, govern the nation, and bring peace to the world—progressing from perfecting personal virtue to benefiting society.

"From being a good person to doing meaningful deeds" is the guiding principle in traditional Chinese culture. Only by cultivating oneself can one maintain moral integrity in the process of doing things. On one hand, we act and live guided by the pursuit of virtue and personal refinement; on the other hand, it is through how we act and live that we fulfill that very pursuit. Without this mindset, people often consider self-interest as the ultimate goal and seek to maximize it in their actions. When the pursuit of self-interest conflicts with moral principles, they may disregard ethics for personal gain. In today's interconnected society, such behavior not only harms others but also makes themselves victims in the process.

2. From a Pure Mind to a Pure Land

When it comes to the principles of being a good person

and doing meaningful deeds, Buddhist teachings and Confucian thought share common ground, which is why Buddhism could blend seamlessly with native Chinese culture after it was introduced. In Confucianism, self-cultivation and moral integrity represent personal development, while managing the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world, as well as establishing merit and expressing ideas, reflect a sense of social responsibility. It advocates progressing from being a good person to doing meaningful deeds—from cultivating oneself to benefiting the broader world.

Likewise, Buddhism emphasizes awakening oneself and others, benefiting oneself and others as its ultimate goal. This is especially true in Mahayana Buddhism, which emphasizes developing bodhicitta—the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Like the buddhas and bodhisattvas, one takes the mission of benefiting others as a sacred duty, not only seeking personal liberation but also vowing to lead all beings toward liberation. Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva has made the

vow— "If I do not go to Hell to help the suffering beings there, who else will go?" Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's boundless compassion is expressed through "a thousand hands and eyes to help all in need." As described in the sutra, "A thousand pleas will receive a thousand responses—in this sea of suffering he is the boat that ferries all across." These words and actions fully embody the Bodhisattvas' altruistic aspiration and practice.

Whether in personal cultivation or in altruistic practice, Buddhism can complement the shortcomings of traditional Chinese culture. This is because Buddhism is a profound wisdom of life. While it sets moral standards, it also thoroughly examines the nature of life and the interplay between mind and world. It helps us understand that practicing morality is not merely a demand imposed by society or external forces, but rather a fundamental need of life itself. If we wish to elevate ourselves, we must follow and refine our moral conduct.

Buddhism teaches that life has two dimensions: the

deluded mind and the true mind, affliction and awakening, confusion and enlightenment. Therefore, the first step is to confront the weaknesses of life. The West places great emphasis on law, precisely to address human weaknesses—to prevent those weaknesses from harming oneself or others. If human weaknesses are not addressed, even morality can be misused. I once discussed with philosopher Zhou Guoping on the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Western humanism. While Western humanism advocates personal freedom, Buddhism—also deeply human-centered—speaks of liberation through spiritual awakening. Though freedom and liberation may seem similar, they point to very different ends. Western humanism arose as a rebellion against medieval religious theocracy—seeking to free people from religious repression. This led to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and modern civilization. But it also released the negative side of human nature: as long as one doesn't harm others or break the law, anything becomes permissible. This lack of restraint has led many into a state of decay, indulgence, and self-destruction.

The liberation in Buddhism is grounded in a deep understanding of the human mind and nature. It involves eliminating negative tendencies and awakening one's positive potential. A well-known Buddhist teaching says, "Diligently observe precepts, practice concentration, and cultivate wisdom; extinguish greed, hatred, and ignorance." This provides a practical and effective path for personal cultivation. By observing precepts and developing meditative concentration, we can realize our awakening nature and ultimately free ourselves from delusion and afflictions—breaking away from the deep-rooted negative tendencies accumulated since beginningless time. With this foundation, we can move forward toward awakening and liberation.

When it comes to altruism, many people today are enthusiastic about charity, but often find it difficult to sustain their efforts over time. The Department of Psychology at Fudan University once held a forum titled "Making a Loving Heart More Powerful" targeted at charitable workers. I was invited to give a talk and speak

with psychology professors. In charitable work, we sometimes come across recipients who lack manners—they accept help but show no gratitude. On the other hand, some donors are driven by impure motives, leading them to become overly concerned with gains and losses. How should we view these issues? We need to be clear about what charity truly is. As I see it, charity is a practice of compassion.

First and foremost, one must hold a sense of care and compassion for the broader society. Only when actions are carried out with love and compassion can they truly be called "charity." From the perspective of Buddhist teachings, performing the same good deed may either cultivate compassion or reinforce attachment to the ego—the difference lies in one's intention. So, how can charity become a true practice of altruism and compassion? It requires both wise use of the mind and the support of sound mechanisms. Buddhism provides us with such a framework.

A couple of years ago, I gave a talk titled "Unlocking Mindfulness and Universal Compassion," which involves two key qualities: benefiting both oneself and others. If we wish to benefit ourselves and move toward awakening, we must cultivate mindfulness; without it, we cannot reveal our awakening nature. If we wish to benefit others and help sentient beings, we must cultivate compassion; doing a few good deeds is not enough. In terms of personal growth and character development, Buddhism guides us to build our practice within, not merely through external moral constraints. Otherwise, we may lack the inner drive for transformation.

Classical Chinese learning encompasses the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, each offering complementary insights. As inheritors of these teachings, we must engage in its study to reconnect with our cultural roots, enrich our inner lives, and give rise to spiritual aspiration. In doing so, we also develop the inner qualities needed to serve society effectively.

IV

Returning to Simplicity with the Wisdom of Chan

The *Surangama Sutra* teaches: "All living beings, from the time without beginning, have mistaken themselves by clinging to external objects, thereby losing their true minds and being turned round by objects." In the restless pursuit of external gains, we keep forging ahead—only to lose ourselves along the way. A Western proverb echoes this insight, gently advising us to "wait for the soul to catch up with the body." This cross-cultural resonance leads us to ask: in a world overwhelmed by material desires, how can we remain anchored in our true mind and preserve its inner autonomy? In response

to this question, Western humanistic thought has begun to draw upon Eastern wisdom. It reflects on the crises brought about by modern civilization and seeks a balance between instrumental rationality and value rationality. Meanwhile, deeply inspired by Chan, minimalist aesthetics aims to simplify space, objects, and lifestyle, allowing us to return to the genuine needs of the mind.

We are now living in the Degenerate Age of Dharma. What does that mean? The so-called "degeneration" does not mean that the Dharma is no longer present. In fact, when it comes to studying Buddhist teachings, people can read sutras and look up texts far more easily than before. With a few clicks, we can access countless sutras and listen to virtuous teachers explaining the Dharma. Such ease would have been unimaginable in the past. Yet, despite all this convenience, practice has not become easier. In many ways, it has become even more difficult than before. This is because modern society is filled with temptations, and the external environment is full of distractions, making it hard for our mind to settle.

How can we maintain inner autonomy in a restless world? The answer lies in carrying forward the wisdom of Chan. In traditional Chinese culture, Buddhism, along with Confucianism and Daoism, has played an irreplaceable role in shaping how people perceive the world and establish their spiritual aspirations. Among the three, Confucianism advocates active engagement with society. Yet, amid the ever-changing tides of official life, it is especially important to preserve a mind of transcendence; otherwise, one can easily be shaken by success and failure. This is where the Dharma offers essential guidance. Through its wisdom, we learn to face life's uncertainties with composure, knowing when to step forward with diligence and when to step back with equanimity.

For this reason, Buddhist classics such as the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Heart Sutra*, the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, and the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* have long been essential readings for Chinese literati. Su Dongpo, a renowned Song dynasty poet, is a classic example of someone who embraced both Confucian and Buddhist

paths. Though his official career was full of setbacks, he still lived a life rich in flavor and meaning. Su Dongpo had close connections with Chan practitioners and practiced Chan meditation himself. Drawing on the wisdom of the Dharma, he was able to maintain a calm and steady mind throughout life's many ups and downs. This spirit remains deeply relevant today. For modern people, the wisdom of Chan offers support in the following ways:

1. Discovering the True Self

In Chan Buddhism, there is a classic *huatou*—a contemplative question—that asks: "What was my original face before my parents gave birth to me?" This is a profound inquiry into the question: Who am I? What truly represents the "self"? If we believe that youth and beauty define who we are, then we are building our identity on what inevitably fades. If we see wealth as a reflection of the "self," we must realize that we are born with nothing and take nothing with us when we die. If we regard the body as the self, we must remember that, in just a few decades,

it will return to ashes.

The *Surangama Sutra* teaches, "That which is dependent arising is not your true self; that which is not arising from conditions is not your true self, then what is your true self?" Since the "self" represents the very essence of life, the search for the truth of life—who we truly are—involves continuously seeing through our attachments to possessions. Whatever arises through dependent conditions is not the true self, but merely an identity label imposed by ourselves or society. Only by seeing through these conditioned phenomena can we uncover what is truly unconditioned—our original nature.

Chan helps us see through false identities and directly reach the very essence of who we are.

2. Returning to a Simple Life

Why do we need so many things in our lives? In fact, many of these are not true necessities but cravings created

by the mind. Today, people feel that they cannot live without their phones, computers, or cars. However, these things did not exist in ancient times. Even thirty years ago, they were not common. Back then, we simply did not know these needs existed, yet life was still fulfilling.

It shows that what we believe we need is actually shaped by the desires of the mind. The wisdom of Chan helps us let go of imagined needs and rediscover the abundance that already dwells within. Life is complete as it is. When the mind rests in contentment and ceases to create unnecessary desires, we realize that nothing is truly missing. Chan practitioners live simple and humble lives. Since their minds are unburdened by worldly worries, every moment becomes its own perfect season. In that clarity, they naturally delight in spring blossoms, autumn moonlight, summer breezes, and winter snow—each revealing its tranquil beauty.

Many of our lay practitioners used to care a lot about trendy clothes and luxury handbags. But after studying

the Dharma, most now dress more simply, often spending just around a hundred yuan. In the past, they might have worried, "What will others think if I dress like this?" and spent time every day choosing what to wear. But now, these concerns no longer bother them. This is because the focus of their lives has shifted, and so have their needs. Indeed, when we stop creating needs, they simply disappear.

3. Return to the Original Mind and Heal from Within

For quite a while, the term "being a slave to" something has been popular, such as being a slave to phones or video games. This means losing control over ourselves, which can be applied to shopping habits. Many people shop impulsively and without restraint, trying to relieve stress or as a form of emotional compensation—feeling that after working hard, buying something is a way to reward themselves. If we do not consciously examine and manage these impulses, we may easily fall into a repetitive cycle: work, shop, work, and shop again, over and over.

The reason life remains trapped in samsara is because we constantly chase after external things, without understanding what life truly needs. Especially in today's world, from manufacturers to merchants, and from platforms to influencers, everyone is working relentlessly to create temptations and fuel ever-growing desires. This leaves people increasingly powerless against their impulses, making it ever harder to regain control.

The most important role of Chan meditation is to help us unlock our inner awareness and return to our original mind. This enables us to awaken and live with autonomy. The mind has the capacity to generate suffering, but it also holds the innate ability to heal and liberate itself. Cultivating awareness allows us to access this healing potential, freeing ourselves from mental afflictions.

4. Let the Mind be Autonomous

Our mind inherently possesses the capacity of autonomy—this ability is called awareness. In our structured

approach to mindfulness meditation, the beginner level focuses on cultivating concentration while unlocking awareness. The intermediate level expands this awareness, enabling us to remain mindful throughout daily life. Through this awareness, all thoughts and mental images are recognized and resolved, preventing the mind from being swept away by thoughts and habits. The advanced level is based on the right view of emptiness, which frees the mind from dualistic attachments. These capacities already exist within our minds, but they must be awakened through meditation. Therefore, mindfulness and awareness are effective methods for remaining autonomous amid the overwhelming tide of material desires.

At the Meditation Hall of the Amrita Retreat Center, there is a plaque inscribed with the phrase "Original Face." What is our "Original Face"? Nowadays, many people live according to false identities and become deeply attached to them. Wherever there is attachment, there is also the fear of loss, which leads to a sense of uncertainty.

The wisdom of Chan helps us return to our true nature. If we realize that we are already complete and self-sufficient, would we still fear losing anything? Or would we fail to regain our inner autonomy while seeking reliance on external things?

5. Building a Mindful Lifestyle

The Chan-inspired lifestyle we are cultivating is centered on the mind. Many people speak of "everyday Chan" and "Chan and tea in unity," but these ideas often remain at the level of mere rhetoric. So how can we truly integrate Chan into daily life? How does walking become a practice of Chan? How does eating, or drinking tea, become a part of Chan?

To achieve these, we have developed various programs to help people establish a proper way of engaging the mind, bringing Chan into walking, eating, and drinking tea. For instance, when walking, each step should be taken with awareness, bringing the mind fully back to the present

moment. Whether eating, drinking tea, or engaging in any daily activity—walking, standing, sitting, or lying down—we should always stay mindful at all times and in every place. When anchored in the present and staying aware, we can break free from material desires. Thus, we are no longer trapped in what Western philosopher Max Weber called the "iron cage of reason," that is, a rational system built by commercial society.

We often forget what we already have and keep chasing what we don't have, resulting in endless busyness. Today, it is especially important to carry forward the wisdom of Chan and cultivate a life centered on the mind. To promote the application of Chan in modern life, we have launched the "Chan-inspired Living" program. This involves redesigning living spaces, daily objects, and lifestyle. The Amrita Retreat Center fully embodies this Chan-inspired lifestyle that settles our body and mind.

V

Settling the Body and Mind for Modern People

Eastern Mindful Peace Culture Research Institute has developed a variety of programs. These include wellness practices like the Tai Chi Mindfulness Ball, Baduanjin exercises, acupressure massage, and "Wholistic Healthy Circulation," as well as lifestyle programs such as vegetarian cuisine, Dhyana tea, and Shanti coffee. All of these are thoughtfully tailored to meet the real needs of modern people, so they quickly gained popularity. These are existing strengths we can build upon. There is no need to reinvent them, only to apply them effectively. We hope everyone will sincerely commit to learning. This is also a

skillful means for applying classical Chinese wisdom in everyday life and for practicing the bodhisattva path. As the Association for the Application of Classical Chinese Culture, we should take a project-centered approach: creating favorable conditions and nurturing more capable project leaders from the headquarters to each branch. Through these efforts, we can better serve society.

1. Carrying Forward Chinese Classics and Cultivating a Chan-Inspired Lifestyle

Many local governments now focus on community development and have provided various venues for such initiatives. But to truly benefit the general public, meaningful content is essential. Our programs are designed, first, to support physical and mental well-being; then, to cultivate a quality Chan-inspired life; and ultimately, to guide people toward awakening. The first two aspects are non-religious and therefore well-suited to benefit the public and form good connections. In recent years, we have brought these programs to exhibitions, schools,

enterprises, and associations both in China and abroad. They have been warmly received wherever we go.

Recently, New Era University College in Malaysia established the "Eastern Mindful Peace Culture Research Center" in partnership with us, offering master's and doctoral studies. Clearly, serving society through the transmission of Eastern wisdom has become a pressing need of our time, both in China and around the world. Therefore, we encourage everyone to embark on this global journey, passing on the light of Eastern wisdom and allowing the richness of traditional Chinese culture to reach the world and benefit all of humanity. A country's global standing depends not only on economic power, but even more on the enduring influence of its cultural heritage. That's why the government has put forward the vision of strengthening the nation through culture.

Since last year, dozens of Mindful Peace Yard and Mindful Peace Academy have been established across North

America, Europe, Oceania, Asia, and Africa. With such strong momentum, we hope more people will take part in this endeavor. There are two main ways to engage in this global outreach. One is through project-based support, by participating as part of an established project team. The other is to take independent initiative, organizing a new group and establishing a Mindful Peace Yard or Mindful Peace Academy in a new city. Through Mindful Peace programs, we can serve overseas Chinese communities and gradually introduce the unique depth of mindful peace culture to people around the world.

In 2024, we participated in Milan Design Week and hosted Dhyana Tea Ceremonies throughout the seven-day event. Around eighty to ninety percent of the participants were native Italians. Currently, we are holding tea ceremonies in cities such as London, Paris, New York, Melbourne, Auckland, and so on. On one hand, these tea ceremonies beautifully showcase Eastern aesthetics and traditional culture, offering an experience of tranquil elegance. Meanwhile, they serve as skillful means to calm

and settle the mind, which is something modern people deeply need in today's restless world.

2. Promoting Dhyana Tea Space, Building Harmonious Families

At the same time, we hope the Association for the Application of Classical Chinese Culture will help promote the Dhyana Tea Space. Confucianism speaks of "harmonizing the family," which means nurturing healthy and respectful family relationships. Traditional Chinese culture places great importance on the family as a fundamental unit. However, in today's society, many families lack a sense of cultural inheritance and connection. People tend to live within their own sense of self, and as a result, family members are becoming increasingly distant from one another.

By setting up Dhyana Tea Space at home, family members can come together to enjoy Dhyana Tea and study classical texts from Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism—such

as the *Analects,* the *Great Learning,* the *Doctrine of the Mean,* the *Book of Lao Tzu*, and the *Mindful Peace Academy Collections*. Beyond the family, everyone has classmates, colleagues, relatives, and friends. If we regularly host tea ceremonies and invite them to join in reading, practicing Tai Chi Mindfulness Ball, or simply sharing a vegetarian meal, we can create a warm and welcoming space that will surely be appreciated. In doing so, we naturally cultivate a wholesome cultural climate. Unlike connections based on profit or personal interest, these gatherings are grounded in shared cultural learning and inner development. These relationships are deeply meaningful, which is a refreshing presence in today's society.

Let us work together to carry forward traditional culture, empowering more people to cultivate themselves and harmonize their families, thereby contributing to social stability and global peace.

国际静心协会、静心学堂简介

国际静心协会（简称 MPI）是 2021 年成立于瑞士苏黎世的非盈利组织，旨在向全球传播佛法智慧和禅意生活。

静心学堂为“国际静心协会”旗下的核心公益品牌，致力于传承生命觉醒教育，为现代人提供安顿身心、安身立命之道。我们推广的静心学堂课程体系，为汉传佛教济群长老以四十年修学所证，对当代佛教教育作出的探索，包括禅意生活、智慧人生和觉醒之道。同时，我们将在世界各地营造具有禅意的空间、彼此增上的氛围，为大众修学保驾护航。

“静心学堂丛书”呈现了禅意生活、智慧人生的部分课程。我们衷心希望，更多人由此了解生命觉醒的教育，共享东方智慧给人类带来的福祉。

Mindful Peace International & Mindful Peace Academy

Mindful Peace International (MPI), established in 2021 in Zurich, Switzerland, is a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading Buddhist wisdom and promoting a Chan-inspired life globally.

The Mindful Peace Academy serves as the core public welfare brand under Mindful Peace International. We are dedicated to passing on education about life awakening and offering modern individuals ways towards physical and mental well-being, thereby helping them ground themselves and discover their life's mission. The curriculum we promote at the Mindful Peace Academy has been authenticated through forty years of study and practice by Master Jiqun, an eminent elder of Han Buddhism. It represents an exploration of contemporary Buddhist education, encompassing teachings on the Chan-inspired Life, the Wisdom for Living, and the Path to Awakening. Moreover, we are committed to creating Chan-inspired spaces and fostering mutually enriching environments worldwide to safeguard the public's learning journey.

The ***Mindful Peace Academy Collection*** showcases a selection of courses on the Chan-inspired Life and the Wisdom for Living. We sincerely hope that through these courses, more individuals will engage with life awakening education and share in the blessings that Eastern wisdom brings to humanity.

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