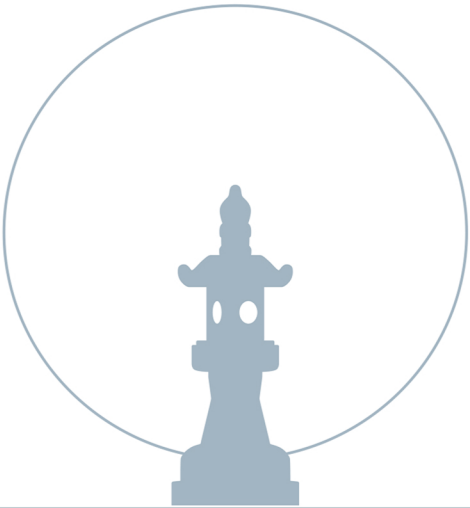
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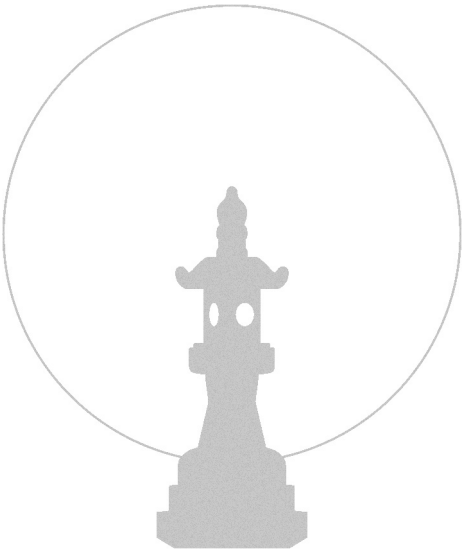
佛教的世界观

The Buddhist Perspective on the World



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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应“2015 首届公共智慧与社会发展阳光论坛”之邀，济群法师做客百年学府北京大学，为现场及通过网络视频直播参与的大众，带来了一场智慧盛宴。针对本次论坛主题——“开启互联网＋智慧的大时代”，法师指出，身处大时代，需要有对“世界”的大见识、大胸怀和大智慧。所以，佛法对世界的认识，在当今时代具有现实和指导意义。

这是一个令人眼花缭乱的时代，我们每天都在接受来自全球各地甚至宇宙中的信息，从各种星系的发现到平行宇宙的提出，不断有新的、前所未有的、甚至是颠覆性的探索。相应的，我们也需要有世界性的

见识和胸怀，尤其需要认识世界的智慧。这不是形而上的哲学问题，而是对每个人都具有现实意义。因为世界观将影响我们的人生观和价值观，可以说，我们对世界有什么样的认识，面临选择时就会有什么样的取舍，规划人生时就会有什么样的目标。

我们能看到什么样的世界，关键取决于自身的认识能力。现代的各种科学仪器，正是认识能力的延伸，从而让人类走得更远，看得更广。但这种能力的提高是立足于向外探寻，相对无垠的宇宙，多少有些“知其不可为而为之”的意味。正如庄子所说：“吾生也有涯，而知也无涯。以有涯随无涯，殆已！”两千多年过去，人类的各种知识和发现，与当年相差不可以道里计。但相对宇宙中未知的部分，依然是以有涯在观望无涯，永远在仰望，永远不能穷尽。

那么，人类真的无法揭开世界真相吗？在佛陀十大名号中，其一就是“世间解”。《大般涅槃经》曰：“东方无量阿僧祇世界，一切声闻缘觉不知不见不解，诸佛悉知悉见悉解。南西北方，四维上下，亦复如是。是故号佛为世间解。”为什么佛陀能了知世界真相？

或者说，佛法是怎么看待世界的呢？

先来看看佛教关于“世界”的解释。《楞严经》中，佛陀为阿难开示说：“云何名为众生世界？世为迁流，界为方位。汝今当知，东、西、南、北、东南、西南、东北、西北、上、下为界；过去、未来、现在为世。”也就是说，“世”代表时间，以过去、现在、未来三世概括所有的时间；“界”代表空间，以东南西北等十个方位概括一切的空间。换言之，世界就是时间和空间的呈现。

在这个定义上，佛法和世间法并没有本质差别。不同在于，世人是向外寻找，但不论找得多远，都无法穷尽。因为宇宙本身是无限的，是没有尽头的。而佛法是向内探究，认为心的本质就是宇宙的本质，两者是一体的。一旦明心见性，通达心的本来面目，也就了知宇宙奥秘了。所以，说世界其实离不开众生，也离不开我们的心。这不仅是世界的组成部分，而且是关键部分。可以说，这才是打开世界奥秘的钥匙。

因为认识能力决定了我们所认识的世界，拥有什么样的能力，就能看到什么样的世界。从另一方面来

说，对世界的错误认识，又会带来迷惑、烦恼、痛苦和轮回。佛法认为，无明是一切痛苦的根源，而正见是一切修行的关键所在。所谓正见，就是对世界和人生的正确认识，由此引导我们开启智慧，摆脱迷惑，了悟真相。以下，从几个方面和大家分享佛法对世界的认识。

一、世界的起源

佛法根本不认为
有独立存在的第一因
也不认为有一个万能的神
在创造世界，主宰万物
在佛法看来
无论宇宙还是生命
都是众缘和合而生的

关于世界的起源，早期主要有神创说。上古时期，人类对宇宙一无所知。在茫茫天地间，在种种不可控、不可知的自然现象中，感觉自己命若浮萍，微不足道，就会相信有一种外在力量在决定人类命运。因此，世界各民族的文化和宗教中，都有关于神如何创造世界的记载。人们还相信，正是这个万能的神决定了世间的穷通祸福。作为人，只有通过对神的信仰，才能得到拯救。

此外还有偶然论。因为看不清世界的来龙去脉，就将种种现象归之于偶然，从而回避对问题的追究。表面上看，“偶然”似乎是适用于一切的挡箭牌，其实潜在的危害很大。因为偶然论会让人存有侥幸心理，

比如不想通过努力，就期待某种结果；或采用不正当手段，却认为可以逃避惩罚。这就从根本上摧毁了止恶行善的基础，导致从个体到社会的各种问题。

关于世界起源，佛法是怎么看的呢？佛法是缘起论，对世界的解释可以归纳为四个字——因缘因果。所谓缘起，即一切现象都是由众多条件共同成就的。小到一张桌子，大到整个宇宙，莫不如此，所谓“诸法因缘生，诸法因缘灭，我佛大沙门，常作如是说”。因缘决定了世界的产生，也决定了世界的败坏，所以《阿含经》还说：“有因有缘世间集，有因有缘世间灭。”

什么是有因有缘？当众多条件和合时，并不是完全平等的，还有亲疏之别，即重要和次要的部分。其中，重要条件为因，次要条件为缘。由因和缘的共同作用，构成了一切事物的发生、存在和消亡。就像作物，种子是最重要的因，而土地、阳光、雨露则是次要的缘。因缘具足，种子才能生根发芽。

缘起论不同于哲学上的唯物论或唯心论。因为前者以物质为第一因，后者以精神为第一因，而佛法根

本不认为有独立存在的第一因，也不认为有一个万能的神在创造世界，主宰万物。在佛法看来，无论宇宙还是生命，都是众缘和合而生的。就像一辆汽车能跑起来，是发动机在产生作用，轮子在产生作用，还是方向盘在产生作用？并不是取决于某种因素，而是各种条件共同作用的结果。

二、微观世界

从一张纸到整个宇宙
包括我们的生命现象
都是缘起的
是各种条件和关系的组合
其中没有恒常不变的自体
当条件发生改变
现象就随之改变了

微观世界，包括组成世界的最小物质单位。从古希腊德谟克利特提出原子论，到近代牛顿的经典物理学，基本是建立在原子论的基础上。他们认为原子是物质分割到最后的、不可继续分割的微粒，其存在是客观、常恒的，不受任何主观因素的影响。由这些基本物质元素的聚集，构成了我们的世界乃至宇宙。

20 世纪初，量子力学的出现改变了这些观点。他们提出“波粒二象性”，认为物质的存在并没有常恒不变的实体，它可能以波的方式存在，也可能以粒子的方式存在，且具有随机性、自由性、不确定性。更让物理学家感到惊奇的是，其存在会受到观察者的影响。换言之，对象在没有被观察之前，其存在是不确

定的；只有被观察之后，才决定了它的存在方式。这就说明，当我们观察世界时，不仅是单纯的观察者，本身也是参与者和创造者，甚至在某种程度上决定了世界的存在方式。

量子力学还有个很有意思的观点，认为两个基本粒子只要源头相同，是相关联的，哪怕彼此相距遥远，当其中一个粒子发生变化时，另一个粒子也会发生改变，这就是著名的量子纠缠理论。其中原理，连爱因斯坦都无从解释。因为它们并不在一起，在物质上找不到任何连接，也没有无线传输，这种“鬼魅似的远距作用”是怎么发生，怎么相互感通的呢？

科学家虽然发现了很多现象，却说不出其所以然。可见，虽然我们一直崇尚唯物，信任科学，但究竟什么是物质？其本质是什么？至今仍是未知而扑朔迷离的。对于这些问题，佛法早有自己的一系列认识。

早期的部派佛教中，说一切有部提出了“极微”的概念，认为这是组成物质世界的基本元素，并有专门的计算公式，说明物质是怎么分析到最小单位的。说一切有部认为，极微在时间上是恒常的，包括过去、

现在、未来，所以叫“三世实有，法体恒有”。

这一观点和原子论相似，认为世界存在固定不变的基本元素，以此作为物质世界建立的基础。这些极微的聚集，称为“和合”。能造的是极微，所造的是一切现象。虽然我们看到的现象世界是虚幻不实的，但极微却是恒常不变的。

而大乘中观思想否定了极微的存在，提出“缘起性空”的观点。缘起，说明一切现象都是众多条件的和合，其中找不到恒常不变的自性。所谓自性，即不依赖条件、恒常不变的独立实体。《心经》有个著名的公式：“色不异空，空不异色；色即是空，空即是色。”空什么？佛教所说的空，不是要空掉存在的现象，而是要破除我们内心对此产生的自性见。任何现象，从一张纸到整个宇宙，包括我们的生命现象，都是缘起的，是各种条件和关系的组合，其中没有恒常不变的自体。当条件发生改变，现象就随之改变了。

此外，大乘唯识思想从另一个角度批判了极微的观点，比如《唯识二十论》认为：如果有恒常不变的极微，那么它到底有没有体积？如果有体积，就意味

着它还有方位，还可以继续分割，说不上最小；如果不承认它有体积，就意味着它并不存在。总之，只要有质量的存在，就可以分割，否则就是空的。

唯识宗还提供了两个非常重要的思想。

第一，我们认识的世界没有离开我们的认识。我们可能理所当然地认为，世界在我们的认识之外。比如我看见山，那个被看见的山一定在我的认识之外。其实，如果它在我们的认识之外，我们怎么认识得到呢？既然能被我们认识到，一定没有离开我们的认识。

第二，我们的认知模式决定了我们所认识的世界。佛法认为，生命体是由业力构成的五蕴和合的系统。其中的认知系统，由经验、观念、想法等生命积累共同构成。我们对世界的认识，是透过这个系统得到的。所以，我们能看到什么样的世界，不是由世界决定的，而是由这个认知系统决定的。

唯识有个比喻叫“一心四境”。比如人类看到的水，在鱼看来就是房子，天人看来是琉璃，而饿鬼看来就成了脓血。也就是说，当物质世界没有被认识的时候，究竟以什么方式存在，并不确定。只有当它被

认识之后，才构成其存在方式。或者说，是在那个认知系统中的存在方式。对于人、鱼、天人、饿鬼这些众生来说，由业力造就的生命形态和认知系统各不相同。透过这些不同的认知系统，同样的境界，便有了不同的呈现。

不必说不同的生命形态，就我们熟悉的人道众生来说，面对同样的外境，色盲、近视、老花者的所见一样吗？又或者，眼根同样健康的人，普通人和艺术家的所见一样吗？我们都知道，“一千个读者就有一千个哈姆雷特”，为什么？就因为认知的不同。所以说，外境在没有被观察之前，具有种种的不确定性，并没有我们所以为的，客观的、固定不变的存在。

三、宏观世界

一旦超越自性见
安住在空性境界中
所谓的大和小
不过是梦幻泡影而已
还有平时感受到的
轻重、美丑、贵贱等等
以及由此带来的一切障碍
其实都来自我们的心

在很长时间内，西方社会一直奉行地心说，认为地球就是宇宙的中心。到 16 世纪，哥白尼提出日心说，认为太阳才是宇宙中心，但受到当时教会的打压，支持这一学说的科学家布鲁诺甚至因此被烧死。到 20 世纪哈勃望远镜出现之后，人们才发现，仅银河系就有很多像太阳这样的恒星；同时又发现，宇宙中还有很多银河系这样的星系。而面对浩瀚的宇宙，这些发现不过是沧海一粟而已。

早在两千多年前，佛陀已告诉我们，宇宙中有恒河沙、微尘数那么多的星系。《华严经》就有很多相关阐述，如《卢舍那佛品》的“此莲华藏世界海中，一一境界，有世界海微尘数清净庄严”，《十行品》的

“入三昧已，十方各过万佛世界尘数刹外，各见万佛世界尘数诸佛”，《十明品》的“如是等百世界、千世界、百千世界、亿世界、百亿世界、千亿世界、百千亿世界，乃至百千亿那由他世界”，等等。在《大正藏》收录的经典中，“世界”一词出现了七万多次，让人惊叹佛陀的所知所见，实在是深广难测，不可思议。

那么，佛法对世界的基本认知有哪些呢？首先得从三界说起。三界即欲界、色界、无色界，是根据众生生命状态和精神境界所作的划分。比如欲界众生，还在享受色食二欲的生活，上自六欲天，中至人界的四大部洲，下至八大地狱等，都属于欲界范围。色界在欲界之上，此界众生但有色相而无男女诸欲，包括四禅十八天。无色界则是色相俱无、但住心识于深妙禅定的众生所居，如四空天等。虽然三界的生命层次不同，但都是众生生死往来之处，所以佛法修行是以超出三界、断除轮回为目的。

此外还有六道，即地狱、饿鬼、畜生三恶道，及天、人、阿修罗三善道。这是众生的轮回之道，故

曰“六道”，又名“六趣”，即一切众生随业趣向之处。而十法界则是在六道之外，加上声闻、缘觉、菩萨、佛四种圣贤境界，为六凡四圣。不同的法界，代表不同的生命状态，以及各种世界的存在。

“三千大千世界”也是佛教常见的概念，是对世界结构的说明。用现代的话来说，以太阳为中心，有各种行星围绕，再包括生活其间的六道众生，由此构成一个小世界。一千个小世界构成小千世界，一千个小千世界构成中千世界，一千个中千世界构成大千世界，合称三千大千世界。每个三千大千世界，只是一尊佛陀教化的领域，并不是宇宙的全部。

那么，宇宙中到底有多少三千大千世界？佛陀讲《大般若经》时，放光动地：“此一一光各照三千大千世界，从此展转，遍照十方殑伽沙等诸佛世界。”殑伽沙，即恒河沙。佛说法时，每每以恒河沙来形容数目之多，难以穷尽。因为恒河沙极其微细，哪怕只抓一把都很难数清，何况整条恒河中的沙？而宇宙中的三千大千世界竟然有恒河沙那么多，遍布东西南北，四维上下，每个方向都有无量世界，实在是难以想象。

在佛弟子熟悉的《维摩诘所说经》中，也对世界作了生动的描述。维摩诘是一位居士，“已曾供养无量诸佛，深植善本，得无生忍，辩才无碍”。某日，他示疾于床，释迦牟尼佛就派遣诸大弟子前去慰问。结果从舍利弗、目犍连、须菩提、富楼那、摩诃迦旃延、阿那律、优波离、罗睺罗、阿难一直到弥勒菩萨等，都曾领教过维摩诘的辩才，知道前去问疾后，将有一番高难度的往来答辩，所以谁也不敢接受这个任务，自知难为酬对，不堪任诣彼问疾。

最后轮到智慧第一的文殊菩萨。菩萨虽然清楚任务艰巨，但既然佛陀有此安排，也应承担下来。众人深知文殊师利和维摩诘见面后必说妙法，所以，“八千菩萨、五百声闻、百千天人皆欲随从”。如此浩荡的探病队伍，到了维摩诘一丈大小的房中，竟也不觉拥挤。

因为大家都站着，所以维摩诘就问文殊菩萨：“仁者游于无量千万亿阿僧祇国，何等佛土有好上妙功德成就狮子之座？”文殊菩萨言：“东方度三十六恒河沙国有世界名须弥相，其佛号须弥灯王，今现在。彼

佛身长八万四千由旬，其狮子座高八万四千由旬，严饰第一。”如果一由旬按二十公里计算的话，这个座椅之大，实在是超乎想象。

维摩诘居士接着显现神通，“即时，彼佛遣三万二千狮子座，高广严净，来入维摩诘室，诸菩萨、大弟子、释梵四天王等昔所未见。其室广博，悉皆包容三万二千狮子座，无所妨碍。于毗耶离城及阎浮提四天下亦不迫迮，悉见如故。”如此大的座椅，而且不是一个，是三万二千之多，但小小的丈室居然能够容纳。更奇妙的是，房间没变大，椅子也没变小。

这并不是魔术，而是佛法“事事无碍”的境界，说明物质并没有客观的、固定不变的实体。如果我们有自性见，会觉得大就是大，小就是小，无法理解大的物体怎么能装到小的里边去。其实我们看电脑屏幕，虽然这么小，但可以把上下五千年、纵横千万里都放在其中，看得清清楚楚。我们在看的时候，没觉得世界变小了，也没觉得电脑变大了。还有目前正在发展中的 VR 虚拟现实，从天空到海洋，那么多让人身临其境的场景，仅仅在一副眼镜中而已。

当然，那是通过设备达到的效果。但对修行人来说，一旦超越自性见，安住在空性境界中，所谓的大和小不过是梦幻泡影而已。既没有实在的大，也没有实在的小。还有平时感受到的轻重、美丑、贵贱等等，以及由此带来的一切障碍，其实都来自我们的心，来自我们的执著。

四、世界的生成和演变

不论心还是物
都是无常的
心念有生住异灭
色身有生老病死
世界有成住坏空
乃至宇宙中无量无边的星球
时时刻刻
都在发展、变化之中

世界是怎么产生，怎么变化的？其产生和变化取决于什么力量？从基督教来说，是来自上帝的安排；从现代科学来说，宇宙中有强力、弱力、电磁力、万有引力等，由此影响宇宙和自然界的运作。

佛法是缘起论，认为由众多因缘的和合组成了世界，其中又以地、水、火、风、空、识六大为主，这是偏于物质的分析。此外，还有“应观法界性，一切唯心造”之说，认为世间万象都离不开心的作用。在世界生成和发展的过程中，心具有能动性和主导性，而物是被动的。但不论心还是物，都是无常的。心念有生住异灭，色身有生老病死，世界有成住坏空，乃至宇宙中无量无边的星球，时时刻刻都在发展、变化

之中。只是我们的感官太迟钝了，在很多时候，觉察不出这种改变而已。所以，佛教经论是以心为立足点进行探讨，从真心到妄心，从意识到潜意识，都有深刻的剖析和阐述。

关于世界的生成演变，佛法认为，世界由众缘和合而生。形成之后进入住劫，即相对稳定的阶段，生态环境开始形成，适合众生包括人类居住。然后，这个环境又因自身发展规律和人类的消耗逐渐败坏，最后化为微尘，彻底毁灭。不仅如此，每个星球都会经历这样成住坏空的阶段。

在此过程中，人类是在住劫期间出现在地球上的。这又涉及一个问题：人是怎么来的？基督教认为，上帝用五天创造天地和万物后，在第六天，按照自己的形象，用地上的尘土造出一个人，即人类始祖。

而佛教不承认有造物主，认为是光音天人移民到此。《长阿含经》记载，光音诸天福尽命终，来生此间。本来，这些天人以念为食，能神足飞空，身光自照。后来，见“此地甘泉涌出，状如酥蜜”，就出于好奇尝了一下，结果越吃越多。最后身体变得粗重，

失去天人的妙色，也不再有神足通，只能长居于此。

《起世因本经》则记载，光音天人初到地球时，因为往昔福报的余力，“不须耕种，而有自然粳米出生”。这种稻米随欲而取，取而复生。但随着这些天人福报转薄，他们出于懒惰和贪心，觉得每顿取食麻烦，不如多取一些作为储藏。结果越取越多，终于福报耗尽，只能自耕自食了。

此外，佛法认为世界在住劫过程中会有上升和衰退，又称增劫和减劫。增劫中，世界会往正向的方向发展；而减劫中，则往不良的方向发展。这种发展不是由谁决定的，而是取决于人类整体的道德行为。随着人类道德的堕落，彼此争斗，疯狂掠夺，世界会出现各种问题，包括地震、海啸等自然灾害，也包括战争、瘟疫、饥荒等人为灾难。反之，随着人类道德的提升，不仅社会和谐安定，生态环境也会日益平衡，所谓“依报随着正报转”。

所以说，每个人的心念和行为，在决定各自命运的同时，也在汇集成共业，决定这个世界的未来。在今天，生态环境日益恶化，社会问题层出不穷，关键

就在于人类道德的堕落。而现代科技的发展，又在某些方面强化了人类的破坏力。以环境污染为例，近百年的破坏程度，超过了以往几千年的总和。这是每个人都看得见，也正在深受其害的苦果。

我们是受害者，但何尝不是施害者呢？一方面，每个人的行为会影响到这个世界；另一方面，这个世界的问题会直接影响到每个人，谁也无法幸免。比如雾霾之下，你能独自幸免吗？哪怕有能力移民到更好的环境，又躲得过全球变暖带来的隐患吗？那种“我死后哪怕洪水滔天”的想法，不仅自私，更是愚蠢而短视的。

我们要改变这个社会，必须以缘起的智慧，认识到个体是整个世界的一部分，彼此是相辅相成、不可分割的。只有这样，才能自觉地从我做起，从现在做起。否则的话，很多人也觉得环保重要，可一旦和自身利益发生冲突时，还是自己重要，眼前重要。这就是因为认识不到个体和世界的关系，认识不到这种休戚相关的内在联系。

所以说，对世界的正确认识，是个体生命和人类

社会健康发展的关键。对于今天的国人来说，尤其要重视观念、心态、道德行为的建设，这也是实现中国梦的前提。如果没有这个基础，就不知道实现的是什么梦了。

五、世界的原理

正因为万物没有固定不变的特质
所以，它会随着我们内心的
不同认知发生改变
但认知模式和“我想怎样”
是两个概念
前者是通过观念
心态、生命品质造就的
而后者只是妄想，是没有力量的

古往今来，除了哲学家和神学家的追寻，科学家们也始终在探索，希望能找到解释宇宙一切现象的定律。从经典物理学到量子力学，从爱因斯坦的相对论到最新的弦论，都在试图揭开其中的奥秘和原理。

当一种又一种的理论被提出后，科学家们却发现，这些理论都没办法解释一切现象。比如经典物理学无法解释相对论的现象，相对论无法解释量子力学的现象。为什么会这样？因为他们发现的都是局部原理。换言之，这一原理仅限于某个层面，超越这个层面就不再适用，并不是放之四海而皆准的。弦论的提出在某种程度上解决了这些矛盾，既能解释宏观世界，也能解释微观世界，但它目前只是一种设想，并不是科

学实证。

从佛法观点来看，世界的共同原理就是三法印，即诸行无常、诸法无我、涅槃寂静。这是佛陀亲证的，也是区别佛法和非佛法的标准。

第一是无常，说明万物的非恒常性。在这个世间，小到原子、夸克，大到地球、星系乃至整个宇宙，以及我们身边的一切人和物，有什么是恒常不变，是不依赖条件存在的吗？事实上，这不仅是佛法的认识，也是不断被各种科学发现证实的原理。只要我们愿意了解，就会发现，这个世上真的没什么是恒常不变的。可以说，人们对于无常更多的不是无知，而是无视，似乎无视就可以抵挡无常，让自己在“恒常”的假象中再停留一下，陶醉一下。

第二是无我，说明万物的非主宰性。佛法是缘起论，认为一切现象都是众缘和合的，是一套系统在共同产生作用，而不是以某种力量为主宰。就像汽车可以跑，飞机可以飞，哪一样不是各种零件在相互作用？虽然其中有重要条件和次要因素之分，但没有什么是唯一、不变的主宰。包括对自己的身体，如果可

以主宰，我们一定不愿让它老，让它病，让它死，做得到吗？显然不能。因为在这套系统中，并没有一个所谓的“我”作为主宰。

第三是涅槃寂静，告诉我们，只有平息内在的迷惑和烦恼，心灵才能获得宁静，生命才能获得自由。反之，只要还有迷惑，必然会带来烦恼和痛苦。哪怕眼前诸事顺遂，但只要苦因还在，总归要流转六道，无法自主。

对于以上原理，我们可以去检验，世间有没有什么现象超出这三点？不符合这三点？

此外，大乘中观思想是以缘起性空为核心，说明一切现象都是由条件决定其存在，其中没有恒常不变的主宰。从我们的色身到山河大地，宇宙万有，都是无自性的。这一思想首先是破除自性见，其次是说明一切现象都有无限的可能性。

正因为万物没有固定不变的特质，所以，它会随着我们内心的不同认知发生改变。可能有人会说：我想把家里的东西都变成黄金，做得到吗？为什么做不到？并不是这个原理有问题，而是你的认知模式达不

到，你的业力系统达不到。简单地说，就是你的能力没这么大。因为认知模式和“我想怎样”是两个概念，前者是通过观念、心态、生命品质造就的，而后者只是妄想，是没有力量的。

在我们的生命中，业力决定了认知模式，认知模式决定了认识对象。从无自性空的角度来说，一切都有可能。

正是基于这一原理，佛教非常重视观想的修行。可以通过观想来调整心态，进而改变行为。当身心由内而外地发生改变，再以禅修证得空性慧，才能真正超越现有的凡夫生命系统。

而唯识经论提供的原理有两点。其一，我们认识的对象没有离开我们的认识；其二，我们的认知模式决定了所认识的世界。这在前面已经作了介绍。可见在很多问题上，我们都需要检讨自己的认识能力和认知模式。有句歌词叫“不是我不明白，这世界变化快”，事实上，真相恰恰就是“我不明白”，而不是其他问题。如果不从自心入手，看清心的种种妄念，明白心的种种原理，发现心的本来面目，是不可能明白

这个世界的。就像拿着一面哈哈镜，还是小小的、破碎的，能看明白什么呢?

以上这些原理，对于我们了解生命、看清世界意义重大。因为心才是打开世界奥秘的钥匙。

六、认识与存在

探讨认识与存在的关系
是以对缘起现象的认识为立足点
对缘起现象的错误认识
将导向遍计所执
导向生死轮回
而对缘起现象的正确认识
则能摆脱遍计所执
通达空性实相

我曾出过一本《认识与存在》，是对《唯识三十论》的解读，说明我们的认识和所认识的世界是什么关系。序言中有这样一段话：“世界虽然复杂，但归纳起来，不外乎认识与存在两个方面。那么，认识是什么？存在是什么？认识与存在的关系为何？是各自独立，还是相互隶属？本论‘三能变’的部分，用大量篇幅，重点探讨了人类认识的奥秘——八识五十一心所。三性三无性，揭示了存在的各种形态及实质；而诸法唯识的理论，则论证了认识与存在相互依托的关系。唯识学考察认识与存在的目的，是为了帮助我们获得唯识的中道正见，然后落实于空性禅修，完成生命品质的转化。”

前面已经说过，认识模式决定了我们认识的世界，此处通过唯识的三性说作进一步说明。所谓三性，即遍计所执性、依他起性和圆成实性，是认识的三个层面。了解其中原理，我们才知道如何辨别真妄，并通过改变认识来选择心行，转染成净。

首先是遍计所执，即主观错觉的世界。也就是呈现在我们认识上的影像，只是一种错觉而已。为什么这么说？因为每个人在认识世界时，会受到观念、经验、情绪、习惯、文化等种种因素的影响。这种认知模式，就像一副有色眼镜，对我们见闻觉知的一切进行了加工。在生活中，我们有没有对哪个人一见如故，或看到哪个人就特别讨厌？这就说明，我们看到的世界，早已被自己的认识处理过了。

这种加工是持续不断的，觉得这个人可爱，就找一大堆理由证明他的可爱；觉得这个人讨厌，就找一堆理由证明他的讨厌。可以说，理性很多时候都在为我们的感觉打工。随着加工的深入，对喜欢的越来越贪著，对讨厌的越来越拒绝，烦恼也就在所难免。

其次是依他起，即因缘显现的世界。佛法认为，

我们看到的世界和心密切相关。每种心理产生活动时，由见分、相分、自证分三部分组成。所谓见分，指眼等六识有了别外境的作用，比如眼睛能看到，耳朵能听到；所谓相分，即外境反映到心识上的影像；所谓自证分，即内心自证自觉的作用，正是这个作用，连接着我们的认识和所认识的影像。总之，外在世界和我们的认识有着共同的源头，那就是心。

了解这些原理，对前面提出的量子力学理论就不难理解了。因为量子的随机性、自由性，正是意识的特点。一个物质还未成形时，会受到自由意志，即心念的影响。只有成形后，才会遵循某个规则。比如行为产生之前，我们会面临选择：我要做什么，不做什么。选择之后，不断地做，才会进入一种惯性。物质世界也是如此。

第三是圆成实，即世界的实相。世间万象虽然有各种显现，但每个现象的背后，都蕴含着空性。在空性层面，一切是等无差别、圆融无碍的，没有此或彼的对立。不仅如此，能认识的心和所认识的世界也是一体的。所以，“如来天眼最胜清净，一切世界、一

切有情色相差别，及余物类种种不同，如来皆见，如观掌中阿摩洛果。”反过来说，只要有能所的分别和执著，所见就一定是局限的，甚至是错误的。

通常，凡夫都是活在遍计所执中。唯识经论有个比喻，就像有人夜晚看到地上有绳，因为月色朦胧，误以为是蛇而吓出一身冷汗。类似的典故，还有杯弓蛇影、疑邻窃斧等。虽然杯里没有蛇，邻人也没有窃斧，但在发现真相之前，这个错觉是实实在在的，并且使自己的身心受到影响。凡夫有我法二执，还有所知障和烦恼障，这使我们总是带着情绪、想法、感觉、经验去诠释世界，对自己的见闻觉知进行加工，进而制造烦恼，制造痛苦，制造轮回。

探讨认识与存在的关系，是以对缘起现象（依他起）的认识为立足点。对缘起现象的错误认识，将导向遍计所执，导向生死轮回；而对缘起现象的正确认识，则能摆脱遍计所执，通达空性实相。两条路的分歧，就在于对缘起现象的认识正确与否，这也是轮回和解脱的分水岭。

此外，中观是以真俗二谛来划分世界。其中，世

俗谛是世间的道理，是凡夫根据见闻、经验所总结的；胜义谛则是圣智证得的诸法实相。两者的关系是什么呢？龙树菩萨有个偈颂："若不依俗谛，不得第一义。不得第一义，则不得涅槃。"告诉我们，如果不能正确认识世间现象，就不能证得真谛；不能证得真谛，就无法断除烦恼，成就涅槃。

总之，不论阿含还是唯识、中观的见地，所有经教都在帮助我们破除对世界的误解，告诉我们真相是怎么回事。只有对世界建立正确认识，进而在正见指导下，通过禅修将闻思正见落实于心行，才能得定发慧，通达空性，成为佛陀那样的觉悟者。

七、结 说

正确认识世界
目的是帮助我们
找回自己，净化心灵
造就健康人格
只有这样
世界才有改变的希望
所谓“心净则国土净”

通过佛法怎么看世界，我们可以从中了解佛法的深度及广度，对佛陀的智慧心悦诚服。在科技高度发达的今天，佛法不仅没有过时，而且还能补科学之偏。正如朱清时先生在《物理学步入禅境——缘起性空》一文中所说：“当科学家千辛万苦爬到山顶时，佛学大师已经在此等候多时了。”正确认识世界，目的是帮助我们找回自己，净化心灵，造就健康人格。只有这样，世界才有改变的希望，所谓“心净则国土净”。

八、答 疑

佛法是究竟、圆满的智慧
是法尔如是的
在任何时空都不会失去它的价值
但佛教的流传
包括僧团的存在
本身属于社会现象之一
离不开这个时代的共业
我们不要将两者混为一谈

10 月 16 日上午，济群法师做客“2015 年首届公共智慧和社会发展阳光论坛”，开讲“佛教的世界观”。当天，北京大学英杰交流中心内可容纳 300 人的讲座现场座无虚席。与此同时，通过网易和优酷的图文直播、视频直播等方式参与的在线听众共计 30 万。2 个小时的讲座结束后，场内场外的听众们就教界现状和个人修学等问题踊跃提问，法师坦率、智慧、幽默的解答，纠正了很多人对佛教的误解。一时间，现场掌声如潮。

如何看待负面新闻

主持人：有幸请到济群法师出席论坛，听了讲座，我的体会有两点，第一，法师向我们展示了一个逻辑周密、严谨的佛教世界观，让我们更多地了解佛教眼中的世界；第二，所有语言的背后是五个字，叫浓浓的慈悲。我们对佛教世界观有基本了解之后，如何将这些理论契合现实生活？我想，这是在座和网络前的诸位更为期待的。

第一个问题特别接地气。很多人关注今年的一个社会现象，姑且把它称为“少林寺风波”。在直播过程中，大家就此提出了各种问题。我们对佛教的认识，在面对风波时往往显得脆弱，甚至容易动摇。请法师谈谈您的看法。

济群法师：刚才讲了这么高大上的内容，结果一下子回到如此现实的问题中，是不是有些上气不接下气？看来要能上能下才行！作为教界人士，我当然为这些风波感到遗憾。因为它不仅影响到某个寺院，也让佛教这个品牌不断地被抹黑，被贬值。可以说，这

既是佛教界的不幸，也是整个社会的不幸。

今天这个社会，恶性案件频发，道德底线沦丧，到处充斥着浮躁之气。为什么会有这么多状况？归根到底，正是大众的心态使然。可以说，现在是一个极度缺乏精神追求，缺乏人格和道德建设的时代，而这正是佛教最为擅长的。佛教有“心学”之称，既能帮助我们解决暂时的心灵困扰，更能从根本上引导我们调整心行，离苦得乐。千百年来，一直是国人的修心指南，立德宝典。如果把这个宝藏糟蹋了，当我们的人生面临困惑，社会出现危机时，到哪里去寻找解决方法？

我之所以立志弘法，并不仅仅因为我是出家人，是佛教徒，而是看到佛法对社会大众的价值。佛法有超尘出世的层面，也有积极入世的层面。对于大众关注的财富、环保、伦理建设等种种问题都提供了解决方案，而且是究竟的解决方案。这就需要我们共同来学习佛法，护持正法，让佛法智慧有良好的传播渠道，能利益更多的人。

如果我们不学习，不维护，就可能因为不明真相

导致各种误解。同时，也会以讹传讹，给恶意的攻击、诽谤以生存空间。在这个信息时代，时时都有无数的消息被制造，被传播。其中，有正常的发布，也有恶意的炒作。如何理智地看待并取舍，对今天的人尤为重要。如果不能善加抉择，往往会被某些别有用心的信息所转，甚至不自觉地参与到网络暴力中，于人无益，于己有害。关于这个问题，我觉得一行禅师有段话说得特别好："我决心不传播不确定的消息、不批评或谴责我没有把握的事情，避免讲会导致分裂或不和的话，或会导致家庭、团体破裂的话。我将尽一切努力来调解和平息所有的矛盾，无论是多么微小的矛盾。"

当然，佛教经历了文革摧残并在改革开放后商业浪潮的影响下，确实存在太多问题。在某些方面，多少也偏离了自身的本分。因为僧团的职能就是内修外弘，以修行提升生命品质，以弘法教化社会大众。这是它的基本职能，不应该有商业化的成分。一旦涉及商业，就会有利益纠纷，并引发各种社会乱象。要想改变这些状况，需要教界和社会大众的共同努力。

主持人：谢谢济群法师直面这样一个现在其实蛮敏感的话题。如今的佛教已不是一教一门之事，需要社会大众共同用智慧来维护。

为什么佛不保佑股民

主持人：下一个问题更接地气——今年老百姓经历了股灾，为什么佛不保佑股民？

济群法师：首先，我们要对股市本身有正确认识。佛法是一种人生智慧，给我们提供了正确的人生态度和理财之道，这是根本所在。只有在这个基础上，佛陀才可能对我们加以保佑。如果理财之道本身就有偏差，比如带着强烈的投机心去炒股，那佛菩萨保佑这一部分人的话，可能其他很多人就要遭殃了。

股票分两种类型，一是投资型的，一是投机型的。投资型的有利于经济发展，比如现在提倡的众筹众创，就是双方共赢的方式。但现在很多人是带着投机心理炒股，而且急功近利，贪心满满。在这种情况下提出

的要求，和佛菩萨的清净、慈悲是不相应的，所以请求无效！

佛法和科学可以相互印证吗

主持人：第三个问题，刚刚您在演讲中提到佛教和科学的关系时，用了很多理论来互相比照。科学是1000多年的学术，而佛教诞生至今有2500多年。在今天，却往往要用科学发现来印证佛法的内容，相当于用年轻人的说法来印证一位老人的话，这种比对合理吗？佛法和科学到底应该谁来印证谁？

济群法师：其实谁也不需要印证谁。但为什么要这样比较呢？就像你刚才讲的，佛法是古老的真理，科学是年轻的智慧。很多时候，年轻人说话的语境和大家比较接近，为了让对方听懂，就要用这种方式来说，否则就可能存在代沟，无法产生交集。

适当地将科学和佛法做一些对比，是想引导大家通过科学这个渠道来了解佛法。现在很多人崇尚科学，

觉得科学是先进的，而佛法是迷信、落后、愚昧的。所以，我们才借助这些方式来解读，这叫善巧方便。如果没有这样一个对比，很多人可能认识不到佛法的智慧有多么博大。

放生的关键在于慈悲护生

主持人：今年以来，在很多主流媒体上，我们看到了关于放生的各种报道。比如在居民区放生蛇，或在水中放生不适当的外来物种，破坏了生态平衡。放生是佛教重要的传统，越来越多的佛教徒用各种方式参与放生，该怎么协调这种热情和社会大众的排斥？该怎么放生，才能让所有人快乐和谐？

济群法师：放生的关键在于慈悲护生，而现在的一些放生，往往以求福报、求保佑为重点，将之作为消灾祛病的捷径。真正将放生作为菩提心的修行，出于慈悲和爱护动物的反而不多。

如果不是带着对众生的强烈悲悯来放生，重点可

能就落在“做了这件事”，而不是“怎么做才能令众生得到最大利益”。此外，有些是为了增加信众凝聚力，或是为了某个活动造势而放生，但求数量大、氛围足，把重点放在场面和仪轨上，甚至不惜提前定购，令商贩为满足放生数量而增加捕捞，真不知所放为何？还有个问题是，今天不仅放生物命多样化，放生环境也远较古代复杂，如果不加考虑，势必会引发各种问题。这是我们特别需要反思的。

慈悲和智慧是佛法修行的两大内涵，放生也不例外。我们首先要考量自己有没有对动物心生慈悲，是不是看到动物面临刀下之苦后生起极大悲悯，想着尽力解救它们于危难之中，并结下法缘，愿它们早日离苦得乐。其次，还要考虑动物被放后的生存问题，以及由此带来的环境问题、与人类或其他众生和平共处的问题。这就需要了解一定的专业知识，才能作出智慧的抉择。

当然，世间任何事都难有万全之策。在放生的问题上，我们只要本着悲心，并以自己目前的认知尽量为动物考虑周全，就可以问心无愧地积极去做。

什么是真正的出家人

主持人：这里有个问题是微信平台上发来的，有些直接和尖锐。他说，现在有些披着佛教外衣的出家人做很多让人不接受的事。请问法师，什么是真正的出家人？佛教不是教人谦卑和平等吗，怎么感觉现在法师们都成了高大上？很多学佛人都成了站在道德制高点上的法官，批判不入自己法眼的普通人，这还是智慧的佛法吗？如果佛法是智慧的，为什么会教出这样的人？如果佛法已经丧失了智慧的基础，为什么大家还要相信佛法？如何树立正见？

济群法师：现在这个社会，各行各业都有假冒伪劣的现象，佛教界也不例外。一方面，假僧尼、假活佛很多，这些人的所作所为大大损害了佛教的社会形象。这种情况下，佛教界本身就是受害者。我们需要考量一下，那些让人不能接受的到底是什么？就像你要抵制假货的时候，难道要把真货一起抵制吗？另一方面，因为现行佛教教育的严重缺失，再加商业浪潮的影响，所以出家人在僧格养成方面相对薄弱，这是

教界需要加以重视的。

什么是真正的出家人？从内在品质来说，应该有希求解脱的出离心，进而生起帮助众生解脱的菩提心。从外在形象来说，行为举止要符合戒律规范，有庄严如法的威仪，脱俗宁静的气质。其中，又以内在品质为核心，真正发起出离心和菩提心之后，自然会由内而外地产生改变。

至于高大上的问题，出家人凭什么受人尊敬？并不是因为这个身份，而是这个身份代表的内涵和使命。如果一个人能够放下世俗追求，以追求真理、完善道德为使命，把自己献身于利益大众的事业，这样的人自然受人尊敬。即使他没有现出家相，同样可以得到这份尊敬。这种尊敬是来自社会，并不是自己刻意追求的。

我经常对佛学院的学生说：我们不要觉得自己出家了就高人一等，或者觉得自己学佛了，别人都是一无是处的凡夫。自己把自己端起来，高高在上，对别人指手划脚，随意批评，这种身份上的优越感是最糟糕的。作为出家人，如果没有一定的外在威仪、教理

素养和禅修证量，内心不安静，不脱俗，摄受力和教化力从何而来？所以，社会有些负面评论未必是空穴来风。佛教界应该对这些现象加以反思，并作为未来努力的方向。

同时，我们不能把佛教界的现象或某些人的行为，和佛法等同起来。佛法是究竟、圆满的智慧，是法尔如是的，在任何时空都不会失去它的价值。但佛教的流传，包括僧团的存在，本身属于社会现象之一，离不开这个时代的共业。我们不要将两者混为一谈。至于是否要相信佛法，取决于每个人对人生的追求和抉择。不论你是否相信，佛法都不会损失什么。

什么是爱

主持人：谢谢济群法师坦率、真诚的表达。下面的问题很简短，只有四个字：什么是爱？

济群法师：爱的定义弹性比较大。从爱的对象来说，有爱情、亲情、友情等等；从爱的性质来说，有

自私、无私的不同，还有深浅、长短的差别等等。佛教提倡的爱，是慈悲大爱，希望对方不要遭受任何痛苦，拥有更多快乐。而且它的对象涵盖一切众生，包括人类，也包括动物乃至鬼神。

这种慈悲来自深深的理解和接纳。因为认识到自己和众生本是一体的，对众生的痛苦感同身受，所以会无条件、毫无保留地帮助对方。同时，这种慈悲是没有粘著的，是以无所得的心在利益无量众生。内心没有我在帮助对方的优越感，也没有对方得到我帮助的想法。而一般人的爱往往来自执著和占有，是自私而狭隘的。这就会以爱的名义来要求甚至绑架对方，比如“我这都是为了你好……”“我这样爱你，你难道……”“我为你付出了那么多，你竟然……”从而患得患失，予取予求，带来种种纠结，甚至是难以承受的痛苦。

如果我们想得到没有痛苦和副作用的爱，就要将小爱升华为大爱，将自私、有所得的占有转变为无私、无所得的慈悲。

如何有效学佛

主持人：这个问题是，听了法师上午的讲座，觉得特别好，但好多词没听懂。我很想跟法师好好学习佛法智慧，但连那些词都听不懂，何况还有那么多佛经，有那么多法师在说法。我该如何学习？

济群法师：学佛确实不太容易。一方面，现在的人心浮气躁，每天忙忙碌碌，很难静下心来闻法、思维、修证；另一方面，佛法博大精深，经论众多，法门林立，即使有心学佛，也往往觉得无所适从，不知如何选择。

我弘法二十多年，虽然一直在各地讲经说法，但这种方式只是和大家结个法缘。如果没有后续的跟踪服务，系统引导，很难让播下的佛法种子继续生根发芽。正因为看到大众在学佛中存在的困难，所以我这几年重点在做修学体系的建设。希望借助这套模式，让大众有氛围、有方法、有次第、有引导地修学。

首先是有氛围。有十来个人，每周两次在辅导员的引导下，一起学习、交流、讨论，互帮互学，彼此

促进。

其次是有方法。现在的学佛通常有两种问题，一是偏于玄谈，学了很多道理，但只能夸夸其谈，用不起来；二是盲修瞎炼，虽然每天都在修着，却不知如何把所修转变为自己的认识和心态。所以方法很重要。有了方法，才能让所学法义落实到心行，把概念转化为观念，用观念来调整心态，最终提升生命品质。

第三是有次第。就像我们读书，需要从小学、中学再到大学，不断升级。如果没有次第，或是起点太高，比如不少人开始就喜欢《坛经》，但除了学几句口头禅，未必了解其中深意，更谈不上运用；或是停步不前，拿着小学课本一学再学，结果始终是小学水平。所以次第很重要，要由浅入深，才能循序渐进。

最后是有引导。修学的所有课程是我亲自拟定的，有相关的文字和音像资料。我们还形成了一套学习辅助材料，有一批通过选拔和培训的辅导员和大家共同修学。这些内容在网站上有详细介绍。对于真正有心想学的人，我们不仅会提供课程，还会帮助他们形成一个修学的团体和氛围。感觉像做广告啊！

主持人：这是明显的广告，而且植入时间很长。

济群法师：公益广告，你这个是公益论坛。

让互联网 + 智慧

主持人：后面几个问题回到我们的主题——开启互联网＋智慧的大时代，到底什么是互联网＋？互联网可以＋创业，＋创新，＋电商……到底能不能＋寺院，能不能＋智慧，＋出来是什么样的效果？

济群法师：互联网＋是现在流行的传播方式，就是以互联网的视野和方法来做各种事。最近腾讯正在推出“互联网＋寺院”，让寺院也进入互联网时代。我觉得，是一个有益的尝试。

得知本次论坛的主题时，我就在想，什么是互联网＋智慧？应该从什么角度契入？所以决定讲一个和世界有关的内容。因为互联网已经为我们缔造了一个新世界。在这个世界中，有很多颠覆性的改变，对人

类的认识能力和认识对象也有突破性的提高。在这个平台上，如果和佛法智慧相结合，可以帮助我们从更高的视野，以更广的胸怀来寻求发展。从另一个角度说，当我们用互联网来传播佛法，互联网就会成为我们认识、开发、成就乃至运用智慧的有效平台，让佛法传播超越时空，普及为一种“公共智慧”。

主持人：谢谢法师的精彩回答！互联网和佛法的精神有很多契合之处。希望每个人的智慧都可以成为彼此的公共智慧。

什么是解脱

主持人：有个问题是这样的：学佛是为了解脱，到底什么是解脱？怎么证明自己得到了解脱？

济群法师：解脱是佛法修学的核心，但今天的人对解脱有太多误解。当我们说到解脱的时候，或是觉得它非常遥远，似乎难以企及，甚至是不敢想象的；

或是觉得解脱偏于消极，好像要把世间责任统统放下，什么都不做才行。两者都有失偏颇。

我觉得，今天的人特别需要解脱。因为这个时代最大的特点，就是每个人都活得很累，很迷茫，很困惑。我们有了越来越富足的生活，但烦恼不减反增。通常，我们会通过喝酒、娱乐、旅游来自我麻醉。但这只是一种短暂的缓解，并不能真正解除烦恼，反而借酒浇愁愁更愁。而在这种自我麻醉的过程中，一方面会产生依赖，一方面也会逐渐产生“抗药性”，最后生无可恋，做什么都觉得没啥意思。事实上，这样的人正在与日俱增。所以说，每个人都有解脱的需要，却没有解脱的途径。

学佛所做的，就是通过闻思修，帮助我们看清内在的情绪烦恼，进而加以对治。所以，佛法所说的解脱不是让我们消极避世，隐身山林，而是破除内在无明，放下错误执著。当我们没有了烦恼迷惑，一样可以做事业，过日子，可以自利利他，但会过得更幸福、更智慧、更慈悲。所以，没有哪个人不需要解脱。

怎么知道自己是否解脱，如果你能摆脱一件事情

的束缚，在这方面没有任何困扰，就从这件事情中解脱了。究竟的解脱，是彻底断除一切烦恼——当你具备这样的能力，自然知道自己是否解脱。

佛法中的积极内容

主持人：下面的问题是：今年4月，中共中央政治局常委、全国政协主席俞正声在北京人民大会堂会见中国佛教协会新一届领导班子的时候，指出要挖掘佛教教理中的积极内容，广泛聚集力量，服务社会发展。在您看来，什么是佛教教理中的积极内容？难道佛教教理还有不积极的内容吗？

济群法师：佛法是一种大智慧，是对人生和世界的正确认识，在任何时空都是有其普世价值的。但在佛教传播过程中，确实有不少人对此存在误解。比如佛教说苦，说空，说无常、无我、涅槃，很多人就视之为消极。苦是否定，空是否定，无常是否定，无我也是否定，难道学佛就让人什么都不要干吗？

事实上，佛法修行有两个面向。一方面是偏向对负面的否定，另一方面是偏向对正面的开显。所谓否定，并不是要否定人生乃至世界，而是要否定我们的错误认识和执著。比如空是否定对“有”的执著；无常是否定对“永恒”的执著；无我是否定对“自我”的执著；涅槃则是平息内在的迷惑烦恼，而不是让我们放弃生活，更不是停止生命。当我们没有正确理解这些法义时，仅凭自己的想当然，可能会觉得佛教是消极的。这些误解需要通过对佛法的弘扬去纠正。

同时，我们更要看到佛教对正面的开显。佛法认为，每个众生都具有和佛菩萨同样的智慧德相，又称佛性、觉性。它是圆满而清净的，在圣不增，在凡不减。从究竟意义上说，学佛就是要开显这个本来具足的宝藏，这才是修行之本，也是人生终极的意义所在。

新时代的佛教事业

主持人：今年 4 月，国家宗教事务局局长王作安提出，中国佛教事业迎来大有作为的历史性机遇。新

一任佛协会长学诚法师也提出“新时期、新使命、新担当”。请问，佛教不是讲无为吗？法师眼中的佛教事业是什么？如何看待历史性的机遇？如何理解这三个“新”？

济群法师：一个出家人所做的就是内修外弘，我理解的佛教事业也是如此。当今社会最大的问题，就是人的心态不好，进而衍生了种种社会问题。关于此，我们一方面要从根本入手，对人心加以引导和调整；另一方面，也要针对现实存在的问题，比如城市文明、环保、财富、幸福等等，提出佛法的思考和解决之道，帮助人们从更高的角度来审视现实生活，审视所处时代。

今天是一个非常特殊的时代。有人说这是一个最糟的时代，也有人说这是一个最好的时代。到底是好是糟？关键在于我们有没有智慧。一方面，这个时代制造了太多诱惑，几乎让人防不胜防，所以从道德人心到生态环境都问题重重，愈演愈烈。如果没有选择的智慧，很容易陷入这种混乱状态，难以自拔。

另一方面，互联网、全球化给我们提供的资讯和平台，是任何一个时代无法相比的。我们今天弘法，可以和整个世界相通。只要你说得有道理，对人有启发，就可以在更大的平台上利益众生，为社会尽一份力。所以从手段上说，这个时代提供的因缘是前所未有的，关键在于自己能否用好。《楞严经》说：“若能转境，则同如来。”你是转这个世界，还是被世界所转？就取决于你自己，取决于你能不能在漫天资讯中善巧取舍，在滚滚红尘中站稳脚跟。

佛教所说的无为，并不是不作为，而是“因上努力，果上随缘”。佛菩萨在因地修行时，都曾发过种种大愿。这种愿力之大、之深、之广，尽虚空难以容纳。而历代祖师为传承并弘扬佛法付出的努力，也是令人震撼，令人油然而生敬佩之心的。

至于佛教在这个时代的使命和担当，我觉得从根本上说，出家人的使命和担当在任何时代都是一以贯之的。但要看到，每个时代都有特定的因缘和文化背景，我们要在审时度势之后，在弘法的平台、途径和表现形式上，以当代人喜闻乐见的方式来呈现。在这

个问题上，可以法无定法，用开放的心来接纳并学习各种技术，但传承的内容不能变。

主持人：谢谢法师，是在烈火中粉身碎骨，还是像佛经说的火中生红莲，在于自己对时代的把握。

神通和道在日用

主持人：有网友提了个好玩的小问题，他说刚刚法师在讲座里，几次提到“神通”这个词，请问您有神通吗？您刚刚还谈到佛会发光，您会发光吗？

济群法师：这主要看你怎么定义“神通”。佛教所说的神通有两种，一种是异于常人的表现，比如佛菩萨显现的各种瑞相等；另一种是在日常生活中，能够智慧地穿衣吃饭，行住坐卧。禅宗有个公案说，一位学生问禅师：人家都说你神通广大，能不能给我们显一下？禅师说，你把饭端过来，我能接过来吃；你问我问题，我可以给你回答，这就是神通。

主持人：好像禅宗经常说一句话：吃饭时吃饭，睡觉时睡觉。这是很高明的修行境界吗？很多人会觉得这个好像很简单。这么简单，难道就是佛法吗？

济群法师：事实上，现在能好好吃饭的人很少！多数人吃饭的时候，要不胡思乱想，要不百般挑剔，要不胡吃海喝，要不天南地北地闲聊，要不头也不抬地刷着手机，能够以清净心，带着觉知，了了分明地吃一餐饭的人，真的不多。

主持人：好好吃饭的人很少。这个问题听起来好像是个玩笑，事实上这也是很多人对佛教的一个误解。当年太虚大师说过，很多人看待佛教是“不问今生问来世，不敬苍生敬鬼神”，对佛教的信仰落在了追逐神通，追逐名利。法师的回应恰恰就是一个禅者风范，告诉你大道至简，不要胡思乱想。

出家人还有烦恼吗

主持人：最后一个问题是针对您个人的。您刚刚提到学佛为了灭烦恼，那您还有没有烦恼？

济群法师：这是一个很常见的问题。很多人会好奇，出家人过着与常人不同的生活，还要闻法修行，到底会不会有烦恼？其实，一个人有没有烦恼，除了修行带来的根本改变，和他的生活、观念、看问题的方式也有很大关系。在世人的生活中，爱啊，恨啊，工作啊，儿女啊，人际交往啊……错综复杂，难以平衡。相应的，纠结和烦恼也不绝如缕。而出家人一方面生活简单，另一方面能比较智慧地认识、面对和解决问题，本身就不容易产生烦恼。

世人的烦恼，很大一部分是来自得失心。而我始终觉得，出家人不存在得意和失意的问题。如果你有因缘做一些利益众生的事情，固然很好；如果没有因缘去做，你可以自己闻思、静修、坐看云起，也是清净自在，不亦乐乎。总之，怎么都是好的，有什么可烦恼？

此外，出家人还有一份愿力。我曾经发过一条微博，讲到做大事的五种利益。其中之一，就是做大事不容易失败。为什么不容易失败？因为不容易成功。当然，我说的大事不是开公司之类，而是弘扬佛法，帮助一切众生走向觉醒。这件事值得尽未来际去做，所以做就是了，不必患得患失，也没时间患得患失。

主持人：做大事就不会有烦恼，所以，法师如此清净、庄严和慈悲。我们今天在台上请教济群法师，感受更多的是法师的真诚、坦率、慈悲，我称之为“宁静的温柔”。法师传达给我们的，是他身上所具备的品质和光芒。感恩法师把佛法智慧分享给我们！





The Buddhist Perspective on the World

Master Jiqun

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Master Jiqun was invited to deliver a speech at the First Sunshine Forum on Public Wisdom and Social Development (2015) held at Peking University, a century-old institution. He brought a feast of wisdom to audiences both on-site and online through live streaming. As the central focus of the event, the forum's theme was "Opening the Great Era of Internet Plus Wisdom." In response, Master Jiqun pointed out that living in this great era calls for broad vision, open-mindedness, and profound wisdom in understanding the world. He further emphasized that the Buddhist view of the world holds

both practical value and guiding significance in our time.

This is a dazzling era. We are constantly receiving information from every corner of the world—and even from beyond our planet. From the discovery of new galaxies to theories about parallel universes, unprecedented and even groundbreaking explorations continue to emerge. In such a time, we need a global vision, a broad mind, and especially the wisdom to truly understand the world. This is not merely an abstract philosophical issue, but one that holds practical significance for everyone, because our worldview shapes our outlook on life and our values. The way we understand the world determines the choices we make, the priorities we set, and the goals we pursue in life.

The kind of world we can see depends on our own capacity for understanding. Modern scientific instruments extend this capacity, enabling us to explore further and see more broadly. Yet this ability is for the sake of external exploration. In the face of the boundless universe, we are actually "pursuing the unattainable." As Zhuangzi once

said, "Life is finite, but knowledge is infinite. To pursue the infinite with the finite is perilous!" More than two thousand years have passed, and human beings' knowledge and discoveries have advanced far beyond what was known in Zhuangzi's time. Yet, compared with the vast unknown of the universe, we are still finite beings gazing into the infinite—forever looking upward, but never reaching the end.

Does this mean that human beings cannot uncover the truth of the world? One of the Buddha's ten epithets is Knower of the Worlds. The *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* states: "In the ten directions of the worlds, all Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas do not fully know, see, or understand the infinite worlds of the east, but the Buddhas know, see, and understand them all. The same is true for the worlds in all other nine directions—the south, west, north, northeast, southeast, southwest, northwest, above and below. Therefore, the Buddha is called the Knower of the Worlds." Why is the Buddha able to perceive the truth of the world? Or, to put it another way, how does

Buddhism view the world?

Let's first look at how Buddhism explains the concept of the "world." In the *Surangama Sutra*, the Buddha instructs Ananda: "What is meant by the 'world of sentient beings'? The 'world' consists of two aspects: time and space. You should know that east, west, south, north, southeast, southwest, northeast, northwest, above, and below represent the dimensions of space, while past, present, and future represent the flow of time." In Chinese, the word for "world" is composed of two characters: *Shi*, meaning time, and *Jie*, meaning space. In this sense, "time" refers to the three periods of past, present, and future, and "space" to the ten directions. Thus, the world is the manifestation of time and space.

Based on this definition, there is no fundamental difference between the Buddha's teachings and worldly teachings. The difference lies in the direction of our search. Ordinary people look for answers in the external world, but no matter how far they go, they can never reach the end.

This is because the universe itself is infinite and boundless. However, the Buddha Dharma focuses on the mind, believing that the nature of the mind is one and the same as that of the universe. Once we realize the true nature of the mind and see our original nature, we naturally understand the mysteries of the universe. Therefore, the world is inseparable from sentient beings, nor from the mind itself. The mind is not merely a part of the world, but its key part—the very key that unlocks the mysteries of the universe.

Our ability to perceive the world determines the world we perceive. This means the ability we possess shapes the world we see. If we have a wrong understanding of the world, it will lead to delusion, afflictions, suffering, and the cycle of samsara. In light of this, Buddhism teaches that ignorance is the root of all suffering, while the right view is the key to all spiritual practice. The right view means seeing the world and life with correct understanding. It guides us to awaken wisdom, break free from delusion, and realize the truth. Next, I'd like to

share with you Buddhist understanding of the world in six perspectives.

I

The Origin of the World

In ancient times, the origin of the world was mainly explained through Creationism, for humans knew almost nothing about the universe. Amid the vast universe, people faced various uncontrollable and unknowable natural phenomena. So they felt their lives were as fragile and insignificant as a drifting leaf. This sense of vulnerability led them to believe that an external force governed their fate. Therefore, the cultures and religions of various nations recorded stories of how their gods created the world. People also believed that it was these omnipotent gods who determined their wealth and poverty, fortune and misfortune. As human beings, only through faith in

such gods could they find salvation.

In addition, there is the belief in Accidentalism[1]. Because people cannot clearly understand the truth of the world, they tend to see everything as a matter of chance and avoid thinking more deeply about it. On the surface, "chance" serves as a convenient explanation for everything, but in fact, this view carries serious hidden dangers, as it encourages people to rely on luck. For example, people may expect success without putting in any effort, or use dishonest means while still believing they can escape the consequences. Such thinking undermines the moral foundation of refraining from evil and doing good, leading to problems at both individual and societal levels.

So, how does Buddhism view the origin of the world? Buddhism teaches the principle of dependent origination. That is, it explains the world through the law of "causes, conditions, and effects." Here, dependent origination

1. Accidentalism refers to the belief that events occur by chance rather than through causes, principles, or moral order.

means that all phenomena are made up of many conditions. From something as small as a table to as vast as the entire universe, everything follows this principle. As the Buddha taught, "All dharmas arise due to causes and conditions, and all dharmas cease due to causes and conditions. This is what the Great Sramana (the Buddha) always teaches." Causes and conditions determine the formation of the world and also its destruction. Therefore, the *Agama Sutra* states: "With causes and conditions, the world arises; with causes and conditions, the world ceases."

What do "causes and conditions" mean? When many factors come together, they are not all of equal importance. Some play a primary role, while others play a supporting role. The primary factors are called "causes," and the supporting factors are called "conditions." Through the combined effects of both causes and conditions, all things arise, exist, and eventually cease. Take crops as an example: the seed is the most important cause, while the soil, sunlight, rain, and dew are the supporting conditions. Only

when both the cause and the conditions are complete can the seed take root and sprout.

The principle of dependent origination differs from both materialism and idealism in philosophy. Materialism holds that matter is the primary cause of everything, while idealism asserts that the mind is the first cause. However, Buddhism does not posit a single, independently existing first cause, nor does it believe in an omnipotent creator who made and governs the world. From the Buddhist perspective, both the universe and all forms of life arise from many conditions. It's similar to how a car runs. Does it move because of the engine alone, the wheels alone, or the steering wheel alone? It doesn't depend on any single factor; rather, it runs because many parts work together.

II

The Microscopic World

The microscopic world refers to the smallest particles of matter that make up the world. In ancient Greece, Democritus proposed the atomic theory, and in modern times, Isaac Newton developed classical physics. Both were built on the idea of Atomism. They believed that atoms are the smallest, indivisible particles of matter, and their existence is objective and constant, unaffected by any subjective factors. When these basic particles come together, they form our world and even the universe.

In the early 20th century, quantum mechanics emerged and changed these traditional views. It introduced the

concept of "wave-particle duality," while holding that matter does not possess a fixed and unchanging form. Instead, it can behave either as a wave or a particle; its behavior is random and uncertain. What surprised physicists even more was the discovery that the act of observation itself could influence what is being observed. In other words, before an object is observed, its state is not fixed; only through observation does its specific form become defined. This implies that when we observe the world, we are not merely observers, but also participants and co-creators. And to some extent we even determine the very way the world exists.

Quantum mechanics also presents a fascinating idea known as quantum entanglement. It suggests that when two fundamental particles originate from the same source, they remain connected, no matter how far apart they are. If one particle changes, the other will instantly change as well. The principle behind this phenomenon even puzzled Albert Einstein. Since the two particles are physically separated—with no material connection and

no signal passing between them—how can this "spooky action at a distance" occur? How do they communicate with each other?

Although scientists have discovered many natural phenomena, they often cannot fully explain their underlying causes. This shows that, although we place our reliance in materialism and science, some fundamental questions remain unanswered: What exactly is matter? What is its true nature? Even today, the answers to these questions remain unknown and unclear. On these issues, Buddhism has long offered its own profound insights.

In early Sectarian Buddhism, the Sarvastivada school introduced the concept of "Paramanu"—indivisible, fundamental particles that make up the material world. They even developed formulas to explain how matter could be analyzed down to its smallest particles. The Sarvastivada school held that these indivisible particles are constant throughout the past, present, and future. This view is expressed in the teaching: "Everything exists in all three

times, and the essence of all dharmas is eternal."

This view is similar to atomic theory, which holds that the material world is built upon fixed and unchanging fundamental elements—indivisible particles. These particles combine to form various objects and phenomena. And it is from these particles that all phenomena arise. Although the phenomenal world we see is illusory and unreal in nature, the indivisible particles themselves are believed to be fixed and unchanging.

However, the Mahayana Madhyamaka school negates the idea of indivisible particles. Instead, it teaches that everything is dependently arising and empty in nature. The term "dependently arising" means that all phenomena arise from many conditions; there is no fixed or independent self-nature. Here, self-nature refers to an entity that exists on its own, unchanging and independent of any conditions.

The *Heart Sutra* expresses this truth in its famous

formula: "Form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form. Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form." How should we understand "emptiness"? In Buddhism, "emptiness" does not mean that things do not exist. Rather, it aims to break free from the view of self-nature that arises in our minds. Every phenomenon, from a sheet of paper to the entire universe, including our very lives, follows the principle of dependent origination. All are formed by many interconnected conditions, with no constant, unchanging essence. When the conditions change, the phenomena change accordingly.

Mahayana Yogacara school challenges the concept of indivisible particles from another perspective. For instance, the *Twenty Verses on Consciousness-Only* states: If unchanging, indivisible particles do exist, do they have volume? If they do, it implies that they have spatial dimensions and can be further divided—so they are not truly indivisible. If they do not have volume, then they cannot exist at all. In conclusion, anything that possesses mass can be divided; otherwise, it does not exist.

The Yogacara school also provides two very important ideas.

First, the world we perceive is inseparable from our perception. We often take it for granted that the world exists outside of our perception. For example, when we see a mountain, we assume that it exists outside of our perception. However, if it truly existed outside of our perception, how could we ever perceive it?

Second, our way of perception determines the world we perceive. Buddhism believes that living beings are made up of the five aggregates, which are formed by karmic forces. Among these aggregates, the cognitive system is shaped by the accumulated experiences, views, thoughts, and other aspects of life. It is through this system that we perceive the world. Therefore, the world we perceive is not determined by the world itself, but by this cognitive system.

To explain this idea, Yogacara uses a metaphor of "One

Mind, Four Realms." For example, what humans see as water appears to fish as their home, to heavenly beings as crystal, and to hungry ghosts as pus and blood. This shows that, before the material world is perceived, the state in which it exists is uncertain; only after it is perceived does it take shape. In other words, the world exists in the way it is perceived within each cognitive system. The life forms and cognitive systems of beings—humans, fish, heavenly beings, and hungry ghosts—differ according to their karmic conditions. Through these distinct cognitive systems, the same environment appears in different ways.

Not to mention other forms of life, even among human beings, can everyone perceive the world in the same way? Do those who are color-blind, nearsighted, or farsighted see the same external world? Likewise, for those with healthy vision, do ordinary people and artists see the same scene? We are all familiar with the saying, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Why is that? It is precisely because our ways of understanding differ. Therefore, before the external world is observed, it remains full of uncertainty;

it does not possess the objective, fixed, and unchanging existence that we often assume.

III

The Macroscopic World

For a long time, Western society adhered to the geocentric theory, believing that the Earth was the center of the universe. In the 16th century, however, Nicolaus Copernicus proposed the heliocentric theory, suggesting that the Sun, not the Earth, was the center of the universe. This theory was strongly opposed by the Church at that time; as a result, the scientist Giordano Bruno, who supported this theory, was even burned to death. It was not until the 20th century, with the advent of the Hubble Space Telescope, that people discovered that the Milky Way alone contains countless stars like the Sun. At the same time, we also found that the universe itself contains countless

galaxies similar to the Milky Way. Yet, in the face of the vast universe, these discoveries are merely a drop in the ocean.

More than two thousand years ago, the Buddha already told us that the universe contains galaxies, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River or particles of dust in this world. The *Avatamsaka Sutra* offers many such descriptions. For example, the "Chapter on Vairocana Buddha" says, "Within each realm of the Lotus Treasury World Ocean, there exist as many pure and adorned worlds as there are particles of dust"; the "Chapter on the Ten Practices" states, "Upon entering samadhi, one can see in all ten directions, beyond countless worlds as numerous as dust particles, countless buddhas dwelling in those worlds"; and the "Chapter on the Ten Pervasive Knowledges" further describes, "Hundreds of worlds, thousands of worlds, hundreds of thousands of worlds, billions of worlds, hundreds of billions of worlds, trillions of worlds, and even countless nayutas of worlds," and so on. For the texts in the *Taisho Tripitaka*, the term "world" appears over

seventy thousand times. This astonishing fact reminds us that the Buddha embodies boundless wisdom and vision—so profound, vast, immeasurable, and truly beyond comprehension.

How does Buddhism understand the world? Let's begin with the concept of the Three Realms. These realms—the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm—describe the different states of life experienced by sentient beings.

For example, in the Desire Realm, beings are still indulging in sensual pleasures such as food and sex. This realm includes, at its highest level, the Six Heavens; in the middle, the Four Continents, which consist of the human world; and at the lowest level, the Eight Great Hells.

Above the Desire Realm lies the Form Realm, where beings still have form but are free from sexual desires. This realm consists of four meditation levels, which comprise eighteen heavens.

Beyond the Form Realm lies the Formless Realm, where beings are devoid of physical form and sexual desire. They exist entirely within deep and subtle states of meditation. This realm includes the Four Formless Heavens.

Although beings in the Three Realms have different states of life, these realms are all places where sentient beings come and go through birth and death. Therefore, the purpose of Buddhist practice is to transcend the Three Realms and break free from the cycle of samsara.

Buddhism also offers another way of categorizing sentient existence, known as the Six Realms. These include the three lower realms—hells, hungry ghosts, and animals, and the three higher realms—heavenly beings, humans, and asuras. Together, they form the cycle of samsara, known as the Six Realms or Six Destinies, where all sentient beings are reborn according to their karma.

Beyond the Six Ordinary Realms, there are the Four Noble Realms: Sravakas (hearers), Pratyekabuddhas

(solitary realizers), Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. Together, they form the Ten Dharma Realms. Each of the Ten Dharma Realms represents a different state of life and corresponds to a distinct kind of world.

The Great Trichiliocosm is also a common concept in Buddhism that describes the structure of the world. In modern terms, a world refers to a system centered around one sun, with planets revolving around it. It also includes all sentient beings within the Six Realms of existence. A thousand such worlds form a Small Chiliocosm; a thousand Small Chiliocosms form a Medium Chiliocosm; and a thousand Medium Chiliocosms form a Great Chiliocosm. The Great Chiliocosm is also called the Great Trichiliocosm. Each Great Trichiliocosm is merely the domain where a single buddha teaches sentient beings; it does not encompass the entirety of the universe.

How many Great Trichiliocosms exist in the universe? When the Buddha delivered the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, he radiated brilliant light that filled the worlds,

declaring: "Each of these rays of light illuminates a Great Trichiliocosm, and as they extend further, they illuminate countless buddha worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River." The term "sands of the Ganges River" (Gangesha) is often used in Buddhist teachings to describe an innumerable quantity, beyond the grasp of calculation. The grains of sand in the Ganges are so tiny and numerous that even a handful is impossible to count, let alone all the sands in the entire river. Likewise, the Great Trichiliocosm in the universe are as countless as the sands of the Ganges River. They extend in all directions—east, west, south, north, southeast, southwest, northeast, northwest, above and below—each direction containing countless worlds. The sheer magnitude is truly beyond imagination.

As we all know, the well-known *Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra* vividly presents the wondrous worlds. Vimalakirti, a lay practitioner, had "made offerings to countless buddhas, deeply cultivated the roots of virtue, attained insight into the true nature of all phenomena, and possessed

unparalleled eloquence." One day, he manifested illness and lay in bed. Upon hearing this, Sakyamuni Buddha sent his great disciples to visit Vimalakirti. However, these prominent disciples—Sariputra, Maudgalyayana, Subhuti, Purna, Mahakatyayana, Aniruddha, Upali, Rahula, Ananda, and even Maitreya Bodhisattva—all declined the task. They all had experienced Vimalakirti's sharp wisdom and eloquence before, and knew that visiting him would mean facing a great challenge of answering his questions. Realizing they couldn't match his eloquence or respond adequately, no one dared to go and visit him.

Finally, it was the turn of Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. Although he knew the task would be difficult, he accepted it, as it had been entrusted to him by the Buddha. Everyone knew that when Manjushri met Vimalakirti, there would surely be a profound exchange of Dharma. Therefore, "eight thousand bodhisattvas, five hundred sravakas, and hundreds of thousands of heavenly beings all wanted to follow him." Surprisingly, when this great assembly entered Vimalakirti's small room—only ten feet

in size, it did not feel crowded at all.

Since everyone was standing, Vimalakirti asked Manjushri Bodhisattva, "Noble one, you have traveled across immeasurable worlds. In which Buddha land is there a lion throne adorned with the most supreme and wondrous virtues?" Manjushri replied, "In the east, beyond thirty-six Buddha lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges River, there is a world called Merudhvaja. The Buddha there is named Merupradiparaja. His body is eighty-four thousand *yojanas* tall, and so is the height of his throne. It is the most magnificently adorned throne that exists." If one yojana is taken to be about twenty kilometers, the size of this throne is truly beyond imagination.

Vimalakirti then displayed his supernatural powers. As the sutra states, "The Buddha Merupradiparaja immediately sent thirty-two thousand lion thrones—lofty, vast, exquisitely adorned, and supremely pure—into Vimalakirti's room. The bodhisattvas, great disciples, and celestial beings such as Sakra, Brahma, and the Four

Heavenly Kings, all witnessed something they had never seen before. Amazingly, Vimalakirti's small room was able to hold all thirty-two thousand lion thrones without any obstruction. Meanwhile, the city of Vaishali and the four continents of Jambudvipa remained unchanged, appearing exactly as before." Despite the thirty-two thousand lion thrones, Vimalakirti's small room was able to hold them all. What was even more extraordinary was that the room did not grow larger, nor did the thrones shrink in size.

This is not magic, but reflects the Buddhist view that all things exist in unity, without obstructing each other. It reveals that material things do not possess an objective, fixed, and unchanging essence. If we cling to the view of inherent self-nature, we see what is large as large and what is small as small. As a result, we cannot understand how a larger object could fit into a smaller one.

Take a computer screen for example. Though it is so small, it can display five thousand years of history and

span thousands of miles, all with perfect clarity. When we look at the screen, we don't feel that the world has shrunk, nor that the computer has expanded. Similarly, with the development of virtual reality (VR), we can experience countless vivid scenarios—from the sky to the ocean—all contained within a headset. Such effects are, of course, made possible by VR technology. However, for practitioners, once they transcend the view of inherent self-nature and abide in the state of emptiness, the concepts of "large" or "small" are seen as nothing more than dreams, illusions, bubbles, or shadows. There is no true "large" or "small" in nature.

We often perceive distinctions—heavy or light, beautiful or ugly, noble or lowly—and experience the obstacles they cause. In fact, all of these come from our own minds and attachments.

IV

The Formation and Evolution of the World

How did the world come into being and how does it change? What forces determine its creation and transformation? From Christianity's perspective, it is the result of God's will. From modern science's perspective, the strong nuclear force, weak nuclear force, electromagnetic force, and gravity drive the operation of the universe and the natural world.

Buddhism teaches the principle of dependent origination, which holds that the world arises out of numerous causes and conditions. Among these, the six elements—earth,

water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness—are considered fundamental, representing the material level. At the same time, Buddhism also teaches that "One should observe the nature of the Dharma realm; all things are created by the mind." This means that all phenomena are inseparable from the functioning of the mind. As the world forms and changes, the mind plays an active and dominant role, while matter is passive. However, both mind and matter are impermanent. The mind undergoes arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing; the body experiences birth, aging, sickness, and death; and the world itself goes through formation, existence, decay, and emptiness. Even the countless planets throughout the universe are constantly changing, though our senses are often too dull to perceive such changes. Therefore, Buddhist sutras and treatises focus on exploring the mind. They deeply analyze and explain the mind in all its forms, from the true mind to the deluded mind, and from consciousness to the subconscious.

In Buddhism, the world comes into being through the

coming together of many causes and conditions. After it forms, it enters a period of relative stability. At this period, the ecological environments begin to take shape, and become suitable for living beings, including humans. Over time, however, the world begins to decline—as it follows its own natural processes and as humans consume and exhaust its resources. At last, it breaks apart into dust and is completely destroyed. Moreover, every planet in the universe goes through this same cycle of formation, existence, decay, and emptiness.

Humans appeared on the Earth during its stable period. This raises another question: How did humans come to be? Christianity believes that after creating heaven, earth, and all things in five days, God created the first human—the ancestor of humankind—on the sixth day, shaping him from the dust of the ground in his own image.

Buddhism does not acknowledge the existence of a creator. Instead, it teaches that human beings originated from celestial beings of Abhasvara Heaven—also known as

the Light-Sound Heaven. According to the *Dirgha Agama Sutra* (Long Discourses), these celestial beings, after exhausting their merits and lifespan, were reborn in this realm. At first, they lived on the power of thought, could fly freely through the air by supernatural powers, and radiated their own light. When they saw sweet dew rising from the earth, looking like butter and honey, they became curious and decided to taste it. Finding it delicious, they continued to eat more and more. As a result, their bodies became heavier, their divine radiance faded, and they lost their supernatural powers. Eventually, they could no longer fly and became permanently bound to live in this world.

According to the *Agganna Sutra* (*the Sutra on the Origin of the World*), when beings from the Light-Sound Heaven first arrived on Earth, their past residual blessings allowed them to live without farming, as natural rice grew spontaneously. This rice could be taken as desired, and would regrow when being harvested. However, as their blessings gradually diminished, out of laziness and greed,

they found it troublesome to gather food for every meal and decided to store it in advance. Their repeated over-harvesting ultimately depleted their blessings, leaving them no option but to cultivate the land for a living.

Additionally, Buddhism teaches that the world goes through the cycles of growth and decline during its stable period, also known as ascending kalpas and descending kalpas. During an ascending kalpa, the world develops in a positive direction, while in a descending kalpa, it deteriorates. This is not determined by any external force, but depends on the collective moral behavior of humanity. As human morality declines, people fall into conflict and recklessly exploit resources. This gives rise to many problems—natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, as well as human-made calamities like wars, epidemics, and famines. Conversely, as human morality improves, society becomes more harmonious and stable, and the ecological environment grows increasingly balanced. This reflects the Buddhist principle that the external environment transforms in accordance with the inner moral

state of sentient beings.

Therefore, every individual's thoughts and actions not only determine their own destiny, but also contribute to the collective karma that ultimately shapes the future of the world. Today, as the environment continues to deteriorate and social problems keep emerging, the root cause lies in the moral decline of humanity. Modern technology, while advancing rapidly, has in some ways amplified our destructive power. Take environmental pollution as an example. The damage in the past century surpasses that of all previous millennia combined. This is a consequence visible to all, and one from which humanity is now suffering.

We are victims, yet we are also part of the cause. On the one hand, everyone's actions affect this world; on the other hand, the problems of this world directly impact everyone, leaving no one untouched. For example, can you truly escape the effects of smog? Even if you can move to a better environment, can you avoid the risks brought by

global warming? As the saying goes, "When I'm dead, the flood may come for all I care." Such an attitude is not only selfish but also foolish and short-sighted.

If we wish to transform society, we draw on the wisdom of dependent origination. It teaches us that each individual is an integral part of the whole world—mutually supportive and inseparable. Only in this way can we consciously start to transform ourselves from this very moment. Otherwise, although many people recognize the importance of environmental protection, when it conflicts with personal interests, they still put their immediate gains first. This happens because they fail to see the connection between the individuals and the world, and to realize how deeply our destinies are interconnected.

Therefore, a correct understanding of the world is crucial for the healthy development of both individual lives and human society. For people in China today, it is especially important to focus on the cultivation of ethical values, mindsets, and moral behaviors. This is the foundation

for realizing the Chinese Dream of rejuvenation. Without this foundation, we wouldn't even know what dream we are realizing.

V

The Principles of the World

Throughout history, while philosophers and theologians have pursued the nature of the world, scientists have also been searching for laws that explain all phenomena in the universe. From classical physics to quantum mechanics, from Einstein's theory of relativity to the latest string theory, they have been trying to uncover the underlying mysteries and principles of the universe.

However, as new theories emerged, scientists realized that none of them could explain all phenomena. For instance, classical physics cannot explain the phenomena in relativity, and relativity cannot account for the phenomena

in quantum mechanics. Why does this happen? Because each theory reveals only a limited principle. In other words, a principle works only within a certain range; once it goes beyond that range, it no longer holds true—it isn't universally valid. To some extent, string theory attempts to address these contradictions. It seeks to explain both the macroscopic and microscopic worlds. However, it remains a hypothesis that has yet to be scientifically verified.

From Buddhism's perspective, the universal principles of the world are the Three Dharma Seals, which are impermanence, no-self, and nirvana. These are the truths realized by the Buddha, and are the criteria for differentiating Buddhist teachings from non-Buddhist ones.

The first principle is impermanence, which reveals the non-permanent nature of all things. In this world, from atoms and quarks to planets, galaxies, and even the entire universe, as well as everything and everyone around us, is there anything truly constant and unchanging? Does anything exist independently, without relying on any

conditions? In fact, this is not only a Buddhist insight but also a principle affirmed by scientific discoveries. As long as we are willing to observe reality as it is, we will find that nothing in this world is permanent. We could say that people don't really fail to understand impermanence—they just prefer to ignore it. It's as if by ignoring it, they could somehow keep it from touching their lives, allowing them to stay a little longer in the illusion of permanence and indulge in its fleeting comfort.

The second principle is no-self, which explains the non-dominating nature of all things. Buddhism teaches the principle of dependent origination, which holds that all phenomena arise from many conditions. Everything exists within a system where all factors work together, rather than being dominated by any single, ruling force. For example, a car runs and a plane flies—both rely on the countless parts working together. Although there are primary and secondary factors, nothing serves as the sole, unchanging and dominating factor. This also applies to our own bodies. If we could truly be their master, we

would never allow them to grow old, fall ill, or die. But can we make that happen? Clearly not. This is because within this system, there is no real "self" that rules over everything.

The third principle is nirvana, a state of ultimate tranquility. It teaches us that only by settling our inner delusion and afflictions can the mind find peace and life attain true freedom. Conversely, as long as delusion remains, it will inevitably lead to afflictions and suffering. Even if everything seems smooth at the moment, as long as the causes of suffering remain, we will continue to cycle through the six realms of samsara, unable to find true liberation.

With these principles in mind, we can examine whether any phenomena in the world transcend or fail to conform to them.

Furthermore, Mahayana Madhyamaka teaches the core principle that everything arises from conditions and is

empty in nature. It reveals that all phenomena arise out of conditions, with no permanent or unchanging essence. From our physical bodies to mountains, rivers, the earth, and the entire universe, everything is without inherent self-nature. This insight first seeks to break free from the view of inherent self-nature, and further reveals that all phenomena hold infinite potential.

Since nothing has a permanent nature, things change according to our state of mind. However, some may ask, "If so, why can't I turn everything in my house into gold?" The issue isn't with the principle itself, but with the limits of your way of perception and karmic system. Simply put, you do not have sufficient abilities. There's a difference between "how I perceive" and "what I want." The former is shaped by your views, mindsets, and the quality of your life, while the latter is mere delusion, which holds no real power.

In our lives, karmic forces determine our way of perception, which shape the objects of our perception. As the

teaching says, all things are devoid of inherent self and empty in nature; this means that anything is possible.

Based on this principle, Buddhism emphasizes the practice of visualization. Through visualization, we can adjust our mindset and transform our behavior. When our body and mind are transformed from within, and we attain the wisdom of emptiness through meditation, it is then possible to transcend the existing ordinary life system.

The Yogacara sutras and treatises present two key principles. First, the objects we perceive do not exist apart from our perception. Second, our way of perception shapes the world we perceive. As discussed earlier, this highlights the need to examine how we perceive and how capable our perception is. A song lyric goes, "It's not that I don't understand; it's just that the world is changing too fast." But in fact, the real issue lies in our own lack of understanding, not in anything else. We must start by examining our own mind—seeing through its delusive thoughts, understanding its workings, and uncovering

its true nature. Only then can we truly understand the world. It's like looking through a distorted, broken funhouse mirror—how could we possibly see things clearly?

These principles are significant for understanding life and seeing the world clearly. After all, the mind is the key that unlocks the mysteries of the universe.

VI

Perception and the World Perceived

I once published a book titled *Perception and the World Perceived*, which interprets the *Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only*. It explores the relationship between our perception and the world we perceive. In the preface, I wrote: "Although the world is complex, it can be understood through two aspects: perception and the world perceived. So, what is perception? What is the world perceived? And what is the relationship between them? Are they independent or interdependent?"

The section on the Three Kinds of Subjective

Transformers focuses on exploring the mysteries of perception—specifically the eight consciousnesses and fifty-one mental factors. The concepts of Three Natures and Three Non-natures[1] reveal the various forms of phenomena and their essences, while the theory of Consciousness-Only demonstrates the interdependent relationship between perception and the world perceived. Consciousness-Only explores perception and the world perceived, aiming to help us attain its Middle Way perspective. By applying this understanding to the meditation on emptiness, we can ultimately transform the quality of our lives."

As mentioned earlier, our way of perception determines the world we perceive. We can further explain it through the Yogacara teaching of the Three Natures: the Imagined Nature, the Dependent Nature, and the Perfected Nature, which represent three levels of perception. By

1. Three Non-natures refers to three kinds of non-nature, defined from the perspective that all phenomena lack self-nature, offering an explanation rooted in the concept of emptiness.

understanding these principles, we learn how to distinguish illusion from reality. In this way, we can transform our perception, cultivate wholesome mental actions, and turn defilement into purity.

The first is the Imagined Nature, which refers to the world of subjective illusions. That is to say, the mental images that arise in our perception are merely illusions. Why is this so? Because when we perceive the world, our views, experiences, emotions, habits, and cultural background all shape what we see. This way of perception is like wearing tinted glasses—it colors and distorts everything we see, hear, and sense. For instance, have you ever felt an instant affinity with someone, or an immediate dislike for another person? Such experiences show that the world we perceive has already been filtered and reshaped by our own mind.

This reshaping process is continuous. When we find someone appealing, we come up with countless reasons to prove their charm; when we find someone unpleasant, we do the same to prove our dislike. In many cases, rationality

serves as a tool for our emotions. As this reshaping process deepens, we grow more attached to those we like and more averse to those we dislike. In this way, afflictions naturally arise.

The second is the Dependent Nature, which refers to the world that manifests through causes and conditions. According to Buddhist teachings, the world we perceive is closely connected with the mind. Each mental activity consists of three parts: the perceiving function, the perceived object, and self-awareness. The perceiving function refers to the discriminating role of the six consciousnesses in perceiving external objects, such as the eyes that can see and the ears that hear. The perceived object is the image of external phenomena reflected in the mind. Self-awareness is the mind's intrinsic ability for self-awareness and self-realization; it is this function that connects our perception with the images we perceive. In essence, the external world we perceive and our perception arise from the same source—the mind.

Understanding these principles makes it easier to comprehend the quantum mechanics theories mentioned earlier. The randomness and freedom of quantum particles are much like the characteristics of consciousness. Before matter takes form, it is influenced by free will, or the power of the mind. Only after it takes shape does it follow certain rules. For example, before taking action, we face choices: what to do and what not to do. Once a choice is made and repeated, it develops into a habit. The material world operates in a similar way.

The third is the Perfected Nature—the true nature of the world. Although phenomena appear in various forms, each is empty in nature. On the level of emptiness, all things are equal, perfectly harmonious and unobstructed, free from any opposition between "this" and "that." Moreover, the perceiving mind and the perceived world are fundamentally one. As the sutra states, "The Tathagata's divine eye is supremely pure; he sees all worlds, all beings' distinctive forms and characteristics, and all kinds of phenomena, as clearly as he sees an amla fruit in the palm

of the hand." Conversely, as long as we cling to the duality of subject and object, our perception will inevitably be limited or even erroneous.

Ordinary beings usually live within the realm of the Imagined Nature. The Yogacara teachings illustrate this with a metaphor. At night, someone sees a rope on the ground. But due to the dim moonlight, he mistakes it for a snake and becomes terrified. Similar stories include "seeing the reflection of a bow in a cup and mistaking it for a snake" and "suspecting a neighbor of stealing an axe." Although there is no snake in the cup, and the neighbor has stolen nothing, until the truth is revealed, these illusions feel entirely real and still disturb the body and mind.

Ordinary beings are bound by attachments to self and to phenomena, as well as by two kinds of obscurations—cognition and affliction. Because of this, we interpret the world through our own emotions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences, constantly reshaping what we see, hear, sense and perceive. In this way, we give rise to afflictions,

suffering, and the cycle of samsara.

Exploring the relationship between perception and the world perceived is grounded in understanding phenomena that arise from conditions—the Dependent Nature. When we misunderstand these phenomena, we fall into the Imagined Nature and remain caught in the cycle of samsara. When we understand them correctly, we can break free from the Imagined Nature and realize the ultimate truth of emptiness—the Perfected Nature. The difference between these two paths lies in whether we can correctly understand phenomena—This marks the dividing line between samsara and liberation.

Additionally, the Madhyamaka school understands the world through two truths: conventional truth and ultimate truth. Conventional truth refers to the worldly principles, summarized by ordinary beings through what they see, hear, and experience. Ultimate truth, by contrast, is the true nature of all phenomena, realized by the awakened ones.

What is the relationship between these two truths? As Nagarjuna Bodhisattva teaches: "Without relying on conventional truth, the ultimate truth cannot be attained. Without attaining the ultimate truth, nirvana cannot be achieved." This tells us that without correctly understanding worldly phenomena, we cannot realize the ultimate truth; without realizing the ultimate truth, we cannot eliminate afflictions and achieve nirvana.

In summary, all teachings—whether the Agamas, Madhyamaka, or Consciousness-Only—seek to help us overcome our misunderstandings about the world and reveal its true nature. Only by first establishing a correct understanding of the world, and then, under the guidance of the right view, internalizing these insights through meditation, can we attain concentration and wisdom, realize emptiness, and awaken as the Buddha did.

VII

Conclusion

By viewing the world through the Buddha Dharma, we come to appreciate its depth and breadth, and develop heartfelt respect for the Buddha's wisdom. Today, as technology advances, Buddhism is far from outdated; rather, it offers insights that can complement the limits of modern science. As Professor Zhu Qingshi wrote in his essay, the "Physics Stepping into the Realm of Chan: Dependent Origination and Emptiness," "When scientists, after great efforts, finally reach the summit, they find that the Buddhist masters have been waiting there all along."

The purpose of understanding the world correctly is to

help us rediscover ourselves, purify our minds, and cultivate a healthy character. Only in this way can we see hope for the world to change—for as the sutra says, "When the mind is pure, the land is pure."

VIII

Lecture Q&A

On the morning of October 16, Master Jiqun was invited to give a lecture, titled "The Buddhist Perspective on the World," at the First Public Wisdom and Social Development Sunshine Forum (2015). The 300-seat lecture hall at the Yingjie Exchange Center of Peking University was packed to capacity. At the same time, more than 300,000 people joined online via live text and video streaming on NetEase and Youku.

After the two-hour lecture, both onsite and online participants eagerly raised questions about the current state of the Buddhist community and issues related to personal

practice. Master Jiqun responded with candor, wisdom, and humor, addressing many misunderstandings about Buddhism. The hall was filled with waves of applause.

1. How to View Negative News?

Host: We are honored to have Master Jiqun with us at the forum. After listening to his lecture, I have two main reflections. First, the Master presented to us a well-structured and rigorous Buddhist worldview, which enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of how Buddhism perceives the world. Second, behind all his words was a spirit of profound compassion.

Now that we have gained a basic understanding of the Buddhist worldview, the question is: how can we integrate these principles into everyday lives? I believe this is what everyone here, as well as those joining us online, is most eager to explore.

The first question is very down-to-earth. Many people are

concerned about a social issue this year, which we may call the "Shaolin Temple Controversy." During the live broadcast, they raised various questions about it. When facing such controversy, our understanding of Buddhism often appears fragile, and even easily shaken. Master, could you please share your thoughts on this?

Master Jiqun: We were just discussing such lofty ideas, and now we suddenly come back to a very down-to-earth question—quite a shift, isn't it? It seems we have to be able to move easily between the lofty and the ordinary!

As a member of the Buddhist community, I find it unfortunate that such controversy has occurred. It has not only affected the Shaolin Temple, but also continued to tarnish and devalue the public image of Buddhism. This is a misfortune not only for the Buddhist community, but for society as a whole.

In today's society, vicious criminal cases are happening frequently, moral bottom lines are collapsing, and a

restless atmosphere seems to be everywhere. Why do we see so many such problems? At the root, they stem from people's mindset. This is an age that severely lacks spiritual pursuit, cultivation of character, and moral development. And it is precisely in these areas that Buddhism excels, offering wisdom and guidance.

Buddhism is often called a "study of the mind." It not only helps us address immediate inner troubles, but more importantly, teaches us how to fundamentally transform our mindset—to move away from suffering and attain happiness. For centuries, it has served as a guide for self-cultivation and a treasury of moral wisdom for the Chinese people. If we neglect and waste this treasure, then when we fall into confusion or our society faces crises, where else can we turn for solutions?

I aspire to spread the Dharma not merely because I am a monk or a Buddhist, but because I see its value for society as a whole. Buddhism has two aspects—transcending the world and engaging with it. It offers ultimate solutions to

many issues that people care about, such as wealth, environmental protection, and ethical development. This is why we must study Dharma together, uphold the true teachings, and build effective channels for sharing its wisdom, so that more people may benefit from it.

If we neither study nor uphold the Dharma, we may fall into misunderstandings simply because we do not know the truth. Rumors can then spread from one to another, giving space for malicious attacks and slander. In today's information age, countless messages are being created and circulated every moment—some are genuine, while others are driven by malicious hype. Therefore, learning to view and discern information with wisdom is especially important for people today. Without careful discernment, we may easily be swayed by those with hidden motives, or even unknowingly take part in online abuse—bringing no benefit to others and harming ourselves.

On this matter, I find Thich Nhat Hanh's words particularly meaningful: "I am determined not to spread

news that I am uncertain of, nor to criticize or condemn what I am not sure about. I will avoid speech that could cause division or discord, or break families and communities apart. I will do my best to reconcile and settle all conflicts, no matter how small."

Indeed, after the devastation of the Cultural Revolution, and the impact of commercialization that followed the Reform and Opening-up, Buddhism has faced many challenges today. In some ways, it has strayed from its true purpose. The essential role of the monastic community is twofold: to cultivate the mind and to spread the Dharma—improving the quality of life through practice and guiding people through teaching. This fundamental mission should remain free from commercial influence. Once financial interests are involved, conflicts of interest inevitably arise, leading to various social problems. To change this situation, both the Buddhist community and the public must work together.

Host: Thank you, Master Jiqun, for addressing such a

sensitive topic so openly. Today, Buddhism is no longer merely a concern of the monastic community. It calls for the collective wisdom of society to preserve and support it.

2. Why Doesn't the Buddha Bless Stock Investors?

Host: Our next question is even more down-to-earth. This year, many people have gone through the stock market crash. So why didn't the Buddha bless the investors?

Master Jiqun: First of all, we need to have a correct understanding of the stock market itself. Buddhism is a wisdom for living. It teaches us the right attitude toward life and sound principles for managing wealth. This is the foundation. Only with this foundation can the Buddha truly bless us. If our approach to wealth is misguided—for example, driven by a strong speculative mindset in the stock market—then if the buddhas and bodhisattvas were to bless such people, it would only bring harm to others.

There are two kinds of activities in the stock market: investment and speculation. Investment can benefit economic growth—as seen in today's efforts to promote crowdfunding and innovation, which create win-win situations. But many people enter the market only with a speculative mindset, chasing quick profits out of greed. Prayers made from such intentions do not resonate with the purity and compassion of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. As a result, such prayers are in vain.

3. Can Buddhism and Science Verify Each Other?

Host: In your lecture just now, when you spoke about the relationship between Buddhism and science, you used many theories to compare the two. Science has developed for over a thousand years, while Buddhism has existed for more than 2,500 years. Yet today, people often use scientific discoveries to verify the teachings of Buddhism—much like trying to validate the wisdom of an elder with the words of the young. Is such a comparison reasonable? Ultimately, should Buddhism be verified by science, or

should science be verified by Buddhism?

Master Jiqun: In fact, neither Buddhism nor science needs to validate the other. But why do we make such comparisons? As you said, the Dharma embodies ancient truth, while science represents a new form of wisdom. Young people often communicate in ways that are closer to how you think. To help them understand, we need to speak in their language; otherwise, a gap in understanding may arise, making genuine connection difficult.

We make comparisons between science and Buddhism to help people understand the Dharma through the lens of science. Today, many people admire science, seeing it as advanced, while dismissing Buddhism as superstition, outdated, or ignorant. This is why we use such methods of interpretation—this is called skillful means. Without such comparisons, many people may never realize how vast and profound the wisdom of the Dharma truly is.

4. The Key to Releasing Animals Lies in Compassion and the Protection of Life

Host: Since the beginning of this year, we've seen many reports in the mainstream media about animal release. For example, releasing snakes in residential areas, or unsuitable non-native species into local waters, which disrupts the ecological balance. Animal release is an important Buddhist tradition, and more and more Buddhists are participating in it in various ways. How can we balance this enthusiasm with the public's concerns? And how can we release the animals in a way that brings happiness and harmony to everyone?

Master Jiqun: The essence of releasing animals lies in cultivating compassion and protecting life. Yet nowadays, many people focus on seeking blessings or protection, treating it as a shortcut to dispel misfortune and illness. Few people genuinely approach it as a practice of bodhi-citta, motivated by true compassion and care for living beings.

If the act of releasing animals is not guided by deep compassion for all beings, the focus easily shifts from how to benefit them most to simply having performed the act itself. In some cases, animal releases are organized mainly to strengthen the solidarity among followers or to promote an event. As a result, they seek impressive numbers and a lively atmosphere, placing the emphasis on spectacle and ritual display. Sometimes animals are even pre-ordered in bulk, prompting vendors to increase capture just to meet the demand—leaving one to wonder what such release is truly for.

Another issue is that, today, both the species being released and the environments into which they are placed are far more diverse and complex than in ancient times. Without careful consideration, such practices are bound to create problems. This is something we urgently need to reflect upon.

Compassion and wisdom are the two pillars of Buddhist practice, and the same applies to releasing animals. First,

we should ask ourselves whether we truly feel compassion for them. When we see animals facing death, do we feel deep empathy and wish to save them from danger? In doing so, we form a Dharma connection and wish them to be free from suffering and attain happiness. Second, we must also consider their survival after release, the potential impact on the environment, and how they can coexist peacefully with humans and other beings. This requires a certain level of knowledge and understanding, so that we can make wise choices.

Of course, there is rarely a perfect solution to anything in this world. When it comes to releasing animals, as long as we act with compassion and, to the best of our ability, consider their well-being as fully as we can, we can do so with a clear conscience and without regret.

5. What Makes a True Monastic?

Host: Here is a question from the WeChat platform. It is direct and sharp. The question says: "Nowadays, some

monastics who wear robes behave in ways that many find hard to accept. Venerable Master, what makes a true monastic? As we know, Buddhism is supposed to teach humility and equality. Why do some monks today seem to act in the opposite way? Many people who study Buddhism stand on a moral high ground, judging and criticizing others who don't meet their standards. Is this really the wisdom the Dharma teaches? If Buddhism is truly a path of wisdom, why does it produce such people? If Buddhism has already lost its foundation of wisdom, why should anyone still believe in it? And how can we establish the right view?"

Master Jiqun: In today's society, counterfeits and imitations exist in almost every field, and the Buddhist community is no exception. On the one hand, there are some fake monks, nuns, and self-proclaimed "living buddhas," whose actions severely damage the public image of Buddhism. In such cases, the Buddhist community itself is also a victim. We need to reflect on what exactly people find unacceptable. It is like rejecting counterfeit

goods—would you also reject the genuine ones?

On the other hand, because current Buddhist education is inadequate, and the wave of commercialization has had a strong impact, monastics have become relatively weak in the cultivation of their discipline and character. This is an issue that the Buddhist community must take seriously.

So what makes a true monastic? From the perspective of inner qualities, one should cultivate the mind of renunciation—the aspiration for liberation—and further give rise to the bodhicitta, the resolve to help all beings attain liberation. From the perspective of outward appearance, one's conduct should align with precepts, reflecting dignity, discipline, and a serene, transcendent presence in harmony with the Dharma.

Among these, the inner qualities are fundamental. When genuine renunciation and bodhicitta are awakened, transformation naturally arises from within and manifests outward.

As for the concern about monastics appearing "lofty" or "high-status," why are they respected in the first place? It isn't because of the identity itself, but because of the meaning and mission this identity represents. When a person can let go of worldly pursuits to seek the truth, cultivate virtue, and dedicate themselves to the well-being of others, such a person naturally earns respect. Even without wearing monastic robes, such a person is worthy of the same respect. This kind of respect comes from society, not from something that one deliberately seeks.

I often remind the students at the Buddhist academy not to think that just because we have become monastics, we feel superior to others, or that because we study the Dharma, everyone else is just ignorant or inferior. When we put ourselves on a pedestal, looking down on others, pointing fingers and offering careless criticism, that sense of superiority rooted in identity is most harmful.

As monastics, without dignified demeanor, clear understanding of the Dharma, and depth of meditative

attainment—if the mind remains restless and bound by worldly ways—then how can we have the strength to inspire others or the ability to guide them? This is why some negative comments in society are not baseless. The Buddhist community needs to reflect on these phenomena and take such reflection as guidance for future efforts.

At the same time, we should not equate the phenomena in the Buddhist community, or the behaviors of certain individuals, with the Dharma itself. The Dharma embodies ultimate, perfect wisdom—true and unchanging—and its value spans across all times and places. However, the spread of Buddhism, including the presence of the Sangha, is a social phenomenon influenced by the collective karma of the era. We should not confuse the two. As for whether one chooses to have faith in the Dharma, that depends on what they seek in life and the choices they make. Whether one believes or not, the Dharma itself loses nothing.

6. What Is Love?

Host: Thank you, Master Jiqun, for your candid and sincere sharing. The next question is very brief: What is love?

Master Jiqun: The meaning of love is quite broad. In terms of its object, love may take the form of romantic love, family love, or friendship. In terms of its nature, it can be selfish or selfless, shallow or deep, fleeting or enduring. However, the kind of love Buddhism emphasizes is great loving-kindness—a wish for others to be free from suffering and to experience greater happiness. This loving-kindness extends to all beings: not only human beings, but also animals, and even spirits and unseen forms of life.

This kind of compassion arises from deep understanding and acceptance. When we realize that we and all beings are one, we naturally feel their suffering as our own, and offer help unconditionally and wholeheartedly. At the same

time, this compassion is free from attachment; it benefits countless beings with a mind that seeks nothing in return. There is no sense of superiority in thinking, "I am the one helping," nor even the thought that "others are receiving my help."

Ordinary love, by contrast, often comes from attachment and the desire to possess. It tends to be self-centered and narrow. Under the name of love, people may make demands or even try to control others: "I'm doing this all for your own good...," "I love you so much, how could you...," "I've given you so much, and yet you..." Such love brings constant anxiety over gain and loss, endless expectations, entanglements, and even unbearable suffering.

If we wish to experience love that is free from suffering and side effects, we must elevate small love into great love—transforming selfish love that seeks return into selfless love that asks for nothing in return.

7. How to Effectively Study Buddhism?

Host: Another question: "I really enjoyed the Master's talk this morning—it was excellent. But there were so many terms I couldn't understand. I truly wish to study the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings, yet when I can't even understand these terms, how can I possibly begin? There are so many sutras and so many masters teaching Dharma—how should I study Buddhism?"

Master Jiqun: Studying Buddhism is indeed not easy. On the one hand, people today are restless and constantly busy, making it hard to calm their minds, listen to the teachings, reflect on them, and practice them. On the other hand, the Buddha's teachings are vast and profound, with many sutras, treatises and methods. Even those who sincerely wish to learn often feel lost, not knowing how to choose.

I have been spreading Dharma for more than twenty years. Although I have traveled to many places to give

teachings, this approach mainly serves to form a Dharma connection with people. However, without follow-up support and systematic guidance, it is difficult for the seeds of the Dharma that are planted to truly take root and grow. Precisely because I have seen the difficulties people face in learning Buddhism, in recent years, I have focused on developing a structured system of study and practice. Through this approach, I hope to provide a supportive atmosphere, effective methods, a step-by-step path, and proper guidance to help people study and cultivate the Dharma.

First, a supportive atmosphere. A group of about ten people meets twice a week under the guidance of a facilitator to study, share, and discuss together. In this way, they help and learn from one another.

Second, effective methods. In learning Buddhism today, there are two common problems. One is engaging in abstract discussions—studying many teachings but only talking about them, without being able to apply them

in practice. The other is practicing without clear understanding—doing daily practices without knowing how to transform them into one's own understanding and mindsets. That is why having the right methods is essential. Only with the right methods can we integrate what we learn into our minds, turning abstract concepts into the right views. By using these views to adjust our mindsets, we can ultimately elevate the quality of our lives.

Third, a step-by-step path. Just as in education, we progress step by step—from primary to secondary, and then to university. Without such progression, problems can arise. Some people start with teachings that are too advanced, such as the *Platform Sutra*; they may only recite a few well-known phrases, but fail to grasp their deeper meanings, let alone put them into practice. Others never move beyond the basics, studying the same elementary material over and over, and thus remain at an elementary level. That is why progression is essential: only by moving from the simple to the profound can we advance steadily on the path.

Lastly, proper guidance. All the courses have been designed by me and come with supporting written and audio-visual materials. We have also prepared supplementary resources, together with a team of facilitators who have been carefully selected and trained to study and practice together with everyone. More details are available on our website. For those who sincerely wish to learn, we not only offer courses, but also help them build a community with a supportive atmosphere for study and practice. It sounds like I'm advertising!

Host: Master, this was definitely an ad—and a pretty long one.

Master Jiqun: A public service ad! After all, this is a public service forum.

8. Bringing Together the Internet and Wisdom

Host: Now let's get back to our main theme—Opening the Great Era of Internet Plus Wisdom. But what exactly

is "Internet Plus"? We've seen internet plus entrepreneurship, internet plus innovation, internet plus e-commerce... But what about the internet plus monasteries? Internet plus wisdom? And if so, what kind of sparks may that create?

Master Jiqun: Internet Plus is a popular mode of communication today. It means approaching various things with the vision and methods of the internet. Recently, Tencent has been promoting "Internet Plus Monastery," bringing monasteries into the internet age. I think this is a meaningful attempt.

When I first heard about the theme of this forum, I asked myself: What is Internet Plus Wisdom? From what perspective should I approach it? Then I decided to speak about something related to the world, because the internet has already created a new world for us. In this new world, we are witnessing many transformative changes—changes that have improved our ability to understand and enlarged the scope of what we know. If we can combine

this platform with Buddhist wisdom, it may help us pursue development with a broader vision and a more open mind. Moreover, when we use the internet to spread Dharma, the internet itself becomes an effective tool for understanding, cultivating, applying and realizing wisdom. In this way, the Buddha's teachings can go beyond time and space, and gradually become a kind of shared wisdom for all.

Host: Thank you, Master, for your wonderful response! The spirit of the internet and that of Buddhism share much in common. We hope that everyone's wisdom can come together to form a shared wisdom for all.

9. What Is Liberation?

Host: Since practicing Buddhism is about seeking liberation, what does liberation really mean? How do we know if we have attained it?

Master Jiqun: Liberation is at the heart of Buddhist

practice, but people today misunderstand what it truly means. Some see liberation as something distant, almost unreachable, or even unimaginable. Others see it as passive, as if one must give up all worldly responsibilities and do nothing at all. Both of these views miss the point.

I feel that people today need liberation more than ever. The defining feature of our times is that everyone feels exhausted, confused, and lost. Even though our material lives are becoming more and more abundant, our worries haven't decreased. In fact, they've multiplied. Usually, we try to numb ourselves with alcohol, entertainment, or travel. But these are only temporary escapes; they don't truly free us from afflictions. It's like trying to drown your sorrows with wine—the more you drink, the deeper the sorrow becomes. And in the cycle of self-numbing, we gradually become dependent, and at the same time, we build up a kind of "tolerance," so that over time nothing seems to bring relief anymore. Eventually, we feel empty and meaningless, losing interest in everything. In fact, more and more people are falling into this state. That's

why I say everyone needs liberation, but so few know the path to liberation.

In practicing Buddhism, what we're really doing is listening to the teachings, reflecting on them, and applying them in our lives. This helps us clearly see our own inner emotions and afflictions, and then learn how to transform them. Liberation in Buddhism does not mean withdrawing from the world, hiding away in the mountains. Rather, it means breaking through our inner ignorance and letting go of false attachments.

When we are no longer trapped by confusion and affliction, we can still run a business, live our daily lives, and benefit both ourselves and others. But we'll do so with more happiness, greater wisdom, and deeper compassion. That is why everyone, without exception, needs liberation.

So how can you know if you have attained liberation? If you can break free from the grip of something, and it no longer disturbs you, then you have freed yourself from it.

The ultimate liberation is the complete cessation of all afflictions. Once you have that capacity, you will naturally know if you are truly free.

10. The Positive Aspects of Buddhism

Host: The next question is: In April this year, Yu Zhengsheng—member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau and Chairman of the CPPCC—met with the newly elected leadership of the Buddhist Association of China at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. During the meeting, he emphasized the importance of drawing on the positive aspects of Buddhist teachings, rallying broad support, and contributing to social development. In your view, what are the positive aspects of Buddhist teachings? Does this imply that there are also aspects that are not positive?

Master Jiqun: The Buddha Dharma is a great wisdom—a correct understanding of life and the world, holding universal value across all times and places. Yet, in the course of

its transmission, many people have misunderstood it. For example, Buddhism speaks of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, no-self, and nirvana, and many regard these teachings as negative. They think that suffering is a denial, emptiness is a denial, impermanence is a denial, and no-self is also a denial. But does practicing Buddhism really mean that people should do nothing at all?

In fact, Buddhist practice has two dimensions. One emphasizes the negation of what is negative, while the other emphasizes the unfolding of what is positive. This so-called "negation" does not mean denying life or the world, but rather letting go of our wrong views and attachments. For example, emptiness negates attachment to existence; impermanence negates attachment to permanence; no-self negates attachment to the self; and nirvana pacifies inner confusion and afflictions, rather than abandoning daily life or bringing life itself to an end. When we fail to properly understand these teachings and rely only on our own assumptions, we may regard Buddhism as pessimistic. Such misunderstandings need to be corrected

through the proper transmission of the Dharma.

At the same time, we must also recognize the positive aspects that Buddhism reveals. The Dharma teaches that every sentient being possesses the same wisdom and virtues as the buddhas and bodhisattvas, also known as Buddha-nature, or the nature of awakening. It is perfect and pure—it neither increases in the enlightened beings nor diminishes in the ordinary beings. In the ultimate sense, to study and practice Buddhism is to reveal this inherently complete treasure. This is the very core of practice, and the ultimate meaning of life.

11. Buddhist Endeavors in the New Era

Host: In April this year, Wang Zuo'an, Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, noted that China's Buddhist endeavor is now embracing a historic opportunity for great achievement. At the same time, Venerable Master Xuecheng, the newly elected President of the Buddhist Association of China, put forward the

guiding vision of "New Era, New Mission, and New Responsibility." But doesn't Buddhism teach emptiness? In your view, what does the Buddhist endeavor really mean? How should we understand this historic opportunity? And how should we interpret these three "new" themes?

Master Jiqun: What a monastic undertakes is to cultivate themselves and spread the Dharma. I understand the Buddhist endeavor in the same way. The greatest problem in today's society lies in the unhealthy state of people's minds. This, in turn, gives rise to many social problems. To address this, we must begin at the root—guiding and transforming the mind—while also responding to the concrete issues of our time, such as urban civilization, environmental protection, wealth, and happiness, through the insights and solutions offered by Buddhism. In this way, we can help people view their lives and the age they live in from a higher perspective.

We live in a truly extraordinary era. Some say it is the worst of times, while others say it is the best. So is it good

or bad? The key lies in whether we have wisdom.

On the one hand, this era creates countless temptations, almost impossible to guard against. Therefore, problems have multiplied, from moral decline to environmental degradation—growing ever more severe. Without the wisdom to choose, it is easy to fall into this state of confusion and find it hard to break free.

On the other hand, the internet and globalization have given us access to information and platforms unmatched by any previous age. In spreading the Dharma today, we can connect with the entire world. As long as what we share is meaningful and inspiring, we can use these broader platforms to benefit sentient beings and contribute to society. In terms of the ways we can spread Dharma, the opportunities offered by this era are unprecedented. The crucial question is whether we can make good use of them.

As the *Surangama Sutra* says: "If one can transform

circumstances, one is the same as the Tathagata." Do you transform the world, or are you transformed by it? This depends on yourself—on whether you can discern wisely amid the flood of information and stand firm in the bustle of the world.

The concept of emptiness taught in Buddhism does not mean doing nothing. It refers to "making effort at the cause and accepting the result as it comes." When buddhas and bodhisattvas practice on their path to enlightenment, they make vows so vast, profound, and far-reaching that even the boundless space cannot contain them. The tireless efforts of masters throughout history to preserve and spread the Dharma are truly awe-inspiring and deserve our deepest respect.

When we talk about Buddhism's mission and responsibility in today's world, I believe that, at the fundamental level, the role of monastics has remained consistent throughout all ages. Yet, each era has its own unique conditions and cultural background. Therefore, we must

assess the situation and present the Dharma through platforms, approaches, and forms that people today can appreciate and connect with. In this matter, there's no fixed method. We should keep an open mind, embracing and learning new technologies. However, the essence of the teaching must remain unchanged.

Host: Thank you, Master. In the fire, we may be broken to ashes, or, as the sutras say, a red lotus may bloom from the fire. It all depends on how we attune ourselves to the spirit of the age.

12. Supernatural Powers and the Way in Everyday Life

Host: Someone online asked a fun question. He said, "Master, in your talk, you mentioned 'supernatural powers' a few times. Do you have them? And since you also spoke of the Buddha giving off light, do you emit light too?"

Master Jiqun: It mainly depends on how you define

"supernatural powers." In Buddhism, there are two kinds: one refers to extraordinary manifestations, such as the auspicious signs revealed by buddhas and bodhisattvas; the other is the ability to live daily life with wisdom—in dressing, eating, walking, standing, sitting, and lying down.

In a Chan koan, a student asked his master, "People say you have great supernatural powers. Could you show us?" The master replied, "When you bring me a bowl of rice, I can take it and eat. When you ask me a question, I can answer. This is what we call supernatural power."

Host: In Chan Buddhism, there's a saying: "When eating, just eat; when sleeping, just sleep." Is this considered a profound state of practice? To many people, it seems too simple. Could something so simple really be the Buddha's teaching?

Master Jiqun: In fact, very few people today truly know how to eat a meal properly. Most eat while their minds

wander, or they're being picky, overeating, chatting away or glued to their phones without even looking up. It's rare to find someone who can eat with a pure mind—with awareness and clarity.

Host: It is true that very few people today really know how to eat a meal properly. It may sound like a joke, but it actually reflects a common misunderstanding of Buddhism. As Master Taixu once pointed out, many people regard Buddhism as "neglecting this life but focusing only on the next, worshiping ghosts and spirits instead of respecting living beings." In this way, their faith becomes entangled in the pursuit of supernatural powers or worldly fame and fortune. However, the Master's response reflects the true spirit of Chan: the Great Way is simple—do not be carried away by endless thoughts.

13. Do Monastics Still Have Afflictions?

Host: The last question is for you, Venerable Master. You just mentioned that practicing Buddhism is about

freeing oneself from afflictions. So, do you still have any yourself?

Master Jiqun: This is a common question. Many people are curious: since monastics live differently from lay people, spending their time studying and practicing the Dharma, do they still have afflictions? Actually, when a person is free from afflictions, it's not only because of practice. It also has a lot to do with how they live, what they value, and the way they view problems. In worldly life, all kinds of complicated things that are hard to balance, such as love, hate, work, family, children, and social relationships. Naturally, worries and afflictions keep coming up. For monastics, life is simpler. At the same time, with a wiser way of understanding, facing, and resolving problems, afflictions are less likely to arise.

For ordinary beings, most afflictions arise from the mind of gain and loss. But I have always felt that for monastics, there is no such issue. If you have the opportunity to do something to benefit others, that is wonderful. If you

don't, you can still study and reflect on the Dharma, meditate, or simply sit watching the clouds drift by—pure, free, and at ease. After all, everything is good as it is; so what is there to worry about?

In addition, monastics also have a power of aspiration. I once shared on Weibo about the five benefits of undertaking great endeavors. One of them is that such endeavors are not likely to fail. Why don't they fail easily? Because they don't succeed easily either. Of course, by "great endeavors," I do not mean starting a business, but spreading the Dharma and helping all sentient beings move toward awakening. This is something worth doing endlessly into the future. So we just do it—with no time or need to worry about gain or loss.

Host: Undertaking great endeavors brings no afflictions; that is why the Master is so pure, dignified, and compassionate. Today, as we had the honor of inviting Master Jiqun to the stage, what we felt most was his sincerity, frankness, and compassion—what I would call a "gentle

serenity." He shared with us the very qualities and radiance he embodies. We are deeply grateful to him for sharing the wisdom of the Dharma with us.



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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 by Master Jiqun, an eminent elder of Han Buddhism, through forty years of study and practice. 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.

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