



静心学堂 丛书

The Mindful Peace Academy Collection

中英双语 Chinese-English Edition

人生五大问题

The Five Major Questions of Life

济群法师 / 著
Master Jiqun



大千出版社

【目 录】

一、何为幸福.....	2
二、我是谁.....	9
三、生从何来，死往何去.....	15
四、何为命运.....	23
五、活着为什么.....	29

在这个世间，每个人都会面临这样那样的问题。事实上，人生就是一个不断制造问题和解决问题的过程。一个问题解决了，新的问题又会接踵而至，循环往复，不曾少息。

现实问题，只要努力多半不难解决。但继续对人生做深层思考，触及心灵深处，必然会面临生命存在的共同问题——何为幸福？我是谁？生从何来，死往何去？何为命运？活着究竟为什么？等等。这些也是人类永恒的困惑，如果找不到答案，心灵是无法真正安宁的。千百年来，人们始终没有停止探讨和追寻，但答案往往来自思维，来自猜测和推断，来自有限的个人经验，而不是对生命真相的体证。今天，我想从佛法的角度，谈谈对这些问题的认识。

一、何为幸福

佛教所说的人生是苦
并不是就现象而言
而是透过现象所作的本质判断
苦是人生本质
快乐只是对痛苦的一种缓解
现实中
没有哪种快乐是具有本质性的

我们首先要解决的是生存问题，也就是基本温饱。这是属于物质层面的需求，相对比较单纯。除此而外，我们还想进一步获得幸福，这是所有人关注并孜孜以求的。那么，幸福究竟是什么？是由物质还是精神决定的？如果幸福仅仅取决于物质，那就应该可以量化，可以总结出一个幸福的达标指数，比如有多少钱，或有什么条件等。可事实又是如何？

多数人在生活清贫时，往往会将希望寄托于物质改善，这也是人们热衷于赚钱的动力所在。但在当初设定的目标一一实现时，除了给我们带来一些暂时满足，预想中的幸福似乎并没有如期而至。可见，幸福未必是改善物质就能解决的。

那幸福究竟是什么？我的定义是：幸福只是一种不稳定的感觉。这种不稳定的感觉，固然和物质有一定关系，但更重要的，是在于自身心态，在于我们对自身需求的定位。这才是问题的根本所在。如果缺乏良好心态，或对物质的需求永无止境，那么，幸福将永远是可望而不可即的幻影。所以说，幸福不仅是唯物的，更是唯心的。

探讨人生幸福，首先需要对苦和乐的关系有正确认识。

从佛法观点来看，认为人生是苦。许多人对这一定义不理解，并以此推断，佛教必是消极悲观的。因为在我们的感觉中，并非一味的苦，而是苦乐参半、悲喜交集。那么，佛陀为什么会有这样的结论呢？

其实，佛教也将人的感觉分为五种，分别为苦、乐、忧、喜、舍。其中，苦和乐偏于物质层面，忧和喜偏于精神层面。虽然理智告诉我们：苦乐忧喜都是无法避免的人生常态，但在内心，谁又不是趋乐而避苦呢？事实上，这也是一切众生的本能。人类五千年文明，同样是在帮助我们摆脱痛苦，获得快乐。但结



果又是如何？我们有了古人难以想象的丰裕生活，但痛苦就此解决了吗？烦恼就此消失了吗？

可见，佛教所说的人生是苦，并不是就现象而言，而是透过现象所作的本质判断——苦是人生本质，快乐只是对痛苦的一种缓解。现实中，没有哪种快乐是具有本质性的。所谓本质，也就是说，这种快乐不论什么时候享受，也不论享受多长时间，它都是快乐的。我们能找到这样一种绝对、不变的快乐吗？

事实上，任何快乐都有某种痛苦与之对应。当我们被饥渴之苦折磨时，吃饭会成为快乐；当我们被思

念之苦缠绕时，亲人相见会成为快乐；当我们夜不成寐时，安然入睡会成为快乐。如果去掉饥渴、失眠这些前提，吃饭和睡觉会成为快乐吗？当我们不想吃却不得不吃，不想睡却不得不睡的时候，同样的事立刻就转为痛苦了。只有当我们需要吃饭、睡觉并为之所苦时，才会因为这种痛苦得到缓解而产生快乐。从这个层面来说，痛苦有多少，由缓解痛苦带来的快乐就有多少。

现代社会物质丰富，也比古人有了更多缓解痛苦的途径。古人离别时，天各一方，音讯渺茫，这种思念因难以解决而与日俱增。一旦相见，由此产生的喜悦可谓强烈之极，这在古代诗文中大量描写。但我们现在想念一个人时，可以立即拨通电话。如果觉得只闻其声不够，还可通过视频相见。又或者，买张机票就能很快见面。哪怕远隔重洋，也不再是无法逾越的障碍。但正因为易于缓解，这种由相思带来的痛苦就很肤浅，很有限。相应的，所产生的快乐也很肤浅，很有限。

因为不了解生命真相，我们才会产生诸多烦恼。

但人们往往看不到这一点，以为改变世界才是解决痛苦的有效途径。这一定位的偏差，使得我们在改善物质条件的同时，又在不断制造烦恼。甚至可以说，制造问题的速度远比改善世界的进程更快。所以，今天的人虽然享有高度文明，却比古人活得更累，压力更大。原因无他，就在于欲望太多，烦恼太多，这也是人生之苦的根本。唯有消除内心的恶性需求及烦恼，才能从源头解决痛苦，成就解脱自在的人生。

其他宗教往往将幸福寄托于天堂，寄托于外在拯救。其实，改变环境只是换汤不换药的被动举措。倘若生命品质不曾改变，由此带来的安乐只是暂时的。因为生命的迷惑还在，就会源源不断地制造烦恼，制造轮回。佛教认为，唯有体认生命真相，才能从根本上转迷为悟，超越痛苦。此外，佛教还特别强调自力，即自身努力。这也是佛教区别于其他宗教的主要特征之一。其他宗教主要强调他力，只要具有信仰，就能因此得到救赎。而在佛法修行中，虽然也依靠佛菩萨的加持力，但主力是自己。

当然，仅仅依靠自己还不行，还需要有智慧，有

方法，所谓“以己为洲，以法为洲”。否则，往往会走上自以为是的歧路。这里所说的法，就是佛陀告诉我们的修行之道，简单地说，就是三学八正道。佛教以佛法僧为三宝，为皈依对象。其中，佛是我们改善生命的榜样，法是认识生命真相的方法，僧是指导我们使用方法的导师。由依止佛法僧三宝，依教奉行，而能究竟解脱自在、离苦得乐。

二、我是谁

“自我”正是有情最大的误解
是我们因为不了解生命真相
而产生的错误设定
不论身体还是情绪
都不具有永恒不变的内涵
都不能代表所谓的“我”

生命有很多不解之谜。古往今来，人们不停地追问：我是谁？我从哪里来？我到哪里去？这是人类永恒的困惑，也是每个人无法逃避的终极问题。因为我们最在乎、最关注的就是这个“我”。我们的整个生活，基本都是以自我为中心建立的。但我们是否想过：究竟什么代表着我？仅仅是这个身体吗？仅仅是眼前这个会说会动、会哭会笑的五蕴身吗？

人们之所以害怕死亡，原因就是将这个身体当作是我，以为身体败坏就意味着“我”的毁灭。其实，色身只是生命延续过程中一个朝不保夕的片段，一种不断改变的形式，并不能代表真正的“我”。从哲学定义来说，“我”代表生命的本质，是永恒且不可分

割的。但身体只是由众多元素构成，刹那刹那处于新陈代谢中，处于发展变化中。而在今天这个医学发达的时代，身体的很多零件还可以更换组装，甚至使用人工替代品，其中哪有什么独存、不变的“我”？如果了解其中原理，我们对身体就不会那么在乎，对死亡就不会那么恐惧了。

身体而外，“我”的存在还体现于两方面：一是观念，一是心态。我们生活在共同的世界，但同时又活在自己的世界，活在自己的情绪中。很多时候，还会被这些喜怒哀乐左右着，无法自主。我们为什么会被其主宰？原因就是把这些情绪误以为是“我”——“我喜欢，我讨厌”，于是就会在乎，就会执著，进而不断将心灵能量投射其中，不断强化这些情绪。最终将主权拱手相让，使某些情绪长时间地影响我们。生活中，有人一生追寻爱情，也有人一生被仇恨驱使。其实，很多情绪只是内心的恶性肿瘤，生命的不良发展。虽然生长在我们心中，却并不属于“我”的一部分。倘能以智慧观照，认清这些情绪不过是内心飘浮的影像，就不会一头栽入其中，成为被操纵的傀儡。



这就需要对自我加以审视，认清我执给生命带来的危害。事实上，一切烦恼皆因我执而起。任何一种东西，只要贴上“我”的标签，就会对我们具有杀伤力，就会让人爱，让人恨，让人朝思暮想，寝食难安。一旦将“我”的标签去除，它的变化就不会对我们产生什么影响了。在这个世间，每天要发生很多惊天动地的事，但真正使我们为之心动的未必有万分之一。很多时候，我们只是随之感慨一下，就迅速抛在脑后。为什么？就是因为我们没有将自己和那些事联系起来，没有对此产生我执。

我执还是世间一切是非纷争的根源，是我们和他人相互抵触、难以和谐的原因所在。生活中，一个自我意识过强、处处以“我”为中心的人，必定不会有融洽的人际关系。反之，那些淡化自我、处处为他人着想的人，不仅深受大众欢迎，自己也能安乐自在。因为他们不必害怕“我”的利益受损，担心“我”的自尊受挫。远离这个处处作祟的“我”，也就远离了那些与“我”形影相随的烦恼。

从佛教角度来说，“自我”正是有情最大的误解，是我们因为不了解生命真相而产生的错误设定。不论身体还是情绪，都不具有永恒不变的内涵，都不能代表所谓的“我”。所以，佛教提出“无我”的思想。这也是佛陀对众生最大的贡献。或许不少人会觉得费解，甚至对此感到恐惧：如果“无我”，那现在这个会动又会说的又是什么？又会消失何方？其实，“无我”所否定的，只是加诸于“我”的错觉，而非现象本身。

禅宗有个话头是：“一念未生前本来面目是什么？”我们每天都在绵绵不绝的思绪中，在一念接一念的意识活动中。当这些念头尚未生起时，生命是一

种什么状态？再往前追溯：来到这个世界前，“我”又是以什么状态存在？所谓“父母未生前本来面目是什么”。这也是禅宗另一个重要的话头。禅宗的修行，正是通过这样一种追寻，将遮蔽内心的妄执层层扫荡，将现有的错误设定逐步瓦解。

认识你自己——这是佛法关注的根本问题，也是西方哲学的经典名言。唯有透彻生命真相，我们才能把握前进之舵，成为生命的真正主人。否则，只能是这个色身或情绪的奴隶，为他的衣食奔忙不休，为他的喜怒耗尽生命。更悲哀的是，很多人不仅劳而无功，还会由此造作恶业，在未来继续沉沦，继续受苦。

三、生从何来，死往何去

生命的未来在哪里

我们的归宿在哪里

答案就在我们当下的心行

就看我们现在做了什么，想了什么
现在生命的形态，来自过去生的积累
未来的生命发展，又来自今生的积累

茫茫宇宙中，地球时刻都在不停运转，所谓“坐地日行八万里”。那么，居住在地球上的我们，来自何方，又去向何处？如果找不到答案，我们能活得踏实吗？当然不少人未必会想这个问题，或者事情太多而没时间去想，又或者，用种种方法来转移这个无法解决的疑问。但不论我们想不想，这是每个人最终需要面对的现实。

在历史长河中，我们的一生是如此短暂；在浩瀚太空中，我们的生命又是如此渺小。如果从唯物论的角度看，我觉得，实在看不出生命的终极意义。不论有过多少辉煌，也不论付出多少努力，最终都是趋于毁灭，都是化为尘土。但我们不必因此悲观，佛法告



诉我们：在有限的层面之外，生命还有其无限的层面。生命既是渺小的，也是无限的；既是短暂的，也是恒久的；既是脆弱的，也是强健的。倘能透彻心的本质，就会了解，每个有限的当下都是无限。认识这一层面，我们才能找到人生的终极意义。

探讨有情的生死，必然涉及生命的轮回。在一般人看来，生命就是从呱呱落地开始。而从轮回的眼光看，今生只是生命长卷中的一个章节，只是其中一个相对的开始。在它之前，有着无穷的过去；在它之后，

又有着无尽的未来。现代人往往不易接受这一观点，但只要对生命现象全面观察，我们会发现，某些用科学难以解释的现象，如果从轮回角度来看，就会豁然开朗。

比如，我们是否相信人和人之间存在缘分？在这个世间，我们会和很多人相识相遇。有些人，我们会一见如故；有些人，天天见面也会视同陌路；还有些人，我们却会毫无理由地心生厌恶。原因何在？很多人会说：这是缘分。但很少有人进一步思考：缘分从何而来？为什么我们和不同的人会有不同的缘分？如果相信轮回，对缘分就不会感到奇怪。因为人与人之间的关系并非始于今生，还有许多前生带来的烙印。在过去生，有些曾是我们的亲朋故友，有些则是我们的冤家仇敌。当彼此在今生再度相遇，这种烙印就复苏了，并驱使我们往往昔的爱恨情仇演绎下去。

再如，每个人都有不同的天赋，有自己学起来容易上手的专业。我们常常可以看到，在学习中付出同样努力，未必会有同样成果，还可能相距甚远。是上天不公吗？是命运捉弄吗？都不是，只是因为生命

起点不同。起点高的，稍加努力就能领先于人。而起点低的，惟以“笨鸟先飞”作为弥补。但天赋又是什么？通常以为是父母遗传，事实上，很多人具有的天赋和父母毫无关系。而从佛教角度来看，生命其实有两套系统，其中的物质系统由父母给予，而精神系统来自过去生的积累，并将继续影响未来生命，成为下一轮的起点。

从这两个角度，可以帮助大家理解生命的轮回。我们还要看到，轮回虽然体现为一种生命现象，但根源是在我们的心。佛教认为，众生在天、人、阿修罗、畜生、饿鬼、地狱六道生生不息地流转。这六种生命形态，也代表了我们内心的不同状态。

比如饿鬼，是贪心发展的极致。一个贪得无厌的人，会表现出极度的渴求，永无满足之时。这种心理被无限张扬后，生命呈现的就是饿鬼状态。畜生是愚痴无知的状态，其生命只是停留在本能的需求。就像那些除饮食男女外别无所求的人，和一生忙于觅食、繁衍的动物，又有什么区别？阿修罗是嗔恨、狭隘的象征。他们所热衷的斗争，既是嗔心的体现，又是对



嗔心的张扬。当这种心态被固定后，生命就会进入阿修罗的状态。

可见，生命状态也是某种心念的延伸，是在成长过程中逐步发展而来的。在社会上，不同行业者往往会表现出不同的行仪，学者有学者的气质，商人有商人的风度。这些差别正是由不同心行外化而来，是心念由内而外的延伸。包括轮回，也是内心发展的一个结果，不是谁强加于我们的。佛菩萨的生命品质亦非本然如是，他们所具有无限智慧和慈悲，都是在生命发展过程中逐步造就、开发并圆满的。

生命的未来在哪里？我们的归宿在哪里？答案就在我们当下的心行，就看我们现在做了什么，想了什么。现在生命的形态，来自过去生的积累。未来的生命发展，又来自今生的积累。所以佛教非常注重当下的努力，这是衔接过去和未来的关键，也是我们改变命运的着力点。

如果不了解生从何来，生命是没有根的；如果不了解死往何去，生命是没有归宿的。一个找不到根和归宿的人，自然会缺乏安全感，这也是现代人极为普

遍的心理。如何获得安全感？很多人是通过积聚财富或购买保险来解决。事实上，在灾难频仍、风云变幻的今天，这些保障又是多么脆弱，多么不堪一击。让向外寻求的心回到当下吧，因为真正的安全感不在别处，就在我们此刻的心行。我们能够把握当下，就能把握未来，把握生命走向。当我们有能力把握这一切的时候，还有什么不安，有什么需要恐慌的呢？

四、何为命运

某些行为一旦形成习惯
心就会不知不觉地进入惯性轨道
不是我们想改变就能轻易改变的
这就必须借助修行来调整
事实上，这正是修行的难度所在
因为习惯是日积月累而来
有着根深蒂固的力量

人有没有命运？又由谁来决定这一切？其他宗教多认为，命运是由外在的主宰神或某种神秘力量决定。而佛教认为，命运就是生命发展的规律，决定这种规律的力量仍在我们自身。换言之，命运体现了生命发展的因果，是以不同心行作为因而导致的结果。有什么行为，就会导致什么样的命运走向。这些行为包括身、语、意三业。其中，身业是所行，语业是所说，意业是所想。

佛教还认为，这些由所行、所说、所想构成的因果，贯穿着过去、现在、未来三世。但现代人很难接受这一观念，或者说，很难发自内心地引起共鸣。所以我现在主要提倡的是心灵因果，当下因果。

我们可以暂时不考虑三世因果，但无法回避心灵因果，当下因果。当我们行善，或只是生起一念善心时，由此感得的乐果未必立即现前，但由此带来的内心喜乐却是当下就能体会的。我们所有做过、想过的事，都会在内心留下痕迹，形成力量。这种力量正是影响未来生命走向的因。因为心念会形成习惯，并逐步固定为心态，进而导致不同性格，导致不同人格。

每个人的内心都有很多不同心念在活动，其中有正面的，也有负面的，区别只是在于各自力量的强弱。如果不加选择地任其发展，很可能被我执掌控，被我执发展的负面力量占据主动。每个人最在乎的都是自己，因为我执就是我们的本能，是我们不假思索就会维护的本能。修行的意义，则在于帮助我们调整方向，由被动转为主动，有选择地强化某些正面心理，淡化并逐步根除负面心理。

习惯从哪里来？无非就是某件事我们做多了，想多了，以致成为自然。比如我们习惯于见到哪些人，习惯于每天做些什么，吃些什么。一旦这种习惯



固定下来，就会逐步发展为某种生命模式，成为我们的性格。所以说，性格就是习惯的积累，进而会逐步发展为我们的人格，发展为我们的生命品质。观察一下就会发现，我们现在的许多性格，其实是和生活习惯密不可分的。

这些习惯和性格，又决定了命运的不同走向。所以说，命运不是上天的赐予，不是偶然的机遇，而是由我们自己设计，并由不同行为决定的。这种决定命运的因素，佛教称之为“业力”。所谓业，又可看

作我们的生命程序。造作地狱之因，就是编写进入地狱的程序。种下人天善因，就是编写进入人天善道的程序。我们编写不同的程序，就会进入不同的世界和生命轨道。我们要改变命运，也要从改变心行程序做起。如果我们有能力改变心行，改变习惯，就有能力改变命运。反之，如果无法改变现有的性格和习惯，改变命运不过是空话而已。

心具有两个特点：一是选择，二是创造。这也是人之所以为万物之灵的关键所在。桌子不会选择，房子不会选择，动物的选择能力也相对较弱。而人具有理性，具有抽象思维，不仅能选择、判断，还能在选择、判断后进行创造。正因为这两大特点，人类才创造了五千年文明。而在改造世界的同时，自身命运也随之发展。从这个角度来说，心就是命运的主宰。

但在很多时候，某些行为一旦形成习惯，心就会不知不觉地进入惯性轨道，被其所控，不是我们想改变就能轻易改变的。这就必须借助修行来调整，事实上，这正是修行的难度所在。因为习惯是日积月累而来，有着根深蒂固的力量。这种力量，就像地球引

力将我们固定在地球上一样，使我们难以超越，难以摆脱当下的凡夫状态。

曾经有位教授说要学佛，起因却是为了戒烟。因为他抽烟三十年，完全被尼古丁所控制，可又检查出肺部病变。医生警告说：再抽烟马上完蛋。他当然珍爱生命，但每天要和尼古丁的诱惑斗争，身心俱疲，特别希望通过学佛来解决问题。

这个理由固然有些可笑，却说明习惯一旦形成，对身心有极强的控制力，若不痛下决心，是很难改变的。除了决心，我们还应了解生命发展的规律。依循这一规律，才能切实地规划未来，改变命运。

五、活着为什么

活着的意义
在于开发自身潜在的高尚品质
唯有这样
我们才有能力完成生命版本的升级
才有能力给众生究竟而长久的帮助
这正是佛教所说的
自觉觉他，自利利他

人为什么活着？活着的价值是什么？也是每个人无法回避的重要问题。

做任何事，我们都会有某种理由。因为饿了，所以要吃饭；因为困了，所以要睡觉；因为孤独，所以要寻找感情。活一辈子，难道不更需要理由吗？一般人找个理由似乎不难，比如为了我的孩子，为了我的家庭，为了我的事业，因为他们对人生没有太多思考，随便找个理由都可以打发自己。但深入思考的话，我们就很难满足于这些答案，满足于这种人云亦云的价值观。

所以那些有思想的人反而不容易找到活着的理由。因为世人认可的那些理由都经不起推敲，对某些

人固然重要，对某些人却可有可无；又或者，在生命某个阶段显得重要，但在其他阶段却毫无价值。可见，这些都不是我们找寻的终极答案。也正因为如此，不少艺术家或哲学家甚至会苦闷到走上绝路。因为对那些注重精神生活的人来说，如果找不到具有说服力的理由，就很难心安理得地过下去。

从更深一层来看，多数人追求的人生价值，更经不起死亡的审视。再大的事业，再多的财富，在死亡面前，都像泡沫般脆弱短暂。当事业结束时，为我们的生活留下什么？回顾历史，哪怕贵为帝王，称霸一时，同样是灰飞烟灭。所以，外在一切都是要过去的。当这些成为回忆，它给生命带来什么影响，才是我们真正应该重视的。

孟子说：“人人皆可以为尧舜。”佛教同样认为，每个生命都具有潜在的、佛菩萨那样的高尚品质，那就是众生本具的佛性。我们的心固然会制造种种烦恼，但同时也具备解除烦恼的能力。若不开发这一能力，轮回将永无止境。因为无明就是制造痛苦的永动机，使我们在苦海中沉沦辗转，迷失方向。



活着的意义，在于了解并开发自身潜在的高尚品质。唯有这样，我们才有能力完成生命版本的升级，才有能力给众生究竟而长久的帮助。这正是佛教所说的自觉觉他，自利利他。

佛教认为，人生由惑、业、苦组成。因为无明障蔽，使我们看不清生命真相。不知何为幸福，就会以苦为乐，与幸福背道而驰。不知我是谁，就会非我执我，贻害无穷。不知生从何来，死往何去，不知何为

命运，就无法对未来作出正确规划，使生命健康发展。不知活着为什么，就会耽著于眼前小利而忽略生命的究竟价值，或因找不到活着的正当理由而失去生存动力。因此，探讨和解决这些永恒的问题，对人生幸福具有重大意义。





THE FIVE MAJOR QUESTIONS OF LIFE

Master Jiqun

Translated by MPI Translation Center

Contents

I	What Is Happiness?	41
II	Who Am I?	49
III	Where Does Life Come From, and Where Will Death Lead?	55
IV	What Is Destiny?	62
V	Why Do We Live?	68

In this world, everyone encounters various problems. In fact, life is an ongoing process of creating and solving them. Once one problem is resolved, new ones emerge, forming an endless cycle without respite.

Real-world problems are generally solvable with effort. delve into the depths of our minds, we inevitably face common existential questions: What is happiness? Who am I? Where do we come from, and where do we go after death? What is destiny? What is the purpose of living? These are humanity's eternal perplexities; without answers,

our mind cannot truly find peace. For thousands of years, people have never ceased exploring and seeking, but the answers often come from thought, conjecture, and inference, based on limited personal experiences, rather than from realizing life's truth. Today, I would like to discuss these issues from the perspective of Buddhism.

I

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

First, we must address the issue of survival, ensuring that our basic needs for food and clothing are met. This pertains to material needs and is relatively straightforward. Beyond this, we want to further attain happiness. This is what everyone cares about and strives for. So, what exactly is happiness? Is it determined by material or by the spirit? If happiness were solely dependent on material possessions, it should be quantifiable. We could create a happiness index based on specific criteria, such as how much money we have or the conditions we meet. But what is the reality?

When most people live in scarcity, they often pin their hopes on improving their material conditions, which fuels their drive to earn money. However, once their initial goals are achieved, they may find that the anticipated happiness doesn't arrive as expected, offering only temporary satisfaction. This suggests that true happiness might not be attainable through material improvement alone.

So, what exactly is happiness? My definition is that happiness is simply an unstable feeling. While this feeling is certainly influenced by material, it is even more closely tied to our mindset and how we define our own needs. This is the crux of the issue. If we lack a healthy mindset or our material desires are endless, happiness will always remain an unattainable illusion. Thus, happiness is not purely material; it is also shaped by our mindset.

To explore happiness in life, we must first clearly understand the relationship between suffering and happiness.

From a Buddhist perspective, life is suffering. Many people fail to understand this definition and thus conclude that Buddhism must be pessimistic. This is because, in our feelings, life is not purely suffering; instead, it is a mixture of both suffering and happiness, joy and sorrow. So, why did the Buddha make such a conclusion?

In fact, Buddhism categorizes human feelings into five types: suffering, pleasure, sorrow, joy, and equanimity. Among them, suffering and pleasure are more related to the physical level, while sorrow and joy are more related to the spiritual level. Although rationality tells us that suffering, pleasure, sorrow, and joy are inevitable aspects of life, who does not instinctively seek pleasure and avoid suffering? In reality, this is the instinct shared by all sentient beings. Humanity's 5,000 years of civilization have also aimed to help us alleviate suffering and attain happiness. But what are the results? We now enjoy an abundance that our ancestors could never have imagined, but has suffering been eliminated? Have afflictions disappeared?

It becomes evident that when Buddhism states that life is suffering, it is not referring to the phenomenon itself but rather making an essential judgment through the phenomenon—suffering is the essence of life, while happiness is merely a temporary relief from suffering. In reality, no form of happiness is inherent. By “inherent,” we mean that this happiness remains constant, no matter when or how long it is enjoyed. Can we find such absolute, unchanging happiness?

In fact, every kind of happiness has a corresponding form of suffering. When we are tormented by hunger and thirst, eating becomes happiness; when we are overwhelmed by the pain of longing, reuniting with loved ones becomes a source of joy; when we cannot sleep at night, falling asleep becomes happiness. Without the preconditions of hunger, thirst, or insomnia, would eating and sleeping become happiness? When we have to eat without feeling hungry or sleep without being tired, the same activities immediately turn into suffering. Only when we experience the suffering of hunger and insomnia do we feel happiness

from their relief. From this perspective, the extent of suffering determines the amount of joy that comes from its relief.

In modern society, material abundance offers us more ways to alleviate suffering than those available to our ancestors. In the past, when people parted, they were often separated by vast distances with little hope of communication, causing their longing to grow day by day. Once reunited, the resulting joy was extremely intense, often described in ancient poetry and literature. But now, when we miss someone, we can simply make a phone call. If hearing their voice isn't enough, we can connect through video chat. Alternatively, we can buy a plane ticket and meet in person quickly. Even if separated by oceans, it is no longer an insurmountable barrier. Yet because it is so easy to alleviate, the suffering caused by longing has become very shallow and limited. Consequently, the joy derived from relief is also shallow and limited.

Because we do not understand the truth of life, we

experience numerous afflictions. Yet, people often fail to see this and believe that changing the world is an effective way to alleviate suffering. This mistaken view leads us to continuously create more afflictions even as we improve material conditions. We can even say that the speed at which we create problems far exceeds the progress we make in improving the world. As a result, although people today enjoy a high level of civilization, they live more exhausting and stressful lives than those in the past. The reason is simple: too many desires and too many afflictions. This is the fundamental source of life's suffering. Only by eliminating our harmful desires and afflictions can we address the root of suffering and achieve a life of liberation and ease.

Other religions often place their hope for happiness in heaven or external salvation. In reality, changing the environment is just a passive measure that does not address the root cause. If the quality of life does not change, the resulting happiness will only be temporary. Because life's delusion persists, it will continuously generate

afflictions and perpetuate the cycle of rebirth. Buddhism teaches that only by realizing the true nature of life can one fundamentally transform delusion into enlightenment and transcend suffering.

Furthermore, Buddhism places particular emphasis on individual effort, which is one of the key distinctions between Buddhism and other religions. Other religions primarily stress external power, offering salvation through faith alone. In contrast, in Buddhist practice, while we do rely on the blessings of buddhas and bodhisattvas, the primary effort must come from within ourselves.

Of course, relying solely on ourselves is not enough; we also need wisdom and methods, following the principle of “relying on oneself as a refuge, and relying on the Dharma as a refuge.” Otherwise, we may often stray onto a misguided path of self-righteousness. Here, the Dharma refers to the path of practice taught by the Buddha, which can be summarized as the Threefold Training (Precepts, Meditation, and Wisdom) and the Noble Eightfold Path

(Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration). Buddhism regards the Triple Gem of “Buddha, Dharma, Sangha” as the objects of refuge. Among them, the Buddha serves as a model of how we can improve our lives, the Dharma is the method of understanding the truth of life, and the Sangha are the teachers who guide us in applying these methods. By taking refuge in the Triple Gem and following the teachings, one can ultimately attain liberation, be free from suffering, and achieve happiness.

II

WHO AM I?

Life holds many unsolved mysteries. Throughout history, people have persistently asked: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? These are humanity's eternal perplexities and the ultimate questions that no one can escape. Because what we care about and focus on the most is this "self." Our entire lives are centered on the self. But have we ever pondered what truly represents the self? Is it merely this physical body? Is it just this five-aggregate body that can speak, move, cry, and laugh?

People fear death because they take this body as the self, believing that the decay of the body means the perishing

of the self. In reality, the physical body is just a transient phase in the ongoing process of life. This constantly changing form cannot represent the true self. Philosophically, the self represents the eternal and indivisible essence of life. However, the body is composed of numerous elements, constantly undergoing metabolization, development, and change. In today's advanced medical age, many body parts can be replaced, reassembled, or even substituted with artificial components. In such a scenario, where can we find an independent, unchanging self? Understanding this principle can lessen our attachment to the body and reduce our fear of death.

Besides the body, the existence of the self is also reflected in two aspects: views and mindset. We live in the same world, but we also live in our own worlds, immersed in our own emotions. Often, we are swayed by these emotions—joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure—and unable to control ourselves freely. Why are we dominated by them? It is because we mistake these emotions for the self—“I like,” “I hate”—and therefore, we start to care, become

attached, and continuously invest our mental energy into them, reinforcing these emotions. Ultimately, we surrender our sovereignty, allowing certain emotions to influence us for extended periods. Some people spend their entire lives chasing after love, while others are driven by hatred throughout their lives. In fact, many of these emotions are like malignant tumors within, originating from unhealthy life developments. Although they grow within us, they are not truly a part of the self. By wisely observing them and seeing that these emotions are mere fleeting images in our mind, we can avoid being trapped by them and becoming puppets manipulated by our emotions.

This requires us to examine ourselves and see clearly the harm that self-attachment brings to our lives. In fact, all afflictions arise from self-attachment. Anything labeled with the self becomes potentially harmful; it can make us love, hate, obsess, and lose the balance of our mind. Once we remove the label of the self, changes in those things will no longer affect us. In this world, many dramatic events occur every day, but only a tiny fraction truly affects us.

Often, we merely sigh and quickly forget. Why? It's simply because we haven't closely connected ourselves with those events and developed a sense of self-attachment towards them.

Furthermore, self-attachment is the root of all disputes and conflicts in the world. It is why we clash with others and find it difficult to achieve harmony. A person with a strong sense of self, consistently placing "me" at the center, is bound to have disharmonious relationships. Conversely, those who diminish their sense of self and always consider others' needs not only gain widespread popularity but also find inner peace, happiness, and freedom. They are free from the fear of losing self-interest or damaging self-esteem. By distancing themselves from the insidious self that lurks everywhere, they also distance themselves from the afflictions that are inseparable from it.

From the perspective of Buddhism, self is the greatest misconception sentient beings hold, a wrong construct

arising from our lack of understanding of the true nature of life. Neither the body nor emotions possess an eternal, unchanging essence and, therefore, cannot represent the so-called self. This is why Buddhism introduces the concept of “no-self (*anatta*).” This teaching is the Buddha’s most significant contribution to sentient beings. Many people may find this no-self perplexing or even frightening: if there is no self, then what is this being that can speak and act? Where will it go? In truth, no-self denies the illusion imposed upon the self, not the phenomena themselves.

In Chan Buddhism, there is a *huatou* (the critical phrase): “What is your original face before a single thought arises?” Every day, we are immersed in an endless stream of thoughts and continuous mental activity. What is the state of life before these thoughts arise? Going further back, what was the state of “I” before coming into this world? This is another important *huatou* in Chan Buddhism: “What was your original face before you were born?” The practice of Chan is precisely this kind of

pursuit, sweeping away the delusions that obscure the mind layer by layer and dismantling existing false assumptions step by step.

Understanding yourself—this is the fundamental problem addressed by Buddhism and also the classic maxim of Western philosophy. Only by thoroughly comprehending the truth of life can we grasp the helm of our journey and become true masters of our lives. Otherwise, we remain slaves to our physical body or emotions, tirelessly toiling for its food and clothing and exhausting our lives for its happiness and aversion. Even more tragically, many people not only labor in vain but also create negative karma, leading to continued suffering and downfall in the future.

III

WHERE DOES LIFE COME FROM, AND WHERE WILL DEATH LEAD?

In the vast universe, Earth is constantly in motion. As the saying goes, “Sitting on the Earth, we travel forty thousand kilometers a day.” So, for us who reside on Earth, where do we come from, and where are we going? Can we live with peace of mind if we can’t find the answer? Of course, many people may not think about this question, either because they are too busy or because they use various methods to distract themselves from this unsolvable mystery. But whether we think about it or not, it’s a reality everyone must eventually face.

In the long course of history, our lifespan is so short; in the vast space, our existence is so tiny. From a materialistic perspective, we find it hard to see the ultimate meaning of life. No matter how much glory we achieve or how much effort we invest, in the end, everything tends toward destruction and turns to dust. But we don't have to be pessimistic. Buddhism tells us that beyond the finite aspect, life also has an infinite aspect. Life is small, yet infinite; fleeting, yet eternal; fragile, yet robust. If we can thoroughly understand the nature of the mind, we will realize that each finite moment is infinite. By understanding this, we can find the ultimate meaning of life.

Exploring the birth and death of sentient beings inevitably involves the cycle of samsara. For most people, life begins with the first cry at birth. However, from the perspective of samsara, this life is just one chapter in the long scroll of existence, merely a relative beginning. Before it lies an infinite past; after it, an endless future. Yet, modern people often find this view difficult to accept. But if we observe life comprehensively, we will see that certain phenomena,

which are difficult to explain scientifically, become clear when viewed through the lens of samsara.

For example, do we believe in a karmic connection between people? In this world, we encounter many individuals. With some, we feel an instant familiarity as if we've known them before; with others, despite seeing them every day, they remain strangers. And then, there are those we inexplicably dislike. What is the reason for this? Many would say it's a karmic connection. But few take the next step to ponder: where does the karmic connection come from? Why do we have different karmic connections with different people? If we believe in samsara, the karmic connection becomes less puzzling. This is because our relationships with others do not begin in this lifetime; they carry many imprints from previous lifetimes. Some were our close friends or family in past lifetimes, while others were our adversaries and enemies. When we meet again in this lifetime, these imprints resurface, driving us to continue the love, hatred, and grudges from the past.

For another example, everyone has different talents and areas of study that they find easy to grasp. We often see that equal study effort does not always yield equal results; the outcomes can be vastly different. Is this because destiny is unfair, or is destiny playing tricks? Neither. It is simply because the starting points in life are different. Those with a higher starting point can easily get ahead with a bit of effort, while those with a lower starting point must work harder to catch up like the “early bird catches the worm.” But what exactly is talent? It is commonly believed to be inherited from parents, but many people’s talents have nothing to do with their parents. From a Buddhist perspective, life has two systems: the material system, which our parents give us, and the spiritual system, which stems from the accumulation of our past lives and continues to influence our future lives, becoming the starting point for the next cycle.

The above two perspectives can help us understand the samsara of life. However, we must also realize that samsara is not only a phenomenon of life; its root lies in our mind.

Buddhism believes that sentient beings continuously cycle through the six realms of existence: heavenly beings, human beings, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. These six forms of life also represent different states of our mind.

For example, hungry ghosts represent the extreme result of greed. An insatiably greedy person exhibits an intense craving and is never satisfied. When this mental state is infinitely amplified, the manifestation of life that follows is that of a hungry ghost. The animal realm represents a state of ignorance where life is driven purely by basic instincts. If we seek nothing beyond food and procreation, how is such a life any different from that of animals busy with foraging and reproduction? Asuras symbolize aversion and narrow-mindedness. Their obsession with conflict is both a manifestation and an exaggeration of aversion. When this mindset becomes fixed, life becomes like an asura.

It is evident that the state of one's life is also an extension

of specific thoughts, gradually developed over time. In society, people in different professions often exhibit different behaviors: scholars have a scholarly demeanor, and business people have a commercial flair. These differences manifest their different mental activities, extending from inner thoughts to outer behaviors. Samsara is also a result of our mind, not something imposed on us by others. Similarly, the qualities of buddhas and bodhisattvas are not achieved without effort. Their boundless wisdom and compassion are gradually cultivated, developed and fulfilled throughout their life journey.

Where does the future of life lie? Where is our final destination? The answer lies in our current mindsets; it depends on what we are doing and thinking right now. The current state of our life is the result of the accumulation from past lifetimes. The development of future life will come from the accumulation in this lifetime. Therefore, Buddhism greatly emphasizes present efforts, as they serve as the key link between the past and the future, and the focal point for changing our destiny.

If we don't understand where life comes from, life is rootless; if we don't know where death leads, life is aimless. Those who cannot find their roots and destination will naturally lack a sense of security, which is a common psychological issue in modern times. How can we find security? Many try to solve this by accumulating wealth or buying insurance. However, in today's world of frequent disasters and constant upheaval, how fragile and vulnerable these safeguards truly are! Let us bring our outward-seeking mind back to the present, for true security lies not elsewhere but in our current state of mind. By mastering the present, we can control the future and steer the course of our lives. When we have the ability to manage all of these aspects, what is there to feel insecure or fearful about?

IV

WHAT IS DESTINY?

Do people have a destiny? And who decides everything? Many other religions believe that an external deity or a specific mysterious force determines destiny. However, Buddhism believes that destiny is the natural law of life development, and the power that determines this law resides still within ourselves. In other words, destiny reflects the cause and effect of life development, with different mindsets as the cause and the resulting outcomes as the effect. The type of actions we take determines the direction of our destiny. These actions encompass the three types of karmas: physical (body), verbal (speech), and mental (mind). Physical karma is what we do, verbal

karma is what we say, and mental karma is what we think.

Buddhism also believes that the causality arising from actions, words, and thoughts extends across the three periods of lifetimes: past, present, and future. However, modern people find this difficult to accept or resonate with deeply. Therefore, now I primarily advocate for the causality of the mind and the present moment.

We may temporarily set aside the causality of the three lifetimes, but we cannot ignore the causality of the mind and the present moment. When we perform good deeds or even just generate a single kind thought, the resulting happiness may not manifest immediately, but the inner joy it brings can be felt right away. Everything we have done or thought leaves an imprint in our mind and forms a strength. This strength is precisely the cause that impacts the future direction of our life, because our thoughts form habits, then gradually solidify into attitudes, and ultimately lead to different personalities and characters.

Everyone has many different thoughts active in their mind, some positive and others negative. The difference lies in their strengths. If we allow them to develop unchecked, we are most likely controlled by self-attachment and dominated by its negative forces. Everyone cares most about themselves, because self-attachment is our instinct—an instinct we protect without even thinking. The purpose of spiritual practice is to help us correct our course, shifting from passivity to proactivity, selectively strengthening positive mindsets, and gradually weakening or eliminating negative ones.

Where do habits come from? They arise simply from repeatedly doing or thinking about something until it becomes natural. For example, we grow accustomed to seeing the same people, performing the same tasks, and eating the same type of foods day after day. Once these habits are established, they gradually shape a particular life pattern, forming our character. In essence, character is the accumulation of habits that evolve into our personality and, ultimately, the quality of our life. Upon closer

observation, it becomes clear that many aspects of our current character are closely tied to our daily habits.

These habits and character determine the different directions of our destiny. Therefore, destiny is not a gift from the heavens, nor does it occur at random. It is set by ourselves and shaped by our actions. Buddhism refers to this factor that determines destiny as “karma.” Karma can be seen as the programming of our life. Creating causes of hell is like writing a program that leads to hellish experiences. Planting wholesome causes for human and heavenly realms is like writing a program for entering their respective paths. By writing different programs, we enter different worlds and life trajectories. Therefore, to change our destiny, we must start by reprogramming our mindsets. If we can transform our mindsets and habits, we can reshape our destiny. Conversely, if we are unable to alter our character and habits, then changing our destiny is merely empty talk.

Our mind has two characteristics: the ability to choose

and the ability to create. This is what makes humans the most intelligent beings. A table cannot make choices, a house cannot make choices, and even animals only have relatively weak abilities to choose. Humans, however, possess rationality and abstract thinking, which enable us not only to make choices and judgments but also to create based on those decisions. It is precisely because of these two characteristics that humanity has created thousands of years of civilization. While transforming the world, human destiny has also evolved. From this perspective, the mind is the master of destiny.

However, in many cases, once certain behaviors become habits, the mind unconsciously falls into automatic patterns and becomes controlled by them. Changing these habits is not easy, even if we want to. This is where spiritual practice comes in, and it indeed presents a real challenge, as habits are formed over time and hold deeply ingrained power. This power is like gravity, anchoring us to the Earth, making it difficult to transcend and break free from our unenlightened state.

A professor once said he wanted to study Buddhism, but the initial reason was to quit smoking. He had been smoking for thirty years, and nicotine had a strong hold on him. However, he was diagnosed with lung abnormalities, and the doctor warned him that continuing to smoke would quickly lead to severe consequences. Although he cherished his life, he was exhausted by the daily struggle with nicotine's temptation, and he hoped to find a solution through studying Buddhism.

This reason may seem absurd, but it shows that once a habit is formed, it exerts firm control over our body and mind, making it difficult to change without firm resolution. Besides determination, we also need to understand the laws of life development. Only by following these laws can we effectively plan for the future and change our destiny.

V

WHY DO WE LIVE?

Why do we live? What is the value of living? These are important questions that no one can avoid.

In everything we do, we have some sort of reason. We eat because we are hungry; we sleep because we are tired; we seek companionship because we feel lonely. But isn't it even more necessary to have a reason for living? For most people, finding a reason seems easy, such as living for their children, families, or careers. Any reason can suffice for them because they don't contemplate much about life. However, upon deeper reflection, we find it hard to be satisfied with these answers and the superficial values.

Thus, thoughtful individuals often struggle to find a reason for living, as the reasons generally accepted by society do not hold up to scrutiny. What may be important to some is insignificant to others; what seems vital at one stage of life may hold no value at another. Clearly, these are not the ultimate answers we seek. This is why many artists or philosophers can become so distressed that they see no way out. For those who prioritize spiritual fulfillment, it is difficult to live comfortably without finding a convincing reason.

At a deeper level, the life values that most people pursue cannot withstand the scrutiny of death. No matter how great their career or wealth is, they are as fragile and fleeting as bubbles in the face of death. When our careers end, what do they leave behind for our lives? Looking back at history, even those who were emperors and held great power eventually turned to dust and vanished. Therefore, everything external is transient. When these become memories, the impact they have on our lives is what we should genuinely value.

Mencius said, “Everyone can become Yao or Shun (Yao and Shun were legendary sage-kings in ancient China, renowned for their wisdom, virtue, and benevolent rule. They are often cited as examples of ideal rulers in Chinese culture.)” Buddhism believes that every being possesses latent noble qualities similar to those of buddhas and bodhisattvas, which is the Buddha nature inherent in all sentient beings. Our mind indeed generates various afflictions, but it also holds the ability to eliminate them. If we do not develop this ability, samsara will be endless, as ignorance is the perpetual motion machine that creates suffering, causing us to drift aimlessly in the sea of suffering and lose our way.

The meaning of life lies in understanding and developing our latent noble qualities. Only by doing so can we upgrade the version of our life and provide ultimate and enduring help to all beings. This is precisely what Buddhism refers to as enlightening oneself while enlightening others, benefiting oneself while benefiting others.

Buddhism teaches that life consists of delusion, karma, and suffering. Veiled by our ignorance, we fail to see the true nature of life. Unaware of what happiness is, we mistakenly take suffering as joy and stray from true happiness. Lacking an understanding of who we are, we cling to a false sense of self, which leads to endless troubles. Not knowing where we come from or where we go after death, and lacking insight into destiny, we struggle to make the right plans for the future that nurture the healthy development of life. Without understanding the purpose of life, we may become fixated on immediate trivial gains while neglecting the ultimate value of life, or we lose the motivation to live due to the inability to find the right reason. Thus, exploring and resolving these eternal questions holds great significance for achieving true happiness in life.

国际静心协会、静心学堂简介

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

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

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

Mindful Peace International & Mindful Peace Academy

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

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

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

本书由善信

智因、王宝珍、姜文鸽、李少华、姜嘉怡、陈宏

乐捐印刷净资

诸供养中，法供养最！行动起来，把握当下善因缘！

扫码一键访问

- 济群法师官网、社交媒体
- 国际静心协会官网、社交媒体
- 最新书目，功德助印
- 法宝结缘，加入我们



Access with QR code

- Master Jiqun: Website and social media
- MPI: Website and social media
- Latest Books; Support Printing
- Claim Free Dharma Books; Join Us

助印账号（汇款请注明“法宝助印”，专款专用）

银行 Bank: Zürcher Kantonalbank, 8010 Zurich

账号 Account Number: CH95 0070 0114 8065 7306 8

户名 Account Name: Mindful Peace International

SWIFT/BIC Code: ZKKBKCHZZ80A

地址: c/o TCM Glatt GmbH Richtiarkade 16 8304 Wallisellen



大千出版社

UNIVERSES

国家图书馆出版品预行编目(CIP)资料

人生五大问题 = The five major questions of life

济群法师著. -- 初版. -- 新北市: 大千出版社,

2025.03 面; 公分. -- (静心学堂丛书)

中英对照

ISBN 978-957-447-449-3(平装)

1.CST: 佛教修持

225.87

114002439

静心学堂丛书

人生五大问题

作 者: 济群法师

出 版 者: 大千出版社

发 行 人: 梁崇明

登 记 证: 行政院新闻局局版台省业字第 244 号

P.O.BOX: 中和邮政第2-193号信箱

发 行 处: 235 新北市中和区板南路498号7楼之2

电 话: (02)2223-1391(代表号)

传 真: (02)2223-1077

网 址: <http://www.darchen.com.tw>

E - m a i l: darchentw@gmail.com

初 版: 西元 2025 年 3 月

I S B N: 978-957-447-449-3 (平装)

结缘品 (欢迎助印流通)

© 版权所有 翻印必究 ©

本书如有缺页, 破损, 装订错误, 请寄回本社调换