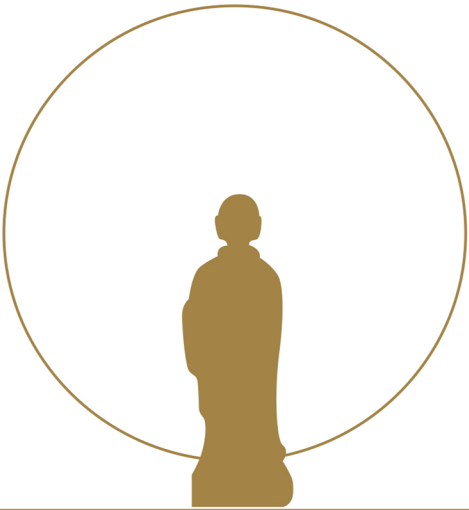
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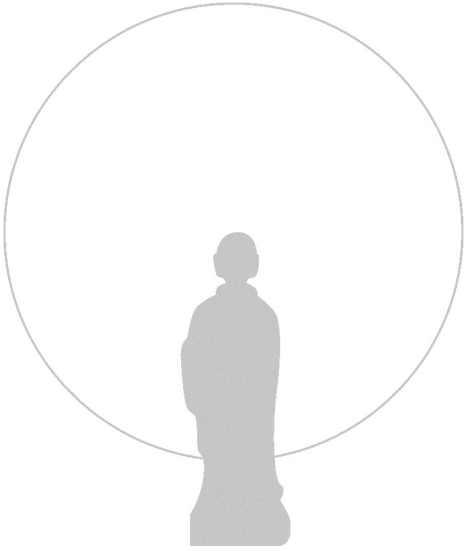
信仰与人生

Faith and Life



济群法师 著
Master Jiqun

大千出版社



【静心学堂丛书】

文化篇

人生篇

社会篇

信仰篇

实践篇



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人生是学习的过程，成长的过程，也是不断解决问题的过程。可以说，我们从小到大所有的学习，最终都是为了解决问题。即使纯粹出于兴趣的学习，也是在解决精神需求。而对每个问题的解决，又会成为人生路上的足迹，将我们导向不同的未来。

有句话叫作“活到老，学到老”。这种学习是永无止境的，因为人生总有新的问题需要解决，除非你固步自封，不想提升。事实上，一旦停止学习，人生也就失去了活力。自 20 世纪 60 年代以来，在联合国教科文组织等机构的大力提倡下，终身学习和终身教育的概念，已在世界范围内形成共识。

究竟应该学什么？取决于我们需要解决的问题。

人生问题林林总总，大体可分为两类：一是现实的问题，一是永恒的困惑。现实问题包括基本生存，及家庭、感情、事业、地位、人际关系等，是每个人都要面对的。但这并不是人生的全部，作为万物之灵，人类有别于其他动物的关键在于，我们还会追问生命真相——我是谁？生从何来，死往何去？活着的意义是什么……这些永恒的困惑，并没有随着科技发展找到答案。

人们曾经以为，科学会解释一切并最终取代宗教。事实上，在人类可以探索太空并不断有最新发现的今天，我们对自己的认识依然模糊不清，对内心的烦恼依然束手无策，对人生的目标依然无从确定。这就离不开对宗教的了解，因为它给我们指明了一条向内寻找的道路——由调心，而安身立命；由修心，而明心见性。

从原始社会以来，信仰始终伴随着人类社会的发展。流传至今的，有佛教、基督教、天主教、印度教、伊斯兰教、道教及各种民间信仰。据有关统计，在全世界七十多亿人口中，有信仰者约占 80%，其影响体

现在方方面面。就个人而言，主要在于人生观、价值观、世界观的形成，及为人处世的方式。

以下，重点从佛教的角度，探讨信仰与人生的关系。

一、信仰可以建立道德准则

当我们认识到
善行能使自己得到正向成长
而不善行会在生命中留下不良记录
基于对自己的负责
就会自觉选择道德行为

说到宗教信仰，和道德密不可分。可以说，宗教是世界各民族建立道德准则的基石。可能有人觉得宗教是形而上的，并不是生活必需，但他们需要道德吗？需要和谐安定、彼此信任的生活环境吗？在一个社会中，如果不讲道德，缺乏做人规范，终将导致人人自危的结果。事实上，这正是我们面对的现状。为什么今天会有层出不穷的负面新闻，有种种让人叹息甚至恐惧的不良风气？究其根源，就在于道德缺失，在于我们对道德的认识不足。

中国传统社会以儒家宗法制为基础。在这个背景下，道德是维系人与人、人与家庭、人与社会等一切关系的行为准则。也因此，道德似乎只是社会的要求，

而非个人所需。

这种观念会带来什么结果？当大家都遵守道德时，我们也会这么去做，但只是为了遵守约定俗成的规则，并不是自觉的选择。所以当大家都不遵守道德时，也就不必循规蹈矩了，甚至会觉得，遵守道德就意味着吃亏。我们能看到财富、房子、汽车的价值，看到眼前实实在在的价值，却看不到道德蕴含的价值。这使得我们在没有利害关系时，还愿意谈一谈道德；一旦面对利害冲突，需要在道德和利益之间作出选择时，就会轻易舍弃道德。问题是，当人人都为一己私利不顾道德时，我们还能相信什么？

如何才能重建道德，使之成为人们的第一选择，而不是用来说说的口号？关键是认识道德的价值。只有认识到位，才能在生活中自觉践行。说到价值，离不开道德的思想基础。

1. 立足于世间哲学

从世间哲学的角度，道德和高尚理想有关。有正

向的人生追求，才会遵循相应的道德准则。儒家推崇的有德君子，就是作为道德标杆的存在。最基本的，是践行仁、义、礼、智、信五常，并具备自省、克己、慎独、宽人等素养。千百年来，“君子喻于义”“君子坦荡荡”“君子成人之美”等关于君子的描述，始终被人们用作对美德的赞扬，对自我的期许。而在“立德、立功、立言”的三不朽人生中，也以“立德”为最高境界，胜于文韬武略、世间功名。

在这样的文化传统中，人们向往君子之德，就会自觉遵循道德，因为那是成为君子的途径，于己是见贤思齐，于人能得到肯定。但脱离这一背景，道德就会被架空。曾几何时，社会上甚至流行起“道德多少钱一斤”的调侃。之所以这样，是因为在人们心中，财富成了最迫切、最重要、甚至压倒一切的目标，而道德已得不到什么养分。不仅如此，在欲望的驱动下，各种不道德行为反而肆意生长。

想要改变这一状况，必须重建价值体系。当有德君子真正受到推崇，目标导向才会随之改变。这是以结果纠正行为，就像社会上开始重视学历后，高考、

中考甚至小升初都成了大家关注的热点。但在今天这个金钱至上的时代，仅仅依靠思想引导来提倡道德，似乎有些力不从心。

2. 立足于对神的信仰

除了哲学，道德也来自对神的信仰。如基督教国家是依对上帝的信仰建立道德，伊斯兰教国家是依对真主的信仰建立道德。自美国建国以来，总统和首席大法官在就职仪式上，都要手按《圣经》宣誓。这种集宗教、道德、法律含义于一身的仪式，充分说明了宗教和道德的密切关系。

人们相信宇宙中有万能的主宰神，既决定现世幸福，也决定未来归宿。只有信仰神，遵守神的旨意和相应道德规范，死后才能进入天国，与神同在。否则就会堕入地狱，被不灭的烈火所惩罚。这是把信仰、道德和人生幸福形成捆绑——想要得到今世乃至永生的幸福，就必须信神并遵守道德。

可以说，这种道德有着强大的背景，但它的弊端

也在于此。如果你不信万能的神，依此建立的道德就会失效；如果你半信半疑，道德的力量同样会被打折。所以当神的权威不断受到挑战后，即使是传统的基督教国家，由信神带来的道德约束力也在随之减弱。

3. 立足于人性论和因果观

与神教的区别在于，佛教不认为宇宙中有万能的神，其道德观是依托佛陀揭示的生命发展规律而建立——那就是人性论和因果观。这也是佛法对人和世界的认识。

首先是人性论，基于对自身的认识，说明人为什么要遵循道德。每个人都希望成为更好的自己，成为智慧、幸福、安乐自在的人。那么，怎样让自己变得更好？佛法告诉我们，每个人的存在都是五蕴假合，由一大堆想法和情绪组成。由不同的观念，造就我们的心态，再由心态造就人格和生命品质。

其中，善心所和道德行为可以造就健康的人格，高尚的生命品质；而不善心所和不道德行为，则使人

格和生命品质由此堕落。从心行的产生，到人格的建立，不是佛菩萨说了算，而要遵循客观规律，也就是我经常说的“心灵因果”。这种因果是即时的，当下就能感受到；同时也在不断积累，并由这种积累影响未来的生命走向。也就是说，道德行为具有现前和究竟两种利益，反之亦然。

当我们认识到，善行能使自己得到正向成长，而不善行会在生命中留下不良记录，基于对自己的负责，就会自觉选择道德行为。这不是为了做给谁看，不是迫于社会压力，也不是害怕某种外在力量的惩罚，而是为了成就更好的自己。现代人注重养生，但只是在色身下功夫，不知道修心才是根本，遵循道德才是保健。这是由内而外的养生，是从今世到尽未来际的养生。

所以说，佛教是基于人性论和因果观来确立道德的价值。这种道德观不需要借助外在权威，而是可以从自身实践来检验的，在当今社会更具有普世性，更容易为大众所接受。它不仅有利于个人成长，也有利于社会和谐。比如佛教提倡的五戒十善，于人于己都

有莫大利益。只要多一个人遵循不杀生、不偷盗、不邪淫、不妄语、不两舌、不恶口、不贪、不嗔、不痴的道德行为，社会就会多一份安定。

当我们在遵循道德的过程中，感受到这些行为对自身和社会的改变，就会因此得到正向激励，产生进一步实践的动力。这种精神力量不是物质所能给予的。所以从佛教的道德观来说，个体价值和社会价值是相互增上的。如果不落实到个人，只谈道德的社会价值，很难使人长期、自觉地坚持；如果不落实到社会，只是严以律己的个人道德行为，作用难免局限，缺乏普世价值。

二、信仰可以引导精神追求

学佛，就是在佛法指引下
像佛陀那样
以追求真理、走向觉醒为己任
具有这样的精神追求
我们才能活得明明白白
才不会在浑浑噩噩中虚度

现代人熟悉物质追求，从房子、汽车，到衣服、食物，“买买买”已是生活常态。而网购的普及，更使人不受任何束缚，随时可以在线购物。在满足生活所需的同时，也能借此排遣空虚，缓解压力。所以，对物质的追求正以几何级数增长。但说到精神追求，多数人会觉得有些陌生，有些抽象，甚至有些过时。

那么，物质可以解决一切吗？事实上，今天的人并没有因此满足，反而日益迷惘。在过去的穷困年代，我们以为有钱就能幸福。现在很多人有了钱，有了房，有了车，有了以往希求的种种，为什么还是不幸福？问题就在于，没有健康的心态。

幸福是由心感受的。当内心焦虑、恐惧、缺乏安

全感的时候，当内心有种种疾病的时候，是没有能力感受幸福的。我们知道疾病会损害健康，同样，心理疾病会破坏幸福，是幸福的天敌。

近年来，政府也在大力提倡两个文明建设。因为随着物质条件的改善，心理问题正日益显现，到了不容忽视的程度。那么，怎样才能建设精神文明？必须有健康的精神追求，包括对永恒问题、完善人格和文化艺术的追求，这都离不开信仰。

1. 对永恒问题的追求

首先，是对永恒问题的思考。比如我是谁？何为命运？活着为什么？生从何来，死往何去？世界的真相是什么？这是哲学和宗教致力解决的。可能有人会说：为什么要想这些？对我的生活有什么意义？事实上，这是让我们从一个高度来审视人生。在茫茫宇宙中，在亿万年的时间长河中，这短短的一生，不过是刹那生灭的瞬间，到底用来做什么，才能不负此生？如果没有高度，我们是看不到人生意义的，不过是茫

茫然地随业流转。

答案在哪里？世间科学主要是解读物质现象，而哲学和宗教是探讨世界本质，但方法各异。其中，哲学是通过理性思考认识世界，是推理、玄想而非实证，无法直达本质。所以从古希腊开始，哲学家们从不同角度，不断推翻之前的理论，至今莫衷一是。而神教把一切终极答案归于造物主，对非信徒来说，其实是属于“不可知论”。

佛法告诉我们：要解答这些永恒问题，必须开发生命本具的智慧，向内而非向外探寻。这是佛陀在菩提树下证悟时，以智慧亲见的真相。学佛，就是在佛法指引下，像佛陀那样，以追求真理、走向觉醒为己任。具有这样的精神追求，我们才能活得明明白白，才不会在浑浑噩噩中虚度。

2. 对完善人格的追求

其次，要造就健康的心态、人格和生命品质。说到完善人格，离不开对心性的认识。在中西方哲学中，

关于人性是善是恶，自古就有很多争议。儒家说“人皆可以为尧舜”，也说“人之所以异于禽兽者几希”。如果想成圣成贤，就要从诚意、正心、修身开始，进而齐家、治国、平天下。

佛法同样认为众生有两面性，既有佛性，有觉悟潜质，也有魔性，有三毒烦恼。究竟成佛还是成魔？取决于对人性的正确认识，也取决于我们发展什么。在修行成就之前，我们被魔性牢牢掌控，被贪婪、仇恨、嫉妒、自私等不良心理主导，不断地制造烦恼，轮回生死。但佛陀证悟时发现：众生皆有如来智慧德相，有自我拯救的能力。这个发现使生命充满希望，也是佛陀带给人类最大的价值。

我们想要成就佛菩萨那样的生命品质，就要通过修行摆脱魔性，完善人格，进而修定发慧，所谓“仰止唯佛陀，完成在人格”。

3. 对文化艺术的追求

第三，是对文化艺术的追求，属于现世的精神生

活，同样和信仰密切相关。西方艺术史中，很多著名作品直接取材于天主教、基督教的教义，大量的壁画和雕塑，本身就是为教堂创作的。中国传统艺术中，从石窟造像到唐人写经，也是人们为表达对佛教的虔诚所作。可以说，它们都是服务于宗教，是对信仰的供奉，只是附带成了艺术品。

中国的书画、诗文讲究意境。所谓意境，就是思想境界，这也离不开佛法。因为儒家文化重视现世，缺少离俗的超然，出世的自在，所以很多古代文人都喜欢诵读佛经，通过《心经》《金刚经》《维摩诘经》《六祖坛经》的法义提升心境，反映到作品中，自然格调高远，不同凡俗。来自佛法的影响，在王维、柳宗元、苏东坡、王安石等历代大家的作品中随处可见。

总之，从探索永恒、完善人格到文化艺术，不同层面的精神追求都离不开信仰。对国人来说，佛教自传入以来，既弥补了中国本土文化的不足，也极大地丰富了人们的精神生活，有着不可替代的重要地位。

三、信仰可以使人心态超然

佛教所说的随缘
就是以智慧审时度势
根据当下因缘作出最佳选择
然后在因上努力
并接纳任何结果

很多人向往超然的心态，向往诗和远方。因为在生活中，对感情、事业、家庭、人际关系的执著，给我们带来种种烦恼和压力，让人不堪重负。进一步，我们还会对这些执著对象产生永恒的期待，无法面对它们的变化，更不能接纳失去的痛苦。这就使得我们拥有越多，反而越焦虑，越恐惧，越没有安全感。因为拥有越多，变化的概率就越大，失去的机会就越多，遭受的打击也越频繁。

而今天又是一个瞬息万变的世界。过去的人，可以几十年在一处安居乐业。但在全球化的今天，各国发生的事件都可能波及整个世界，带来一系列连锁反应。同时，现代人的活动范围日益增大，每天乘车搭

机，奔波在不同场所。这都使得生活中充满不确定、不安全的因素。

如果我们对外境过分依赖，就会恐惧变化，每天在患得患失中，活得很累。怎样才能在无常的世间保有超然，云淡风轻地面对一切？是需要智慧的。

1. 以缘起法审时度势

儒家关心现世成就，看重成家立业、荣华富贵，当我们有这样的定位，必然会对家庭、感情、事业产生依赖。有道是“人到无求品自高”，只要有所求，有所依赖，就会被所求对象的变化左右，不得自在。

而佛教对人生的认识，主要体现在轮回观和心性论，正好弥补了儒家文化的不足。轮回观，让我们看到生命的长度。生命不只是这一世，还有无始的过去和无尽的未来。心性论，让我们看到生命的深度。生命不只有感觉到的六识，还有感觉不到的潜意识，储藏着曾经发生的一切生命经验。所以不必纠结于一时得失，而要从更高的角度审视生命，看到现在拥有的

一切，是遵循因缘因果的规律，所谓“缘聚则生，缘散则灭”。

世间所有现象，包括人自身的存在，都是由众多条件决定的，是条件关系的假相。因缘和合，事物就显现；因缘消散，事物就败坏。因为一切是缘起的，只要其中一个条件变化，结果就会随之变化。所以变化才是常态，不必害怕，更不必拒绝。

事实上，变化也意味着机遇，好的固然可以变坏，坏的同样可以变好，关键是我们创造什么因缘。佛教所说的随缘，就是以智慧审时度势，根据当下因缘作出最佳选择，然后在因上努力，并接纳任何结果。成功固然值得欢喜，失败也不是最终结束，而是可以作为新的起点，继续在因上调整。

2. 从缘起法认识空性

缘起的另一个内涵是无自性，也就是空性。关于此，《心经》的解读是：“色不异空，空不异色；色即是空，空即是色。”色是指存在的现象，从本质上说

是空的，只是条件关系的假相。此外，《金刚经》的“一切有为法，如梦幻泡影，如露亦如电，应作如是观”也告诉我们：过去发生的一切，不管多么风光还是失败，就像曾经的一场梦。只不过在这梦中，还会伴随各种影像和爱恨情仇。当我们真正看清事物的真相后，还会那么在意得失吗？

除了在认识上看破有为法的虚幻，我们还要通过禅修证悟空性，进而安住于空性。这样的话，我们同样可以工作生活、待人接物，但不会有任何粘著，也就是《金刚经》所说的“应无所住而生其心”。当心没有粘著时，就像虚空一样，尽管有云彩飘来飘去，但虚空如如不动，湛然澄澈，不会被干扰，也不会被染污。

其实，心本来就有无住的智慧，有不粘著的能力，只是被无明遮蔽。佛教所说的明心见性，就是让我们通过修行证悟空性，开启这种智慧和能力。那么在面对各种念头和外境时，就能时时保有超然。

当我们真正体证空性，安住于空性，不仅能接纳现实中的一切变化，即使是面对生死，也能自在无碍。

过去很多祖师大德能坐脱立亡，并不是什么神话，而是体证了不生不灭的觉性。对他们来说，生不是开始，死也不是结束，哪有什么可害怕的呢？当生死都不在话下，还有什么可焦虑的呢？

汉魏之后，儒释道成为中国文化的主流。其中，佛教虽然属于外来文化，但传入中国两千多年以来，对哲学、文学、艺术产生了全面影响。我们今天学习中国传统文化，一定离不开佛教，否则是不完整的。

中国人很有福报，既接受了儒家思想，能积极入世，又接受了佛法智慧，能保有超然。如果没有出世的情怀，那么得意时会执著，失意时会受挫，都会让人很累。但能以出世心做入世事的话，得意时不执著，失意时不在乎，不论世间如何流转变化，都能成为修行的功课，安然接纳，历境炼心。这是何等自在！所以说，不论我们从事什么行业，佛法这种安心的智慧都是大有裨益的。

四、信仰可以培养慈悲大爱

只有体认无我的智慧
认识到自己和众生本是一体
利他才会成为必然的选择
因为帮助众生其实就是帮助自己
不会有任何利害、得失的考量

大爱是相对小爱而言。小爱即世间的亲情、爱情、友情，是人们熟悉并追求的，包括父母、兄弟姐妹、妻子丈夫等亲缘关系，及朋友、同事等社会关系。这些围绕自我建立的小爱，固然会给人们带来很多快乐，但问题同样在于这个“自我”。

因为人有自私的本性，即佛教所说的我执。当一个人过分在乎自我、一切以自我为中心的时候，就会与他人造成对立。在社会新闻中经常可以看到，即使在父母和儿女、丈夫和妻子等至亲之间，也会因意见不合、财产纠纷而对簿公堂，甚至大打出手。至于兄弟反目、朋友恩断义绝、合作伙伴相互坑害之类的矛盾，更是屡见不鲜。当人们与身边亲友都无法和谐相

处时，也给整个社会带来了戾气。

从另一方面来说，随着经济的发展，贫富悬殊日益增大。当双方都不能正确看待和使用财富时，这种差距很容易引发对立，使一些人产生“仇富”心态，影响社会安定。

如何才能解决这些问题？特别需要倡导爱的教育，让人们学会爱，进而从小爱提升为慈悲大爱。只有更多的人投身公益，不是靠少部分人做，而是在全社会形成互助的风气，才能减少贫富对立，给社会带来温暖。这就离不开文化的影响。

1. 有我之爱是有限的

从某种意义上说，人就是文化的产品。其中包括学校的教育，也包括家庭、社会、书籍的影响，它们共同造就了我们的人生观、世界观、价值观，影响了我们的生活方式，决定了我们会成为什么样的人。

在中国传统文化中，儒家讲究伦理纲常。“五伦”就是针对父子、君臣、夫妇、兄弟、朋友五种基本人

伦关系，提出“父子有亲，君臣有义，夫妇有别，长幼有序，朋友有信”的相处之道。此外，儒家特别强调仁爱。孟子说“恻隐之心人皆有之”，这种爱并不关乎亲缘，而是出自人的良善本能。进一步，还要将这念人人具足的恻隐之心向外延伸，发扬光大，从关爱亲友到关爱社会。但儒家在倡导“仁者爱人”的同时，还提出“爱有差等”。可见这种仁爱虽然广大，却是有差别的，是根据和“我”的亲疏远近、利益关系来分配的。

基督教倡导博爱，并积极从事慈善事业，帮助贫苦大众。但被爱的只是人，却把同为生命的动物当作人的食物。即使在人类中，被爱的也只是教徒，而同样是人的异教徒却受到诅咒。此外，因为一神教的排他性，还会引发宗教之间的战争。这些矛盾都和“我”有关。

只要有“我”，就会有自己和他人的分别，有亲疏、好恶的分别，有民族、国家的分别。当内心有这些界限，就会产生二元对立，彼此冲突。所以说，有“我”的爱，再大也是有限的，不能遍及一切。

2. 无我才能慈悲大爱

佛教所说的慈悲大爱是平等的，无分别的，只要有一个众生被排除在外，就不能圆满慈悲。怎么做到这一点？最重要的理论基础就是无我。因为无我，才没有我和他的分别，没有亲疏，也没有任何对立。这样才能彻底利他。大家听到“无我”不要恐慌，这不是说你不存在，而是要否定我们对自己的错误认定。

这就需要智慧的引导，帮助我们真正找到自己，同时体会到，“我”和六道众生本来就是一体的，在本质上是相通的。否则的话，我们可能会觉得：众生和我有什么关系？我对众生不感兴趣，为什么要利益他们？这么做对我有什么意义？

只有体认无我的智慧，认识到自己和众生本是一体，利他才会成为必然的选择，因为帮助众生其实就是帮助自己。就像我们的脚受伤，手自然会去帮助，不会觉得“我明明是手，为什么要帮脚”，也不会有任何利害、得失的考量。

菩萨之所以能成就无缘大慈，同体大悲，正是把

众生和自己视为一体，就像手和脚那样。只要众生有需要，有困难，便会自然而然地心生慈悲，无条件地给予帮助，没有任何期待，不求任何回报。这样的慈悲是无限的，没有一个众生是菩萨不愿帮助的。这就是大乘的菩提心，是一种崇高的利他主义愿望——我要走向觉醒，并帮助一切众生走向觉醒、离苦得乐。生起这种愿望，才是成为大乘佛子的标志。

除了发愿，更要通过不断练习，把菩提心的修行落到实处。慈悲，就是与乐拔苦。从调动恻隐之心开始，到培养仁爱之心，圆满慈悲喜舍四无量心。这种修习是有次第的，从对一个人练习，到对十个人练习，到对百人、千人、万人练习；从对有关系的人生起慈悲，再对没关系的人生起慈悲；从对喜欢的人生起慈悲，再对不喜欢的人生起慈悲；从对人类练习，再对一切众生练习。在座上座下的练习过程中，不断超越我执，超越贪嗔、好恶、有限的设定。

关于慈悲大爱，佛教和儒家、其他宗教最大的不同，就在于是否“无我”。只要有我，就会带来不同的局限；只有无我，才能生起无限的慈悲。

五、信仰可以解决生死归宿

探寻死亡真相
解决死亡问题
不仅是我们今天面对的
也是佛陀当年出家的原因
是佛法修行的重点

国人避讳谈“死”，视之为不吉的话题。又或者，总觉得死是别人的事，和自己没什么关系。我们在世上忙来忙去，拼命赚钱，拼命做事业，即使有了这辈子花不完的钱还不够，仿佛可以永远活下去，永远赚下去。从来没想过，死亡必然到来，也必然会带走这一切。但什么时候死是不一定的，可能是明年，也可能是明天，甚至可能是下一秒。那些猝死的人，如果想到生命会戛然而止，还会那么奋不顾身地追求，不为死亡做一点准备吗？遗憾的是，很多生命就这样猝不及防地走了，而且越来越年轻化。

当我们听到这样的新闻，看到身边亲戚朋友的死亡，内心会不会有一种恐慌？在西园寺和心理学界

联合举办的“佛法与心理治疗”论坛上，与会者曾就“死亡焦虑”的主题展开探讨。我也代表佛教界作了讲座，通过对《心经》的解读，阐述了佛教的生死观。不少与会心理学家听后表示，佛法对死亡问题的解决最为彻底。

如果我们从来不思考死亡，也不为死亡做任何准备，一旦死亡来临，就会痛苦、茫然、不知所措，最后在抢救和折磨中无奈离去。这是今天很多人的生命结局，是不是有些悲哀，有些草率？难怪古人把“好死”列为五福之一。

怎么才能无忧无惧地安然离世？就要了解死亡的真相，未来的归宿。我们现在所受的教育，以及唯物论的“人死如灯灭”，儒家的“未知生，焉知死”，都没有解答这个问题。那么，死真的是一了百了吗？真的不需要做任何准备吗？很多人年轻时还觉得无所谓，但年龄渐长之后，“怎么死？去哪里？”的惶惑就会时常浮现心头。

探寻死亡真相，解决死亡问题，不仅是我们今天面对的，也是佛陀当年出家的原因，是佛法修行的重

点。佛陀之所以放弃王位而出家，就是看到老、病、死的痛苦。从死亡的角度审视，不论青春、美貌还是财富、地位，都是过眼烟云，分文不值，所以他决定去追求生命永恒的价值。经过六年苦行，最终在菩提树下证悟不生不灭的境界。那么，佛教是怎么认识死亡的呢？

1. 死亡并不是结束

佛陀证悟时发现：生命不只是这一生，而是在无尽的流转中，由生向死，死而复生。今生只是生命延续中的一个片段，就像一片浪花。这一期的生死，也不过是一片浪花的生灭而已。浪花有生有灭，但大海如如不动。如果认识不到生命的大海，而是活在浪花中，觉得浪花就是一切，就会被浪花的生灭左右。如果我们能从生命之海来看生死，体会到生命的无限，而不是局限于浪花，就不容易焦虑了。

中国的“悟空号”发现，在宇宙中，我们看到的物质世界只占 5%。此外，暗物质占 27%，暗能量占

68%。心理学家也说，生命有意识和潜意识两个层面。其中，意识只是露出海面的冰山一角，潜意识才是深藏海底的巨大山体。这都说明，我们的视野非常有限。学佛，就是帮助我们开启智慧，从宏观的视角认识生死。

除了轮回，佛法所说的涅槃、往生和菩萨道思想，为我们指明了生命的真正归宿。很多人把涅槃等同于死亡。其实，涅槃是对迷惑烦恼的彻底平息，是证悟不生不灭的境界，包括有余依涅槃和无余依涅槃。前者的五蕴果报身还在，后者才是灰身泯智，意味着色身的消亡。所以涅槃不等于死亡，活着一样可以证悟涅槃。

净土法门也是解决死亡焦虑的重要途径。对于修行人来说，如果今生没能证悟怎么办？阿弥陀佛所发的悲愿，让学人可以通过信愿行积累资粮，由一心念佛，借助佛力往生极乐。那是无限安乐的所在，是阿弥陀佛对众生的慈悲接引。所以念佛人把死亡称为“往生”，是脱胎换骨的新生。看到这样的光明前景，还会畏惧死亡吗？还会有任何不舍吗？

此外，菩萨的无住涅槃是证悟后为大悲所驱动，继续在轮回中救度众生。菩萨道修行要建立无尽的悲愿，以轮回为战场，在十方世界不断地救度众生，帮助众生从迷惑走向觉醒。正如《普贤行愿品》所说：虚空界尽，众生界尽，众生业尽，众生烦恼尽，我此愿王无有穷尽，念念相续，无有间断，身语意业，无有疲厌……这是何等的气势，何等的愿力！有了这样的愿力，就会根据众生的需要随类化身，哪里需要就到哪里，转被动受死为主动选择，转生死焦虑为悲愿无尽！

2. 临终关怀

临终关怀，是帮助人们面对死亡的方法。哲学家说，哲学是为死亡做准备。其实，宗教更是为死亡做准备。佛教中，“念死无常”是修行人必须具备的基本认知，既是正行，也可以是一切法门的前行。真正的修行人，时时都在为死亡做准备。想到死亡随时都会发生，就不敢有任何懈怠。

佛教把生命分为四个阶段，出生时是生有，在世时是本有，死亡时是死有，此生结束到下次受生之间叫作中有，就像在世间结束一份工作，还没找到下一份工作的中间阶段。当一个人离开世界时，如何从此生过渡到下一生？是什么在决定生命去向？除了往昔业力，临终一念也很关键。

如果生起善心，就能使善业尽快成熟；如果发愿往生，资粮具足，就能蒙佛接引；如果临命终时被人各种恼乱，生起强烈的贪著或嗔恨，就会堕落恶道。所以佛教非常重视临终关怀，要在生死关头为临终者做好心理引导，让他放下尘世的一切牵挂，了解未来去向，对弥陀悲愿充满信心，愿离娑婆，愿生极乐。同时，通过念佛或称念三皈，帮助临终者调整心行，安住正念。这些都是非常重要的外在助力。

现在西方也有安宁关怀，对医学上不再有治疗意义的重病患者，在减轻他们身体疼痛的同时，给予心灵疏导和关爱。这种关怀也包含信仰的引导，使他们安然并有尊严地走完人生最后旅程。

六、信仰可以找回自己

学佛不是向外求
对三宝建立依赖的目的
是导向内心
我们以三宝为皈依对象
但这不仅是指外在的住持三宝
还有内在的自性三宝

今天的世界变化得这么快，这么丰富多彩，各种媒体、娱乐、游戏、科技产品，以及发展中的人工智能、虚拟世界，使我们对外界的依赖日益严重。除了工作，很多人时刻刷着手机，刷着各种碎片化的信息，无法静静地面对自己，甚至失去了休息的能力。虽然身体早已疲惫，却无法入睡，还在难以自控地刷着。在最新的《国际疾病分类》中，已专门为“游戏成瘾”设立条目，并明确诊断标准，以帮助精神科医生确定患者是否对游戏产生病理性依赖。此外，手机综合症、晚睡综合症等时代病，也已成为世界性问题。

在铺天盖地的信息中，人类对自我的迷失越来越深，问题越来越多，心智越来越不正常。与此对应的，

则是被科技武装起来的、前所未有的破坏力。这就使得世界危机四伏，防不胜防。

根本的解决之道，就是从人心入手。内心和平，才有世界的和平；内心安定，才有世界的安定。东方文化，尤其是佛法智慧，它最大的作用，就是帮助我们认识内心，找回自己，造就健全人格。所以近年来，佛教在西方国家的影响越来越大。很多心理学工作者都在学习佛教的教理和禅修方法，将之运用于学科建设和临床治疗。

人也是一个产品，需要通过正确方法来打造。一方面，是通过闻思经教，接受智慧和觉醒的教育，从而调整观念，解决人生困惑；另一方面，是通过止观禅修平息烦恼。这样的话，就能在正见指导下，造就良好的心态，健全的人格，最终成就高尚的生命品质，成为佛菩萨那样美好的自己。

学佛不是向外求，对三宝建立依赖的目的，是导向内心。我们以三宝为皈依对象，但这不仅是指佛像、教法、僧众这些外在的住持三宝，还有内在的自性三宝，就是我们本来具足的觉性。我们依止善知识，正

是为了通过听闻正法，依教奉行，最终认识自己，而不是把佛菩萨或善知识当作偶像崇拜。

以上，主要从佛教的角度，通过建立道德准则、引导精神追求、使人心态超然、培养慈悲大爱、解决生死归宿、找回自己六个方面，讲述了信仰的作用。希望大家通过对智慧文化的学习，断恶修善，成就高尚品质，为社会的健康发展作出贡献。



Faith and Life

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Life is a journey of learning, growing, and continuously overcoming challenges. From childhood to adulthood, everything we learn ultimately helps us address the problems we face. Even when we learn out of interest, it's often to fulfill an inner need. Each challenge we work through leaves a mark on our path, guiding us toward different futures.

The saying "Learn as long as you live" reminds us that learning is a lifelong journey, because life constantly presents new challenges—unless you remain stagnant and stop improving yourself. In fact, once you stop

learning, life loses its vitality. Since the 1960s, organizations like UNESCO have strongly advocated for lifelong learning and education, which have gained worldwide recognition.

What exactly should we learn? This depends on the problems we want to solve. We all face many problems in life, which can be divided into practical and permanent problems. Practical problems include basic survival, as well as family, relationships, career, status, and interpersonal relations—issues everyone must face. But these are not all that life is about. As the most self-aware beings, we differ from other animals in our ability to reflect on the deeper truths of life: Who am I? Where did I come from, and where will I go after death? What do I live for? These permanent problems remain unanswered, even as technology advances.

We once believed that science would explain everything and eventually replace religion. Yet, even today, when we can explore outer space and make groundbreaking

discoveries, our understanding of ourselves remains unclear. We are still helpless in the face of our inner afflictions and uncertain about the true purpose of life. This is why understanding religion remains essential. It guides us toward a path of inner reflection—through calming the mind, we find peace and purpose in our life; through cultivating the mind, we realize its true nature.

Since primitive times, religious faith has always accompanied the development of human society. The faiths that have been passed down to the present day include Buddhism, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam, Taoism, and various forms of folk faith. Statistics show that about eighty percent of the world's population—now over seven billion—follow a religion. Its influence on people is far-reaching, shaping their outlook on life, values, worldview, and their way of interacting with others.

Next, I will focus on exploring the relationship between faith and life, from a Buddhist perspective.

I

Faith Can Establish Moral Principles

When it comes to religious faith, it is inseparable from morality. Religion has long served as the cornerstone upon which different peoples have built their moral standards. Some may think religion is metaphysical and not essential to daily life. But do they still need morality? Do they all want to live in a harmonious, stable environment built on mutual trust? In any society, when morality is ignored and standards of conduct are lacking, people eventually feel unsafe. This is precisely the challenge we face today. Why does negative news keep emerging one after another? Why are there so many troubling social

trends that leave people feeling disheartened or even fearful? At the root of these issues are a lack of morality and a limited understanding of what morality truly means.

Traditional Chinese society was rooted in a Confucian, clan-based system. In this context, morality served as the code of conduct that maintained all relationships among individuals, families, and society. As a result, morality was often regarded as a social obligation rather than a personal need.

What is the outcome of this mindset? It leads us to follow moral norms only when others do, so morality is considered more of a social obligation than a personal choice. When others abandon morality, we feel no need to uphold it either. We may even think that being moral means we will be taken advantage of. We can easily recognize the value of tangible things, such as wealth, houses, and cars, yet fail to see the deeper value of morality. As a result, we are willing to talk about morality when there is no conflict of interest. Yet, when faced with a choice between

morality and personal gain, we quickly cast morality aside. The problem is: If everyone gives up morality for the sake of self-interest, what is left for us to believe in?

How can we rebuild morality so that it becomes people's first choice, rather than just an empty slogan? The key lies in recognizing its true value. Only with a clear understanding can we consciously practice it in our daily lives. When discussing its value, we must first understand its ideological foundation.

1. Rooted in Worldly Philosophy

From the perspective of worldly philosophy, morality is related to noble ideals. Only with positive life aspirations can one adhere to corresponding moral principles. In Confucianism, the "virtuous gentleman" represents a standard of moral excellence. At the most basic level, this involves practicing the five virtues: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity, as well as cultivating qualities such as self-reflection, self-restraint,

ethical self-cultivation, and tolerance towards others.

For thousands of years, the "virtuous gentleman" has been praised as a model of morality and self-fulfillment. This ideal is reflected in classical teachings such as: "A man of virtue knows what is right," "A man of virtue is calm and poised," and "A man of virtue helps others achieve their best." Moreover, Confucianism upholds the three immortal pursuits of life: establishing virtue, achieving success, and leaving a lasting legacy through words. Among them, "establishing virtue" is regarded as the highest, surpassing both literary and military achievements, as well as worldly fame.

In such a cultural context, people aspire to embody the virtues of a gentleman and naturally follow moral principles, as this is the path to becoming a gentleman. It also brings the benefits of learning from the virtuous and gaining social recognition. However, without this cultural context, morality becomes hollow. At one point, sarcastic remarks like "How much does morality weigh?"

became widespread. This happened because in people's minds, wealth had become the most urgent, the most important, and even the overriding goal, while morality was no longer being nourished. Moreover, driven by desire, all kinds of immoral behaviors spread unchecked.

To change this situation, the value system must be rebuilt. When virtuous gentlemen are truly respected, people will begin to shift their goals. This approach focuses on using results to guide behavior. Just as people began placing greater emphasis on academic credentials, exams like the college entrance exam, high school entrance exam, and even primary school admissions became major points of public concern. But in today's money-centric culture, merely promoting morality through ideological guidance seems increasingly challenging.

2. Rooted in Faith in God

In addition to philosophy, morality also stems from faith in God. For example, in Christian countries, morality

is founded on faith in God, while in Islamic countries, it is based on faith in Allah. Since the founding of the United States, during the inauguration ceremonies, both the President and the Chief Justice have been required to take an oath with their hand on the Bible. This ceremony, which carries religious, moral, and legal significance, clearly illustrates the close connection between religion and morality.

Many people believe in an omnipotent God who governs the universe and determines both present happiness and future destiny. In this view, only by having faith in God, following His will, and adhering to moral standards, can they enter heaven after death. Otherwise, they will fall into hell and be punished by eternal flames. This view binds faith, morality, and human happiness: to attain happiness in this life or everlasting happiness after death, they must believe in God and observe moral standards.

This kind of morality is backed by a powerful belief system, but that is also where its limitations lie. If one

does not believe in an omnipotent God, the morality based on this belief will lose its effect; if one is skeptical, the power of morality will also be diminished. Therefore, as God's authority is continuously challenged, even in traditional Christian countries, the moral influence once upheld by belief in God is declining.

3. Rooted in Human Nature and the Law of Cause and Effect

Unlike monotheism, Buddhism does not believe in an omnipotent God governing the universe. Instead, its moral framework is built upon the laws of life as revealed by the Buddha—namely, the understanding of human nature and the law of cause and effect. This reflects the Buddhist view of human beings and the world.

The first concept is human nature, which explains why we should follow moral principles based on an understanding of ourselves. Everyone aspires to become a better person—wise, happy, and at peace. But how can

we improve ourselves? Buddhism teaches that our existence is a temporary combination of the five aggregates, which include countless thoughts and emotions. Our views shape our mindset, which in turn shapes our character and the quality of our lives.

Wholesome mental states and moral behavior shape a healthy character and a noble quality of life, while unwholesome mental states and immoral actions lead to their opposites. Mental states and character are not determined by the buddhas and bodhisattvas; rather, they follow objective laws, which I often refer to as the "causality of the mind." This law can lead to two effects: immediate effects, which can be perceived in the present, and long-term effects, which continually shape future lives. In short, moral behavior brings both immediate and long-term benefits, while immoral behavior brings the opposite.

Once we realize that good actions bring us positive growth, while evil actions leave negative imprints in

our lives, we will naturally follow moral behavior out of responsibility for ourselves. This isn't about impressing others, succumbing to social pressure, or fearing punishment from an external force. It's about becoming a better version of ourselves. In today's world, people prioritize physical health, focusing only on their bodies. But they fail to realize that the key lies in cultivating the mind. In fact, following moral principles is the true form of self-care. This is nurturing life from the inside out, a form of well-being that spans from the present life to endless future lifetimes.

Therefore, Buddhism establishes the value of morality based on human nature and the law of cause and effect. This moral framework does not rely on external authority but can be tested through personal practice, making it more universal and easily accepted by the public. It benefits not only individual growth but also social harmony. For example, the Five Precepts and the Ten Wholesome Deeds advocated by Buddhism bring immense benefits to both oneself and others. When more people follow moral

actions, such as abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive and harsh speech, as well as greed, aversion, and ignorance, the society becomes more stable.

By following moral principles and witnessing their positive effects on ourselves and society, we naturally feel encouraged and motivated to continue. This inner strength is beyond what material possessions can provide. Therefore, within the Buddhist moral framework, individual and social values enhance each other. If we only focus on the social value of morality while neglecting the individual value, it becomes difficult for us to maintain persistent and self-motivated practice. On the other hand, if morality is confined to personal discipline without considering its broader societal impact, it makes a limited impact and lacks universal significance.

II

Faith Can Guide Spiritual Pursuits

Modern people are accustomed to material pursuits—houses, cars, clothes and food—so "shop, shop, and shop some more" has become a daily norm. The widespread use of online shopping has freed people from constraints, allowing them to shop online anytime. While meeting daily needs, it can also dispel feelings of emptiness and relieve stress. As a result, the pursuit of material goods is increasing exponentially. However, when it comes to spiritual pursuits, many people find it unfamiliar, abstract, or even outdated.

So, can material wealth solve all our problems? In fact, many people today are becoming increasingly lost rather than content. In the past, during times of poverty, we believed that having money would bring happiness. Now, many have money, houses, cars, and everything they once wished for—but why are they still unhappy? The root of the problem lies in the lack of a healthy mindset.

In fact, happiness is experienced through the mind. When we are filled with mental illness or unhealthy mental states, such as anxiety, fear, and insecurity, we become incapable of experiencing happiness. Just as physical illness harms health, mental illness destroys happiness and becomes the greatest enemy to happiness.

In recent years, the government has been actively promoting both material and spiritual development. As material conditions improve, mental issues are increasingly emerging, reaching a level that cannot be ignored. So, how can we build a spiritual civilization? It starts with healthy spiritual pursuits, including exploring life's permanent

problems, perfecting one's character, and engaging with culture and art—all of which are inseparable from faith.

1. The Exploration of Permanent Problems

First, it is about contemplating permanent problems: Who am I? What is destiny? What am I living for? Where did I come from, and where do I go after death? What is the true nature of the world? These are the very questions philosophy and religion strive to answer. Some may ask, "Why think about these? What do they mean to my life?" Actually, this allows us to reflect on life from a higher perspective. In the vast universe, amidst the endless stream of time, this short life is but a fleeting instant—how can we make it meaningful? Without this higher perspective, we cannot truly see the meaning of life, simply drifting aimlessly due to the force of karma.

Where do we find the answer? Science primarily interprets material phenomena, while philosophy and religion explore the essence of the world, each with its own

approach. Philosophy understands the world through rationality—relying on reasoning and speculation rather than direct realization—which cannot directly grasp the essence. Since ancient Greece, philosophers have consistently challenged and overturned previous theories, and to this day, no consensus has been reached. Theistic religions, on the other hand, attribute all ultimate answers to the creator, which, for non-believers, is "agnosticism."

However, Buddhism teaches us that, to address these permanent problems, we must awaken the wisdom inherent in life and look inward rather than outward. This is the very truth the Buddha directly realized upon attaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. To study Buddhism is to pursue the truth and the path to awakening as our mission—by following the guidance of the Dharma, just as the Buddha did. With such a spiritual aspiration, we can live with a clear purpose rather than wasting our lives in confusion.

2. The Pursuit of Perfecting Character

Next, we must cultivate a healthy mindset, character, and quality of life. When it comes to perfecting character, understanding the nature of the mind is crucial. Throughout both Eastern and Western philosophy, there has long been debate over whether human nature is inherently good or evil. Confucianism teaches that "Everyone has the potential to become as virtuous and wise as Yao or Shun." It also emphasizes that "The slight difference between humans and animals lies in our innate moral potential." To become a sage, one must first cultivate oneself—developing sincerity and a virtuous mind—further extending this to managing the family, governing the country, and ultimately bringing peace to the world.

Buddhism believes that sentient beings have dual natures: a Buddha-nature with the potential for awakening and a demonic nature afflicted by the three poisons of greed, aversion, and ignorance. Whether we realize our

Buddha-nature or fall into demonic nature depends on how we understand human nature and what we choose to cultivate. Before realizing our Buddha-nature, we are often dominated by our demonic nature, which manifests as unhealthy mindsets, such as greed, hatred, jealousy, and selfishness. They continuously create suffering, keeping us trapped in the cycle of birth and death. However, the Buddha realized that all beings possess the wisdom and virtues of the Tathagata, along with the ability to save themselves. This realization fills life with hope and is the greatest gift the Buddha offers to humanity.

If we wish to attain the qualities of the buddhas or bodhisattvas, we must practice to free ourselves from our demonic nature, perfect our character, and ultimately develop concentration and wisdom. In other words, "Pay reverence only to the Buddha, for he embodies the perfection of character."

3. The Pursuit of Culture and Art

Thirdly, the pursuit of culture and art represents a part of spiritual life and is closely connected to our faith. In Western art history, many famous works are directly inspired by Catholic and Christian doctrines. A large number of murals and sculptures were originally created for churches. Similarly, in traditional Chinese art, from cave sculptures to the copying of Buddhist sutras during the Tang Dynasty, these works were expressions of devotion to Buddhism. In this sense, they served religious purposes as offerings of faith and were later recognized as artworks.

Chinese painting, calligraphy and poetry emphasize *yijing*; it refers to a realm of thought, inseparable from Buddhist teachings. While Confucian culture emphasizes worldly engagement, it lacks the supramundane detachment and freedom that Buddhism offers. As a result, many ancient literati enjoyed reciting Buddhist sutras, such as the *Heart Sutra*, the *Diamond Sutra*, the

Vimalakirti Sutra, and the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. By studying these teachings, they elevated their state of mind, which was naturally reflected in their works. This gave their works deep meaning and set them apart from the secular world. Such influence is evident in the works of great masters throughout history, such as Wang Wei, Liu Zongyuan, Su Dongpo, and Wang Anshi.

In short, various spiritual pursuits—such as exploring eternity, perfecting character, and pursuing culture and art—are inseparable from faith. Since Buddhism spread to China, it complements native Chinese culture while greatly enriching people's spiritual lives. As a result, Buddhism holds an irreplaceable and important role for Chinese people.

III

Faith Can Cultivate a Transcendent Mindset

Many people long for a transcendent mindset and a life filled with poetry and distant dreams. This is because our attachments to relationships, careers, family, and social connections often bring us many afflictions and pressures, leaving us overwhelmed. Furthermore, we hold lasting expectations toward these attachments, unable to face their changes or even accept the suffering of losing them. As a result, the more we have, the more anxious, fearful, and insecure we become. The more we possess, the greater the chance of change: the more opportunities to lose, and the more frequent the setbacks we will face.

Today, we live in a world of rapid changes. In the past, people could live in peace and contentment in one place for decades. But in this era of globalization, events in one country can ripple across the globe, triggering a chain reaction. Moreover, the scope of our activities has greatly expanded; many of us travel by car and plane to different places every day. This has introduced more uncertainty and insecurity into our lives.

If we become overly dependent on external things, we will fear change, grow anxious about gains and losses, and end up exhausted. How can we maintain a sense of detachment and calmly face everything in this ever-changing world? It takes wisdom.

1. Accessing Situations with Dependent Origination

Confucianism emphasizes worldly achievements, such as establishing a family and career, as well as pursuing glory and wealth. With this perspective, we inevitably become dependent on family, relationships, and career. As the

saying goes, "When a person has no desires, their character naturally elevates." As long as we have desires and reliance on external things, we will be affected by their changes, unable to attain true freedom.

Buddhism perceives life primarily through the lens of samsara and the nature of the mind, which precisely complement Confucian culture. The view of samsara reveals the length of life, showing that life is not limited to this lifetime, but spans across a beginningless past and an endless future. The nature of the mind helps us understand the depth of life, showing that life includes not only the six consciousnesses that we can perceive, but also the subconscious, which stores all our past life experiences. Therefore, we don't have to become entangled in temporary gains and losses. We should examine life from a higher perspective, understanding that everything we have now follows the law of causes, conditions, and causality, as the gatha goes: "When conditions gather, things arise; when conditions disperse, things cease."

All phenomena in the world, including human existence, are determined by numerous conditions; they are illusions arising from conditional relationships. When causes and conditions come together, things manifest; when they dissipate, things decay. Since everything follows the law of dependent origination, any change in a single condition will change the result. Therefore, everything is ever-changing—there's no need to fear it, much less resist it.

In fact, change brings opportunity. While good things can turn bad, bad things can also turn good. The key lies in the causes and conditions we create. In Buddhism, "adapting to conditions" means using wisdom to assess situations and make the best choice based on current causes and conditions. We then put effort into shaping the causes while accepting whatever outcome arises. Success is certainly worthy of celebration, but failure is not the end; it can serve as a new starting point, guiding us to further improve the causes.

2. Understanding Emptiness Through Dependent Origination

The law of dependent origination implies that everything lacks inherent nature; it is empty in nature. As the *Heart Sutra* goes: "Form does not differ from emptiness, and emptiness does not differ from form; form is emptiness, and emptiness is form." "Form" refers to phenomena that exist, which are inherently empty; they are mere illusions arising from conditional relationships. Furthermore, the *Diamond Sutra* teaches: "All conditioned phenomena are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, shadows, like dew and lightning; thus should you contemplate them." This tells us that everything that has occurred, no matter how glorious or disappointing, is like a dream. In this dream, we experience various images and the entanglements of love and hate. Once we truly see things as they are, will we still be affected by gain and loss?

Beyond recognizing the illusory nature of conditioned phenomena, we must realize emptiness through meditation

and abide in it. In this way, we can live, work, and interact with others without any attachment, just as the *Diamond Sutra* says: "One should cultivate a mind that does not dwell anywhere." When the mind is free from attachment, it is like the vast sky; despite the passing clouds, the sky remains crystal clear; it is unmoved, undisturbed, and undefiled.

The mind inherently possesses the wisdom of non-abiding and the ability to remain unattached; it is simply obscured by ignorance. In Buddhism, "seeing the true nature of the mind" means realizing emptiness and awakening this wisdom and ability through practice. As a result, when facing various thoughts and external circumstances, we can always maintain a sense of detachment.

When we truly realize emptiness and abide in it, we can not only accept all the changes in reality, but also remain at ease even in the face of death. Many great masters were able to pass away while sitting or standing; this is not a

myth but the realization of the awakened nature, unborn and undying. For them, birth is not the beginning, and death is not the end—so what is there to fear? When we transcend the cycle of birth and death, what is there to be anxious about?

After the Han and Wei Dynasties, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism became the main pillars of Chinese culture. Although Buddhism originated outside China, its introduction over two thousand years ago has profoundly influenced China's philosophy, literature, and art. Therefore, any study of traditional Chinese culture is incomplete without Buddhism.

The Chinese are very fortunate, as we embrace Confucian thought, actively engaging in worldly affairs, while also drawing from Buddhist wisdom, which brings us a sense of transcendence. Without such a transcendent mindset, we may become attached to success and frustrated by failure, both of which can be exhausting. However, if we can engage in worldly affairs with a

transcendent mindset, we won't be attached to success or frustrated by failure. No matter how the world changes, everything can become an opportunity for practice, allowing us to accept all experiences with ease. Such perfect freedom! Therefore, no matter what profession we are in, Buddhist wisdom is greatly beneficial, as it brings us peace of mind.

IV

Faith Can Cultivate Compassion and Universal Love

Universal love is relative to individual love. Individual love refers to family relationships, romance, and friendship—connections people all know and pursue. They include kinship ties with parents, siblings, and spouses, as well as social ties with friends and colleagues. This form of love, built around self, undoubtedly brings great joy, but the issue lies in the notion of "self."

People have a natural selfish nature, also known as "self-attachment" in Buddhism. When an individual excessively focuses on themselves and views everything

from a self-centred perspective, they naturally create conflict with others. As we often see in the news, even among close family members—such as parents and children or husbands and wives—disagreements over opinions or property disputes can lead to legal battles or even physical fights. It is even more common to see conflicts such as siblings turning against each other, friendships falling apart, and business partners betraying one another. When people can't live in harmony with those around them, it also brings a hostile and tense atmosphere in society as a whole.

Moreover, as the economy grows, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. When both sides cannot view or manage wealth properly, this gap can easily create tension and foster a "hatred of the rich," threatening social stability.

How can we tackle these issues? It is crucial to promote the education of love: teaching people how to love, and elevating the individual love into universal love and

compassion. When more people engage in public welfare, rather than relying on just a few, a culture of mutual support will be fostered throughout society. In this way, we can reduce the opposition between the rich and the poor, bringing warmth to society. To achieve this, cultural influence is indispensable.

1. Love Rooted in Self is Limited

To some extent, we are products of culture, shaped not only by school education but also by the influence of family, society, books, etc. Together, these factors shape our outlook on life, worldview, values, and lifestyle, ultimately determining who we become.

In traditional Chinese culture, Confucianism emphasizes ethics and social order. This emphasis is embodied in the "Five Relationships," which define the proper conduct between father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, elder and younger siblings, and friends. They are further explained as follows: "affection between father

and son, righteousness between ruler and subject, distinct responsibilities between husband and wife, respect for the elders and care for the younger, and trust between friends."

Furthermore, Confucianism also places a special emphasis on *ren* (benevolence). Mencius also said, "The heart of empathy is inherent in everyone," meaning that this empathy arises from our innate goodness and extends beyond family. We can further extend this inherent empathy from caring for family and friends to the public. However, while Confucianism advocates benevolent care for others, it also acknowledges that "love has distinctions." This means that although Confucian benevolence is extensive, it is not equal; it is allocated based on the closeness of relationships and the nature of self-interest.

Christianity promotes universal love and actively engages in charitable work to help the poor. However, while humans are the focus of this love, animals are even treated as food. Even among humans, love is often for fellow

believers, while those of other faiths may be excluded. This exclusivity inherent in monotheistic religions has sometimes sparked religious conflicts. These contradictions are all tied to the "self."

As long as there is the "self," we will always perceive distinctions between ourselves and others, closeness and distance, likes and dislikes, and even between different nations and ethnicities. Carrying these distinctions in our minds may give rise to duality and lead to conflict with others. That is why love rooted in the self, no matter how great, will always be limited and can never truly embrace everything.

2. Only No-self Can Lead to Compassion and Universal Love

Buddhism teaches that true compassion and universal love are both equal and unconditional. Our compassion achieves perfection only when not a single being is excluded. So, how do we achieve this? The most

important theoretical foundation is the concept of "no-self." Without a sense of "self," there is no division between "I" and "others," no sense of closeness or distance, and no opposition. This is how we can fully benefit others. When we hear the term "no-self," we should not panic—it does not mean we don't exist; rather it means letting go of our wrong perceptions of ourselves.

This entails the guidance of wisdom to help us truly discover ourselves, while realizing that "I" and all beings in the six realms are inherently one. Without this understanding, we may wonder: "What do other beings have to do with me? Why should I care about their interests, since I'm not interested in them? How does it serve my life purpose?"

Only by understanding the wisdom of "no-self" and realizing our oneness with all beings can we naturally help others—because helping others is actually helping ourselves. It is like when our feet get hurt; our hands reach out to help without a second thought. We don't

question, "Why should we help? We're the hands, not the feet." At that moment, we do not think about personal gain or loss at all.

Bodhisattvas embody the qualities of "great loving-kindness without affinity, and unconditional compassion with same unity," because they view all other beings as one with themselves, just like the hands and feet of the same body. Whenever other beings are in need of help or facing difficulties, they give rise to compassion naturally, and offer help unconditionally, with no expectation or desire for anything in return. This compassion is limitless; there is no being that a bodhisattva would not help. This is the essence of Mahayana Bodhicitta—a noble aspiration to awaken oneself while helping all beings awaken, escape suffering, and attain happiness. Developing this aspiration is what marks a true Mahayana practitioner.

In addition to making vows, we must continually put Bodhicitta into practice, which involves loving-kindness

and compassion. Loving-kindness means bringing happiness to others, while compassion means alleviating their suffering. This practice begins by awakening our innate empathy, continues with cultivating kindness, and ultimately culminates in perfecting the Four Immeasurables: loving-kindness, compassion, rejoicing, and equanimity. It also follows a sequence: from one person, to ten, to a hundred, a thousand, and even tens of thousands; from those with whom we are connected, to those with whom we are not; from those we like, to those we dislike; from humans to all sentient beings. In both seated meditation and daily life practice, we gradually transcend self-attachment, greed and aversion, likes and dislikes, and all other limited preconceptions.

When it comes to compassion and universal love, what distinguishes Buddhism from Confucianism and other religions is its emphasis on "no-self." As long as the sense of "self" remains, compassion will be limited; only by letting go of the "self" can boundless compassion truly arise.

V

Faith Can Resolve the Problem of Death and Rebirth

In China, death is often seen as inauspicious and thus considered a taboo topic. We may think of death as something that happens to others, not to ourselves. We hustle through life, striving tirelessly to make money and build our careers. Even when we have more wealth than we could ever spend in a lifetime, it is still not enough—as if we could live forever and keep earning endlessly. We never reflect that death is inevitable and will eventually take everything away. But the timing of death is uncertain—it could happen next year, tomorrow, or even in the next second. If those who died suddenly had known that life

could end so abruptly, would they have pursued their goals so recklessly, without making any preparation for death? Unfortunately, many lives end unprepared, and such sudden deaths are occurring at increasingly younger ages.

When we hear about the deaths of relatives and friends, we feel a sense of panic. At the "Buddhism and Psychotherapy" forum co-hosted by Suzhou West Garden Monastery of Vinaya School and the psychology community, participants explored the topic of "death anxiety." I delivered a lecture on behalf of the Buddhist community, explaining the Buddhist view of life and death through an interpretation of the *Heart Sutra*. Many attending psychologists remarked that Buddhism offers the most thorough solution to the issue of death.

If we never reflect on death or prepare for it, then when it arrives, we are likely to face it with pain, confusion, and helplessness. Despite the suffering and all rescue efforts, we may eventually pass away in despair. This is how

many people's lives end today—isn't it somewhat tragic and hasty? No wonder the ancients considered "a peaceful death" as one of the Five Blessings.

How can we pass away peacefully, without fear or worry? To achieve this, we must understand the truth about death and where we will go after death. Unfortunately, the education we receive today, along with the materialistic views such as "Death is like a lamp going out," and the Confucian idea that "If you do not understand life, how can you understand death?"—all fail to answer this question. So, is death really the end of everything? Do we truly not need to prepare for it? When we are young, many of us feel it is irrelevant. But when we are old, questions like "How will I die?" and "Where will I go?" begin to arise more often, stirring a sense of uncertainty and unease.

When it comes to death, exploring its truth and finding a way beyond it is not only a challenge we face today, but also the very reason the Buddha renounced his royal life.

In fact, it is the main problem Buddhist practice seeks to address. The Buddha gave up his throne and became a monk after witnessing the suffering caused by aging, sickness, and death. He realized that, in the face of death, youth, beauty, wealth, and status are all fleeting and worthless. Thus, he decided to seek the eternal value of life. After six years of ascetic practice, he finally attained awakening under the Bodhi tree, realizing the emptiness, a state of neither arising nor ceasing. So, how does Buddhism view death?

1. Death Is Not the End

When the Buddha attained enlightenment, he realized that life is not limited to this single lifetime, but flows through an endless cycle of birth and death. This life is merely a fleeting moment in the ongoing flow, like a single wave in the ocean. The birth and death we experience now is just like the rising and falling of a wave. Waves rise and fall, but the ocean remains unmoved. If we fail to see the ocean, but live only within the waves, thinking they

are everything, we will be constantly tossed by their rise and fall. However, if we perceive life and death as part of the ocean, we can realize its infinite aspect as the ocean itself, rather than being confined to the finite aspect like fleeting waves. In this way, we naturally become less anxious.

Furthermore, China's "Wukong" satellite has discovered that the material world we see accounts for only 5% of the universe. Additionally, dark matter makes up 27%, and dark energy comprises 68%. Psychologists also point out that life has two levels: the consciousness and the subconscious. Consciousness is just the tip of the iceberg, while the subconscious is the massive mountain hidden beneath the surface. This indicates that our perspective is very limited. However, studying Buddhism helps us unlock our wisdom and understand life and death from a broader view.

As ordinary beings, we are trapped in the cycle of samsara, but Buddhist teachings on nirvana, rebirth to a Pure

Land, and the Bodhisattva path point us toward the true destination of life. Many people equate nirvana with death. But in reality, nirvana is the complete cessation of delusion and afflictions—the realization of the state of neither arising nor ceasing. It includes both "Incomplete Nirvana" and "Complete Nirvana." The former means that this physical body composed of five aggregates still exists, while the latter signifies the dissolution of both the physical body and consciousness. Therefore, nirvana is not death; it can be realized while we are still alive.

The Pure Land practice is also an important way to resolve death anxiety. It is intended for practitioners who are unable to attain enlightenment in this lifetime. Amitabha Buddha's compassionate vow allows them to accumulate merit through "Faith, Vows, and Practice." By wholeheartedly chanting his name and relying on his power, they can be reborn in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. That is a place of infinite peace and happiness, where Amitabha Buddha compassionately guides sentient beings. This is why Pure Land practitioners

view death not as an end, but as a rebirth—a process of complete transformation and renewal. With such a bright future ahead, we will not fear death, nor cling to anything in this life.

Moreover, bodhisattvas have attained non-abiding nirvana; this means that, driven by great compassion after enlightenment, they continue to save sentient beings trapped in samsara. Practicing the Bodhisattva path means making boundless compassionate vows, treating samsara as a battlefield, tirelessly rescuing sentient beings across all worlds, and guiding them from delusion to awakening. As stated in the *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva*: "Even if the realm of infinite space ends, the realm of sentient beings ends, the karma of sentient beings ends, and the afflictions of sentient beings end, my vows are endless, thought after thought without even an instant of ceasing. And I will never grow weary of this practice—in my actions of body, speech, and mind."

What magnificent resolve! What great vows! With such vows, bodhisattvas can manifest in various forms to meet the needs of sentient beings—going wherever they are needed. Thus, instead of helplessly fearing death like ordinary beings, they transcend the cycle of birth and death—transforming that fear into boundless compassion!

2. Hospice Care

Hospice care offers a way for us to face death. Many philosophers say that philosophy prepares us for death, but religion plays an even more vital role in this preparation. In Buddhism, contemplating that death could come at any moment is a fundamental practice for all practitioners; it is not only a primary practice, but also a preparatory practice for all Dharma paths. True practitioners are always preparing for death. Knowing that death can strike at any moment fosters urgency and vigilance in practice.

Buddhism divides life into four stages: birth, living, death, and the intermediate state between death and the next rebirth. This intermediate stage is like finishing one job but not yet starting the next—a transitional phase between this life and the next. When a person leaves this world, how do they transition from this life to the next? What determines where life will go? One factor is past karma; the other is the final thought at the moment of death.

When wholesome thoughts arise, they can help good karma ripen more quickly; if one aspires to be reborn in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss and has accumulated sufficient merit, they can be welcomed by Amitabha Buddha at the moment of death. However, if at the moment of death, one is disturbed by afflictions, and gives rise to strong greed or anger, they will fall into lower realms. That's why Buddhism places great emphasis on hospice care—providing mental guidance to the dying before death. This helps them let go of all worldly attachments, understand their future destination, and develop

deep faith in Amitabha Buddha's compassionate vow—wishing to leave the Saha world and be reborn in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. At the same time, through chanting Amitabha Buddha's name or the Three Refuges, we assist the dying in adjusting their mental states and settling into right mindfulness. These are very important external supports in the transition of life.

Hospice care is now common in the West. It helps relieve physical pain while also providing spiritual care and support for seriously ill patients who can no longer be treated. This kind of care also includes faith-based guidance, allowing them to complete the final journey of life with peace and dignity.

VI

Faith Can Help One Rediscover Oneself

The world today is changing rapidly, and life is rich and diverse—with media, entertainment, games, tech products, and the rise of artificial intelligence and virtual worlds. As a result, we've become increasingly dependent on external distractions. Outside of work, many are glued to their phones, scrolling through fragmented content. So they find it hard to sit quietly with themselves, and some even lose the ability to rest. They can't fall asleep even when exhausted, as they keep scrolling uncontrollably. In response to these issues, the latest edition of the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)* contains "gaming

disorder," along with clear diagnostic criteria to help psychiatrists determine whether a patient has developed a pathological addiction to gaming. In addition, modern ailments like "phone addiction" and "Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome (DSPS)" have become global issues.

Amid the overwhelming stream of information, humanity is increasingly losing touch with itself, facing more problems and experiencing deteriorating mental health. At the same time, technology has armed us with unprecedented destructive power, making the world fraught with hidden dangers that are difficult to defend against.

The fundamental solution starts with the mind. Inner peace is the foundation for world peace, and inner stability is the key to global stability. Eastern culture, especially the wisdom of Buddhism, plays a crucial role in helping us understand our inner world, reconnect with ourselves, and cultivate a healthy personality. In recent years, Buddhism's influence has been growing in Western countries. Many psychologists are studying Buddhist

teachings and meditation practices, integrating them into academic research and clinical therapy.

Just like a product, a person must be shaped through the right methods. On one hand, this involves listening to and reflecting on Buddhist teachings—embracing the cultivation of wisdom and awakening, thereby transforming our views and resolving life's challenges. On the other hand, it involves subduing afflictions through meditation practices such as samatha and vipassana. Guided by the right view, we can cultivate a healthy mindset and a well-rounded character, ultimately becoming the best version of ourselves—embodying the same noble qualities as the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Practicing Buddhism is not about seeking something external. The purpose of relying on the Three Jewels is to guide our inner cultivation. While we take refuge in the Three Jewels, this goes beyond external forms such as Buddha statues, Dharma, or Sangha—these are the outer Three Jewels. There are also the inner Three Jewels,

which refer to our inherent nature of awakening. By relying on wise teachers, we listen to the true Dharma and put it into practice—not to idolize buddhas, bodhisattvas, or teachers, but to ultimately realize our true nature.

We have just explored the role of faith from a Buddhist perspective through six key aspects: establishing moral principles, guiding spiritual pursuits, cultivating a transcendent mindset, cultivating compassion and universal love, resolving the problem of death and rebirth, and rediscovering oneself. I hope that, through studying this wisdom, we can eliminate evil, cultivate goodness, and embody noble character, thereby contributing to the healthy development of society.

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，对当代佛教教育的探索，包括禅意生活、智慧人生和觉醒之道。同时，我们将在世界各地营造具有禅意的空间、彼此增上的氛围，为大众修学保驾护航。

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

Mindful Peace International & Mindful Peace Academy

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

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

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

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