



静心学堂丛书

The Mindful Peace Academy Collection

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In the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Where Is Humanity Headed?

# 人工智能时代， 人类何去何从

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人工智能时代正以不可阻挡之势席卷而来。科技日新月异，生活丰富便利，人们却依然忧思难安。在这物质发达而内心迷茫的时代，人类将何去何从？2018年2月4日下午，济群法师和中国社科院研究员、著名哲学家周国平教授，继《我们误解了这个世界》的对话后，就“人工智能时代”这一热点问题，分别从佛法和哲学的视角，探讨这一时代背景下人类的出路。

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# 人工智能時代 人類何去何從？

主講嘉賓：游群法師 周國平教授



# 一、人工智能对人类的威胁

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现在人工智能的威胁主要有两点  
一是它自我更新的失控，这有可能  
二是人工智能会不会毁灭人类

人对自身的优化，不仅在于积累知识和提升能力  
更重要的是证悟觉性  
这种唯有生命才具备的无限潜能  
正是人类和人工智能的根本区别

**主持人：**人工智能时代，人类何去何从？对于这个话题，有人欢欣鼓舞，也有人忧心忡忡，担心人类被自己研发的人工智能灭了，所以我们特别希望听到两位智者的看法。首先想问，人工智能对人类最大的威胁是什么？

**周国平：**今天这个题目是济群法师出的。我听到时，首先一愣：这是科技啊！然后精神一振，觉得法师特别敏锐。人工智能是现在比较前沿的话题，也是一个热点。法师能与时俱进，抓住热点，同时又和哲学、佛学探讨的问题联系起来——既前沿，又永恒。

说实话，在人工智能的问题上，我确实是外行，

相信法师在一定程度上也是外行，但这个问题真的需要外行来关注。关于人工智能对人类的主要威胁，我觉得，可能引发了两个问题。

一个问题是，人工智能会不会超过人类，乃至取代人类？这是很多人关注的。我想，人工智能说到底仍是个技术，是人类为自己制造的非常好用的工具。从这一点来说，我相信工具永远超不过人类，也无法取代人类。不能因为这个工具特别强大，就说它比人类高明。就像人类发明了汽车，跑起来比人快得多，你说汽车比人强吗？人类发明了飞机，必须靠飞机才能上天，你说飞机比人强吗？其实不能。因为这些都是人制造的，人工智能也是同样。

当然有一点不同，因为它是智能的。我的理解是，人工智能可能是对大脑神经网络的模拟，其主要优势在于计算能力，处理大数据非常快。这是人类完全不能相比的。一个最突出的例子，谷歌开发的阿尔法狗，开始和李世石下围棋时，以三比一赢了对方，已经很让人震惊了。然后它所向披靡，所有棋手都下不过它。现在更厉害，干脆宣布不和人类下棋，因为是无意义

的事。这就充分体现了它处理数据的能力和优势。李世石说，他下棋时会考虑二三十步，但阿尔法狗下一步棋的时候，考虑了几千步。这一步下面有多少可能性，它全都考虑到了。这种速度是人类永远赶不上的。

但我想强调，它仅仅在处理大数据的领域中可以领先，而人类的很多领域不是这种情况。在精神生活方面，人工智能有天生的缺陷，永远不可能和人类相比。阿尔法狗下棋再厉害，能享受棋手的情感吗？比如我的好友芮乃伟下棋时那种内心的愉悦、沉思的快乐，它不可能享受到。我不相信有一天人工智能会有情感，最多只能模拟情感的外在表现，不可能有真实的情感。

再进一步，在哲学、艺术、宗教等精神领域，我想人工智能最多做些资料工作，不可能有创造性。我不相信有一天，某个超级机器人成了柏拉图那样的哲学家；或成了爱因斯坦那样的大科学家，提出一种新的理论；或像佛陀那样，创立一种宗教。在最高的精神领域，人工智能不可能和人类相比，也永远不可能取而代之。所以从人类生活来说，最重要的一块是不



能取代的。

另一个问题是，人工智能会不会祸害人类，乃至毁灭人类？这也是有些人忧虑的。我觉得可能是科幻片看多了，想象力太丰富。从目前的情况看，人工智能的开发方向很明确，一定要有市场，能够应用。比如无人驾驶的汽车、能做家务的机器人，这些是它的重点。但也有些很聪明的人，比如霍金就觉得人工智能自我更新的能力太强，而人类进化非常缓慢，所以他很忧虑。

我觉得这不太可能。现在人工智能的威胁主要有两点，一是它自我更新的失控，这有可能。但失控到什么程度？我不相信会到无法解决的程度。二是人工智能会不会毁灭人类？其实真正让人担忧的情况是，一旦恐怖分子掌握人工智能，并发明毁灭性的武器，结果会很糟糕。这种危险是存在的。

总之，一方面不要太忧虑，另一方面也要加以警惕，制定一系列防备措施。包括在法律上，规定人工智能的发展边界在哪里。就像我们现在对基因工程规定了边界，你可以克隆羊，克隆动物，但不能克隆人。

**主持人：**我们听到了周老师的看法，在精神领域，人工智能难以超越人类，也无法取代，他对这点比较乐观。法师对这个问题怎么看？

**济群法师：**我之所以提出这个问题，是因为人工智能已成为整个社会的关注焦点。包括这次达沃斯论坛，人工智能也是其中的重要话题。

人工智能的出现，确实给不少人带来恐慌。据有关人士预测，目前社会上的很多工作，在未来几年会被人工智能取代。包括阿尔法狗的出现，它的学习能力之强，也是人类望尘莫及的。所以霍金认为：人工智能的崛起，要么是人类历史上最好的事，要么是最糟的……也有可能是人类文明史的终结，除非我们会如何避免危险。

正如周老师所言，人工智能作为工具，可以用来造福人类，也可以用来毁灭人类，关键是谁在使用它，用它来做什么。当今世界有很多不安定因素，一方面是因为恐怖分子和核武器的威胁，一方面是因为人类自身的问题层出不穷。现在人类的聪明才智都投入在

发展经济和科技上，包括研发人工智能，但对自身的认识和优化，基本处于停滞甚至倒退中。因为外界诱惑重重，使人身不由己地被裹挟其中，根本没有精力反观自照。如果人工智能日益先进，而人类缺少健康的人格和心态去使用它，就会使世界更加危险。因为随着工具的强大，反而会增强人的破坏力。

人工智能代表西方工业文明、科学技术的进步。面对它的飞速发展，人类特别需要认识自己，提升自己。否则，未来会在社会处于什么地位，世界又会出现哪些问题，我们是没把握的。关于人对自身的优化，正是东方文化的重点所在。儒家提倡修身齐家，成圣成贤；佛教引导我们成就解脱，成佛作祖，都是立足于心性修养，立足于生命自身的完善。

另一方面，人工智能的学习能力超级强大。从掌握知识来说，人类通过几十甚至几百、几千年的积累，人工智能在短时间内就可超越。那么，人类的独特性到底在哪里？这也是我们需要关心的。周老师讲到，人工智能或许会模拟人的情感表达，但不会有情感。比如人工智能可以模拟慈善行为，但它能不能有慈悲

大爱？在这些方面，人工智能和人类是有本质的区别。所以我们要去发现作为人的不共所在——哪些是人工智能无法取代，甚至无法学习的。

从佛法修行来说，是要开发生命内在的觉性，这不是靠学习得来的，而是众生本自具足的宝藏。所以说，人对自身的优化，不仅在于积累知识和提升能力，更重要的是证悟觉性。这种唯有生命才具备的无限潜能，正是人类和人工智能的根本区别。因为人工智能的学习和自我更新，只能在有限的范畴内。即使掌握再多知识，也是有限的积累。

在今天这个时代，人需要不断认识自己，开发心的无限潜能，才能在世界立于不败之地。否则的话，随着科技的飞速发展，我们又没有健全的人格去处理它所带来的潜在危险，世界的问题将越来越多，人类的处境将危机四伏。

**主持人：**就像法师说的，科技越来越发达，人心却越来越混乱。两位智者给我们指引了何去何从的方向：不必对人工智能时代过于担心，因为人类也有差

异性的优势。我们有情感，有精神领域可以开拓，重点是把这部分潜能，尤其是觉性开发出来。

## 二、如何认识自己

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一方面，每个人要知道  
自己的独特之处是什么  
另一方面，如果真正挖掘自己  
会发现还有一个更高的自我

当我们彻底摆脱对自我的错误设定  
才会看到心的本来面目  
像虚空一样，无形无相，无念无住  
它一无所有，又能生万物

**主持人：**科技主要是向外探索，而哲学和佛学都是向内挖掘的智慧。说到向内，遇到的第一个问题就是“认识自己”，这对西方哲学和东方佛教都是非常重要的。请问周老师，西方哲学提出“认识你自己”已有几千年，在此期间，作了哪些尝试和努力？

**周：**西方哲学强调“认识你自己”有两个阶段。第一是在古希腊时期，供奉太阳神的雅典德尔斐神庙中刻有一个神谕，就是“认识你自己”。这句话出自阿波罗之口，而他正是雅典城邦最重要的神。这句话的含义，其实是强调人要知道自己的局限性，不要骄傲，不要狂妄。

关于此，有个著名的故事。曾经有人到德尔斐神庙问神：雅典最智慧的人是谁？神回答说：是苏格拉底。苏格拉底是古希腊很重要的哲学家，他听说后感到奇怪：我其实挺笨的，怎么说我是最智慧的人呢？因为不相信，他就到雅典找那些以智慧著称的政治家、艺术家、诗人、工匠，问了他们很多问题，想证明这些人比自己聪明。结果他发现：这些人仅仅知道自己从事的那点事，就自以为很聪明，自以为什么都知道；而他知道自己很无知，好多事都不知道，尤其对最重要的“人应该怎么活”还没想明白。苏格拉底由此总结道：神说我最智慧，是因为我知道人的局限性，知道自己一无所知。

第二是近代以来，西方哲学家也说“认识你自己，实现你自己”，主要在于两个层面。一方面，每个人要知道自己的独特之处是什么。比如尼采说：你要知道自己在这个世界是独一无二的，生命只有一次，所以要珍惜生命，不要作为大众的符号，跟随大家生活，而要实现自己独特的价值。他强调的是这一点，和古希腊哲学的内涵不同。



另一方面，如果真正挖掘自己，会发现还有一个更高的自我——这样就能站在宇宙的立场看人生，让人生具有终极意义。很多哲学家认为，人有一个自我，那是小我；此外还有大我，如柏拉图说的理念世界，基督教说的上帝。尼采不相信上帝，但认为人生应该有更高的意义。这个大我会派驻代表在小我中，人要去发现这个代表。用孟子的话说，是尽心、知性、知天。他说的心就是精神世界，其中有个东西叫性，是和宇宙相通的觉悟，也是大我派驻在自己身上的代表。你要找到它，听它的教导，就和宇宙大我打通了。这个观点，我想哲学和宗教有共通之处。

**主持人：**非常精彩。大我派了代表到小我这里，而佛法讲的是无我，这有很大差别吗？刚才说要认识无限性，怎么在古希腊哲学中是认识人的有限性？请问法师，宗教和哲学在看待自我的角度上，有很多不同吗？

**济：**刚才周老师讲到大我和小我，我联想到《奥

义书》，这是印度宗教和哲学的源头。其中说到宇宙是大我，个体生命是小我。人因为迷失自我而轮回，所以生命的价值就是由小我回归大我。这种宇宙和自身的融合，使生命达到圆满，即梵我一如。但佛法反对这种观点，提出无我的思想，这也是佛教有别于其他宗教的根本。

西方文艺复兴后出现人文主义思潮，关注个性解放，关注个人价值的实现。这就使自我得到极大张扬。那么，究竟什么代表“我”的存在？身份能代表吗？你今天有这个身份，明天可能没这个身份。相貌、想法、情绪能代表吗？相貌会衰老，想法和情绪更是变化不定的。此外，还有地位、财富、名誉等。佛陀对此进行全面审视后发现，我们认定的所谓自我，比如以身份为我，以相貌为我，以想法为我，以情绪为我，以名字为我……所有这些和我们只有暂时而非永恒的关系。既然是暂时的，就不能代表自我本质性的存在。

佛法还告诉我们，把这种暂时的关系当作永恒，是人生一切痛苦的根源。执著身体为我，就会害怕死

亡；执著相貌为我，就会担心衰老；执著想法为我，就会和世界产生冲突；执著情绪为我，就容易陷入情绪，为其所控，成为情绪的奴隶。

佛法所说的无我，并不是说这个生命现象不存在，而是要纠正对自己附加的错误设定。《楞严经》有七处征心，让我们寻找：心到底在哪里？在内还是在外？有没有形相？在审视过程中会发现：我们所以为的“我”，从外在色身到内在想法，所有这一切都是暂时的假相，并没有固定不变的本质。

当我们彻底摆脱对自我的错误设定，才会看到心的本来面目：像虚空一样，无形无相，无念无住，无边无际。它一无所有，又含藏一切，能生万物。禅宗所说的明心见性，就是让我们找到这个本自具足的觉性，由此才能真正认识自己，而不是被种种假相所转。

### 三、生命的价值在哪里

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宗教和哲学虽有不同表达  
但基本思路一致  
就是人不能局限于缘起的自我  
要有超越个体的更高的世界  
你最终是属于那个世界的

人必须关注终极价值  
才能对现实保持超然  
而不是把毕生精力消耗于此  
忘却真正的人生大事

**周：**关于生命的价值，我觉得有两个层面。一个层面是，我知道生命是缘起的，无自性的，没有实质内容。尽管如此，个体生命的价值在哪里？西方哲学非常强调这一点，认为每个生命是独一无二的——世上只有一个你，你只有一次人生，不可重复，所以要珍惜人生，把它的价值实现出来。

当然，我们要对自我有个正确认定，身份、外貌、财产这些都不是我，只是对自我低层次的误解。把这些破除后，我们承认不承认缘起的自我和生命？要不要去实现它独特的价值？

更高的层面是，我们不能停留于实现自我价值。我觉得宗教和哲学虽有不同表达，但基本思路是一致

的，就是人不能局限于缘起的自我，要有更广阔的世界。不管把它叫作真如也好，空性也好，天国也好，大梵也好，理性世界也好……不论有多少称呼，一定是超越个体的更高的世界，你最终是属于那个世界的。人要 and 更高的世界沟通，要回归那里。

这两个层面，我觉得都是需要的。那么，缘起的自我有没有价值？价值在哪里？我想知道这一点。

**济：**从西方哲学的视角，认为生命对每个人来说只有一次，格外珍贵。而佛教认为，生命不仅有现在，还有无穷的过去和无尽的未来，今生只是生命长河的一个片段。所以人生并不是独一无二的，也不只是关注这一生，更要关注生命的轮回。

刚才周老师问：缘起生命的价值在哪里？佛法认为，缘起生命的本身是虚幻的，但虚幻并不是没有。就像我们现在的人身，不仅存在，而且非常宝贵，难得易失。怎么能用好它？从佛法角度说，其价值就在于走向觉醒。因为在六道中，只有人的身份才有理性，才能审视生命真相，并通过修行开启内在觉性。

我们的生命现状是无明的，不知道我是谁；不知道生从何来，死往何去；也不知道生命的意义是什么，世界的真相是什么。因为没有智慧，我们对自己和世界充满误解，从而制造种种烦恼；然后带着这些烦恼看自我，看世界，制造更多的烦恼。生命就在这样的迷惑、烦恼中不断轮回。

学佛就是让我们去认识：这种生命的本质是痛苦的——你想不想改变，想不想摆脱？改变之后又是什么？佛法告诉我们，在迷惑背后，还有觉醒的生命。这个生命是和天地万物相通的，和整个宇宙相通的。认识到有限背后的无限，才能实现生命的最高价值。而改变的唯一途径，是依托现有人身，所以这个缘起的生命意义重大，我们要用好它。

**周：**缘起生命的意义和价值，我想包括两方面。首先是入世的方面，应该有自己真正的事业。现在的问题是，很多人没有自己的事业，这是很痛苦的。他的烦恼不仅在于不觉悟，还在于不知道该做什么。当然这也是不觉悟的表现，只是追随社会的价值观，追

逐物欲，和人攀比，没有真正找到自己的兴趣和能力。他很少问自己这样的事，认识不到作为一个独特生命的价值在哪里，就看社会上什么样的事风光，什么样的事能带来更多利益，就去做什么，这是很大的问题。我觉得，对个人价值的认定不能缺少。应该认识到：我在世上只能活一辈子，一定要找到一件事，把自己最好的能力发展起来，不仅自己快乐，也能造福人类。

其次，光有这个还不行，哪怕你做出再大的事业，哪怕是最心爱的事业，你觉得个人价值已经得到实现，也不算什么，也是很渺小的。如果看破这一点，就能更上一层楼，获得更高的觉悟。这两点都需要，没有第一点的话，人生还是有点空。

**济：**从佛法角度来说，生命存在两个层面，一是现实价值，一是终极价值。现实价值就是过好当下的日子，比如身体健康、心智健全、家庭幸福、儿女孝顺，同时能造福社会，让更多人因为你的存在得到幸福。佛教中的人天善法，就是告诉我们如何使身心安乐，人生美满。这需要智慧和道德，否则是做不到的。



世上很多人也在追求幸福，但在追求过程中，往往制造了很多痛苦，甚至给他人造成伤害。

佛法所说的因缘因果，就是让我们了解：生命延续到底遵循什么规律。我们今天能成为这样的人，我们的兴趣、爱好、性格等，是和过去的观念、行为、习惯有关。也就是说，所有结果都有它的前因。了解这一规律后，我们才知道，想要获得幸福，想要成为更好的自己，应该做些什么。这种现实价值也是每个人需要的。

但仅仅停留在现实价值，不关注终极价值，终究是无法安心的。不少人事业做得很大，功成名就，有一天突然想到：人为什么活着？这些事和我的生命有什么关系？会觉得很茫然。因为每个人都要面临死亡，不论现在地位多高，财产多少，还是儿孙满堂，临命终时，这些都和你没关系了。这时你到哪里去？生命的未来是什么？所以人必须关注终极价值，才能对现实保持超然，而不是把毕生精力消耗于此，忘却真正的人生大事。

如果没有这样的定位，我们很可能把现实价

值当作一切，甚至为了利益最大化不择手段。这不仅是对人身的最大浪费，还会贻害无穷。所以说，终极价值和现实价值的统一，对个体乃至社会都是非常重要的。

**周：**最好的情况是，得到现实价值以后，看破它，去追求终极价值。最糟糕的是，现实价值也没得到，终极价值也不在眼中，这种人就会痛苦不堪。

## 四、佛教否定现实幸福吗

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心既是痛苦的源头  
也是快乐的源头  
所以佛教更重视心灵健康  
重视解脱之乐  
而不是把拥有物质当作幸福之本

**主持人：**刚才的对话中多次提到一个词：幸福。对于普通个体来说，不论追求现实价值还是终极价值，比较关注的是怎样才能过好。普通人印象中的幸福，就是有基本物质保障，同时精神上比较充盈。刚才听到轮回是苦的时候，我在想，佛教是不是否定现实的幸福？

**济：**每个人都向往幸福，追求幸福。但什么是幸福？在物质匮乏的年代，我们往往以为拥有就是幸福。没钱的时候，有钱就是幸福；没结婚的时候，结婚就是幸福；没孩子的时候，有孩子就是幸福；没房没车的时候，有房有车就是幸福。我们以为，得到自己想

要的就是幸福。

随着经济的发展，很多人有了以前梦寐以求的生活条件，甚至有了几辈子、几十辈子都用不完财富，却还是不幸福。为什么会这样？关键是没有健康的心态。如果我们对幸福的追求建立在迷惑、烦恼之上，即便拥有再多，也是无法得到幸福的。反而会因为过度关注物质，带来攀比、竞争、压力，以及焦虑、没有安全感等负面情绪。

佛法告诉我们，心既是痛苦的源头，也是快乐的源头。当内心充满烦恼，这些负面情绪会不断给人生制造问题，制造麻烦，制造伤害，会成为制造痛苦的永动机。反之，当人生没有迷惑、烦恼、压力时，即使粗茶淡饭，也能乐在其中，所谓“若无闲事挂心头，便是人间好时节”。所以佛教更重视心灵健康，重视解脱之乐，而不是把拥有物质当作幸福之本。

修行就是调心之道，只有解除迷惑、烦恼，拥有良好心态，才有能力感受幸福，收获幸福。

**主持人：**明白了，佛法不是否定幸福，而是否定

我们对幸福的错误认知。刚才误解了自我，现在误解了幸福，总结起来就是《我们误解了这个世界》。我们在生活中就能看到这种现象，物质越来越丰富，科技越来越发达，但没有烦恼的幸福非常难得。

## 五、如何静心

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老天给每个人一条命，一颗心  
把这条命照看好，把这颗心安顿好  
人生就是幸福的

身和心本身都有自我疗愈的功能  
休息就是启动这种能力的重要途径  
身体需要通过休息恢复精力  
心灵需要通过放松恢复安宁

**主持人：**刚才提到静心，这是佛法提倡并擅长的。从哲学的角度，有没有静心、安心之类的说法？

**周：**整个哲学就是让人静心，让人站在更高的角度思考根本问题——宇宙的本质是什么？人生的终极意义是什么？我觉得，这种思考的最终结果是让人超脱一些。这点和佛学的目标一致。刚才济群法师说，解除烦恼就是幸福。其实，很难从正面定义幸福。

幸福是哲学中一个很大的问题，在古希腊时期讨论得尤其多，主要有两种观点。一派是伊壁鸠鲁的快乐主义，认为幸福就是快乐。但他强调的快乐并不是物质和纵欲，而是身体健康，灵魂宁静。另一派是完



善主义，认为幸福就是精神的完善，主要代表是苏格拉底和柏拉图。他们强调幸福就是美德，做有道德的人，就是幸福的。

中国古典哲学关注什么是理想生活，也是讨论这个问题。我觉得儒家比较接近完善主义，孔子的幸福观归纳为一句话，就是安贫乐道——物质生活可以简单些，在精神上追求快乐。道家比较接近快乐主义，其幸福观也可归纳为一句话，就是全性保真——保护好生命完整、真实的状态，不让它被物质破坏了。这句话出自《淮南子》，是早期杨子的说法，我觉得可以代表他们的观点。

可见，东西方哲学都是从价值观来说幸福——让自身最珍贵的东西保持良好状态。这最珍贵的是什么？完善主义强调精神，快乐主义强调生命。其实这两派也不是那么绝对，都强调生命要单纯，不要复杂，否则就是痛苦的根源；同时强调精神应该丰富，要高贵、优秀而有信仰。我觉得两者可以结合起来，让精神和生命都有良好状态，就是幸福。

老天给每个人一条命，一颗心，把这条命照看

好，把这颗心安顿好，人生就是幸福的。人心为什么不静？无非是烦恼和痛苦。

烦恼和痛苦的根源有两种，一半是自己制造的痛苦，因为价值观出了问题，没找到人生真正的意义，把并不重要的东西看得无比重要，追求不到痛苦，追求到了仍然痛苦。另一半是人生必然会有的痛苦，不能正确对待生老病死、天灾人祸。那些是自己无法支配的，如果为此纠结，就带来了痛苦。

所以，一是要有正确的价值观，这是哲学讨论的问题；二是对自己不能支配的命运，要以超脱的智慧对待。斯多葛派特别强调的一点是：对不能支配的东西，要做到不动心——既然你支配不了，何必为它激动呢？没必要。这也是哲学讨论的问题。

**主持人：**超脱的智慧，原来哲学也讲这个。《我们误解了这个世界》中说到，命运有一些是可变的，有一些是不可变的，当时周老师就是持这样的观点。法师有补充吗？

**济：**静心是值得关注的问题。尤其在今天这个浮躁的时代，外在的喧嚣刺激，内心的情绪起伏，使每个人都很累。我们想要休息，可心老在不停地动荡，使我们不得安宁。我常说，未来考量一个人能不能健康地活着，其中非常重要的标准，就是有没有休息的能力。

在过去，生活环境单纯，没有那么多娱乐，人们可以静静地晒晒太阳，看看月亮，有时间也有心情和自己在一起。但现代人因为网络的普及，资讯的泛滥，时刻被手机、电脑掌控着，几乎停不下来。必须到身上的电全部耗完，才能把这些东西放下睡觉。充一晚上电之后，第二天又继续忙碌，继续消耗。

其实，身和心本身都有自我疗愈的功能，休息就是启动这种能力的重要途径。身体需要通过休息恢复精力，心灵需要通过放松恢复安宁。如果没有休息的能力，就意味着我们不会有健康的身心。如何让这颗躁动不安的心平息下来？佛法告诉我们，有以下几个方面。

首先是改变认识。周老师讲到，西方哲学家告诫

我们：不要去追求自己得不到的东西。其中包含什么道理？就是以智慧审视人生，所谓“智慧不起烦恼”。所有烦恼都和我们对世界的认识有关。生活中每天都会发生很多事，这些事对我们产生多大影响，关键在于事情本身，而在于我们怎么看待。如果带着强烈的我执、二元对立或负面情绪，那么，每件事都可能制造烦恼。反之，如果我们能以智慧透视真相，任何事都不会带来烦恼。在中国历史上，王维、苏东坡等文人士大夫，既是入世的儒家，也是虔诚的佛教徒。他们通过学习佛法，在做事的同时，看到世间名利的如梦如幻，不管得意还是失意，都能超然物外。

其次是勤修戒定慧。戒是指导我们过健康、有节制的生活。现代人为什么静不下来？就是因为把生活搞得太复杂，索求无度，所以心也变得很乱。如果生活简单而有规律，心就容易清净。而定是安心之道，由此开启智慧。佛法认为心本身就有观照力，《心经》的“观自在菩萨行深般若波罗蜜多时，照见五蕴皆空，度一切苦厄”，就是告诉我们，生命内在有观照的智慧，通过禅修使这种智慧得以显现，就有能力处理情

绪，平息躁动，不被烦恼左右。

**主持人：**关于如何安心，从理论到实践，法师给我们讲得非常清楚，而且和周老师所说有不少相通之处。比如让生活尽量单纯，在精神层面则以更高的智慧和正确的价值观看待人生。学佛可以持戒、禅修，哲学有没有关于静心的具体做法？

**周：**这是哲学不如佛法的地方，光在理论上讲智慧，但没有戒和定这些帮助人进入智慧状态的方法。基督教有，但哲学没有。当然从戒来说，如果生活简朴就算戒的话，那我还有一点，但定一点都没有。我感觉，智慧不仅是理论，有些东西是融化在你的血肉中，不是知识性的东西。

我在看哲学书和思考的时候，觉得它把我本有的东西唤醒了，让我本来有的更强大，是这样的关系。如果单靠接受一些知识，我觉得一点用处都没有。你要问，哲学哪一块对我的影响最深，我可能说不出来，但哲学给我的最大好处是很明确的。我觉得哲学好像

给了我分身术，把自己分成两个我。身体的我在这个世界活动，还有一个更高的我，说是理性、灵魂的我也好，佛性的我也好，就在上面看着身体的我活动，还经常把身体的我叫来，让他向自己汇报，然后给他总结，给他提醒，给他指导。当遇到烦恼时，更高的我就能跳出来看看。我觉得每个人身上都有这样一个自我，要让他经常在场，经常处在清醒的状态，而且要让他强大。怎么让他强大？就是去读那些伟大的著作，去读佛经。

## 六、人性和佛性

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西方近代哲学把人性分成两方面  
一是认为利己乃人的本能  
个体生命一定会趋利避害，趋乐避苦  
但人还有另一种本能叫同情心

相对二元的人性来说  
佛性是超越二元的  
代表更本质的生命内涵  
佛法认为每个众生都有佛性  
不论凡圣，佛性都是圆满无缺的

**主持人：**刚才说到人性和佛性，对于人工智能时代来说，如果我们可以找出规律或算法，是不是可以植入？这样的话，人工智能是不是有一天会具备人所有的情感，或修行所要达到的境界？

**周：**肯定不能，人工智能可以对佛经做很好的整理，我相信它可以做到这点，但永远不会有佛性，也不会懂得佛性。

**主持人：**请法师谈一谈，人性和佛性的区别到底在哪？



**济：**首先要了解什么是人性，然后才能进一步了解，人性和佛性到底有什么差别。简单地说，人性是代表人类本质性的存在。古今中外的哲学流派，都立足于不同视角定义人性。中国古代的“食色性也”“饮食男女，人之大欲存焉”，是从自然性的角度定义人性。西方哲学更强调理性，以此作为人性的重要内容。

佛法对人性的认识有两方面，一是知的层面，一是行的层面。从知的层面，认为理性是人性的重要特点；从行的层面，认为人有贪嗔痴，也有悲悯之心，说明人性是多样而非单一的存在。中国古代有性善说和性恶说，孟子说“人人皆可以为尧舜”，可以成就圣贤品德；也讲“人之所以异于禽兽者几希”，不小心就可能禽兽不如。

所以人有两面性，关键在于发展哪一方面。今天的社会强调发展，我们要发展经济，发展企业，发展文化。其实生命也是同样，我们希望自己成为什么样的人，就要充分了解人性，作出正确选择，发展其中的正向力量。

相对二元的人性来说，佛性是超越二元的，代表

更深层、更本质的生命内涵。佛法认为每个众生都有佛性，不论凡圣，佛性都是圆满无缺的。一旦证悟佛性，就能彻底摆脱迷惑烦恼，实现生命的最大价值。所以说，了解佛性对我们更为重要。

**周：**佛就是觉悟，佛性就是觉悟的本性。人性问题，从不同角度有不同说法。比如探讨人和动物的区别，但对人来说又是共同的，这些特性被称为人性。西方哲学通常认为，人是有理性的，动物是没有理性的。

此外是从道德的角度。中国关于人性善恶有很多争论，先秦时的儒家就有几派，孟子认为性善，荀子认为性恶，孔子则认为是中性的，所谓“性相近，习相远”，善恶是后来变的。但西方哲学对人性的善恶谈得很少，没有从道德上分析人性。

西方近代哲学对人性的分析，是考虑到这样的问题——社会怎么对人性因势利导。它把人性分成两方面：一是认为利己乃人的本能，个体生命一定会追求自身利益，一定会趋利避害，趋乐避苦。我们无法对

本能作道德判断，不能说这是善的，或这是恶的。

但人不光有利己的本能，还有另一种本能叫同情心。西方哲学普遍承认，人是有同情心的。其中有两种不同观点，但我看大同小异。一种观点认为，同情心是独立形成的特性，是在原始的社会生活中逐步形成的，因为他需要别人帮助，需要合作，就形成了同情心。另一种观点认为，它是由利己心派生的。作为生命体来说，你必须有利己心，对自己的痛苦和快乐是敏感的，要关心并追求自身利益，才能将心比心，推己及人，想到别人有同样的本性，所以要尊重别人的本性。

不管怎样，两者都承认人既有利己心又有同情心，社会就该因势利导。因为利己心是最强烈的，所以要设计一种制度，让每个人都可以追求自身利益。但因为你是利己的，他也是利己的，所以你在利己时不能损人。这样一种鼓励利己、惩罚损人的制度，叫作法治。

法治的根本原则，是每个人可以追求自身利益，但不能损害他人利益。在这一点上，我觉得中国传统

思想是有问题的，往往把损人和利己说成一回事。其实利己不一定损人，损人是有害的，利己则是应该鼓励的。在中国儒家思想中，对于追求个人合理利益是有压制的，很多社会问题可以从找出原因。

**主持人：**这段说得非常棒，很多时候大家会有一些误解，觉得提倡利他时，自身利益一定会受到损害；或说到利己时，一定是损人的。其实两者之间没有必然的捆绑关系。

## 七、利人和利己

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世界是缘起的，不论人和人之间  
还是人和自然之间，都是彼此依存的  
如果我们仇恨他人，想要伤害他人  
且不说对方是否受害  
自己首先会被这种不善心所伤害  
所以说，利他即是利己，害他终将害己

**济**：处理好义与利、自利与利他的关系非常重要。在中国传统文化中，往往把两者对立起来。一个人追求利益，很可能被视为小人。反之，如果你是君子，似乎就不该追求利益。事实上，义与利不必对立，因为我们在世间的生存需要利益为保障。但“君子爱财，取之有道”，只要用正当手段获取利益，和道德并不矛盾。

在市场经济发展早期，很多人为逐利不择手段，带来种种苦果。随着经济发展的逐步规范，人们发现，企业想走得远，做得大，要具备两种精神，一是诚信，一是利他。首先要有诚信，这是企业的立身之本。同时还要有利他心，考虑大众利益，才能得到社会认可。

从诚信和利他的角度，利益和道德是相辅相成的。当然，有时不讲诚信和利他也能赚钱，但这是走不远的。现在的互联网企业讲究免费原则，如淘宝、微信都是通过免费广结善缘，再通过其他渠道获利。可见，利他是做大平台、得到人脉的重要前提。

说到自利和利他，我们过去很容易把两者对立起来，以为利他就会损己，损他才能利己。事实上，人类生活在共同的地球家园，是唇亡齿寒的关系。现在习主席提倡人类命运共同体，也是说明，人类利益是一体的。我们只有具备利他心，互利互惠，才能在地球上和谐相处，共同发展。

世界是缘起的，不论人和人之间，还是人和自然之间，都是彼此依存的。如果我们仇恨他人，想要伤害他人，且不说对方是否受害，自己首先会被这种不善心所伤害。想一想，当我们心怀嗔恨时，会开心吗？反之，如果对他人慈悲关爱，让他人因你受益，不仅能得到对方和社会的认可，同样会滋润自己的生命，让自己感到幸福。所以说，利他即是利己，害他终将害己。

## 八、从同情心到慈悲心

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看到别人的生命受苦，你会本能地产生痛苦  
这是道德的基础  
另一个基础，人是精神性的存在  
所以你有自尊心  
要尊重自己，也要尊重他人

道德需要以智慧为前提  
看清这些行为的结果，以及和自身的利害关系  
否则，仅仅通过社会监督  
或同情心来落实道德，是没有多少力量的



**主持人：**佛法说的是慈悲心，哲学说的是同情心，两者有什么区别吗？

**济：**孟子说，恻隐之心人皆有之。人们看到孩子走在井边就会担心，不是因为孩子和你有什么关系，而是自然生起的同情心。这就说明人有良性潜质。如果我们把这念恻隐之心不断发扬，就会成为慈悲心。当你看到每个人都能心生慈悲，就是观音菩萨的大慈大悲。所以从佛法角度说，同情心是成就大慈大悲的重要基础。如果没有同情心，也就没有慈悲心了。

**周：**西方哲学在谈道德问题时强调了两点。道德

基础并不是社会外加于人的约束，实际上，道德在人性中是有根据的。你是生命，别人也是生命，生命和生命之间是有通感的。看到别人的生命受苦时，你会本能地产生痛苦，这是道德的基础。英国哲学家、经济学家亚当·斯密在《道德情操论》中强调：社会上一切重要道德都是建立在同情心的基础上。其中最主要的，一是正义，一是仁慈。正义就是不能损人，并对损人行为加以制止和惩罚。而仁慈不仅不能损人，还要在他人遭受痛苦时给予帮助。所以，同情心是西方哲学强调的道德基础。

另一个基础是说，人是精神性的存在，有灵魂，有理性，所以你有自尊心，要尊重自己，也要尊重他人，要作为灵性的存在互相对待。这种尊严也是道德的基础。

这个说法和孟子的观点很像。孟子讲道德的四端，其中两点是说：“恻隐之心，仁之端也”，恻隐之心是仁爱的开端；“羞恶之心，义之端也”，做人是有尊严的，不能亵渎这个尊严。这种道德情感，中外是相通的。

**济：**今天的社会，道德在民众心目中并不是很有分量。之所以出现这种情况，和对道德的认识有很大关系。我们往往觉得，道德是社会的需要，不是个体生命的需要。那么当大家都不遵守道德时，我去遵守道德，是不是傻瓜，是不是吃亏？

刚才周老师说到，道德的源头来自内在的同情心、羞耻心。但现在的人太无明了，这种内在源头未必有多少力量。所以要让大家认识到，道德不仅是社会的需要，当我们遵循道德时，自己将成为最大的受益者。佛法认为，生命都是因缘因果的相续。我们今天能成为这样的人，有这样的性格、兴趣、命运，来自过去生的积累，是行为、语言、思想产生后留下的业力。这些积累会成为习惯，习惯会成为性格，性格会成为人格。我们希望成为更美好的自己，必须从身口意三业开始改变。这就离不开对道德的实践。

如果我们不遵循道德，造作种种恶行，将形成不健康的习惯乃至人格，给生命带来无尽痛苦。也就是说，自己首先会成为身口意行为的受益者或受害者，其次才是他人。道德行为会在自利的同时造福他人，

不道德的行为会在自害的同时伤及他人。真正认识到这一原理，自然会遵循道德。所以道德需要以智慧为前提，看清这些行为的结果，以及和自身的利害关系。否则，仅仅通过社会监督或同情心来落实道德，是没有多少力量的。

**主持人：**在利益面前，道德的约束力往往非常微弱，甚至在法律的重压下，也有人铤而走险，导致种种问题。所以还是要从观念上正视，从根本上改变人心和人性，知道所有的事都和自己息息相关。

## 九、认识人心、人性的意义

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人类前途归根到底是取决于人类中的多数人  
他们的生命能不能觉悟  
只要能达到这一点  
人工智能就不可怕，出了问题我们都能解决

心是无限的，哪怕世界有无限的外延  
但在本质上，都是心的显现  
当我们有能力看清自己的心  
就有能力了解无限的世界

**主持人：**我们说了很多人心、人性的内容，就是在解答今天的主题——人工智能时代，人类何去何从。通过两位智者的对话，我想大家琢磨出答案了：往外找是没有出路的，只能向内探求。最后请两位说一说，在科技如此发达的时代，大家不再为基本生存担忧，可还是存在种种问题。我们讨论人心、人性这些古老而根本的问题，意义究竟在哪里？

**济：**自 16 世纪以来，基本是西方的物质文明在主导，包括商业文明、工业文明、科技文明，都在改造世界，服务人类。在人口不断膨胀、资源迅速消耗、生态日益脆弱的今天，很多国家已开始关注移民外星

的课题。这些发展的共同特点，就是不断向外探求。事实上，这条路是走不通的。

我们要寻找出路，必须向内而非向外。因为一切问题的根源，在于人有没有健康的心态和人格，而这正是东方文化的强项。佛法认为，心净则国土净。我们的内心清静，世界自然就清静了。

因为世界是由人组成的，如果每个人都善良而富有爱心，哪怕物质简单一点，同样可以过得很美好。相反，哪怕物质超过现在十倍，但有很多不健康的人，这个世界会安定吗？会和谐吗？

相对无限的宇宙，人的认识能力非常有限。我们有了越来越先进的科学仪器，但每一种新的发现都让人了解到，其实还有更多的未知。可以说，已知越多，未知也越多。我们一直以为物质世界就是一切，但悟空号发现，在宇宙中，暗物质约有 27%，暗能量约有 68%，而我们看到的物质世界仅有 5%。面对如此巨大的未知，我们真的很容易焦虑——未来到底在哪里？

佛法给我们指明一条出路，认为心的本质就是世界的本质。因为心是无限的，哪怕世界有无限的外延，

但在本质上，都是心的显现。当我们将有能力看清自己的心，就有能力了解无限的世界。

我曾在北京大学阳光论坛作过“佛教的世界观”的讲座，讲到科学发现对佛经的印证。从宏观世界，科学家发现了越来越多的星系，但《华严经》《般若经》早就告诉我们，宇宙中有恒河沙数世界。在微观世界，现代量子力学发现了波粒二象性、量子纠缠等，而佛法的中观和唯识思想中，早已将相关原理讲得非常透彻。为什么佛陀在两千多年前就有这样的智慧？因为他证悟了心的本质，证悟了诸法实相。

面对世界的快速发展，人工智能的高度发达，很多人感到茫然：不知道生命的意义在哪里，人生的方向在哪里。如果我们继续向外寻求，是永远找不到出路的。只有转而向内，立足于对心的认识，重新造就人格，建立目标，才能不断提升生命品质，而这正是人工智能完全无法替代的优势。

人类何去何从？我们有什么样的认识，就能认识什么样的世界，选择什么样的未来。佛法自古以来就被称为心学，对认识心性和解决心理问题有着透彻的



智慧。通过对智慧文化的学习，可以开发潜能，从认识生命真相，到认识世界真相。当我们看清这一切，就没有何去何从的困惑了。

**周：**我觉得，人类前途归根到底是取决于人类中的多数人，他们的生命能不能觉悟。从这个角度说，只要能达到这一点，人工智能就不可怕，出了问题我们都能解决。如果达不到这一点，没有人工智能，人类也没多大希望。

从这点来说，我觉得我们需要佛法，也需要一点哲学。佛法确实了不起，西方哲学从古希腊开始，一直在追求，要找到世界的本质是什么。找了两千多年，现在得出一个结论——世界没有本质，也就是佛法说的无自性。

**主持人：**周老师刚才的讲话中说到一些佛法名相，我觉得特别赞叹：您作为一个哲学家，可以有这些修行方面的认识。相信到下一本书，您的境界更值得期待。关于今天的主题，相信每个人都有自己的思索，

【静心学堂丛书】

也找到了相应的答案。刚才法师和周老师说得很清楚，就是向内求——每个人找回自己的本心，找到生命的出路，人类就能找到共同的出路。

## 十、现场问答

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- 空，是否一切皆虚幻
- 要不要追求真相
- 学佛是投资人生
  - 自我与无我
- 如果工作被人工智能取代

## 1. 空，是否一切皆虚幻

问：佛家讲空，让人觉得生命很虚幻。那佛教和哲学是不是虚幻的？有没有学习的必要？

**济**：空，是要空掉我们对自我和世界的错误认识，并不否定现象本身。佛教认为一切存在都有因缘因果，只是因为我们看不清，才对自我和世界产生我的设定，永恒的设定，进而执著这种设定——以为自己的所见最正确，就是如此，必须如此，烦恼由此产生。如果不学习佛法或哲学的智慧，可能永远活在自己的观念中，在无我的世界执著我，在无常的世界期待常，永远事与愿违。只有学会智慧地看世界，才不会因为误

解引发烦恼，人生才会变得更美好。

**周：**我倒觉得，哲学让我的人生变得比较痛苦。如果不想这些问题，就安安心心地过日子。但思考这些，最后你会发现是没有答案的。从空性来说，是要空掉我们的错误认识，空掉世界的永恒性，以及给我们希望的坚固性——觉得世界是坚固的，可以提供意义。西方人总在追问“世界的本质”，最后把上帝作为精神本质来信仰——总有一个永恒的、不会失去的东西在那里，你相信它吧。但佛教没有这个。当然，可能世界的本来面目就是这样，你就接受吧。

**济：**佛法否定永恒，并不是说除了虚幻的现象就什么都没有。其中有两个层面，一是我们会对世界产生永恒の設定，其实这种永恒根本不存在。我们希望爱情天长地久，事业千秋万代，甚至希望自己长生不老，不过是因为执著感情，在乎事业，害怕死亡，是对世界有过多依赖后产生的幻想。事实上，这种执著将给人类带来无尽的痛苦。佛教讲无常，只是让我们

认清真相，但同时也告诉我们，觉性是永恒的，但这个永恒是超越二元对立的，既不可以用有去认识，也不可以用无去认识，并不是什么都没有。

**周：**有和无的中道非常微妙，其实我看不懂。最后我得出一个结论——不要去问有还是无，就对了。

## 2. 要不要追求真相

**问：**周教授说，研究世界后发现没有本质，那么世界有没有真相？我们要不要去追求究竟的真相？我觉得从生到死，这样自得其乐不也挺好的吗？

**周：**如果你已经有这个问题，必然去问。我的体会是，如果弄不清楚，觉得人生是不踏实的。有些人是没有这个问题的，你让他问，他也不问。但有些人对终极性问题比较关注，可能有天生的成分，当然也有后天的熏陶。如果你属于内心没有这个问题的，那就这样吧，不必自寻烦恼。

**济：**世界有没有真相？需不需要探究真相？很多人对世界没什么思考，生个孩子，找份工作，过个小日子，也能乐在其中。一旦关注起“人为什么活着，生命真相是什么”之类的问题，反而平添烦恼。那么，自得其乐的人需不需要被唤醒？还是让他们继续安于现状？其中包含两种情况。

有些人之所以自得其乐，是建立在相对稳定的基础上，比如身体健康、家庭和睦、事业顺利，没遇到天灾人祸。一旦这种平衡被打破，其实是乐不起来的。即使他有福报，能一辈子乐下去，面对死亡时还能不能乐？即使能平静地死去，这种没有终极方向的人生，和动物有什么本质区别？只有认识真相，知道无常无我、因缘因果的原理，才知道怎么在因上努力，同时坦然接纳一切结果。建立在这一基础上的快乐，才是可靠而长久的。

**周：**我觉得，明白世界真相，比如知道无常、空性的道理后，并不能建立幸福的基础，但给了我们消除痛苦的理由——用不着烦恼，反正这么回事，就不

会纠结于人生中的是非得失。很多人没看到这个真相，所以如此纠结。

**济：**消除痛苦的根源，就是制造幸福最好的基础。

### 3. 学佛是投资人生

问：我是做企业的，很想把佛法学好，但身边人常说，应该退休后才去学。因为学东西肯定要花时间，有时会和应酬冲突。我想请教，什么时候学佛更合适？

**济：**佛法是人生的大智慧，可以引导我们更好地做人，更智慧、更幸福、没有烦恼地活着。这样一种智慧，是老了才需要，还是越早拥有越好？现代人普遍很忙，做企业的尤甚，似乎没时间用来学佛。事实上，不少企业家为了提升管理水平，会去上工商管理、传统文化等课程。为什么有时间学习？因为他们认识到，自己需要这样的提升。



学佛也是同样。当我们了解它的重要性，相信这种学习有助于自己更好地做人做事，自然会有时间。日本的稻盛和夫能做两家世界 500 强的企业，离不开佛法的智慧。近年来，我也经常应邀给企业家们讲座，内容包括“企业与人生、现实价值与终极价值”等。智慧可以化繁为简，使管理更加直接有效，同时让你更有爱心和利他心，得到更多人的认可。所以，这种学习是磨刀不误砍柴工，从另一个角度说，也是对人生的投资。

#### 4. 自我与无我

问：佛法提倡的无我是不是反人性的？这和西方的人本主义精神是不是相违？

周：佛教说无我，我的理解，并不是对个人生命的否定，而是一个大的概念。诸法无我，就是一切现象都没有自性，没有不变的本质。这不是人类学的概念，而是大的哲学概念，当然对人也适用。很难从这

一点说它是反人性的，我觉得这和人本主义谈的不是一回事。

**济：**西方人本主义强调个体的独特性，追求个人价值的实现。在佛教看来，这一思路缺少对人性的考量，容易成就我执。个性解放到底解放什么？在漫长的中世纪，西方经历了宗教神权的压抑，所以在文艺复兴时期提出了个性解放。这一思想虽然带来艺术、文学、哲学的全面繁荣，但也使人性中的负面因素得以张扬。很多艺术家看到了其中的问题，但没有解决的智慧，只能以极端的方式来表现，使当代艺术变得光怪陆离。事实上，如果找不到生命的出路，也就找不到艺术的出路。如何找到生命出路？唯有佛法智慧。从某种意义上，佛教所说的无我，正是要否定人本主义追求的自我。因为后者往往是在追求自我的过程中，迷失了自己。在佛法看来，只有放下自我，才能找回自己。

**周：**人本主义是局限在缘起的现象世界，肯定人

要追求自我价值，却没有看缘起现象的背后，有没有本体世界或空性。而无我的观念是告诉我们，现象世界的本质是空性。文艺复兴后，一方面是人本主义的兴起，另一方面是原来关于本体论、形而上学的追求，包括对上帝信仰也开始衰落，提出“到底有没有上帝”等疑问。实际上，对本体的怀疑就是无我——看到世界背后没有不变的本质。这已逐步成为西方哲学的主流。从历史的发展来说，两者好像不太冲突，而是相辅相成的关系。这可以作为研究的题目先放着。

**主持人：**听到今天的对话，大家会有一种感觉，很多问题的最终答案是开放性的。在阅读本书时，您也会有这种感觉。这也是启发我们思考的过程。

## 5. 如果工作被人工智能取代

问：现在越来越多的岗位被人工智能替代，那么失业的人是什么因缘？社会是否会因此不稳定？

**济：**这确实是个重要问题。未来很多工作会被人工智能替代，意味着大量的人要失业。对很多人来说，工作不仅是生存需要，也是精神寄托，可以打发日子乃至实现人生价值。当他们没事干之后，即使衣食无忧，身心何以安顿？这就可能制造种种社会问题。所以说，未来每个人的身心健康尤为重要。这样的话，不论社会如何变化，都能安然接纳，顺势而为。我想，最好的方式就是学佛。

当人有更多时间后，应该发挥人的独特性，完善自我，实现生命的终极意义。进一步，以慈悲、爱心、正念造福社会，利益大众。这才是人类的未来出路。如果没有智慧文化的引导，很多人没事干之后，其实是很可怕的事。

**周：**我觉得有各种可能性，有时是物极必反。现在我们买东西已经不去商店，都是电商快递给你。结果北京的大商场快空了，生活中的一些普通乐趣也没了。我相信发展到一定程度，人们会考虑这种生活到底对不对。我觉得不会长期延续下去，人需要日常生

活的乐趣，不能完全用人工智能代替。

另一方面，马克思讲共产主义社会最重要的特点，还不在于生产资料公有，这只是手段而已。他要达到的目的，是造就一个自由王国，每个人都可以从事他喜欢的事，有人搞科研，有人搞艺术，各尽所能，不是为了物质，也不是为了谋生。如果有好的社会制度和环境，可以把多数人从谋生的劳动中解放出来，发展自己的能力，实现人生的价值。前提是他对人生有正确理解，所以还是要靠佛法。

**主持人：**今天已经超出预期时间，虽然听众在陆续发来问题，但对话只能到此结束。未来何去何从？相信每个人心中会有自己的思索和答案。我们再次用热烈的掌声，感谢两位智者以智慧火花给我们的启示，也把掌声送给自己——因为你们的到来，成就了这一场因缘。希望以后还有机会相聚，再次探索静心文化。





IN THE AGE  
OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE,  
WHERE IS HUMANITY HEADED?

Master Jiqun Zhou Guoping

Translated by MPI Translation Center

**A Dialogue at the Groundbreaking Ceremony  
for Zhenji Monastery in the Yandang Mountains, 2018**

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**A**s technology rapidly advances, the age of artificial intelligence (AI) is upon us, bringing both convenience and enrichment to our lives. However, people still feel anxious and restless. In this era marked by material wealth but mental confusion, where are humans headed? On February 4th, 2018, Venerable Master Jiqun and renowned philosopher Zhou Guoping continued their previous dialogue, “We Have Misunderstood the World,” by exploring the trending topic of AI from the perspectives of Buddhism and philosophy. Their goal was to help chart a path forward for humanity in this complex, changing landscape.

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# I

## AI'S THREATS TO HUMANITY

**Moderator:** Where is humanity headed in the age of AI? While some people are optimistic about AI's potential, others are apprehensive, particularly about the possibility of humans being destroyed by their own creations. We would like to hear the opinions of our two esteemed guests. To start, what do you think is the biggest threat that AI poses to humanity?

**Zhou:** Master Jiqun introduced today's topic, which initially surprised me. My first reaction was, "We are going to talk about technology!" Then I came to appreciate Master Jiqun's remarkable insight. AI is a cutting-edge

and popular topic, and Master Jiqun is able to stay up to date with the latest trends, link them with timeless questions in Buddhism and philosophy, and make today's theme both relevant and enduring.

To be honest, I do not consider myself an AI expert, and I believe the master is also not fully immersed in this field. Nonetheless, I believe that this topic demands the attention of outsiders like us. As for the primary threats that AI poses to humanity, I think there are two questions to consider.

Many people wonder whether AI will surpass or even replace humanity. However, at the end of the day, AI is still a technology – a tool that humans have created for themselves. From this perspective, I believe that tools can never surpass humans or replace them. We cannot say that a tool is superior to humans just because it is very powerful. For example, cars were invented by humans and run much faster than humans, but can we say that cars are superior to humans? Humans also invented airplanes

and rely on them to fly, but can we say that airplanes are superior to humans? Of course not. We created all these technologies, and AI is no exception.

Of course, there is a subtle difference regarding AI, as it is a form of machine intelligence. As far as my understanding goes, AI can replicate the neural networks of the brain, and its key advantage lies in its exceptional computing power and speed to process vast amounts of data. This is something that humans simply cannot match. The best example of this is Google's AlphaGo, which caused quite a stir when it won three out of four games against Lee Sedol in their first matches of Go. After that, AlphaGo went on to dominate all its human opponents, leading to the conclusion that there is no longer any point in pitting humans against AlphaGo. AlphaGo is a prime example of AI's superiority in processing data. Lee Sedol mentioned that he thinks about 20-30 moves before each turn, whereas AlphaGo considers thousands of moves and all the possibilities when it makes a move. Humans simply cannot match AlphaGo's speed.

However, it is important to emphasize that AI is only superior when it comes to handling large datasets. Many aspects of human life do not fall under this category. In the realm of spiritual and emotional life, AI has inherent limitations and can never be compared to humans. For instance, AlphaGo may excel at playing Go, but can it experience the emotions of a player? My friend Rui Naiwei, for example, feels true happiness and contemplative joy when playing Go, which AI can never experience. I do not believe that AI will ever possess emotions; at best, it can simulate the external expressions of emotions but never the real thing.

Furthermore, in fields such as philosophy, art, religion, and other spiritual domains, I believe that AI cannot be creative and can only perform data-related tasks. I do not think that one day, a super robot will become a philosopher like Plato, propose a new theory like Einstein, or establish a religion like the Buddha. In the highest realm of spiritual life, humans will always surpass AI and remain irreplaceable. Therefore, the most important part

of human life cannot be substituted.

Another question that arises is whether AI could potentially harm humans or even lead to our destruction. Some people express this concern, but I believe it is unfounded, perhaps fueled by an overactive imagination and too many sci-fi movies. Looking at the current situation, AI development has a clear direction. It must have a market and be practical, such as self-driving cars and robots that can do household chores. Nevertheless, there are brilliant minds, like Stephen Hawking, who worry about the comparatively sluggish evolution of humans in contrast to AI's powerful self-updating capability.

I believe that AI cannot pose a threat to us on its own. Right now, there are two concerns regarding AI. First, it may upgrade itself out of control, but to what extent? I do not believe it will ever reach a level that cannot be managed. Second, will AI destroy humanity? I think we should instead be concerned about terrorists obtaining AI and using it to develop destructive weapons, which

could be disastrous. This is a danger that actually exists.

To sum up, we should not worry too much. But at the same time, we need to be vigilant and develop a series of preventive measures. This includes legally defining the boundaries of AI development, just like how we have set boundaries for genetic engineering, where you can clone animals, such as sheep, but not humans.

**Moderator:** We have heard from Professor Zhou that it is unlikely for AI to surpass or replace humans in spiritual domains, and he is relatively optimistic about this. What is Master Jiqun's perspective on this issue?

**Ji:** I brought up this topic because AI has become a major focus in our society. It is one of the central topics at the Davos Forum, and its emergence has caused panic for many people. Predictions suggest that in the next few years, AI will replace numerous jobs in society. AlphaGo, for example, has demonstrated learning abilities far surpassing those of humans. Stephen Hawking also warned



that “The rise of powerful AI will either be the best or the worst thing to ever happen to humanity.” If we do not know how to avoid danger, AI can lead to humanity’s end.

As Professor Zhou said, AI can either help humanity flourish or decimate it, depending on who uses it and for what purpose. Our world faces many destabilizing factors, including terrorism and nuclear weapons, but we also face problems that arise within ourselves. Our self-knowledge and self-improvement have stagnated or even regressed as we have channeled much of our intellectual efforts into economic and technological advancements, such as creating AI. Today’s world is full of external temptations that trap people, leaving them with no energy to reflect on themselves. If humans lack the healthy character and mindset to use increasingly advanced AI, the world will become more and more precarious. As the instrument becomes more powerful, so will our destructive ability.

AI represents the science, technology, and industrialization of the West. To keep up with its swift advancement, we must focus on understanding and improving ourselves. Otherwise, we cannot be certain of our future position in society or the kind of problems the world will face. Improving oneself is precisely what Eastern culture emphasizes. Confucianism highlights self-cultivation, family regulation, and attaining saint-like morality, while Buddhism guides us to achieve nirvana and become a Buddha. Both teachings are based on cultivating the mind and perfecting life itself.

AI's learning abilities are remarkably potent, enabling it to quickly acquire knowledge that took humans decades, centuries, or even millennia to gather. So, what makes humans truly unique? This is the question we should really be asking. As Professor Zhou has said, AI may mimic human emotions but will never truly have feelings. For example, it may imitate charitable behaviors, but can it possess loving-kindness and all-encompassing love? In these facets, humans and AI remain fundamentally

different. Therefore, we need to find humans' uniqueness – the thing that AI cannot replace or even learn.

From the perspective of Buddhist practice, we must strive to realize our innate Buddha-nature, which is not something we acquire from learning but a treasure every living being inherently possesses. Therefore, our journey towards self-improvement should involve not only accumulating knowledge and building skills, but more importantly, realizing our Buddha-nature. This unlimited potential, intrinsic to living beings, fundamentally sets us apart from AI, which can only learn and upgrade itself within certain limits. Regardless of how much information AI accumulates, its knowledge will always remain limited.

For humans to maintain our invincible position in this era, we must continually enhance our understanding of ourselves and tap into our mind's unlimited potential. Otherwise, if we lack the healthy character to address problems arising from rapid scientific developments, the

world will face more and more issues, leaving humans in precarious situations.

**Moderator:** As the master has said, while science and technology are advancing rapidly, our minds are becoming more and more chaotic. Thankfully, Master Jiqun and Professor Zhou have shown us a path to follow. They suggested that we should not worry excessively about the age of AI, because humans have unique advantages in the emotional and spiritual realms. The key is to unlock our potential in these areas, especially by realizing our Buddha-nature.

## II

### KNOWING YOURSELF

**Moderator:** Science and technology primarily focus on exploring outward, whereas philosophy and Buddhism are wisdom that emphasize looking inward. When it comes to looking inward, the first challenge is to “know yourself,” which is a fundamental topic in both Western philosophy and Eastern Buddhism. Professor Zhou, could you please shed some light on the attempts and endeavors made in the last few thousand years by Western philosophy to explore the theme of “knowing yourself”?

**Zhou:** In Western philosophy, “knowing yourself” came in two stages. The first stage originated in ancient Greece,

where the Temple of Apollo at Delphi was inscribed with the oracle “Know thyself.” This phrase was spoken by Apollo, the most important god in Athens, and it meant that people should recognize their limitations and not be presumptuous or arrogant.

There is a famous story about this.

One day, a person asked the god at the Temple of Apollo, “Who is the wisest man in Athens?”

The god replied, “It is Socrates.”

When Socrates heard this, he was puzzled, “I am actually quite foolish. Why did the god say I am the wisest man?”

Not believing that he was the wisest, Socrates sought out politicians, artists, poets, and craftsmen who were known for their wisdom and asked them many questions to prove that they were wiser than him. In the end, Socrates realized that these people thought they were

clever and all-knowing just because they were familiar with their specific fields. In contrast, Socrates knew that he was ignorant about many things, especially about the most important thing: how should a man live his life? Thus, Socrates concluded that the god deemed him the wisest because he understood human limitations and his own ignorance.

The second stage, in modern times, sees Western philosophers emphasizing “know thyself and fulfill your potential,” which also has two levels. First, everyone needs to know what makes them unique. For example, Friedrich Nietzsche said, “Every man knows well enough that he is a unique being, only once on this earth.” He urged people to cherish life and realize their own values instead of conforming to societal norms. This interpretation differs from that of ancient Greek philosophers.

Second, if we truly explore ourselves, we will discover a higher self – one that allows us to view life from the perspective of the universe and imbues our existence with

profound significance. Many philosophers posit that each person has a self, known as the small self. But there is also the greater self, such as Plato's world of ideas or the Christian God. Although Nietzsche did not believe in God, he still believed in a higher purpose for life in the form of the greater self. This greater self will station its representative inside the small self, which we must uncover. As Mencius said, one needs to "use his heart to the fullest," "know his nature," and "understand the universe." The "heart" alludes to the spiritual world that contains our "nature," which is the awareness that allows us to communicate with the universe and the representative of the greater self that resides within us. If we find the representative and follow its advice, we will be connected to the universe. I believe this viewpoint shows that philosophy and religion share common ground.

**Moderator:** That is brilliant. Philosophy believes that the greater self stations its representative within the small self, whereas Buddhism rejects the concept of the self entirely. Is there a difference between these two perspectives?



Professor Zhou mentioned how ancient Greek philosophy acknowledges human limitations, but Master Jiqun spoke about how Buddhism enables people to unlock their infinite potential. May I ask, master, are there significant differences in how religion and philosophy understand the concept of self?

**Ji:** When Professor Zhou spoke about the small self and greater self, it reminded me of the *Upanishads*, the source of Indian religion and philosophy. The *Upanishads* sees the universe as the greater self, and each individual life as the small self. It teaches that people enter samsara because they have lost touch with their selves, and the value of life lies in returning from the small self to the greater self. This fusion of oneself and the universe leads life towards perfection, which is achieving “oneness of the individual and the Absolute.” However, Buddhism rejects this belief and introduces the concept of “no-self,” which fundamentally distinguishes Buddhism from other religions.

After the Renaissance, a humanistic movement emerged

that focused on liberating individuality and realizing personal value. This led to a great emphasis on the self. However, what truly represents the existence of the self? Can identity represent it? Today, you may have a certain identity, but tomorrow you may not. Can your appearances, thoughts, and emotions represent the self? These aspects are all in constant flux, with appearances changing as you age, and thoughts and emotions shifting constantly. Similarly, status, wealth, and reputation are also constantly shifting. After thorough analysis, the Buddha concluded that all the aspects we typically associate with the self, such as identities, appearances, thoughts, emotions, and names, have only temporary relationships with us. Therefore, none of them can truly represent the essential existence of the self.

Buddhism teaches us that considering these temporary relationships as permanent is the cause of all suffering in life. If we believe that our body is the self, we will fear death. If we believe that appearance is the self, we will worry about aging. If we believe that thoughts are the

self, we will experience conflicts with the world. If we believe that emotions are the self, we will be easily trapped by them and become their slaves.

The “no-self” in Buddhism does not deny the existence of life as a phenomenon, but rather emphasizes the need to correct our mistaken beliefs about the self. The *Suran-gama Sutra* illustrates this by describing Ananda’s search for the mind in seven different locations: Where is the mind? Is it inside or outside the body? Does the mind have a form? By examining our mind in this way, we can see that everything we identify as “self” – from external appearances to internal thoughts and emotions – is all temporary and illusory, without a fixed and unchanging essence.

Only when we completely eliminate the misconceptions about the “self,” can we see our mind’s original state: like the void, formless and boundless, absent of thoughts and attachments. It has nothing, yet contains everything, and can give rise to all things. In Chan

Buddhism, “realizing the nature of the mind” means finding our inherently complete and perfect Buddha-nature. Only by doing this can we truly understand ourselves, rather than being misled by various illusions.

# III

## WHAT IS THE VALUE OF LIFE?

**Zhou:** Regarding the value of life, we must consider two aspects. First, even though I acknowledge that life arises dependently, and it has no inherent nature or anything truly substantial, does each life not hold value? Western philosophy emphasizes that every life is unique – there is only one of you in the world, and you have only one life that cannot be duplicated. Therefore, it is crucial to cherish life and fulfill its value.

Of course, we need to correctly understand ourselves by recognizing that identity, appearance, and fortune are not who we are, but merely low-level misunderstandings

of the self. But after dispelling these misconceptions, do we not acknowledge that the phenomena of self and life exist? Therefore, should we not make an effort to realize their unique values?

However, while it is important to recognize our personal values, we must not stop there. I believe that both religion and philosophy, despite their different expressions, share the fundamental notion that humans should have a broader world, instead of being limited to the kind of selves that arise from causes and conditions. Whether we refer to it as True Suchness, emptiness, heaven, Brahman, or the rational world, it must be a higher realm that transcends the individual, and we ultimately belong there. Therefore, we must strive to connect with the higher world and return to it.

I believe that both achieving personal value and connecting to the higher world are necessary. Therefore, I would like to ask the master: does the self, which arises from causes and conditions, hold value? If it does, what is its

value? This is something I am curious to learn.

**Ji:** In Western philosophy, life is valued as a precious gift given only once to each individual. However, in Buddhism, the concept of life transcends the present and encompasses an infinite past and an endless future. This current lifetime is merely a fragment of the continuous stream of life. Consequently, life is not considered unique to each individual, and we should not focus exclusively on this particular lifetime. Instead, we should pay attention to the cycle of birth and death.

Earlier, Professor Zhou asked, “What is the value of life that arises from causes and conditions?” Buddhism believes that such a life is fundamentally illusory, but it still exists. In fact, our current human form not only exists but is extremely precious and can be easily lost. How can we use it well? From the Buddhist perspective, life’s value lies in attaining enlightenment. Among the six realms, only humans have the rationality to examine the truth of life and reveal their Buddha-nature through cultivation.

Our current existence is characterized by ignorance – we do not know who we are, where we came from, where we will go after we die, the meaning of life, or the truth about the world. Because of our lack of wisdom, we hold many misconceptions about ourselves and the world, leading to various afflictions. These afflictions cause us to view ourselves and the world through a distorted lens, which in turn creates even more afflictions. Our life thus remains trapped in this cycle of confusion and affliction.

Learning Buddhism makes us recognize that suffering is the fundamental nature of this kind of life. Do you want to change it? Do you want to be free from suffering? And what happens after you make that change? Buddhism tells us that behind our misconceptions lies an awakened life that connects with all things in the universe. To attain the highest value of life, we must recognize the infinite behind the finite, which can only be achieved through our current human existence. Therefore, the significance of this dependently-originated life is immense, and we must use it well.



**Zhou:** There are two aspects regarding the value of the dependently-originated life. The first aspect is that of worldly pursuits: every person should have a genuine career. Nowadays, many people suffer because they lack a true calling. They are distressed not only because they are unenlightened, but also because they do not know what to do. They merely follow societal values, pursue material desires, and compare themselves to others, without truly discovering their own interests and abilities. They rarely ask themselves where their value as a unique life lies, and instead pursue whatever is popular or profitable in society. This is a big problem. I believe that it is essential to recognize one's personal values. It is important to realize that we only have one life and, therefore, must find our true calling to hone our best abilities. This is not only important for our own contentment but also for the benefit of society.

However, merely having a true calling is insufficient. Even if you have a fulfilling and beloved career that makes you feel like you have achieved your personal

value, acknowledging its triviality in the grand scheme of things can propel you towards greater heights of wisdom. Therefore, it is crucial to pursue both worldly and spiritual goals. But if I do not fulfill my worldly pursuits, I still feel that my life is incomplete.

**Ji:** According to Buddhism, there are two levels of life: practical value and ultimate value. Practical value pertains to living a good life in the present, which involves having good physical and mental health, a happy family, obedient children, and being a positive influence on society, making others happy because of your existence. The cultivation of “virtuous deeds of humans and devas” is a Buddhist teaching that helps individuals achieve mental and physical happiness and a fulfilling life, which requires wisdom and morality. While many people in the world are also pursuing happiness, they often create suffering or even harm others in the process.

The law of causality, as taught in Buddhism, helps us understand the rules that life follows. The person we

are today, our interests, hobbies, personality, and so on, are all related to our past beliefs, behaviors, and habits. In other words, every result has its cause. Understanding this law enables us to know what we should do if we want to achieve happiness and become a better version of ourselves. Therefore, obtaining life's practical value is essential for every individual.

However, if we only focus on life's practical value and ignore its ultimate value, we may never experience true peace. It is not uncommon for individuals who have accomplished remarkable success in their careers and gained significant fame to eventually ask themselves, "What is the purpose of my life? How do all my worldly accomplishments contribute to my existence?" These contemplations can often leave them feeling lost. Everyone will face death, no matter how high their status, how wealthy they are, or how many children and grandchildren they have. At the end of their lives, none of these things will matter. Where will they end up? What is the future of their lives? Therefore, people must pay attention to the

ultimate value so that they can maintain a detached attitude towards practical value, instead of exhausting their energy on it and forgetting about the real purpose of this precious life.

Without such a sense of purpose, we may take practical value as everything and even perform unscrupulous deeds to maximize our interests. This is not only the greatest waste of human life but will also bring endless harm. Therefore, the unity of ultimate value and practical value is essential for individuals and society.

**Zhou:** The best scenario is to attain practical value and then see through it to pursue ultimate value. The worst scenario is when practical value is not achieved, and ultimate value is not in sight, leading to unbearable suffering.

## IV

### DOES BUDDHISM DENY PRACTICAL HAPPINESS?

**Moderator:** During the discussion, one word came up many times: happiness. For ordinary individuals, whether they pursue practical or ultimate values, they care about how to live a good life. The happiness that ordinary people have in mind is having basic material security and, at the same time, being mentally fulfilled. When I heard that samsara is suffering, I was thinking, does Buddhism deny current happiness?

**Ji:** Everyone seeks happiness, but what exactly is happiness? In times of material scarcity, we often believed

that owning things equaled happiness. When we lacked money, having money was happiness; when we were unmarried, getting married was happiness; when we had no children, having children was happiness; when we had no home or car, having a home and car was happiness. We thought that obtaining what we desired would make us happy.

As the economy continues to grow, many people have achieved generational wealth and the living standards they once dreamed of. However, they still find themselves unhappy. Why is this? It is because they lack a healthy mindset. Pursuing happiness based on confusion and afflictions means that no matter how much we own, we will never truly obtain happiness. Instead, focusing excessively on material possessions can lead to unhealthy comparison, competition, pressure, and negative emotions like anxiety and insecurity.

Buddhism tells us that the mind is the source of both suffering and happiness. When the mind is full of afflictions,

these negative emotions will continue to create problems, obstacles, and harms in our lives, becoming a perpetual motion machine that keeps producing suffering. On the contrary, when there is no confusion, affliction, or pressure in life, even with simple food and drink, one can still find joy in life, as the saying goes, “If nothing weighs down your mind, any time is a good time in this world.” Therefore, Buddhism emphasizes mental health and the joy of liberation rather than taking material possessions as the basis of happiness.

The essence of Buddhist cultivation lies in developing healthy mindsets. Only by freeing ourselves from confusion and afflictions can we experience true happiness.

**Moderator:** I understand now. Buddhism does not deny happiness, but rather denies our misconceptions of happiness. Earlier, we misunderstood the self, and just now, we misunderstood happiness. In summary, it is *We Have Misunderstood the World*. We can see this phenomenon in our daily lives: as material wealth increases and

technology advances, happiness without afflictions becomes increasingly rare.



# V

## HOW TO CALM THE MIND?

**Moderator:** We mentioned calming the mind, which is what the Dharma advocates and excels at. Does philosophy talk about calming and settling the mind?

**Zhou:** The essence of philosophy is to help us to calm the mind by thinking from a higher perspective about fundamental questions: What is the essence of the universe? What is the ultimate meaning of life? This kind of thinking will make us feel a sense of transcendence and tranquility, which is consistent with the goal of Buddhism. Just now, Master Jiqun said that happiness means relieving worries. Indeed, it is hard to define

happiness as a specific thing we gain.

Happiness is a major topic in philosophy, especially in ancient Greece, where there were two main schools of thought. One school was Epicureanism, which believed that happiness meant pleasure. But the pleasure that Epicurus emphasized was not indulging in greed and material, but feeling healthy and tranquil. The other school was Perfectionism, which saw happiness as a result of spiritual perfection, represented by Socrates and Plato. They believed that happiness was achieved by being virtuous and morally upright.

Classical Chinese philosophy also discusses what constitutes an ideal life. I believe Confucianism is similar to Perfectionism, and Confucius' view of happiness can be captured in the phrase "being content with simple living and devoted to truth." Confucius emphasizes simplifying the material life and seeking spiritual happiness. Taoism is closer to Epicureanism, and we can summarize Taoist happiness by one of Yangzi's statements in *Huainanzi*:

“preserving life’s fullness and authenticity.” This means protecting life’s complete and truthful state from material harm.

As we can see, both Eastern and Western philosophies discuss happiness based on their values – keeping their most precious things in favorable conditions. What are the most precious things? Perfectionism believes it is the spiritual life, and Epicureanism believes it is the physical life. However, neither approach is absolute. They both emphasize that life should be kept simple because a complicated life is the source of suffering. At the same time, they stress that the spirit should be rich, noble, exquisite, and religious. I think we can combine the two schools of thought to ensure that both our spiritual and physical lives are in a good state, which is happiness.

Everyone is given a life and a mind. If we can take good care of this life and settle this mind, life will be happy. Why is our mind restless? Because we have worries and afflictions, which come in two types. Half of our pain is

self-imposed. Due to our distorted values, we often fail to find the true meaning of life. As a result, we tend to give undue importance to trivial matters, causing us to suffer not only when we fail to obtain them but also when we do. The other half of suffering is the inevitable ones in life. Birth, aging, sickness, death, natural disasters, and man-made calamities cause us to suffer when we do not handle them properly. These are things we cannot control. They will make us suffer if we are entangled with them.

Therefore, it is crucial to have correct values, which is a topic frequently discussed in philosophy. Next, when our fate is beyond our control, we need to approach it with transcendental wisdom. Stoicism emphasizes that we must not be affected by things beyond our control. Indeed, since they are out of our hands, why become agitated by them? There is no need. These are some of the philosophical inquiries.

**Moderator:** Indeed, philosophy also emphasizes tran-

scendental wisdom. In the book *We Have Misunderstood the World*, Professor Zhou holds the view that some aspects of destiny are controllable while some are not. Does Master Jiqun wish to add anything?

**Ji:** Settling the mind is a worthy topic to focus on, especially in today's restless age where external stimuli and internal emotions are constantly exhausting us. We want to rest, but our minds cannot calm down, preventing us from finding peace. I often say that, in the future, when we evaluate a person's health, a key criterion will be whether they have the ability to rest.

In the past, people had simpler lives and fewer forms of entertainment. They could peacefully bask in the sun, gaze at the moon, and enjoy solitude. Nowadays, with the prevalence of the internet and the flood of information, people are often at the mercy of their phones and computers. Only after exhausting themselves physically and mentally can they put down their devices and sleep, only to resume the cycle of depletion the next day.

Both the body and mind have a natural ability to heal themselves, and resting is a vital way to activate this function. The body needs rest to restore energy, and the mind needs relaxation to regain a sense of peace. Without the ability to rest, we cannot maintain a healthy body and mind. But how can we calm our restless minds? Buddhism offers several insights.

First, changing our perception is crucial. As Professor Zhou has mentioned, Western philosophers caution us not to pursue things that we cannot obtain. What is the philosophy behind this? It is examining life with wisdom, because wisdom can lead us away from afflictions. All afflictions are related to how we perceive the world. Many events happen in our daily lives, and how much they affect us depends not on the events themselves, but on how we perceive them. If we carry a strong ego, judge things in binary terms, or have negative attitudes, even small things can create afflictions. Conversely, if we see the truth with wisdom, nothing will trouble us. Throughout Chinese history, there have been scholar-officials like Wang Wei

and Su Dongpo who were Confucians and engaged in worldly matters, yet also devout Buddhists. By studying Buddhism, they came to see the illusory nature of worldly fame and fortune, which allowed them to remain detached and relaxed regardless of their successes or failures.

Next, we need to diligently follow precepts, practice concentration, and cultivate wisdom. Precepts guide us to lead a healthy and moderate life. Why is it difficult for modern people to be still? It is because they make their lives too complicated and have insatiable desires, which make their minds chaotic. Indeed, a simple and regular life is the key prerequisite for settling our minds. Only from a settled mind can the wisdom of observation emerge. Buddhism teaches that the power of observation is inherent within the mind itself, as stated in the *Heart Sutra*: “Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, when practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita, perceives that all five skandhas are empty and is saved from all suffering and distress.” This reveals that the wisdom of observation exists within life itself. By practicing meditation, we can manifest such

wisdom, enabling us to manage our emotions, calm our restlessness, and remain unaffected by afflictions.

**Moderator:** The master has provided a clear explanation, both in theory and practice, on how to attain peace of mind, which has many similarities with Professor Zhou's views. They both recommend simplifying life on the material level and approaching it with wisdom and the right values on the spiritual level. However, are there specific methods in philosophy that can guide individuals towards inner peace, similar to Buddhism's precepts and meditation?

**Zhou:** This is where philosophy falls short compared to Buddhism. Philosophy only talks about wisdom on a theoretical level, so it lacks practicalities like precepts and meditation that help people achieve a state of wisdom. Christianity offers these methods, but philosophy does not. Although, if living a simple life can be counted as following precepts, then I do follow them to some extent, but I have no experience with meditation. For me,



wisdom is not just theoretical knowledge but also something that is integrated into one's being.

As I read philosophy books and contemplate their ideas, I feel that they awaken and strengthen something that is already within me. This is how philosophy speaks to me on a personal level, so I think that merely receiving philosophical information is useless. While I might have trouble identifying the specific area of philosophy that has had the most profound impact on me, the greatest benefit that I have gained from philosophy is evident. I believe that philosophy has granted me the ability to divide myself into two distinct selves. One self is my physical self, moving about in the world, while the other is a higher self, which can be called rationality, the spiritual self, or even the Buddha-nature. The higher self observes my physical self from above, summons him for reports, and frequently reminds and guides him. When I face difficulties, my higher self can assess the situation from an elevated perspective. I believe that everyone has this higher self within him, and we should call him often and

keep him awake. We also need to make him more powerful. How do we do that? By turning to great works and Buddhist scriptures.

# VI

## HUMAN NATURE AND BUDDHA-NATURE

**Moderator:** When discussing human nature and Buddha-nature, a question arises: In the age of AI, if we can identify the underlying rules or algorithms of these two natures, can we program them into machines? And if so, will AI eventually possess all human emotions or attain the same mental states that humans seek through spiritual practice?

**Zhou:** Definitely not. AI may excel at organizing Buddhist scriptures, but it will never have Buddha-nature or comprehend it.

**Moderator:** Master Jiqun, could you talk about the difference between human nature and Buddha-nature?

**Ji:** Before exploring the differences between human nature and Buddha-nature, we must first understand what human nature is. In brief, human nature represents the fundamental existence of human beings. Throughout history, various philosophical schools have defined human nature from different perspectives. For example, ancient Chinese philosophers defined human nature based on natural human desires. Mencius stated that “by nature humans desire food and sex,” while Confucius wrote that “food and courting the opposite sex are all basic human desires.” On the other hand, Western philosophy places more emphasis on rationality, seeing it as a crucial aspect of human nature.

Buddhism examines human nature from two perspectives: comprehension and behavior. In terms of comprehension, rationality is characterized as a key element of human nature. Regarding behavior, humans exhibit

qualities such as greed, hatred, and ignorance, but also compassion and empathy. This suggests that human nature is complex and multifaceted rather than one-dimensional. In ancient China, theories about human nature ranged from inherently good to inherently evil. Mencius, for instance, believed that “everyone can achieve the morality of legendary rulers Yao and Shun,” but also cautioned that “the difference between humans and animals is slight,” as people can easily behave worse than animals if not careful.

Human nature develops along two divergent paths, and the key lies in choosing which path to follow. Today’s society emphasizes development, be it in the economy, enterprises, or culture. Similarly, to become the person we aspire to be, we must fully understand human nature and develop its positive forces by making the right choices.

Contrary to human nature, which is still subject to dualistic judgements, Buddha-nature transcends duality and represents a more intrinsic and fundamental essence of

life. According to Buddhism, all sentient beings, regardless of their status as saints or unenlightened people, possess a complete and perfect Buddha-nature. By realizing their Buddha-nature, they can completely free themselves from confusion and afflictions, thereby achieving the greatest value of life. Thus, understanding Buddha-nature is more important than understanding human nature.

**Zhou:** The Buddha represents enlightenment, and Buddha-nature is the nature of enlightenment. There are various perspectives on human nature, with some proposing that it refers to traits that differentiate humans from animals. Western philosophy generally believes that humans have rationality while animals do not.

In addition, there is a moral aspect to this discussion. In ancient China, there were debates about the goodness or evil of human nature. During the pre-Qin period, Confucians held varying views, with Mencius believing in the inherent goodness of human nature, Xunzi believing in the opposite, and Confucius suggesting that human

nature is neutral, saying that “human nature is similar, but habits make them different.” In contrast, Western philosophy rarely takes a moral perspective on human nature.

Instead, it tends to explore how society can influence it. Western philosophers divide human nature into two aspects. First, self-interest, where individuals will always seek to benefit themselves by avoiding harm and seeking pleasure. We cannot judge it morally as good or evil because it is an instinct.

Humans have not only the instinct of self-benefit, but also the instinct of empathy. Western philosophy generally recognizes this and has put forward two theories on how empathy has evolved, although their core ideas are quite similar. One theory suggests that empathy developed independently from self-benefit, gradually evolving during primitive social life as our ancestors needed assistance and collaboration. The other theory suggests that empathy is derived from self-benefit. As a living being, it

is essential to care about yourself, be aware of your own feelings, and pursue your interests. Recognizing that others have a similar desire for self-benefit makes it easier for you to treat them with the kindness and respect you seek for yourself.

Regardless, both perspectives recognize that humans have both self-interest and empathy, and thus society should guide accordingly. Since the drive to pursue personal gain is the most dominant force in human nature, a system should be in place that allows individuals to benefit themselves. However, since everyone is motivated by personal interest, it is crucial to ensure that one does not harm others in the process. This system, which encourages pursuing self-interest and punishes harmful behaviors, is known as the rule of law.

The fundamental principle of the rule of law is that individuals can pursue their own benefits as long as they do not compromise the interests of others. In this respect, I believe that traditional Chinese thinking has some flaws.



It often conflates pursuing personal gain with harming others, but this is not always the case. While harming others is clearly problematic, pursuing self-interest is not inherently negative and should, therefore, be encouraged. Confucian thinking, which tends to suppress individuals from pursuing reasonable self-interest, has contributed to many social problems.

**Moderator:** Very well said. There is a misconception that being altruistic always undermines one's own interests, or that pursuing self-interest always comes at the expense of others. In reality, the two concepts are not inherently intertwined.

# VII

## BENEFITING ONESELF AND BENEFITING OTHERS

**Ji:** It is essential to address the relationship between righteousness and personal interest, as well as the balance between benefiting oneself and others. Traditional Chinese culture often presents these concepts as opposing forces: seeking personal gain can be seen as unscrupulous, while being virtuous may appear to exclude self-benefit. In reality, righteousness and personal interest can coexist, as personal interest is necessary to fulfill our basic needs. As the saying goes, “Gentlemen do not reject wealth, but acquire wealth ethically.” Acquiring benefits through legitimate means does not conflict with morality.

In the early stages of the market economy, many people pursued profits without moral constraints, leading to negative consequences. As markets became regulated, it became clear that a company's success and growth relied on two virtues: integrity and altruism. Integrity forms the foundation of a company's identity, and an altruistic mindset that considers the public's interests is crucial for gaining societal recognition. From this perspective, interest and morality can complement each other. While it is possible to make money without integrity and altruism, such gains are unsustainable. Nowadays, internet companies prioritize providing free services, such as Taobao and WeChat, which built strong customer relationships by offering free services and generated profits through other channels like advertising. Evidently, altruism is an essential prerequisite for building large platforms and establishing connections.

In the past, we often viewed benefiting ourselves and benefiting others as conflicting forces, believing that helping others would harm ourselves and that only by

hurting others could we benefit ourselves. In reality, we live in a shared global home and rely on each other. President Xi Jinping's call for a community with a shared future for humanity highlights that human interests are unified. Only by embracing altruism and mutual benefit can we coexist harmoniously and grow together.

The world is dependently-originated. Whether between individuals or between humans and nature, we rely on each other. When we harbor hatred and ill-will, it is our own inner peace that suffers first, regardless of whether others are affected. Consider this: are we happy when filled with anger and hatred? In contrast, if we show compassion and love, positively impacting others through our actions, we gain recognition from people and society while also nurturing our own lives and experiencing joy. Therefore, benefiting others also benefits ourselves, while harming others ultimately harms ourselves.

# VIII

## FROM EMPATHY TO COMPASSION

**Moderator:** Buddhism discusses compassion, while philosophy focuses on empathy. What is the difference between the two?

**Ji:** Mencius said, “All people have a heart that feels for others.” When we see a child walking near a well, we become worried, not because we have any connection to the child, but because our empathy has arisen naturally. This example demonstrates people’s inherent capacity for goodness. If we constantly nurture these moments of empathy, they can evolve into compassion. When we can show compassion towards everyone, we achieve the

great compassion of Avalokitesvara. Thus, from a Buddhist perspective, empathy is a crucial foundation for attaining great compassion. Without empathy, compassion cannot exist.

**Zhou:** Western philosophy highlights two points when discussing moral issues. First, morality is not an external constraint imposed by society but is rooted in human nature. You are a living being, as is everyone else, and a sense of resonance exists between living beings. When you witness others suffering, you instinctively feel pain, and such empathy is the basis of morality. British philosopher and economist Adam Smith argued in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that all crucial societal morals are based on empathy. The two most important morals are justice and benevolence. Justice dictates that we cannot harm others and must intervene and punish harmful behaviors. Benevolence involves not only refraining from harm but also actively supporting those who are suffering. Therefore, empathy is the first foundation of morality emphasized in Western philosophy.

The second foundation for morality is that humans are spiritual beings with souls and reason. Therefore, you have self-respect, and you should also respect and treat others as spiritual beings. This self-respect is also a foundation of morality.

This view aligns with Mencius's perspective on morality. In his "Four Initiators of Morality," he identifies "compassion as the initiator of benevolence," which indicates that empathy is the origin of kindness. He also includes "shame as the initiator of righteousness" because being human involves having self-respect that must not be tarnished. Therefore, this moral sentiment concerning empathy and self-respect is universally shared across both Eastern and Western cultures.

**Ji:** In today's society, morality often takes a back seat in people's minds, which is largely because we misunderstand its significance to our own well-being. We often assume that morality is more of a requirement for society as a whole than a necessity for individuals. So, if everyone

else disregards morality, would it be both foolish and disadvantageous for us to continue adhering to it?

As Professor Zhou mentioned earlier, the source of morality comes from our inherent empathy and shame. However, people today may be so misguided that this inherent source has lost its potency. Therefore, it is essential to make people realize that morality is not only a societal requirement; when we adhere to morality, we are the greatest beneficiaries ourselves. Buddhism believes that life is a continuous cycle of cause and effect. The karmic energy from our past behaviors, speech, and thoughts manifests in our present self, shaping our character, interests, and fate. These accumulations become habits, habits form character, and character shapes personality. To become a better self, we must change our actions, speech, and thoughts, which cannot be achieved without practicing morality.

If we dismiss morality and engage in various evil deeds, we will form unhealthy habits and even harmful person-



alities, causing endless suffering. Thus, we will be the first to benefit or suffer from our actions, speech, and thoughts before they affect others. Moral behaviors benefit both ourselves and others, while immoral behaviors harm both. When we truly understand this principle, we will naturally follow morality. Therefore, wisdom is a prerequisite for practicing morality, as it enables us to understand the consequences of our actions and their impact on our own interests. Relying solely on social supervision or empathy to implement morality will not be very effective.

**Moderator:** When personal interests come into play, ethical constraints often seem weak. Despite potential legal repercussions, some individuals still engage in risky behaviors and venture into dangerous legal territories, which often leads to significant problems. Hence, it is essential to adopt the right perspective at a conceptual level and fundamentally transform our mindsets and natures, acknowledging that everything is intimately connected to ourselves.

# IX

## THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING HUMAN NATURE AND THE HUMAN MIND

**Moderator:** We have discussed human nature and the human mind in order to answer the question: where is humanity headed in the age of AI? Through the dialogue between our two knowledgeable guests, I believe we have concluded that searching outward will not lead us anywhere, so we must look inward. Today, even though technology has taken care of our basic survival concerns, many problems continue to exist. Given this, how important is it to explore these age-old and fundamental topics like human nature and the human mind?

**Ji:** Since the 16th century, Western material civilization has dominated. Commerce, industry, science, and technology have transformed the world and served humanity. Today, with an ever-growing population, rapidly depleting resources, and an increasingly fragile ecosystem, many countries are considering planetary migration. These developments share a common characteristic: constantly searching outward. However, this path is a dead end.

To find the way forward, we must look inward, not outward. The root of all problems lies in people's minds and personalities, and cultivating a healthy mind and character is the strength of Eastern culture. Buddhism believes that "When the mind is pure, the pure land manifests." If our inner world is pure, the outer world will naturally be pure. The world is made of people; if everyone is kind and loving, even modest resources can lead to beautiful lives. Conversely, if many people are unhealthy, even if material wealth increases tenfold, will this world enjoy stability and harmony?

Compared to the infinite universe, human cognitive ability is very limited. As scientific instruments advance, each new discovery only makes us realize how much remains unknown. Frankly, the more we learn, the more we realize our ignorance. We have always thought that the material world was everything, but the Dark Matter Particle Explorer “Wukong” discovered that dark matter accounts for about 27% of the universe, dark energy for about 68%, and the visible material world for just 5%. With such vast unknowns, anxiety is natural – where is our future?

Buddhism shows us a path: the essence of the mind is the essence of the universe. Since the mind is infinite, the universe, despite having infinite extensions, is fundamentally a manifestation of the mind. Therefore, by gaining clarity into our own minds, we can comprehend the boundless world.

I once gave a lecture on “The Worldview of Buddhism” at Peking University’s Sunshine Forum, where I discussed

scientific discoveries that corroborate Buddhist scriptures. In macroscopic systems, scientists are discovering more galaxies, but the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* have long told us that the universe contains an inconceivable number of worlds, equivalent to the countless grains of sand in the Ganges River. In the microscopic realm, modern quantum mechanics has detected phenomena like wave-particle duality and quantum entanglement, yet the doctrines of Middle Way and Consciousness-only have long provided in-depth explanations of these principles. How did the Buddha possess such wisdom over two thousand years ago? He grasped the essence of the mind, which is the true nature of all phenomena.

Many people feel lost in today's rapidly developing world with increasingly advanced AI, unsure of life's purpose or direction. If we continue to search for answers externally, we will never find a solution. Instead, we must look inward, drawing on our understanding of the mind to set goals that reshape our character. This ability to look inward is humans' unique advantage, one that AI can

never replace.

Where do we go from here? Our understanding shapes the world we perceive and the future we choose. Buddhism has long been revered as a study of the mind, offering deep wisdom on its nature and ways to resolve psychological issues. By exploring this wealth of wisdom, we can unlock our potential and gain a clear understanding of life and the world. With this clarity, we will no longer be uncertain about our direction.

**Zhou:** I believe humanity's future ultimately hinges on whether most people can achieve life's awakening. If we can, AI is not a threat, as we can address any problems that arise. But if we cannot achieve this, humanity has little hope, even without AI.

In this regard, I think we need Buddhism and some philosophy. Buddhism is truly exceptional. Western philosophy has been seeking the essence of the world since ancient Greece. After over two millennia, it concluded

that the world has no essence, which is what the Buddha Dharma calls “empty of intrinsic existence.”

**Moderator:** I admire Professor Zhou’s deep understanding of spiritual practice, as shown by his references to Buddhist concepts. I eagerly anticipate your next book, which I believe will take your ideas to even more exciting heights. As for today’s topic, I think everyone has their own reflections and found corresponding answers. Master Jiquan and Professor Zhou made it clear that we need to look inward. Each person must search for their original nature and life’s ultimate answer, and only then can humanity find a shared path forward.

# X

## LIVE Q & A

### 1. Does Emptiness Mean Everything Is an Illusion?

**Question:** The concept of emptiness in Buddhism makes life seem illusory. Does that mean that Buddhism and philosophy are illusory too? Is it necessary to study them?

**Ji:** Emptiness involves freeing ourselves from misconceptions about self and the world, but it does not deny the existence of phenomena. Buddhism teaches that everything exists due to causes and conditions. Our inability to clearly see this truth leads us to form assumptions about the self and the permanence of things.



Clinging to these erroneous beliefs, and being convinced that our perception is the absolute truth, results in afflictions. Without studying Buddhism or philosophy, we may remain trapped in false beliefs, clinging to the idea of “self” in a world without self, expecting permanence in an ever-changing world, and repeatedly facing disappointment. Only by seeing the world with wisdom can we avoid these afflictions and improve our lives.

**Zhou:** For me, engaging in philosophy has made life more painful. If you do not ponder these questions, you can live peacefully, because delving into them reveals a lack of answers. Emptiness means letting go of our mistaken understanding of the world’s eternity and solidity. We hope the world is firm and meaningful, which is why Westerners often search for the “essence of the world,” ultimately turning to God as a spiritual essence. They believe there must be something eternal and unshakable to rely on. But Buddhism does not offer that, but perhaps the true nature of the world is as such.

**Ji:** Buddhism denies permanence, but that does not mean there is nothing beyond illusory phenomena. There are two aspects to this. First, we tend to impose the idea of permanence on the world, which does not exist. We hope for everlasting love, enduring career success, and even eternal youth. These are simply illusions that stem from our attachments to emotions, worries about our careers, and fear of death – all of which result from an excessive dependence on the world. Such attachments bring endless suffering to humanity, so Buddhism speaks of impermanence to help us recognize the truth. But at the same time, it tells us that there is one thing that is eternal: the awakened nature. However, its eternity transcends binary opposition, surpassing the concepts of existence and non-existence, and non-existence does not mean nothing at all.

**Zhou:** The middle path between existence and non-existence is subtle and difficult to grasp. In the end, I have determined that it is best not to fixate on this question and simply move forward.

## 2. Do We Need to Pursue the Ultimate Truth?

**Question:** Professor Zhou said that after studying the world, he found that there is no essence. So, does the world have a truth? Should we pursue the ultimate truth? Is it not enough to enjoy life from birth to death?

**Zhou:** If you are curious about the truth of the world, you will inevitably seek answers. Personally, I feel unsettled without them. Some people do not ponder these questions, and even if you encourage them to ask, they will not. However, others are more concerned with ultimate questions, influenced by innate factors and later influences. If you do not have these questions in your heart, there is no need to worry about it.

**Ji:** Does the world have a truth? Do we need to explore it? Many people do not contemplate the world deeply. Having a child, securing a job, and settling down like this is enough for them. However, when they start asking questions like, “Why do people live? What is the truth of

life?” it can lead to complications. Should we “awaken” those who are happy with their lives with these questions, or is it wiser to let them carry on undisturbed? There are two scenarios.

Some people’s happiness is rooted in their relatively stable environment, which includes good health, a harmonious family, a successful career, and the absence of natural or man-made disasters. However, when this stability is compromised, their happiness dwindles. Then, there are others who have an abundance of merits that can sustain their happiness throughout their lives – but can they remain happy when facing death? Even if they die peacefully, how does such a life without ultimate direction set them apart from animals? Only by understanding the truth and knowing the principles of impermanence, no-self, and causality can we learn to cultivate the causes and calmly accept all results. Only the happiness built on this foundation of wisdom is reliable and lasting.

**Zhou:** I think understanding the world’s truth, such as

the principles of impermanence and emptiness, does not automatically establish a foundation for happiness. However, it does provide a rationale for eliminating suffering. It helps us realize that this is just how the world works, so there is no need to get entangled in life's gains and losses. Sadly, many people have not seen this truth and remain caught up in these matters.

**Ji:** Eradicating the root of suffering is the best foundation for creating happiness.

### 3. Studying Buddhism is an Investment in Life

**Question:** I am an entrepreneur and want to study Buddhism, but people around me often say I should wait until retirement, as learning takes time and conflicts with social engagements. When is the right time to study Buddhism?

**Ji:** Buddhism offers profound wisdom that guides us to live better, wiser, and happier lives with less anxiety and

worries. Is this wisdom needed only when we're old, or is it better to possess it as early as possible? Many modern people, particularly entrepreneurs, are busy and may feel they have no time to study Buddhism. Yet, successful entrepreneurs take courses in business management, traditional culture, and other subjects to improve their skills. Why do they make time to learn? Because they recognize the importance of such learning for personal growth and success.

Studying Buddhism is much the same. When we recognize the importance of this learning and believe it can enhance our personal and professional growth, we will naturally make time for it. In Japan, Inamori Kazuo, the founder of two Fortune Global 500 companies, attributes much of his success to the wisdom of Buddhism. In recent years, I have frequently been invited to give lectures to entrepreneurs on topics such as "Business and Life" or "Practical Value and Ultimate Value." Buddhism can simplify complex matters, make management more direct and effective, and foster love and altruism within

you, thereby earning the recognition of more people. Learning Buddhism is like sharpening your saw – you are investing in yourself and your future.

#### 4. Self and No-self

**Question:** Does the Buddhist concept of no-self contradict human nature? Does it conflict with the Western Humanism?

**Zhou:** The Buddhist notion of no-self, as I understand it, is not a denial of individual life, but rather a more comprehensive concept. “All phenomena are without self” means that nothing has an intrinsic existence or unchanging essence. This is a broad philosophical concept, not an anthropological one. Of course, it also applies to humans. It is hard to argue that the idea of no-self contradicts human nature since this Buddhist concept is fundamentally different from the philosophy of Humanism.

**Ji:** Western Humanism emphasizes individual uniqueness

and the pursuit of personal value. However, from the Buddhist perspective, this approach fails to consider the complexities of human nature and can easily result in attachment to the idea of self. During the long span of the Middle Ages, the West experienced religious suppression, leading to the idea of individual liberation during the Renaissance. But what does individual liberation truly liberate? While this idea fostered artistic, literary, and philosophical prosperity, it also allowed negative aspects of human nature to flourish. Many artists recognized this problem but lacked the wisdom to solve it, leading to extreme artistic expressions in modern art. In reality, without knowing the forward path in life, we cannot find the forward path in art. Buddhist wisdom is the only solution. In a sense, the Buddhist concept of no-self aims to deny the very self that Humanism seeks to pursue. In fact, the way Humanism approaches the self might actually make us lose sight of our true selves. In Buddhism, only by letting go of our perceived selves can we discover ourselves.



**Zhou:** Humanism is limited to the dependently originated phenomenal world. It asserts that people should pursue personal values but does not consider whether there is emptiness or an ontological world behind these phenomena. The concept of no-self tells us that the essence of the phenomenal world is emptiness. After the Renaissance, Humanism flourished, and at the same time, ontology, metaphysics, and people's belief in God began to decline, raising questions such as "Does God exist?" Their skepticism about ontology parallels the idea of no-self, which acknowledges that there is no unchanging essence behind the world. Over time, this notion has become widely accepted in Western philosophy. In terms of historical development, the Buddhist concept of no-self and Humanism seem to complement each other rather than conflict. This can be a topic for further research.

**Moderator:** After listening to today's dialogue, you may notice that many answers are open-ended, and you may experience similar feelings while reading *We Have Misunderstood the World*. Finding answers on our own will

inspire our thinking.

## 5. Replaced by AI

**Question:** As AI continues to replace more and more jobs, what are the underlying causes of this trend of unemployment? Might this lead to societal instability?

**Ji:** This is certainly a critical issue. In the future, AI will replace many jobs, resulting in a large number of people becoming unemployed. For many individuals, work is not only essential for survival but also serves as a source of spiritual fulfillment, filling their days and helping them achieve their life goals. What will become of their mental and physical well-being when they have nothing to occupy their time, even if they no longer need to worry about basic necessities like food and clothing? This situation could give rise to various social problems. As society continues to evolve, our physical and mental health will be vital for adapting comfortably to societal changes. I believe that learning Buddhism offers the best

path to achieving a healthy body and mind.

When people have more time, they should develop human's unique traits, perfect themselves, and realize life's ultimate value. They should then benefit society and the public with compassion, love, and mindfulness. This is the future of humankind. If there is no guidance from a culture of wisdom, it can be dangerous when many people are left with nothing to do.

**Zhou:** I think there are different possibilities. When things reach their extremes, they can rebound. Nowadays, we buy everything online instead of going to shopping malls. As a result, big shopping malls in Beijing are becoming empty, taking away simple pleasures like shopping. I believe when technology reaches a certain height, the public will question whether this is the right way to live. Therefore, I do not think that unrestricted technological development will continue indefinitely. People need the simple pleasures of daily life, which AI cannot entirely replace.

On the other hand, Karl Marx stated that the primary feature of communism is not the public ownership of the means of production, as it is just a method to attain communism's ultimate objective of establishing a free society. This society would enable individuals to explore fields where they excel, such as research, art, or other areas of interest, without worrying about survival or resources. By establishing sound social regulations and a healthy social environment, we can free people from the burden of basic survival needs, allowing them to develop their abilities and find meaning in their lives. However, achieving this requires people to adopt the correct view of life, which ultimately depends on Buddhism.

**Moderator:** Although the audience has been sending in questions, we must end our conversation today as we have already exceeded the expected time. What will the future hold? I believe each one of us has our own thoughts and answers. Once again, let us give a warm round of applause to our two wise speakers for sharing their insightful perspectives with us. Please also give a round of applause to

IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE,  
WHERE IS HUMANITY HEADED?

yourselves – your attendance has made this event possible. I sincerely hope we will have the chance to gather again in the future and continue to explore the culture of mindfulness and inner peace.

## 国际静心协会、静心学堂简介

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

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

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

The Mindful Peace Academy serves as the core public welfare brand under Mindful Peace International. We are dedicated to passing on education about life awakening and offering modern individuals ways towards physical and mental well-being, thereby helping them ground themselves and discover their life's mission. The curriculum we promote at the Mindful Peace Academy has been authenticated 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.

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