

Tapping the Potential for Wisdom Inherent in Humankind

SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, EVENING PRESENTATION:

ETHICS: FOUNDATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

MODERATOR: PROFESSOR SUSAN ROUNDS, Ph.D., U.C. Berkeley; Acting Director of Dominican College Off-campus Teaching Credential Program.

SPEAKER: PROFESSOR LUI TAI:

TEACHING IDEAS FROM CHINESE CULTURE AS A MEANS OF REVERSING DOWNWARD TRENDS IN WORLDWIDE EDUCATION

In our present era, science has made tremendous progress, and material advancement has reached new summits. However, in the area of spiritual development, not only have we not made progress, we have suffered a major setback. In fact, the more we enjoy material abundance, the more shriveled our spiritual identity becomes, to the point that many of us feel that life is empty and totally meaningless.

Some who are dedicated to protecting the moral fiber of society attribute this decline to the negative influence of certain ideological and political systems. However, there is ample evidence that no economical or political ideology can completely eradicate disaster and pain from the world. Political systems have even less power to remold and improve human character, since political structures, by their very nature, are prone to human flaws and imperfections. Therefore, if we wish to bring genuine peace to the world, we must work on the basics: improving human character through the educational process.

A comprehensive and wholesome educational system must begin at childhood. From a very young age children should be taught the qualities of filiality, fellowship, responsible citizenship, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, incorruptibility, and a sense of shame. Then children will be able to develop a healthy, positive world view and a strong moral foundation. Nowadays education worldwide continually emphasizes the transmission of knowledge and technological expertise, but there is a growing disregard and disdain for moral upbringing. The status of teachers is at an all-time low. Teachers are often reduced to the position of vendors of technical skill, but they no longer transmit the vital messages of ethics and morality that are essential to the survival of the social structure. Moreover, with such little public support and reinforcement, teachers are even less inclined to act as good models for their students.

In what ways can we rectify this situation? Confucius, hailed as the greatest sage and educator of China, advocated an educational system based in ethical and moral principles that are fundamental to human nature. According to Confucius, humans are endowed with the potential for spiritual and intellectual perfection. This is because they are born with the qualities of humaneness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trustworthiness. What they make of those qualities depends upon their environment and their teachers. However, the fact that people are intrinsically endowed with those virtues means they are equipped to strive for perfection.

Confucius outlined a system, at once logical and practical, to implement his educational ideals. Its steps are:

- 1) to eliminate the desire for material objects;
- 2) to investigate the nature of things;
- 3) to make one's thoughts proper;
- 4) to make one's intentions sincere;
- 5) to engage in self-cultivation;
- 6) to bring harmony to the family;
- 7) to govern the country;
- 8) to bring peace to the entire kingdom, that is, the whole world.

By following the steps of this system, one can activate and develop the Eight Virtues:

- 1) Filiality refers to respect for one's parents and elders.
- 2) Fellowship means harmony and compatibility with one's siblings and peers.
- 3) Responsible citizenship means being loyal to one's countrymen and women, and protecting one's nation. It also means not encroaching upon other nations.
- 4) Trustworthiness is the indispensable quality underlying all of one's interactions with one's friends and colleagues.
- 5) Propriety refers to the rules of etiquette and the moral precepts that prevent one's thoughts, words, and actions from transgressing the limits of what is proper.
- 6) Righteousness means the ability to arrive at the truth and at an appropriate course of action through moral reasoning.
- 7) Incorruptibility means having a lofty and pure character, and also fulfilling one's duty in one's professional and social life.
- 8) Finally, a sense of shame has been defined as "a noble quality that approaches true courage."

If children are instilled with those basic qualities from a very young age, and if they are given the proper guidance and nurturing environment to develop those qualities, they can

gradually become upright and public-minded individuals. They will become law-abiding citizens and inspiring models who can exert a beneficial influence on society and the whole world. That is why I am suggesting that these ideas from traditional Chinese culture be incorporated into the basic education curriculum. I believe they can inject new life into education everywhere in the world and reverse the downward trends of society.

Professor Lui Tai has been an outstanding calligrapher and painter for over thirty years, and has distinguished herself in many traditional styles of calligraphy. Her works have been seen in galleries and national exhibitions in major European cities, in France, Germany, Austria, and England, as well as In Japan, Australia, East Asia, Southeast Asia, America and Canada. She is recognized as one of the most prominent calligraphers of our era. Professor Lui is also a scholar of Chinese, classics and poetry, as well as a playwright and critic. She was a professor of Chinese Calligraphy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and recently accepted an appointment as a full professor at the College of Fine Arts, Dharma Realm Buddhist University. At the Second Graduation Ceremony, professor Lui Tai was granted an Honorary Doctorate in Chinese Culture by Dharma Realm Buddhist University.

Upcoming Special Events at the Sagely City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

July 4 Recitation for the Welfare of the Nation

July 16 Celebration of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva's Accomplishing the Way (actual day July 21)

July 17 Great Master Chang Ren's Enlightenment; Full Moon

July 18 Anniversary of Venerable Master Hua

July 19 Great Master Chang Jr's Birthday

Aug.13 Celebration of Great Strength Bodhisattva's Anniversary (actual day Aug. 14)
Celebration of Ullambana (actual day Aug. 16)

Aug.27 Celebration of Earth Store Bodhisattva's Anniversary (actual day Aug. 30)

Aug.30 Complete Precepts Ordination for Bhikshus and Bhikshunis; Earth Store Bodhisattva's Anniversary; Venerable Master Yun's Birthday