



# 如何面對不同的意見

—— 從瞎子摸象談起

## How to Resolve Different Opinions

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IN THE BUDDHA HALL AT THE CITY OF TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS

請看看您四周的佛友們。您看到有二人長得一模一樣嗎？現在請您想想您這一生中所見過的人裡，有二人長得一模一樣嗎？也許您會說雙胞胎長得一模一樣；我記得小學同學中有一對雙胞胎，他們長得確實十分相像。剛開始時，的確不容易分別誰是誰；然而過沒好久，全班同學都能輕易的區別他們二人。所以，每個人都長得不一樣，雙胞胎也不例外。

所謂「相由心生」，既然每個人都長得不一樣，人們的思想怎麼可能相同呢？因此每個人有不同的想法，應是意料中的事；即使是同一個人，也經常會改變他自己的想法，所以古人才會說「覺今是而昨非」。

我們每天都面對不同的想法。譬如天冷時，有些人希望將佛殿的門關上；有些人卻喜歡開門，好讓新鮮的空氣進來！天熱時，有些人希望開電扇，有些人卻不喜歡吹電扇！

相信大家聽過瞎子摸象的故事。這原是一則佛教的譬喻故事，出自「大般涅槃經」第三十二卷。因為瞎子看不見東西，他們只好用手摸象來猜測大象的長相。第一位恰巧摸到象腿，他就說大象長得像柱子。第二位摸到象尾，就說大象像繩子。摸到象身的就認定大象像一堵牆，摸到象鼻的就認定大象像大水

Please take a look at people around you. Do you see any two persons that look the same? Now think about all the people you've ever seen or met: have you ever seen any two look exactly the same? What about twins? Do twins look exactly the same? I remember the identical twins in my class back in elementary school. In the beginning, it was indeed difficult to tell who was who. However, before long, everyone in the class was able to tell the subtle differences between the twins. So everyone looks different, identical twins included.

It is said: "Appearances are made from the mind." Since people look different, how can we expect that they think the same? It is only natural that people have different opinions/views of things. Even the same person may change his/her opinion/view from time to time.

We face different views/opinions every day. For example, in the Buddha hall, when it is cold outside, some people would like to see the doors closed, and yet some others may prefer to leave them open to keep the air fresh. When it is hot, some may want to turn the fans on, and yet others may prefer not to.

Remember the story of a group of blind people trying to figure out what an elephant looks like? This is originally a Buddhist story from the *Great Parinirvana Sutra*. Since blind people can't see, they touched the elephant to feel what it was like. One happened to touch a leg and immediately concluded that the elephant was like a pillar. One touched the tail and said the elephant was like a piece of rope. One touched the elephant's back and said that it was like a wall. One touched the trunk and said the elephant was like a big hose. One touched the ear and said the elephant was like a fan. So everyone saw differently. Each one insisted that he was absolutely



管，摸到象耳的就認定大象像扇子？總之，每個人認定的大象長相都不一樣！每個人都堅持己見，於是一群人吵得不可罷休。這則譬喻故事很清楚的告訴我們，人們往往有不同的看法。

我們應該如何面對不同的意見呢？讓我們看看以下二個例子：

第一個例子是非常出名的台灣民謠「天黑黑」。這首民謠是這麼說的：天空黑雲密布，雷陣雨即將來臨，一個老阿公正在賣力的鋤地。鋤啊鋤的，意外的挖到一個芋頭<sup>1</sup>。老阿公很高興的將芋頭帶回家去，他要老阿婆煮成鹹的；但是老阿婆卻喜歡吃淡的。二人一言不合，居然大打出手。一個不小心，竟把鍋子給打破了！結果二人不但吃不到芋頭，還賠了一個鍋子，真是得不償失。由此可知，暴力不是解決紛爭的好辦法。

一個非常出名的例子使眾人的紛爭得以成功地解決是美國的國會制度。美國贏得獨立戰爭後，開國元老們集會制訂憲法。他們面臨一個棘手的問題：各州要選派多少國會議員呢？大州希望依據各州人口來決定議員人數，小州則認為各州應選派相同的議員人數。幸虧元老們沒堅持己見，經過一番腦力激盪及熱烈討論後，他們很有智慧的想出一個皆大歡喜的制度：設立參、眾二院。各州選派二名參議員，而眾議員人數則依據各州人口決定。所有法案皆得在參、眾二院通過，並且這完美的制度延用至今，奠定了美國長治久安的基礎。

讓我們回來看看那群盲人，他們仍為大象的長相爭論不休呢！明眼人一聽便知每個盲人都只摸到大象的一部分，他們只要將所有盲人摸到的拼在一起，就可以得知大象的全貌。

然而我們真是明眼人嗎？和聖賢人比起來，凡夫就像盲人一般，五眼未開，我們缺乏看清事物真相的智慧。物理學也清楚的告訴我們，凡夫肉眼只能看到可見光，而可見光僅占電磁波光譜的一極小段。我們既看不見波長比紅光長的紅外線、無線電波等，也看不見波長

right, so they argued and argued and couldn't agree with each other! This story illustrates clearly that people have different views.

How do we face different opinions/views? Lets discuss two examples:

The first example is the very popular Taiwanese folk song "The Dark Cloudy Sky". It says that a thunderstorm is approaching and the sky is covered with thick black clouds. An old man was plowing in the fields and dug up a taro<sup>1</sup> to his surprise. He happily took it home and asked his wife to cook it salty. His wife liked it plain, however. They couldn't agree with each other and ended up fighting. Guess what happened? During the fight the old couple accidentally broke the wok! Not only did neither get to eat the taro but both had to go hungry for a while until they got a new wok! Obviously, fighting is not the way to go because everyone loses at the end.

A famous successful example of resolving different opinions is the US Congress. After winning the Independence War, the founders of this country gathered to work on the Constitution. A difficult question was how many representatives each state would get to send to Congress? Larger, more populated states favored the idea that population determined the number of representatives from each state. Smaller states did not like it, however, because they'd be out-voted each time! They liked the idea that every state send the same number of representatives, an idea that larger states felt was unfair to them. How could they make all states, big or small, happy? The founders did not fight, fortunately. Instead, they put their heads together, discussed and discussed, and finally came up with a brilliant solution. They created two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state would send two senators to the Senate, and its population would determine the number of representatives it would send to the House. All the bills would have to pass through both Senate and House. All were pleased to get what they wanted. This is still the present system, over 200 years already. If every state had insisted on its own view, there would not be a strong, united USA today! This is a classical example where everyone wins!

Now back to the elephant story. The blind people were still arguing because each one insisted that he/she was absolutely right. How can we help them to find out what an elephant really looks like? Obviously, fighting is not the way to go. To us who can see clearly, these blind people were really stupid. We know that each of them saw only part of the picture. All they had to do was to put all pieces together, like a puzzle, and they'd then have the complete picture.

But, are we sure that we are not like the blind people? From sages' point of view, ordinary people are blind! Having not opened the five kinds of spiritual eyes, we just don't have the wisdom to see





比紫光短的紫外線、微波、X光等。

在「四十二章經」中，佛陀也苦口婆心的告誡我們：「慎勿信汝意，汝意不可信。得阿羅漢已，乃可信汝意<sup>2</sup>。」所以，面對不同意見時，我們千萬不要堅持己見，而能虛心的聆聽旁人的意見，然後以集體的智慧，尋求一個圓滿解決問題的方案。俗話說「三個臭皮匠，勝過一個諸葛亮。」否則，我們恐怕會像「天黑黑」中那對老夫婦般，打破了鍋子，大夥兒一起挨餓！

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1. 原曲是老阿公鋤到一條鰻魚，因大家都吃素，所以改為挖到一個芋頭。
  2. 和佛陀比起來，大阿羅漢也說不上是真正的明眼人，因他們只能看到過去八萬大劫以內的事，八萬大劫以外的就一無所知了。

things clearly. Physics also tells us that visible light occupies only an extremely narrow band (wavelength of approximately 400 – 700 nm; 1nm = 1 billionth of a meter) in the electromagnetic wave spectrum. We can see neither waves with wavelengths longer than red light such as infrared and radio waves, nor those shorter than violet light such as ultraviolet, microwave, x ray, etc.

In the *Sutra in Forty-two Sections*, the Buddha also warns us: “Be careful! Don’t trust your own thought. Your thought can’t be trusted unless you have already attained Arhatship<sup>2</sup>.”

So, when facing different opinions, we’d better not insist that only my own view is correct. Instead, let’s keep our minds open and listen to each other. Appreciate different views, put our heads together and use collective wisdom to come up with a more complete picture and a better solution. As the saying goes: Three stinky leather workers surpass a smart person. Otherwise, we may be like the old couple in the Taiwanese folksong and end up with a broken wok and have to go hungry all together!

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1. The original song says that the old man caught an eel-like fish. Since we are all vegetarians, let’s change it to a taro, a potato-like root.
  2. Even the great Arhats are, to some extent, blind compared to Buddhas. This is because they can only see up to 80,000 great eons in the past but not beyond.

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“bordering on emptiness.” This would seem to bring us down to (at most) “a trillionth part of a trillionth part.” This is my interpretation of the matter as reported in Fo-guang Dictionary (FG.5684c) of Hui-yüan’s Sanskrit Glossary (yin-yi) drawing upon the Great Yogacara āśtra.

3 An immeasurably large number.

<sup>4</sup> The ten wholesome karmic deeds (kuāala-karma) consist in not committing the ten bad karmic deeds. These consist of three related to physical karma (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct), four related to verbal karma (false speech, harsh speech, duplicitous or divisive speech, frivolous speech {including “lewd” speech}), and three related to mental karma (covetousness, anger, incorrect views).

Careful adherence to these ten standards of moral virtue have the karmic effect of conducting to celestial rebirth unless the merit deriving therefrom is “transferred” through dedicating it to the utmost, right, and perfect enlightenment of buddhahood.

5 A first-stage arhat, otherwise known as a “stream-enterer.”

6 A second-stage arhat, otherwise known as a “once-returned.”

7 A third-stage arhat, otherwise known as a “never-returned.”

<sup>8</sup> It is fairly clear that this interlinear note was inserted to prevent undue grandiosity and self-delusion on the part of the enthusiastic new convert to the bodhisattva path. It might do us well to reflect at some length on the differences between a mere “facsimile” generation of the bodhi mind typical of the good-hearted foolish common person and the genuinely perfect generation of the bodhi mind more typical of a journeyman bodhisattva. The issues surrounding this difference are explored in a very inspiring way in the following section.

