

They Come from Cities

城市的聯想

A Talk Given by John Scroggs on July 29, 2012 at Buddha Hall of CTTB 史果霽講於2012年7月29日萬佛城大殿



BODHI FIELD | 菩提田

The subject matter may be dry; however, I decided to talk on this subject because the idea greatly inspired me a lot about the possibility of the City of Ten Thousand of Buddhas. What I want to talk about is periods of time in history where certain cities were incredibly productive and over a very short period of time produced a great number of world teachers and sages. I never realized until I read the book “Imaging” by Jonah Lehrer.

First, I would like to go through some examples and these are all from Western history. The first example is Athens, Greece, which between 440 BC and 380 BC - a mere 60 years - produced an astonishing number of foundational thinkers for the Western world, including Plato, Socrates, Pericles, Thucydides, Herodotus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Xenophon.

Another example is Florence, Italy between 1450 and 1490 AD, which gave rise to Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Ghiberti, Botticelli and Donatello. During these periods of time, Athens was involved in a vicious war with Sparta, and Florence had just lost over half of its population to the Black Death. So, it would be difficult to believe that all these world class philosophers and artists were the product of world peace and easy times.

Moving forward in time, there was Elizabethan England, the London of William Shakespeare. At the time when Shakespeare arrived on the scene, London was the most densely packed city on the face of the planet, with some 200,000 people living in a few square miles on the banks of the Thames River. And surprise, surprise! They were undergoing a theatrical boom. Some citizens went to performances every night; at least 1/3 attended once a month. For you city planners out there thinking about a multi-purpose hall, the famous Rose Theater's inner courtyard was only 46' in diameter, and yet it could accommodate nearly 2000 people in the audience!

From 1510 to the time Shakespeare arrived in London, England had seen literacy amongst the general population go from 1% to nearly half. A lot of this was due to the Protestant Reformation and the printing press. In Catholic France, even 100 years later,

今晚的題目也許看似枯燥，但內容非常有啟發性；其中的思想，激發了我對萬佛聖城未來發展之路的思考。想和大家分享的，是歷史上一些西方國家的城市發展；尤其約翰·李耳在有關創意的書《想像》（Imagine）研究到：「在歷史上特定的短期內，在特定城市，湧現出了大量各行業的菁英和聖賢之士。」

第一個例子是希臘雅典。在公元前440~380年，僅僅60年的時間，西方世界產生了大批傑出的思想家，他們對西方文明的影響非常深遠。代表人物有：柏拉圖、蘇格拉底、伯理克利、修西底德斯、希羅多德、歐裡庇德斯、索福克勒斯、埃斯庫羅斯、亞裏斯托芬和色諾芬。

另一個是意大利城市佛羅倫斯。在公元1450~1490期間，這40年中孕育了許多偉大的藝術家，如米開朗基羅、雷昂納多達芬奇、吉貝爾蒂、波提切利和多納泰羅等人。當時，希臘雅典正和北方的斯巴達激烈交戰，而佛羅倫斯一半人口，因正流行的黑死病死亡。這個時期天災人禍頻發，並非和平盛世。很難想像，正是在這樣的困難時期，卻產生了如此眾多的哲學家 and 藝術家。

如果時間再前進到英國女王伊麗莎白（一世）統治時期的倫敦。1588年莎士比亞在倫敦出現時，該市被稱為「地球上人口密度最高的城市」；二十萬人口居住在泰晤士河兩岸，僅有幾平方哩的地區。當時正值轟轟烈烈的戲劇發展時期，有些市民幾乎每晚都去劇院看演出；至少有三分之一的人口，每個月都去看演出，城市的規劃者考慮籌建多功能的大廳——著名的玫瑰劇院的內庭，直徑只有46英尺，卻能容納2,000位觀眾。

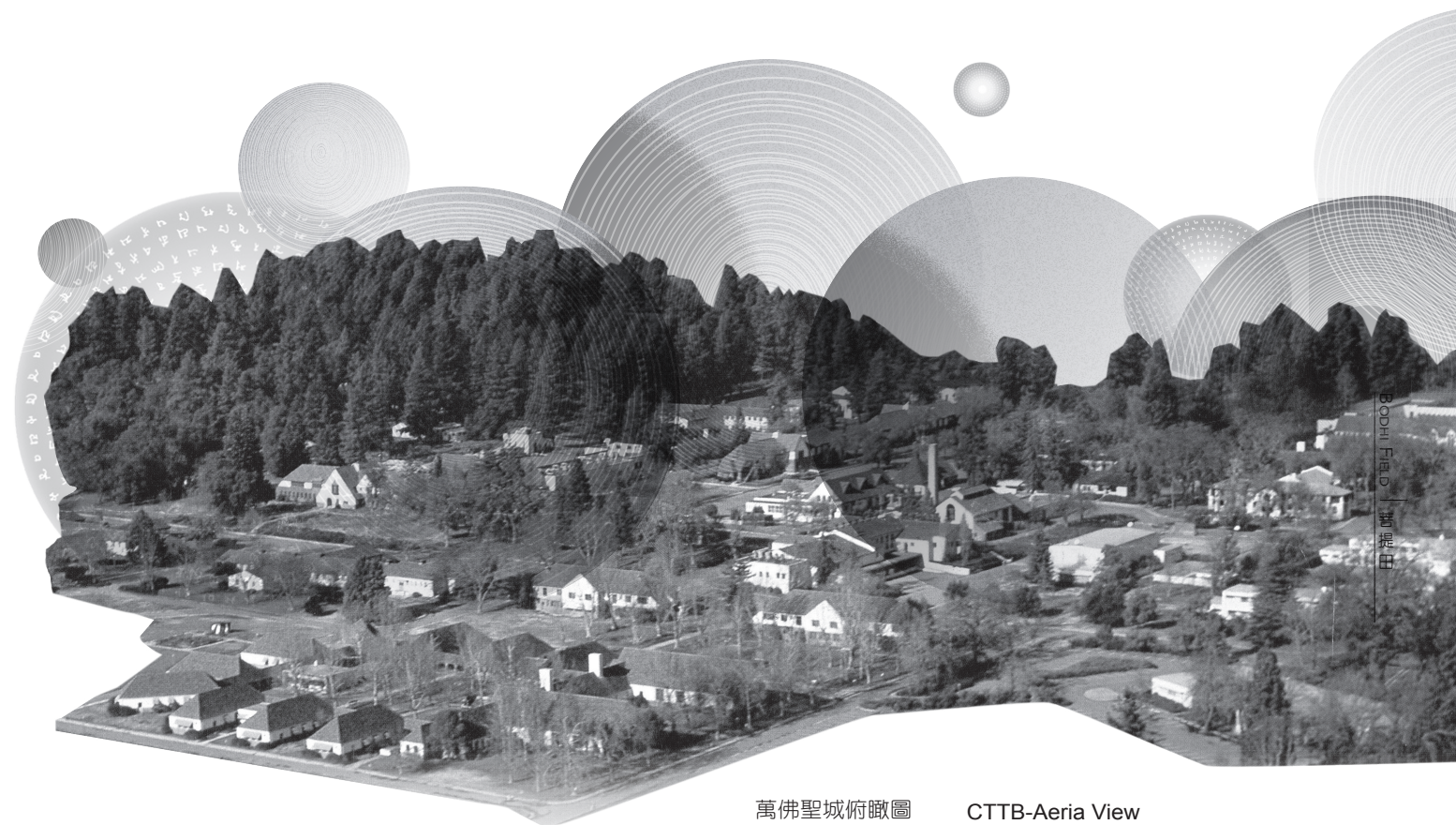
從1510年到莎士比亞來倫敦時期，識字人口從百分之一，增至一半，都是因為新教徒的改革與印刷機的影響。在天主教盛行的法國，一百年後大部分

hardly any citizen could read or write. In stark contrast, in this densely packed city of London, over a very brief period of time, many writers found their voice – Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, John Milton, Sir Walter Raleigh, John Fletcher, Edmund Spencer, Thomas Kyd, Philip Sidney, Thomas Nash, John Donne and Francis Bacon. (This renaissance of English literature was brought to an end in 1642 when the Puritans shut down the public theater.)

When human beings hear about times like these that have produced such an inordinate number of genius/sages in such

人還不識字；而在倫敦許多著名的作家，已寫出偉大的作品，像馬洛、莎士比亞、本·強森、約翰·米爾頓、沃爾特·羅力爵士、約翰·福萊徹、愛德蒙·斯賓塞、托馬斯·基德、菲利普西尼、托馬斯·納什、約翰·多恩、法蘭西斯·培根等人。當時英國文學的文藝復興時期，直到1642年清教徒關閉了所有公共的劇院，而結束。

是什麼原因，使人類許多次在如此短的時間內，在這些城市內產生了如此多的天才和聖人？就像剛才提到



萬佛聖城俯瞰圖

CTTB-Aeria View

a relatively short period, we all want to know why. It is not due to peace and pleasant surroundings, as we have already remarked. Some have attributed it to a 'paradigm' shift that was occurring at that particular time. This idea has been dismissed by some scholars, due to the large number of such shifts which did not have similar results. I think, perhaps, that it is due to a natural ebb and flow in human history. It is like enlightenment - sometimes quick and sometimes, more often, gradual. The city seems to be a common denominator.

In general, cities become more vibrant and productive the larger they grow. For other human creations, like businesses, the larger they grow, the more they restrict productivity and creative thinking. They erect walls and establish hierarchies which ultimately cause the company/business to mature

的，這些時期都不是太平盛世或者安樂景象。學術界對這一現象的探討，有人認為是特定時期發生的典範轉移（註：意指特殊的一群人，打破傳統，將一個粗略的概念落實後，而產生一個新的典範）。但有些學者並不認為如此，因為很多這樣的典範轉移並沒有產生類似的結果。我認為這種現象，是人類歷史自然演進的結果；就像開悟一樣，有時候是頓悟，有時候呢，更多的時候，是漸悟。然而這些現象似乎有一個共同點，就是都發生在城市裏。

通常，城市擴張得越大，就越具有活力和生產力。這不像其它的人類產物，例如工商業機構規模越大、階層越多的結果，反應越緩慢，創新越遲鈍甚至倒閉。然而城市，不管你怎麼認為，都不會是由市長或者官僚機構

and die. Cities, no matter how much one would like to think otherwise, are not really ruled by the Mayor or some top-down bureaucratic nightmare. They are fundamentally unruly masses which constantly churn and mix in a spontaneous and unplanned way. This is the nature of cities - "The crowded spaces force us to interact. They lead us to explore ideas that we wouldn't explore on our own, and converse with strangers we'd otherwise ignore. The process isn't always pleasant...but it remains essential." This happens in city after city.

At CTTB and our other Way places, we sometimes refer to this as the 'pressure cooker' effect. When people come together, they become more productive. They interact with a more diverse people and this produces a 'knowledge spillover' that translates, invariably into greater ideas. This is especially true, I think, in a Way place where sutras are being translated and lectured by large numbers of people. Ideas themselves are not commercial goods. They don't diminish in value or wear out through use, like a Nike tennis shoe. Ideas tend to become more useful and more innovative if they are shared. In fact, ideas don't add up, they multiply when passed on to others.

You are probably wondering by now, "What if anything does this have to do with us?" True, all of these things - writing, philosophizing, creating great art - are really peripheral to our cause. However, they can and should all be aids in cultivating the Way. CTTB is a city. CTTB is on the way to becoming a great city, one established to propagate Virtue and Wisdom. Along the way, this city should become renowned as well for its writers and artists and philosophers. Of course, we are about producing sages, not producing writers, artists or philosophers. But, as it is said, "If you want them to enter the Buddha's wisdom, you must first bait the hook with what they like." These are the bait.

There is a kind movement, special to cities that I think we are beginning to experience here. This can happen slowly or grow and be accompanied by rapid and official change. To try and foster this phenomenon is one of these reasons to study them. If we had been unable to identify a specific condition which can cause this city born incidence so exuberant productivity, we have been able to identify some conditions that preclude or slow down these phenomena. Isolation and segregation I believe are the primary corporates. Most created and imposes can be traced to trans-interactions between diverse groups of people their thoughts and cultures. Biological metaphor often used is cross-fertilization.

It is impossible to be isolated in a crowded environment. All the while human tendency is to gather together with similar people. The city environment does not allow us to occur. Every day you are forced to deal with other cultures, other races other views. This may be uncomfortable. But perhaps productivity is born from irritant situations.

可以統治的。城市，本質上是一個無法控制的集合體，自發地、隨機地不斷互相激盪、融合。這就是城市的本質——擁擠的空間迫使人們去互動交流，去探索自己不會想去探索的想法，與可能忽略了的陌生人交談。這個過程不總是令人愉悅，但卻是必要的，而且是發生在每一個城市裏。

萬佛聖城和其它分支道場也不例外，有時候我們把這稱為「高壓鍋效應」。當大家聚居時，創意會變得更有創造力。多樣化的人們聚集在一起，會產生「知識漫溢」，就能醞釀為偉大的想法。尤其在道場裏，翻譯經典、大眾講法的時候，溝通使得思想碰撞，繼而產生新的火花，知識漫溢的效應就更加明顯。思想不是商品，不會貶值，也不會像耐克網球鞋因為使用而耗損；經過傳播分享，思想變得更加有用，同時增添更多新意。事實上，思想的傳播往往不是簡單的一加一，而是倍增以乘方的形式流傳，產生不可預測的影響。

聽到這裏你也許會問，這和我們修習佛法有什麼關係嗎？在修行路上，寫作、藝術、哲學等方面的知識，並不是最重要的，是一種助緣，但對聖城未來的發展卻很重要。為什麼呢？當我們在傳播佛法時，這是一種修行方式；聖城也是一座城市，是人們實踐道德和智慧的地方，會成為一個非常重要的城市。聖城將不僅僅因為佛法而舉世矚目，也該因這裏眾多優秀的文學家、藝術家、哲學家而享譽全球。當然，萬佛聖城是培育聖人的聖地、福地，也許不僅限於藝術家、文學家、哲學家；但正如古德所說：「欲令人佛智，先以欲勾牽」，這些有才華的人及其作品，會如餌一般，吸引越來越多的人來。

我想這種趨勢已經在聖城發生；城市的這種現象，在特殊的情況下緩慢地發生，也可因某些條件而急速變化，在城市裏因種種事件的發生，而產生非常旺盛的生產力。我們必須先去了解其發生之條件，才能設法促進此變化現象的發生。如果我們沒有辦法認識，倒底是什麼條件時，而我們卻已經確認「絕緣和隔離」都是阻止及減緩上述現象的罪魁禍首。當多樣化的人種，不同種族的人，互相接觸，彼此思想和文化會發生變化，會產生更新更好的影響。如同生物學上異種交配所產生的優良品種。

「物以類聚，人以群分」，人都傾向於親近和自己一樣的人，或者自己喜歡的人；但在聖城不得不面對，和接受不同種類文化、種族、見解的人。也許有人會感到不舒服，但正是這種不同的刺激，才是最有生產價值的。