



意大利道教会
Chiesa Taoista d'Italia

30°
1993-2023



International Taoist Convention

May 26-27, 2023

Temple of Great Harmony
Via G. Puccini n.16 - Caserta, Italy

It will be attended by delegations from:
P.R. China, Singapore, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Slovenia, Australia and Italy.

Program

Friday 26:

10-12 a.m. Naples

Pontifical Theological Faculty of Southern Italy
St. Thomas Aquinas Section

Second Catholic-Daoist Seminar on the theme:
"Communicating with the Heart: interreligious dialogue
as an instrument of peace and fraternity in the world."

5-7 p.m.

Caserta

Temple of Great Harmony
International Taoist Congress (Part I):
"Taoism World Religion."

Saturday 27:

10-12 a.m. Caserta

Temple of Great Harmony
International Taoist Congress (Part II).

5 p.m.

Rite for the Universal Blessing and Salvation.
Celebrated by Rev. M° Li Zhiwang 李至旺
Abbot of the Jade Emperor Temple - Singapore

Masterful Teachings:

Rev. M° Meng Zhiling 孟至岭 - "The Emptiness of the Heart in Taoism".
Rev. M° Li Zhiwang 李至旺 - "Accord of Respect to Divinity With Utmost Sincerity".
Rev. M° Cui Liming 崔理明 - "The Scripture Qiu Zu chui xun wen 邱祖垂训文."
Rev. M° Wu Xinhong 吴信弘 - "Female internal alchemy technique".

Congress and seminar Acts

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Part 1 – Theology Faculty Naples



Taoist Church of Italy



Pontifical Theological Faculty
of Southern Italy
Sect. of St. Thomas Aquinas



Center for Franciscan Studies
for Interreligious Dialogue and Cultures.

International Seminar

Christians and Taoists in dialogue

"Communicating with the Heart"

Interreligious dialogue as an instrument of peace and fraternity in the world.

用心交流

多宗教之间的对话是世界和平及兄弟会的工具

Speakers will be:

Mons. Gaetano Castello
Auxiliary bishop of Naples

Prof. Francesco Asti
Vice dean of PFTIM Naples

Prof. Edoardo Scognamiglio
Director of the Institute of Christology

Prof. Antonio Ascione
PFTIM of Naples

don Vincenzo Lionetti
*Office for Ecumenism
and Interreligious Dialogue
Archdiocese of Naples*

Rev. M^o Meng Zhiling 孟至岭
Vice President Taoist Association of China

Rev. M^o Li Zhiwang 李至旺
Abbot Jade Emperor Temple-Singapore

Rev. Huang Jingyun 黄景运
President Portuguese Taoist Association

Rev. Li Liyong 李理永
President Spanish Taoist Community

Rev. Wu Xinhong 吴信弘
President Swiss Quanzhen Taoist Association

Rev. Yuan Weiqi 袁微琪
Rector Slovenian Taoist Temple

Rev. Yan Meixi 阎美希
President Taoist Association Australia

Rev. Li Xuanzong 李玄宗
President Taoist Church of Italy

May 26, 2023 - 10 a.m.

Pontifical Theological Faculty of Southern Italy
Viale Colli Aminei, 2, Napoli

M° Li Xuanzong 李玄宗

President of Taoist Church of Italy

May the Divine Blessing always be a companion to your steps.

Dear Sisters and Brothers, Venerable Masters, Honored Professors,

This is the second time that Daoist and Christian delegations have met, fraternally, to try to get to know each other, find what unites us as clergy and be able to work together for the benefit of humanity.

- I thank SE Monsignor Gaetano Castello, for his kindness in welcoming us.
- I thank Vice Dean Prof. Francesco Asti, for his willingness to welcome us to his residence. An institute of culture and wisdom, open and welcoming to diversity.
- I thank Prof. Antonio Ascione, a very fine theologian and philosopher, for his contribution and presence.
- I thank Fr. Enzo Lionetti, a tireless worker of the spirit, for his ability to bring different religions into dialogue.
- But most of all I thank Prof. Eduardo Scognamiglio, a spiritual brother and a living example of interreligious dialogue. He is the *trend d'union* that allowed us to realize this seminar.

On behalf of all Taoist delegations, I thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Daoism and Christianity

Daoism and Christianity have substantial theological differences.

On the other hand, the religious experience is the same because it is lived in the minds and hearts of human beings such as we are. All sisters and brothers of one Family. An experience lived with a pure spirit, distanced from the ephemeral attractions of the material world, for both of us.

We both consider ourselves subordinate creatures of an "Absolute," our Origin (*yuan* 元), eternal, omnipotent and omnipresent.

We both believe that if we remain in perpetual resonance (*ganying* 感应) with It, we can read Its manifestations in the existent.

For all above, the spillover of this experience into action is the same:

We both make ourselves ultimate toward others motivated by spiritual goal values.

Daode Jing, 7:

是以聖人後其身
而身先
外其身
而身存
非以其無私耶故能成其私

The Sage, therefore, makes himself ultimate
and still precedes;
is excluded,
and yet it is present.

It is not because He neglects Himself that He may be realized?

Mark 9:35 "If anyone wants to be first,
let him be last of all and servant of all."

We both care for the people, for the weakest, not out of a Pharisaic attitude but because we read in the other the same divine spark that animates us. We are all united by this. By bowing to the other, I bow to the Creator.

Galatians 5:14 - "For the whole Law is fulfilled in this one word: Love your neighbor as yourself."

Zhuangzi 2 - "Let the other and oneself cease to oppose each other, this is the core of the Tao."

We both promote spiritual values so that they may improve secular ones and hope, in this way, for a more humane society.

Finally, both of us are animated by the moral imperative to contribute to the divine work of salvation for humanity.

Daode Jing, 27 Therefore, the saint thinks that it is always good to save men, so that no one may be lost;

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven.

Communicating with the heart

Regarding the theme of the seminar, I am convinced that it is shared by both of us because in both Taoist and Christian scriptures, the heart is the seat of the divine spark within us and of Truth.

Hua Hu Jing 化胡經,33 If you can let go (of the Tao) with your mind and surround it with your heart, it will live forever within you.

Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart with all care, for from it flow the springs of life."

Today, we have come to make a seemingly small contribution. It may seem insignificant, like a seed of wheat. But, if we, both of us, take care of it, we will have abundant harvests for all.

This in Daoism is called *boai* 博爱, brotherhood/universal love.

This in Christianity is called *ἀγάπη*, Agape,

Zi bei
自卑
Humbly

Prof. Antonio Ascione

Full Professor of Philosophy
Pontifical Theological Faculty of Southern Italy
Sect. Saint Thomas Aquinas

RELIGIONS WAYS OF UNIVERSAL FRATERNITY

In this troubled time in world history, the cry of Pope Francis about the future of humanity rises up. Francis is a pope who, alongside words, has implemented a concrete strategy of gestures of friendship and esteem, seeking encounter and dialogue with other religious leaders as an antidote to a disoriented humanity on the brink of ecological, economic and humanitarian catastrophe. International bodies born after World War II with the dream of multilateralism show in this first part of the century a certain weariness in resolving international conflicts and appear inadequate in the face of the mounting national policies characterized by unilateralism. Here then is the "dream" of Pope Francis: to rediscover the reasons for walking together, especially starting from the contribution and service that religions can offer for universal fraternity¹. He recently said, "Building peace asks us to be creative, to go beyond, if necessary, the usual patterns of international relations"².

1. Pope Francis' "dream"

On March 6, 2021, in the Plain of Ur, considered to be the homeland of Abraham and thus the place where the three monotheistic world religions originated, Pope Francis said, "May the human family become hospitable and welcoming to all its children; may they, looking to the same heaven, walk in peace on the same earth"³. Already in the programmatic apostolic exhortation of his pontificate he had made an appeal to the men and women of all humanity of our time to take each other under their arms, to walk together, as in a kind of pilgrimage, cultivating the art of living together⁴. The *Abu Dhabi Document on Human Brotherhood* (Feb. 2019), the encyclical *Brothers All* (Oct. 3, 2020) (henceforth: FT), up to the recent trips to Iraq (2021), Kazakhstan (Sept. 2022), and Bahrain (Nov. 2022) respond to a specific plan aimed at weaving a web of

¹ Cf. already in the abundant bibliography on the subject: Francis' Dream for a More Human World. Studies on Fratelli tutti, monographic issue of *Asprenas* 68 (2021) 2-3. The essay we present in these pages takes up and continues the arguments set forth in A. ASCIONE, Religions at the service of fraternity: a contribution to a world ethic, in L. ROMANO - V. CHITI - P. CORSINI (eds.), *An open world for good politics*. On the encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*, Cantagalli, Siena 2021, 19-30.

² FRANCIS, Greeting to the delegation of "Leader pour la paix," Vatican City, December 2, 2022: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2022/december/documents/20221202-leaders-pourlapaix.html#:~:text=Costruire%20la%20pace%20ci%20chiede,la%20forza%20le%20condizioni%20di>

³ ID., Discourse at the interfaith meeting, Plain of Ur, March 6, 2021: www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2021/march/documents/papa-francesco_20210306_iraq-incontro-interreligioso.html.

⁴ "Today, when the networks and tools of human communication have reached unprecedented developments, we feel the challenge to discover and transmit the "mystique" of living together, of mingling, of meeting, of taking each other in our arms, of leaning on each other, of participating in this somewhat chaotic tide that can turn into a true experience of fraternity, into a caravan of solidarity, into a holy pilgrimage. In this way, the greater possibilities for communication will result in greater possibilities for encounter and solidarity among all": ID, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium* (Nov. 24, 2013), 87, in AAS 195 (2013) 1057.

acquaintance and fraternal ties, as a kind of pilgrimage of trust to gather around the ideal of universal brotherhood as many voices and as many religious leaders. President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart K. Tokayev, welcoming Pope Francis on his recent pastoral visit to the heart of Asia (Sept. 13-15, 2022) , said in tune with him that "humanity could really go astray if we are not careful," and he too felt "that the time has really come for moderates of different cultures and religions to pool their wisdom and energies to unite people behind the ideas of peace, social harmony and mutual support" ⁵(5) . In the pope's intentions, the "dream" of fraternity must concern the whole of humanity, but in particular it must be the believers of the various religions who take the lead in this task, standing on the side of the poor and being the voice of the last: religions are like "sentinels of fraternity in the night of conflicts" ⁶.

The pope has also chosen a style: it is the style of Francis of Assisi, who in his incredible encounter with Sultan Malik-al-Kamil in 1219 "shows us his heart without borders, capable of going beyond distances due to origin, nationality, color or religion," as Pope Francis himself comments. For the pope, the saint of Assisi is the model of dialogue because "he did not wage dialectical warfare by imposing doctrines, but communicated the love of God" (FT 4). Therefore, dialogue has a specific goal: "to establish friendship, peace, harmony and to share moral and spiritual values and experiences in a spirit of truth and love" (FT 271) ⁷, with a "non-dogmatic" communication of one's identity.

2. Religions at the service of fraternity

In the encyclical *Brothers All*, the reasons why religions should be "at the service of fraternity in the world" (as the title of the eighth chapter of the same document states) are also illustrated. They first of all can meet in a friendly and operative dialogue that starts from a common presupposition: the "recognition of the value of every human person called to be a son or daughter of God" (FT 271). Religions have at their disposal a fundamental datum, which consists in the common experience of the universal fatherhood of God, in which authentic human fraternity is rooted and which makes us all sons and daughters and therefore brothers and sisters (cf. FT 272). Beyond the biological fact, authentic fraternity is grounded in the common divine sonship, this at least for the three monotheistic religions. Consequently, "making God present is good for our societies," because "it helps us recognize ourselves as fellow travelers, truly brothers" (FT 274). When God's name is ousted from society soon man goes astray, his rights are violated and his dignity trampled. The estrangement from religious values produces the materialistic view of life and exaggerated individualism. "It is not acceptable," in the words of Pope Francis, "for only the powerful and scientists to have a voice in the public debate. There must be a space for reflection that proceeds from a religious background that gathers centuries of experience and wisdom" (FT 275) of which religious traditions are repositories. To do this, it is necessary for religions to distance themselves from all forms of violence. We are "sons and daughters of the same Heaven" ⁸. The world awaits

⁵ Cf. It is time for dialogue to build fraternity, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 14, 2022:

<https://www.osservatoreromano.va/it/news/2022-09/quo-210/e-il-momento-del-dialogo-per-costruire-la-fraternita.html>.

⁶ FRANCIS, Discourse on the occasion of the signing of the Document on "Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence," Abu Dhabi, February 4, 2019:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2019/february/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_emiratarabi-incontrointerreligioso.html

⁷ Cf. E. SCOGNAMIGLIO, *Dia-logos. I. Perspectives. Toward a pedagogy of dialogue*, San Paolo, Milan 2009; *II. Orientations. Toward a theology of dialogue*, San Paolo, Milan 2012.

⁸ Cf. FRANCIS, Address. Opening and Plenary Session of the VII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, Kazakhstan, September 14, 2022:

from men of religion "the example of upright souls and clear minds, it awaits authentic religiosity"⁹. Faced with the new universal scenarios men and women of religion must "arouse themselves from that fundamentalism that pollutes and corrodes every creed," it is "time to make the heart clear and compassionate." It is finally time to leave to the history books the ideas that have inculcated suspicion and contempt between religions because, in reality, "religions are not problems, but part of the solution for a more harmonious coexistence. Indeed, the search for transcendence and the sacred value of fraternity can inspire and enlighten the choices to be made in the context of the geopolitical, social, economic, ecological but, at root, spiritual crises that run through many of today's institutions, even democracies, jeopardizing security and concord among peoples. We therefore need religion to respond to the world's thirst for peace and the thirst for the infinite that inhabits the heart of every man."

Another key issue is the topic of religious freedom. The creator, Father of all, made us free creatures by restricting his own freedom. "Religious freedom is a fundamental, primary and inalienable right that must be promoted everywhere and cannot be limited to freedom of worship alone. Indeed, it is the right of every person to bear public witness to his or her beliefs: to propose them without ever imposing them."

How can religions put themselves at the service of human fraternity? There are four challenges that question us in this global time. The first is the pandemic situation that has affected the entire human race. While it has made us realize the vulnerability and fragility of the human condition, it has also enabled us to experience that we must care for one another if we are to overcome global crises. "In addition to raising awareness of our own fragility and responsibility, believers in the post-pandemic are called to care: to care for humanity in all its dimensions, becoming artisans of communion [...] witnesses to a collaboration that transcends the fences of one's community, ethnic, national and religious affiliations." The best way to begin to respond to this daunting challenge is to start by listening to the weakest, by giving voice to the most fragile, by echoing a global solidarity that in the first place concerns them, the poor, the needy who have suffered most from the pandemic, which, among other things, has made the iniquity of planetary inequalities in access to care emerge forcefully. Responding to this challenge is more than just a solidaristic sensibility a true "path of healing for our societies."

The second global challenge is that of peace. "God is peace and always leads to peace, never to war." Despite the constant dialogue between religions on this issue, our times are experiencing new and exacerbated conflicts. A greater effort is needed then. If the Creator, to whom we dedicate existence, gave rise to human life, Pope Francis asks, how can those who profess to be believers consent to human life being destroyed? The greatest effort must be aimed at "promoting and reinforcing the need for conflicts to be resolved not by the inconclusive reasons of force, by weapons and threats, but by the only means blessed by Heaven and worthy of man: encounter, dialogue, patient negotiations, which are carried out with children and the younger generation in mind." However, it is also necessary to purify oneself from the presumption of feeling righteous and having nothing to learn from others; it is necessary to free oneself, in Francis' words, from conceptions that offend and profane the name of God through rigidity, extremism and fundamentalism, which simultaneously disfigure the image of man. The sacred must not be allowed to be propped up by power nor must power be propped up by sacredness.

The third challenge concerns the fraternal acceptance of every man and woman. It is especially the task of religions to remind the world that "every human being is sacred." Especially in the face of the new historical fact of great human exoduses caused by wars, poverty and climate change and the search for a well-being glimpsed in the globalized

www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2022/september/documents/20220914-kazakhstan-congresso.html

⁹ Ibid. All forthcoming quotations from Francis will refer to this important Discourse.

world but often difficult to access, that "shared and forward-looking solutions" must be introduced. It must therefore be recognized that it is the duty of religions "to remember that the Creator, who watches over the steps of every creature, exhorts us to have a gaze similar to his, a gaze that recognizes the face of the brother. The migrant brother must be received, accompanied, promoted and integrated." He therefore invites us to rediscover the art of hospitality, welcome and compassion. It is precisely the latter, the way of compassion, which is a feeling of a healthy shame that arises from pity for man's condition and is emotion for his destiny, in which he feels we share, that "makes us more human and more believing." It is proper for religious men not only to affirm the inviolable dignity of every human being, but also "to teach how to weep for others, because only if we feel the labors of humanity as our own will we be truly human."

Finally, the fourth challenge that challenges religions globally is that of the custody of the common home. We need to protect the planet we inhabit from climate disruption so that it will not be enslaved to the logic of profit or the object of blind human predatory activity but preserved for future generations, to the praise of the Creator. In conclusion, the path of religions in the world today must be able to walk the paths of friendship, without seeking fake conciliatory syncretisms but guarding each one's own identity open to the "courage of otherness" and fraternal encounter. Only on this path will "we be able to radiate the light of our Creator" in the dark times we live in.

3. Beyond tolerance: concord and harmony among religions

This "vision" of Pope Francis, which seems to me to be the only possible scenario for the good of humanity in the face of the pathologies of our time, calls for open, fraternal, sincere and uncompromising dialogue between religions, without diluting one's cultural identity or discounting one's religious tradition. This new attitude seems to be a viable remedy capable of accomplishing that not impossible good, which is the art of coexistence, without which the world remains on the brink of total disaster. Thus, an inescapable and all the more new provocation for world religions arises, that of implementing a fraternity based not simply on an idea of equality (which also remains a fixed point) but on the common human origin from God, in that we are all his sons and daughters. Religions thus possess a still imaginable chance for our world before its ultimate ruin. In the field, however, there remain open questions, both on the internal front and on the external relations of each religion, such as the issue of religious freedom and the link between religion and violence, and, against the backdrop, the issue of overcoming, from a dialogue perspective, the negative concept of "tolerance" in view of the more positive concept of "harmony."

Tolerance, as a concept that is purely good in itself but ultimately has a negative valence within it, does not have truth but peace as its goal. Such an idea, which has the sense of forbearance, patience, understanding of the other and willingness to accept him or her, needs to be complemented with a more "harmonious" perspective of interreligious dialogue, there where the common goal will certainly be peace and just coexistence, but one that does not leave its narrative or soften its identity description. On the contrary, rather understand that each identity contributes to the harmony of the whole, without syncretism of any kind but unity of purpose for the good and future of humanity and the earth¹⁰. It is also necessary for the universalism of one religion to give way to a universalism of fraternity, with a view to peaceful coexistence among us and for the very future of humanity. It is not a time for identity rivalries. Rather it is a time in which each religion can bring forth from the treasury of its own tradition those human values that are

¹⁰ Cf. ANASTASIOS, *Living Together. The contribution of religions to an ethics of coexistence*, Qiqajon Editions, Magnano (Biella) 2017.

common to every cultural context ¹¹ .

"A path of peace is possible among religions" (FT 281) because true worship of God does not lead to discrimination, hatred and violence, but to respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others and, ultimately, a loving commitment to the well-being of all ¹². It is necessary, however, not to hide one's convictions, watering down one's ideas, because "the deeper, more solid and richer an identity is, the more it will be able to enrich others with its peculiar contribution" ¹³. In the words of Pope Francis, "as believers we see ourselves provoked to return to our sources in order to focus on what is essential: the worship of God and love of neighbor, so that some aspects of our doctrine, out of their context, do not end up feeding forms of contempt, hatred, xenophobia, and denial of the other. The truth is that violence has no basis in fundamental religious beliefs, but rather in their deformations" (FT 282) ¹⁴. In particular, religious convictions concerning the sacred meaning of human life enable recognition of the fundamental values of common humanity, in the name of which religions can collaborate, build and dialogue ¹⁵. In this mission, religious leaders truly have a great responsibility, not as mere intermediaries but as genuine mediators whose only gain is peace.

For the ideal of peaceful coexistence among religious communities to become a reality, indefinite and irenic optimism about the future is not enough. Tradition and historical experience are certainly valuable, but new initiatives with creative thinking and a broader perspective are needed. All religious communities committed to sincere dialogue can search the deepest layers of their doctrine and the best pages of their tradition for those anthropological principles that value sincere respect for every human person. Religious leaders will have to insist on the sound education of all their members so that such principles develop, prevail and also play a role in public discourse. "Every religion is called to develop all that is most authentic, most good and most beautiful at its disposal, and to approach, with such resources to human beings and more generally to society; and again, to offer them in a peaceful and constructive manner to the larger social whole." ¹⁶ .

Loud, therefore, must resound the call of all the world's religious communities for change to take place through a shift in the consciences of individuals, without which there can be no social renewal, an awakening of spiritual forces that will generate new models and possible styles of fraternal coexistence ¹⁷ .

¹¹ Cf. A. RUSSO, *God in Color. Thinking God in the horizon of pluralism*, San Paolo, Milan 2003; E. SCOGNAMIGLIO, *The Face of God in Religions. An historical, philosophical and theological investigation*, Paoline, Milan 2001,

¹² Cf. FRANCIS, *Homily at Holy Mass, Colombo - Sri Lanka* (January 14, 2015): AAS 107 (2015), 139.

¹³ ID., *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Querida Amazonia* (February 2, 2020), 106:

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html.

¹⁴ "The execrable terrorism that threatens people's security, both in the East and the West, North and South, spreading panic, terror and pessimism is not due to religion-although terrorists instrumentalize it-but is due to the accumulated misinterpretations of religious texts, policies of hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression, and arrogance; that is why it is necessary to stop support for terrorist movements through the supply of money, weapons, plans or justifications, and even media coverage, and to consider all these as international crimes that threaten world security and peace. Such terrorism in all its forms and manifestations must be condemned."- Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence, Abu Dhabi (Feb. 4, 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, February 4-5, 2019, 7.

¹⁵ Cf. ID., *Discourse to the Authorities, Sarajevo - Bosnia and Herzegovina* (June 6, 2015): *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 7, 2015, 7.

¹⁶ ANASTASIOS, *Living Together. The contribution of religions to an ethics of coexistence*, 70.

¹⁷ For an in-depth social ethical study of these issues I refer to the reflections delivered in A. ASCIONE, *For a Mysticism of Living Together. Justice, fraternity and social friendship*, Effatà, Cantalupa (Turin) 2022.

Prof. Edoardo Scognamiglio

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Wisdom of God and commitment to universal brotherhood

If it is true that "the Spirit of the Lord fills the universe and, embracing all things, knows every voice" (Wis. 1:7), then where justice is practiced and the paths of peace and fraternity, love of neighbor and forgiveness are trodden, there the Lord Himself is in action, making Himself present and working in His infinite mercy and providence.

The joy of sharing a journey of reflection, dialogue and friendship with the brothers and sisters of the Taoist Church that is in Italy, Europe and the world, becomes a propitious occasion for our Theological Faculty and the Center for Franciscan Studies to emphasize with more ardor and greater precision that the seeds of God, of the Word, are scattered as fruitful and precious germs in the heart of humanity, of every person of good will, who recognizes in himself the presence of a greater Mystery and of an ultimate and definitive Truth that envelops and transcends him at the same time.

Gathering together today to reflect on the importance of interreligious dialogue, commitment to peace and mutual respect and fraternal welcome, means, concretely, that religions are still an instrument of God, an instrument of communion for all humankind, despite the extremisms and ideologies of the past and present that cast the religious values of the faith traditions of both East and West in a bad light. Those who profess a faith cannot wish death on anyone and cannot respond to evil with evil. Those who follow a path of enlightenment or revelation or redemption cannot embrace the method of violence and intolerance. Even more so, for me as a systematic theologian, the good and values present in every experience of God or the sacred or the Way and Wisdom, engage reflection on the theological reality of religious pluralism as a gift from the one God who inhabits the heavens and the earth and that, in some mysterious way to us, every religion is a way of salvation that does not exclude others.

It is my hope that this day of study and conference will allow not only to strengthen the bonds of friendship between Christians and Taoists, but also to deepen the mysterious plan of God working through the hearts of people and all humankind. We need to take note that the peoples of the earth, linked more and more together and enlightened by our personal faith experience, are able to recognize that God's dream, which is human brotherhood, is a possible project to be realized through the commitment of all our Churches and Communities. Only through a long process of formation in dialogue, peace, tolerance, mutual acceptance and through commitment to coexistence with respect for all different spiritualities and doctrines and cultures and traditions will it be possible to transform our hearts and improve the world. There is a great and courageous renewal effort underway in all our Academic Centers for a more concrete and theologically grounded formation of new generations in interreligious dialogue and the practice of dialogue as an experience of faith and a concrete path of proclamation and conversion for

believers themselves.

Certainly, before the great problems of the world (wars, plagues, pollution, poverty, extremism, racism), which take on global significance, our response will be primarily local but no less effective. Each of us, embedded in a particular religious context of community, is called to do our part, to follow the paths of justice, peace and fraternity, which the Wisdom of the Lord inspires in our hearts and causes to grow in the social structures we inhabit and build.

This day of confrontation with the East helps us to understand, among many things, that not only are there values that can be shared among all religions, but that the good we feel within comes from the one Mystery that stands behind us as the Origin and Source of Life, and that precedes and accompanies us as the Way to follow and the Goal-Patrimony to reach. Again, the dialogue between us fosters the conviction that our identities are increasingly permeable and relational and that they are nourished by the spiritual experience of others, by that figure of difference in which the other stands before us and we before the other.

Prof. Edoardo Scognamiglio

Don Vincenzo Lionetti

Office for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue of the Archdiocese of Naples

International Seminar - Christians and Taoists in Dialogue

"Communicating with the Heart"

Interreligious dialogue as an instrument of peace and fraternity in the world

May 26, 2023

The heart is a very important image in the Bible. It is used to represent the essence of man, his interiority and his relationship with God. In the book of Psalms, for example, we read, "Create in me, O God, a pure heart and renew in me a steadfast spirit" (Psalm 51:12). In the New Testament, Jesus often speaks of the heart and its importance for the spiritual life. In Matthew 5:8 He says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; again in Matthew 22:37-38 we read, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first of the commandments." The term "heart" is used many times in the gospels. For example, Jesus describes himself as "meek and humble of heart" in Mt 11:29.

The gospels present us with a very human portrait of Jesus, capable of rejoicing and weeping, of being moved and angry, of being indignant and loving, of being amazed and feeling anguish. "Meek and humble of heart." By this statement, Jesus intends to make it clear that humility and meekness are typical reasons for love. To love without being meek and humble is practically impossible and unattainable. Meekness and humility are two conditions without which love cannot be experienced. John's gesture of laying his head on Jesus' heart is an eloquent sign of his friendship and love for Jesus. This gesture is described in the Gospel of John 12:24-25.

Communicating with the heart means expressing oneself in an authentic, sincere and compassionate way using voice, body, words and thought together. Communicating with the heart also means listening to the other person with care, empathy and respect, seeking to understand his or her feelings and needs. Communicating with the heart is a skill that can be learned and improved by following certain principles and techniques. Communicating with the heart is important for building deep, harmonious and positive relationships with others

Some points on how you can improve the dialogue of the heart:

1. actively listen to the other person, trying to understand his or her point of view, emotions and needs, without interrupting or distracting: Listening with the heart also means showing interest, curiosity and openness toward the other person, without prejudice or preconceptions.
2. using feedback positively, that is, acknowledging and appreciating the other person's behaviors, without criticizing or belittling. Positive feedback reinforces self-esteem and mutual trust, creates a climate of cooperation and harmony.
3. attune to the other person's heart, that is, try to empathize and connect with his or her feelings and values; attuning to the other person's heart also means respecting his or her differences and choices, without imposing one's own vision or will.
4. using body language in a way that is consistent with words and thoughts, that is, expressing with your voice, gaze, gesture and posture what you really feel and

think. Body language communicates more than words and can convey sincerity, warmth and affection.

"Dialogue with the heart" is an idiomatic expression that means to speak sincerely and frankly, without hiding anything and also with confidence. It is mostly used in association with the verbs "to say, to speak, to confess," as if opening one's heart to the listener to allow him or her to read its secrets. Pope Francis has said that the heart is what moves to welcome, dialogue and sharing, triggering a dynamic he defines as that of "communicating cordially."

Communicating cordially means that those who read or listen to us are brought to grasp our participation in the joys and fears, hopes and sufferings of the women and men of our time. Those who speak in this way love the other because they care about him or her and cherish his or her freedom, without violating it. Welcoming the other is what makes it possible, after listening, to "speak following the truth of love."

"The call to speak with the heart radically challenges our time, so prone to indifference and indignation," Pope Francis writes in his Message for the 57th World Communications Day, which this year has the theme, "Speaking with the Heart. According to Truth in Charity" "In the dramatic context of global conflict we are living, it is urgent to affirm non-hostile communication. We need communicators involved in fostering integral disarmament and committed to dismantling the war psychosis that lurks in our hearts."

Commitment to communication "from an open heart and open arms" is everyone's responsibility. I conclude my brief remarks by quoting Matthew's gospel in which we read "the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart" (Mt 12:33 -35).

This means that the words we speak are a reflection of what is in our hearts. If our heart is full of love and goodness, our words will be kind and friendly. Conversely, if our heart is full of hatred and meanness, our words will be harsh and hurtful. Let us heal our hearts and our words will also change.

Thank you.

1 - Rev. M^o Meng Zhiling 孟至岭

Vice President of Chinese Taoist Association

Deepen Interfaith Dialogues, Jointly Upholding World Peace and Tranquility

(May 26, 2023, Naples, Italy)

At 30th Anniversary Celebration of the Italian Taoist Association,
and the Taoist International Symposium

Distinguished guests, fellow Taoists, and Catholic theologians:

Good morning! Today, we come together in Naples, a beautiful city with a long history, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Italian Taoist Association. Naples is known as the "City of Sunshine and Joy". Revisiting old haunts, I get a second chance to experience the unique charm and vitality of this city. Here, I reunited with long-time friends over 30 years and besides met many new friends. The age of 30 should be a critical period for individuals to establish life values and achieve self-transcendence; it should also be a significant milestone for organizations with far-reaching influence. Likewise, the Taoist Association of Italy is bravely marching towards a new journey of its 30s, with a brand-new visage. On behalf of the Taoist Association of China, I would like to extend warm congratulations and appreciates to the Italian Taoist fellows. In particular, I would like to express my sincere thanks Master Xuanzong, for his long-term selfless dedication and firm support to the cause of Taoism.

The theme of our symposium is "Communication with the heart – Interreligious Dialogue as an instrument of Peace and fraternity in the world". The pursuit of peace is the common vision of mankind. Dialogue and cooperation among different cultures and civilizations not only conforms to the general trend of world development, but is also a concept that Taoism have always upheld. *Tao Te Ching* says "When Tao prevails in the world, war horses are used to plough fields; when Tao does not prevail in the world, even pregnant horses will have to go to battle". In today's world, all countries are interdependent in weal and woe. We live together on earth motherland and share the same piece of blue sky. You are with me, I'm with you, that is, peace is shared, development is interconnected, and destiny is related. Long lasting peace requires us to discuss, build and share together, with the spirit of respect and tolerance, and with the practice to exchange and cooperation. Namely the so called "harmony but not equivalent", "harmonious coexistence" advocated by Taoism. The Taoist Association of China, together with China Religious Culture Communication Association, has held four consecutive international Taoist forums, each of which is related to the theme of "Peace and Mercy", further demonstrating the spirit of harmony and tolerance in Chinese Taoist community and the theme of exchanges and cooperation. In a sense, the spread and promotion of Taoism is a history of interaction and integration of Taoism with other cultures and civilizations.

In an era of multiculturalism and multi-religious beliefs, how to better practice our respective beliefs and make positive contributions to the improvement of human well-being has become a shared responsibility and mission for people of all religions around the world. Taoism, as a long-standing treasure of the Chinese nation, has undergone thousands of years of precipitation and inheritance. The concepts of peace, mercy, and tolerance provide valuable spiritual guidance for modern people in many aspects.

First of all, Taoism undertakes the sacred mission of benefiting the world and society. *Tao Te Ching* says: "The heart of the Holy One is not concerned about himself; his heart is concerned about the concerns of the people". In today's ever-changing and fast-paced social life, Taoism advocates cherishing life and pursuing inner peace and harmony. Chuang Tzu practiced the way himself, advocated a simple, natural lifestyle, and emphasized to follow the laws of Tao, so as to promote the harmonious coexistence among human beings, nature, and society. Tao advocated by Taoism is the eternal law of the universe, which is also the wisdom of life that "people used in daily life but are unaware of it". For instance, Taoist health regimens, such as Tai Chi and Inner Alchemy exercises, are created to harmonize yin and yang, so as to achieve both physical and mental balance. All of which are fundamental principles of universe. The wisdom of Taoism also permeates daily behavior, such as the way of "govern by rule of virtue", guiding people to seek harmony among daily behaviors, laws and fundamental principles.

Secondly, Taoism upholds the philosophy of being in harmony with mercy. This philosophical proposition teaches us to care for others with fairness and compassion, no matter what our circumstances. *Tao Te Ching* says: " Nothing in the world is as soft and weak as water, yet for attacking the hard and the strong, nothing works as well. This is because water is too soft and weak to be altered". In the face of disputes and challenges, Taoism teaches us to maintain a gentle and tolerant heart, to achieve live in harmony. Mater Changchun stopped killing with one word, which successfully stopped the Mongolian army from massacring people in northern China and central Asia. This example fully embodies the far-reaching influence of the Taoist spirit of compassion in real life. By deepening cooperation and exchanges among various religions, we can jointly explore the path of religious peace and compassion, and contribute to the promotion of harmonious coexistence in the world.

Thirdly, Taoism has an open mind, that is, everything thrives without interfering each other; all Taos and ways of nature evolve without violating each other. Taoism respects other religions and advocates communications worldwide in achieving co-development and mutual gains. President Xi Jinping once addressed that "We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority". Taoism, as an important part of traditional Chinese culture, has built a bridge for the exchanges between religions and cultures around the world. We should play the main theme of Taoism on the road of peace and development, deepen the understanding of a shared destiny and harmonious coexistence, and strive to make communications among different civilizations and beliefs, thus to serve as the bond for world peace, and finally to contribute lasting efforts in building a safe, prosper, open, inclusive, clean and beautiful new world.

For the past three decades, the Taoist Association of Italy has not only attracted thousands of believers in its own country, but also promoted the spread and development of Taoism through exchanges and cooperation with Taoist organizations in other countries. What's even more rare is that the association also actively promoted the dialogue between Taoism and Catholicism, which I think is very meaningful. Mater Xuanzong was also one of the first Taoists abroad to propose the establishment of the World Federation of Taoism. Currently, the preparations for the 5th International Taoist Forum and the World Federation of Taoism are progressing steadily. I sincerely invite all guests to participate in these historic events for Taoist world, and contribute efforts to the prosperity and development of Taoism.

Last but not least, I wish the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Italian Taoist Association a complete success, and may exchanges among religious further continue to world peace! At the same time, it is also expected that in the near future, the World Federation of Taoism can provide a broader platform of cooperation for Taoist associations of various countries, so that the wisdom of Taoism can shine on all parts of the world!

Fu Sheng Wu Liang Tianzun!

2 - Rev. M° Li Zhiwang 李至旺

*President of Taoist Mission -Singapore
Abbot of Yu huang gong*

Taoist Mission (Singapore) 新加坡道教协会

“Communicating with the heart: Interreligious dialogue as an instrument of peace and
fraternity in the world”.

以心沟通- 通过跨宗教交流以促进世界和平和互助.

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From: Tai Shang Lao Jun - Qing Jing Jing

The Supreme Venerable of Taoism – Scripture of Stillness and Tranquillity:

Quote: “The Origin of purity lies in impurity.
Movement is the foundation of stillness.
If people can constantly be pure and still, then heaven and earth will return
to their places.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters
May Heavenly Blessings Be With You.

This morning you have come with purity and sincerity in your HEART.
This is the true vital instrument for any peace and fraternity dialogue.

We all are aware of this, but our perpetual mission is to ensure fellowmen carries this
instrument communicating and engagement.

3 - M° Huang Jingyun 黄景运

Chairman Associação Daoista de Portugal

Dear Masters, Brothers and Friends, Ladies and gentlemen,

In a completely biased way, the modern view of reality in today's hedonistic, consumerist and ultra-materialistic society, refers to a reality marked by constant suffering, adorned by social inequality, present in a violent and unjust society. After all, that which characterizes the underworld, or the hells.

That is why a dialectic of salvation inspired by hope is urgent. Without hope, man will no longer find the strength that allows him to continue to resist and insist on existing, drowning in the ocean of suffering in which he finds himself and which his mind continually replicates.

In this way, the doctrine of salvation must be based on an attitude that places this same man at the center, as a hero who saves himself, investing in the study of techniques and practices that allow him to return to a state of Clarity and Quietness, investing in a gradual but complete emptying of the constraints of the mind that shackle him to the underworld that his mind, together with that of everyone else, has generated and replicated, age after age, producing various levels of infernal dimensions to which he returns life after life, wasted in a hedonic stake of existence, constantly generating anxiety, suffering and death, just to start all over again.

The doctrine of salvation is simply that which allows one to rediscover the true, unpolluted and original "I", integrated and unaltered, because clarified regarding the circumstances that illusively insinuated themselves until they were taken as reality, in a perspective solely centered on the human, individualistic, without an overall vision that allows perceiving beyond the visible, audible and palpable, thus establishing a reintegration in the cosmic matrix that gave life and continues to provide formal support and that operates in a perfect way, evident in the orbits that the celestial bodies describe around its axis, thus producing the conditions that allow life in a succession of events that we call seasons, occurring with mathematical precision, producing the fundamental balance for existence.

Away from this original, constant modulation, ancestrally established and by which all of nature is regulated, we could only aspire to one consequence: the existential failure we find ourselves in, irresponsibly, if not criminally, consuming the planet's resources in an unbridled greed that results in war, hunger, disease and death.

It is urgent to start integrating, starting within ourselves, the ancestral concepts of respect and contemplation, in a posture of preserving nature as a way to recover our place as caretakers and defenders of an unpolluted, pure and peaceful planet, instead of the competitive madness that creates all this suffering and which continually bites and kills us, until the complete erasure of good human conscience, which is in no way the true consequence of the original cause.

From the point of view of Daoism, universal Qi is the transcendental blessing that enables life. As He Shang Gong refers, it is the continuation of the Dao in terms of substantiality. The primordial originality that continuously supports and generates the universe, promoting its formal and operational integrity, just as it happens with each and everyone of us, thus producing an intrinsic unity between the Human and the Universe, as in the expression Tian Ren He Yi, which projects us onto the Path, in a constant generating moment, an endless operation which we breathe through every pore, an inhalation and exhalation between the universe that generates us and ourselves, as one, as a whole, without differentiation or separation, one Qi, undivided breath, by which the great ocean of Existence is constituted.

Therefore, if the Dao is the axial root of Daoism, its Arts are the way in which we can penetrate the mystery (Xuán 玄), and in this way, get rid of the structural ignorance that dulls our senses, thus obtaining a renewed capacity to walk the Path in a simple and effective way, improving our lives and the environment that surrounds us, recovering union with the whole, producing in this life, with this body, the virtuous vehicle that allows us to renounce to suffering, returning to the plane of purifying stillness.

Thus, non-action (Wu Wei 無為) is the prayer that we can and should continually recite. A prayer for clarity and stillness, which implies not interfering with what is already happening from the beginning, in order to allow ourselves to be invaded by serenity and thus reach the realms of consciousness that, otherwise, are not achievable because they are submerged by confusion and mental noise.

In this way, non-action is like an egg in which we “hatch” the return to our innate consciousness, our true nature, which is that of the Origin, and thus we can return home.

This metamorphosis is the only thing we can and must accomplish, investing all our capacity in this project, not wasting the opportunity that lies before us here and now, fulfilling the destiny of returning to the original condition that we forgot, granted from the beginning to each one of us.

The tree of life that protects us from merciless fire with its shadow, that feeds us with its fruit and vivifies us with its sap, right down to its roots that sources and stabilizes us, transporting us to the mystery that exists within what exists, and that harmoniously extends and shows itself in the flower and in the fruit that hangs from its branches, a gift of life and fire of the spirit that every child wants and manages to access and delight in.

This tree is the one generated by pure yang, regenerated, purified and by pure yin, which rejuvenates and refreshes what was previously worn out by use.

This is the tree that we generate and that is the source of our salvation, reflecting the original brightness, awakened in us and now available as a jade flower, which opens up showing the beauty of its light in all directions.

Thank you very much
Cibei

4 - M° Li Liyong 李理永

President of Comunidad Taoísta Española

Good morning.

We cannot understand religion without accepting the Interreligious Dialogue.

Today more than ever a true brotherhood is urgently needed. Technology is not providing solutions to the issue of human interaction. Loneliness is increasingly, of greater magnitude. Added to this are the terrible problems of social injustice.

Therefore, religion must be able to rise up, unite and raise its voice, all in unison. Hence, the Dialogue must seek Unity.

Taoism advocates unity. And it is precisely that unity, which is not exclusive to Taoism, but to life, which guarantees the salvation of humanity. And that unity should manifest itself, it should express itself, through peace and brotherhood.

Peace and brotherhood become, therefore, two survival strategies, necessary for the following steps.

Dialogue implies three things: acceptance of the other, joy before the other spirituality and courage.

With the acceptance and joy before the other spirituality we work the fraternity. The fraternity asks for a spirituality that leads us to meet the other, and to be able to welcome him with joy.

In dialogue with the other, I allow vulnerability, that wonderful thing that experience allows, that allows you to feel and live life to the full. I bare my message before the other, I offer it and debate it kindly.

When these 3 things are there, then the dialogue is truly effective. All the participants in the dialogue leave happy, we have made progress in our own spirituality.

A Dialogue should serve to restart, to re-adjust our spiritual vision. In a true interreligious Dialogue we all learn. And if there are mistakes, admit them. And propose common actions where the practitioners can talk and act for the benefit of the closest humanity that surrounds them. And for this is needed courage. Are you able to assume your mistakes? Because you will have one. Are you able to open up to the other? Are you capable of accepting the point of view of the other, if the case arises, after having discussed it, beyond the concepts? Then we'll be fine. Courage is necessary, courage coupled with humility. Courage and humility to see the crooked lines that sometimes appear in any religion, including mine, of course. Because those crooked lines can sometimes be the cause of hatred and violence.

The unity in a Dialogue must not only be manifested during the meeting, at a theoretical level, in the form of conferences and subsequent debates, but must also be manifested in a practical way in something to come. In a joint act, open to all who wish, where convergences are publicly stated.

My concept of Interreligious Dialogue is linked to debate and action, and not to flattery. The WenTzu says that a true Taoist sits down to talk with great scholars to go straight to the practice of what is efficient.

A danger of fraternity is that the respect that is implicit in it turns into hypocrisy. It is when a person, representative of a religious spirituality, is silent before the oppressions or immoralities that another person commits or tolerates, of his own or of another religious

spirituality. This is not fraternity, it is hypocrisy. We do not agree, but we tolerate it instead of debating it, instead of generating a respectful debate seeking the truth.

Let's build a real fraternity, promoting peace, based on acceptance, dialogue and self-criticism to improve.

Then, this fraternity will make us defend what is correct, since the Essence and Purpose of all Religions or true Spiritual Paths are the same or similar.

Working on fraternity in an interreligious dialogue implies eliminating egoic interest. Fraternity is not all sitting at the same table, each with their own interests, and defending only their own, but building a better world together, with a single common interest, in favor of Humanity. Work the Essence in each of the religions, and not the appearance.

And to embrace the other, a true and genuine inner peace is also necessary.

Today there is no social peace, and that happens because people do not achieve internal peace. To establish social peace, the Taoist first says that each one harmonizes himself, that each one manages to understand, live and experience his personal peace. You cannot reach a standard of peace if you are not peaceful with yourself. If there is no personal peace, I can participate in an Interreligious Dialogue on Peace, but then I can be aggressive with my family or at work.

Therefore, the best way to achieve that social peace is for each individual to practice internally, and he himself achieves his internal peace. This is called in Taoism "shoeing the feet instead of carpeting the world." When you get each person to establish their harmony with themselves, automatically what we call social peace begins to flourish gradually, and gradually.

I consider myself a very pragmatic Taoist, who believes that Unity can change the world, using tools such as brotherhood and peace. That is why I believe in the enormous possibility of interreligious dialogue.

Thank you.

5 - M° Wu Xinhong 吴信弘

Chairman Quanzhen Taoist Association – Switzerland

The core beliefs of Taoism include the Tao, the mutual generation and mutual restraint of all things, the balance of yin and yang, etc., and it has a unique philosophical system and practice method among world religions. To promote world peace, Taoism can engage in dialogue with other religions in the following ways:

1. Respect other religions

Respect for other religions is the basis for dialogue, and Taoists should respect people of other religions and their traditions, cultures and customs. To understand the core beliefs and values of other religions, so as to build a relationship of respect and mutual trust.

2. Increased awareness of world religions

Learn about the belief systems and values of other religions. Taoists can participate in more inter-religious activities, and learn from and communicate with people of other religions.

3. Emphasize common ground

Every religion is unique in its own way, but at the same time, it has some things in common. Taoists can build dialogue by discovering and emphasizing commonalities across religions, such as the pursuit of world peace, love, and fraternity. This helps build a relationship of mutual respect and understanding.

4. Advocate peace

Taoism emphasizes peace, balance and harmony, which is also one of the important factors in promoting world peace. Taoists should advocate peace, deepen national friendship and international exchanges through words and deeds, so as to establish the foundation of world peace.

6 - M° Yuan Weiqi 袁微琪

Rector of Slovenian Daoist temple

What is Peace actually?

Written by: Jure Čeh / 袁微琪, Rector of Slovene Daoist Temple

It is my personal belief that peace is a state defined by the absence of conflict, violence, or discord. It is a state of harmony, one which enables cohabitation, cooperation, and prosperity in interpersonal and intersocietal interactions, and, by extension, in an international community. However, our definition of peace must be expanded beyond merely an absence of war or physical violence. The state of peace must include the conditions of – or create the prerequisites for – justice, equality, human rights, tolerance, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, respect of nature and environmental consciousness.

I think it is important to understand that peace is not a state of passivity. Rather, it is a state which must be maintained by active endeavours to peacefully resolve conflicts, and to build and reinforce social structures based on justice and mutual trust. Peace, once achieved, can be manifested as peace of the self, within the family, in society, and finally world peace. But peace must always begin on a personal level, with cultivation of the self.

By delving into Daoist texts left behind by Laozi, Zhuangzi and Liezi, we discover they each in their own way describe the same foundations of achieving peace.

For **Laozi** the key to world peace lies in being in harmony with the Dao, the natural order of the Universe. He sees the Dao as a mysterious force, infinite and beyond our grasp; a force which flows through and embodies all things. To Laozi, the need to recognise and follow the Dao is paramount, for it is through doing so that the individual may achieve living in concord with the natural order and the ebb and flow of life.

A central part of his message lies in the concept of *wu wei*. Though frequently translated as “non-action” (or “not acting”), *wu wei* should not be misinterpreted as “inaction,” but rather to act naturally, without unnecessary effort, force, or violence. Laozi describes *wu wei* as an expression of harmony in oneself and with the Dao, a way of life which makes it possible for all things to be spontaneous and without conflict.

Laozi claims that balance and a natural order are omnipresent in the world, but that we humans frequently distance ourselves from them in pursuit of our own ambitions and desires, which are disconnected from the natural order. To achieve a state of peaceful serenity, individuals, and by extension society, should strive to abandon selfish desires and return to the natural order of things. By expressions of compassion, tolerance, and mutual respect, we cultivate the natural order of the world.

Laozi emphasises the importance of personal growth, or the cultivation of oneself. He believed that as individuals, our focus should be on inner peace and harmony, and the development of our inner wisdom. By way of cultivation of oneself, one becomes more in tune with recognizing the flow of nature and acting in accordance with it. Thus, we may gradually abandon our endeavours for the domination and control of others and instead become more compassionate and more understanding towards them. In doing so, we may contribute to a more peaceful world.

Zhuangzi's ideas are more direct, though he often expresses them indirectly in his work, through metaphor or paradox. He states the individual must first achieve harmony within themselves before they may be capable of contributing to a harmonious society.

The world is full of opposites and thus, Zhuangzi claims, attempting to achieve perfection and unity is pointless, for it is an impossible goal. Instead, he emphasises the importance of understanding and accepting diversity, and of unforced action in harmony with the natural flow of life. In his opinion, the human tendency for control is frequently the source of tension and conflict – he therefore argues the excessive desire to control others should be abandoned completely.

Another important point for Zhuangzi is the relativity of perspective, as he stresses that each individual is limited by our own subjectivity. In recognition thereof he advises us to respect different opinions and to understand (or rather, permit) that each of us may perceive the world differently. By doing so, he wishes to encourage tolerance and peaceful cohabitation among the people of the world.

In summary, according to the above principles, Zhuangzi claims that world peace is achievable once people abandon their need for control and dominance, and instead focus on their own inner peace and harmony. Only by learning to live in harmony with the natural flow can we contribute to world peace and harmony in all things.

Similarly, **Liezi** notes that the key to peace on Earth lies in balancing the many different opposing forces of nature and in one's own life. His philosophy stems from the idea that opposition and conflict are a natural part of life, but the key is in how we choose to react to them.

Liezi further emphasises the importance of inner exploration and of knowing oneself. He believes world peace to be possible only if everyone were to first attain inner peace and harmony. By doing so, one achieves balance between the body, mind, and spirit, which enables one to know and understand themselves and the world around them. Thus, one may be a positive influence on others.

The ideal of peace can be traced throughout the entirety of human history, and **different world religions**. Despite the differences in their beliefs, the cultures they originate from, the rituals they practise, and traditions they are rooted in, practically all religions of the world have common fundamental values and principles. They all espouse tolerance and compassion, peace and harmony with others, and respect for the dignity and holiness of human life.

The first of these tenets is one of tolerance and compassion, which most world religions extend to all human beings, along with respect for their personal dignity. Many religions also expand this principle to not only humans, but to all living beings with whom we share our world.

The second tenet shared by most global religions is living in harmony with one another. Rituals, prayer, and meditation are intended to guide individuals and society towards calmness and balance within oneself, and consequently creating the possibility for harmony within the society in a broader sense. Communal prayers for peace, religious rituals for conciliation, or meditative practises for inner peace join the faithful of different creeds in a unified endeavour to achieve peace on both an individual and collective level.

The third tenet most world religions respect is the dignity and holiness of human life. This is a unifying principle, linking different religions in a mutual striving for peace and justice.

These tenets are frequently reflected in the humanitarian efforts of religious communities. Many of these communities try their hardest (according to their means) to give aid to those in need, such as the poor, the sick, the homeless, refugees, etc. By doing so, they express their devotion to peace, love, and compassion as fundamental values of humanity. May these principles and the endeavours to uphold them be ever blessed.

7 - M° Yan Meixi 阎美希

President Taoist Association of Australia

Dear distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Today, I'd like to talk to you about the importance of interreligious dialogue as a tool for promoting peace and fraternity in the world.

We live in a diverse world, where different religions and faiths coexist. However, this diversity can also bring about challenges and conflicts. To address these challenges and conflicts, we need to establish interreligious dialogue, which seeks to understand and respect differences in faith and culture. Interreligious dialogue is a bridge of communication, a way of deepening our understanding of others' beliefs and cultures.

Through dialogue, we can learn about each other's faiths, cultures, histories, and traditions, and gain a deeper understanding of each other's beliefs and thoughts, thus building closer ties and trust.

As Emmanuel Levinas once said,

"Without genuine communication, there can be no genuine friendship, and without genuine friendship, there can be no genuine peace."

Interreligious dialogue can help us better understand the connections and similarities between different cultures and faiths. We can learn about each other's values, beliefs, and moral codes, which can enhance our understanding and promote harmony. It also lays the foundation for building a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous world.

Furthermore, interreligious dialogue is also key to building harmonious communities and societies. Through dialogue, we can understand each other's needs and desires, negotiate to resolve issues, and work together to address common challenges. This kind of dialogue can establish closer ties at various levels, including personal, organizational, and national levels.

In conclusion, interreligious dialogue is critical for building peace, fraternity, and unity. In this diverse world, we need to learn how to communicate and understand each other to promote mutual respect and care. We need to engage in more interreligious dialogue to build a more harmonious, beautiful, and loving world.

Thank you, everyone!

Parte 2 – Great Harmony Temple

国际道教会议

Conferenza internazionale taoista

International Taoist Conference

道教，一个世界性的宗教：人类的乌托邦或人类的希望？观点和提议

"Il Taoismo, religione mondiale: Utopia o speranza per l'umanità? Visioni e proposte".

"Taoism, World Religion: Utopia or Hope for Humanity? Visions and Proposals".

1 - Li Xuanzong - Introduction

Reverend Masters, Taoist sisters and brothers, I welcome you to our Family.

Thanksgiving

The Taoist Church of Italy and I, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for coming to share our joy of celebrating 30 years of life.

You have traveled thousands of miles and given up your commitments. Facing expenses and inconveniences. All this just because I sent you an invitation? I don't think so. Instead, I think you were driven by an ancestral motivation. One that we all share.

You came because you feel that we are a Family. You are our father, our mother, our sisters and brothers, our children.

You could not have given us a more precious gift. We will keep it and protect it in the most sacred part of our hearts. Forever.

I asked to write. Why?

I asked everyone to write down their thoughts. I know I have created difficulties for you and I appreciate your effort. I will explain why I asked you to write.

We are in a tragic moment in history. The great values, such as Family, Nation, Friendship, Honor, Loyalty, Protection of the weakest, are in crisis. The current war is a demonstration of this. Today financial and economic aggression has no mercy for anyone. Today prevarication has become the norm.

The crisis of values attends to the cosmic order and always brings chaos and destruction. Hence uncertainty inevitably breeds selfishness to survive the changes.

How can we, as Taoists, be faithful to our Doctrine and at the same time live in this kind of world?

The only way out is not to be overwhelmed by events. We can only do that if we are aware of who we are.

Here is the question: Are we a philosophy, martial arts, relaxation techniques, a diet, or are we a religion?

In the former case there can only be chaos, because everyone thinks of himself. Each thinks of its own interests. Each thinks that he or she holds the truth about Daoism.

On the other hand, if we think that Daoism is a religion, and by definition a religion cannot exist without a community that shares the same principles, each person must give up his or her Ego and give it to the community.

In reality, this renunciation is not a loss. It is a collective gain that, however, falls, like an umbrella, on all individuals. Everyone grows.

Everyone lives in harmony and peace. The weakest are supported. The strongest, protect and help.

In addition, each of you is a guide of other people. Within you pulsates the Power of Dao.

Those who are animated by the Power of Tao will have Three External Treasures and Three Internal Treasures:

- (a) The Tao, the Scriptures and the Master.
- (b) Compassion, frugality and humility.

Those who are in resonance with the Tao will make themselves last but care for every living being. He who will live the Tao will cease the distinction between himself and others. So how will he ever prevaricate or use violence to others?

I have asked you to write so that I can collect your teachings. To give this precious gift to all of us. And leave a trace for future generations. I asked for everyone's opinion because even the humblest and youngest can have extraordinary ideas and insight that may elude older people, like me.

Our history

In these thirty years of total dedication to Taoism, constantly inspired by the Ethical and Spiritual Values of our scriptures and received teachings, we have always acted on behalf of humanity by promoting our religion. In the booklet you have received you will find the most important moments of our life journey.

Our future

Our eyes are located on the face. They are not located on the back of the head. It seems obvious but not everyone has this awareness. Most people look through the back of the head: to the past, to remorse, to memories, to wrongs suffered, to the anger of frustrations received.

Therefore, they do not grow humanly or spiritually.

If, on the other hand, we are aware that our eyes are looking ahead and away, then we will not hold back anything that has happened and is happening to us. Our hearts will be quiet and we can accept everyone, those who are good and those who are not good. With a pure mind, uncorrupted by our desires and fears, the future will be welcomed without anxiety, without expectations.

However, no man is an island.

Without you, without family affection, without caring for each other, without being of service to others, without giving and sharing, there is no collective future. Alone we go nowhere. Together, we make the future history of Daoism. In the world.

I wish everyone "good work" and may this our congress bring friendship and mutual prosperity to us all.

Zi bei!

2 - Rev. M° Meng Zhiling 孟至岭

Vice President of Taoist Association of China

The Master will speak in Ziran 自然, with natural spontaneity,
with what his heart dictates for us.

3 - Rev. M° Li Zhiwang 李至旺

*President of Taoist Mission -Singapore
Abbot Yu huang gong*

Taoist Mission (Singapore) 新加坡道教协会

“Taoism World Religion. Utopia or hope for humankind? Visions and proposals”
道教作为世界宗教. 如何成为人类的乌托邦和希望? 愿景和提议。

TaoTe Ching Chapter 49 and 81. 道德经 49章 & 81章

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Good afternoon Brothers and Sisters,
May Heavenly Blessings Be With You.

TAOISM World Religion – Given to us by our Great Sage Laozi, conduct oneself and spread amongst humankind, His wise teachings to secure peace and hope for generations to come.

‘Tao Te Ching’ Chapter 49

- 1 The heart of the Great Sage is not concerned about himself;
His heart is concerned about the concerns of the people.
- 2 He is good to those who are good,
And he is also good to those who are not good.
There is thus goodness.
- 3 He trusts in those who are trustworthy,
And he also trusts in those who are not trustworthy.
There is thus trust.
- 4 In this world, the Great Sage, with his breath,
makes people’s hearts simple.
People fix their eyes and ears on him,
And he treats them like children.

原文

《道德经》第四十九章

- 1 圣人没有一己之心，而是一心为了百姓的心。
- 2 善者吾善之，不善者吾亦善之，德善。
- 3 信者吾信之，不信者吾亦信之，德信。
- 4 圣人在天下，歛歛焉为天下浑其心，百姓皆注其耳目，圣人皆孩之。

'Tao Te Ching' Chapter 81:

True words are strident,

Sweet words are insincere.

A good man does not debate,

A debater is not a good man.

A learned man is not well-read,

A well-read man is not learned.

The sage does not accumulate,

The more he helps others,

The more meaningful his life is.

The more he gives, the more he gets,

Tao of Heaven

Is to benefit and not to harm.

Tao of the Sage,

Is to act and not to strive.

《道德经》第八十一章

信言不美，美言不信。

Xin Yan Bu Mei, Mei Yan Bu Xin.

善者不辩，辩者不善。

Shan Zhe Bu Bian, Bian Zhe Bu Shan.

知者不博，博者不知。

Zhi Zhe Bu Bo, Bo Zhe Bu Zhi.

圣人不积，即以为人已愈有，即以与人已愈多。

Sheng Ren Bu Ji, Ji Yi Wei Ren Ji Yu You, Ji Yi Yu Ren Ji Yu Duo.

天之道，利而不害；圣人之道，为而不争。

Tian Zhi Dao, Li Er Bu Hai; Sheng Ren Zhi Dao, Wei Er Bu Zheng.

4 - M^o Cui Liming 崔理明

Professor of Taoism Academy of China

Recognizing the Return to the Lord and the Tao

(May 26, 2023, Caserta, Italy)

Wherever there are people, there will inevitably be groups, conflicts of interest, and struggles. Power, money, technology, weapons... are closely related to human's survival. People pursue them, which is understandable, but can they alleviate human suffering? They are merely tools, used by the human soul. If the soul is enlightened, these tools can be used to bring benefits to humanity; if the soul is confused, the use of these tools may not necessarily yield positive results. The mission of religion is to solve the problems of the human soul. That is why, in this era of advanced technology, we still need to explore ancient religions. In fact, what we truly need to explore is the human soul and its origin.

Italian Taoist friends may be more familiar with the Bible than the Tao Te Ching. Today, we combine the two to consider four issues: the Lord and the Tao, graven image and formlessness, monotheism and polytheism, and Jesus and Laozi, who are both divine and human.

The Origin of Heaven, Earth, Humans, and All Things

Regarding the origin of the universe and humanity, the *Bible: Genesis* describes it like this (abridged): In the beginning, God created heaven and earth. Then there was light, day and night, air, land and sea, plants, sun, moon, stars, animals, and humans.

Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* Chapter 40 describes it like this: All things in the world are born of being; being is born of non-being. Chapter 42: The Tao produces unity; unity produces duality; duality produces trinity; trinity produces all things. From nothingness, the primordial energy is created as one; one divides into the Yin and Yang, heaven and earth as two; the harmony of heaven and earth creates humans as three, and from the trinity of heaven, earth, and humans, all things are derived. The meaning of these two descriptions is similar, with one being anthropomorphic and the other being more abstract.

Graven image and Formlessness

The Second *Commandment of Moses*: You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I The Lord your God am a jealous God.

Tao Te Ching, Chapter 14: Look at it but you cannot see it, its name is Formless; listen to it but you cannot hear it, its name is Soundless; grasp it but you cannot hold it, its name is Insubstantial. These three cannot be further inquired into, and hence blend and become one. Chapter 35: The Tao's outlet is bland, lacking any taste. It is insufficient to be seen when looked at, insufficient to be heard when listened to, and inexhaustible when used. Chapter 41: The great square has no corners, the great vessel takes long to complete, the great sound is hardly heard, the great image has no form. The Tao is hidden and nameless, only the Tao, good at lending and accomplishing. Describing the Great Tao, it cannot be seen, heard, or touched, being unified as one, but its use is infinite.

Both emphasize the formlessness of the Lord and the Tao. All things in space and time are created and generated after heaven and earth, not existing before heaven and earth. None of them are the Creator and the Tao.

Monotheism and Polytheism

This raises a question: human observation and thinking must take place within time and space, so how can we understand the Lord and the Tao that existed before the creation of time and space? It is difficult to think about and impossible to describe. So how can people obey the Lord and the Tao in their actions?

The Bible states, *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made* (Romans 1:20).

Tao Te Ching, Chapter 25: Man follows the earth, the earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Tao, the Tao follows nature. People observe and learn from everything on earth, all things on earth follow the Yin and Yang and the operation of the four seasons in heaven, and the basis for the operation of celestial bodies is the Tao.

Both emphasize understanding the Lord and the Tao through the operation of heaven, earth, and all things created by them. Here, religion and science seem to have a bit of a kinship.

Although Taoism emphasizes the supremacy of the Tao, it also inherits the folk worship of various gods, such as heaven, earth, mountains, rivers, sun, moon, and stars. This is different from monotheism, but there is no fundamental conflict in the underlying concepts. Tao Te Ching, Chapter 8: The highest good is like water, benefiting all things without competing with them. Chapter 49: The sage has no fixed mind, he takes the people's mind as his mind. Goodness is like water, benefiting all things without competing

with them. The sage has no personal desires, the desires of the people are his desires.

Jesus and Laozi

The Lord and the Tao existed before heaven and earth and transcended time and space. It is very difficult for us, who were created after heaven and earth, to understand the Lord and the Tao. So, is it impossible to follow the Lord and the Tao? The Lord believes it is possible, but of course, it requires verification for people to have confidence. To complete the work of salvation, God allowed his eternal Son to become human and actually took on human nature. This is the advent of Jesus. As our mediator, he must be both God and man. Jesus showed the world how to return to the Lord.

The Bible states, *For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe* (1 Corinthians 1:21). *For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5).

In Taoism, Laozi is the embodiment of the human who was born after heaven and earth and the Tao that existed before heaven and earth. Laozi was born about 2600 years ago during China's Zhou Dynasty. There was Taoist thought before Laozi, but he was the one who brought it all together. Later disciples regarded him as the founder of Taoism and an incarnation of the Supreme Lord Laozi. His *Tao Te Ching* contains more than 5,000 characters, and according to American Sinologist Tai Miao Xia, as of July 2022, the *Tao Te Ching* had been translated into 97 languages, with a total of 2,051 translations. He talks about how people born after heaven and earth can return to the Tao that existed before heaven and earth.

Behind Jesus and Laozi, many different sects and countless cultivation methods have emerged. Some understand it clearly, while others do not. Returning to the Lord and the Tao is not an easy task. Looking back at history, when more people understood the Tao and the Lord, it was a relatively stable era. When there were more confused people, it was a time of more suffering. The various disputes among different sects, religions, political parties, and countries are not because they have recognized the Lord and the Tao, but because they are confused. In Taoism, it is said that one should first understand the Tao and then genuinely practice it before guiding others.

Due to time constraints, we have only briefly discussed the above four issues. We live in a world with time and space, yet we must think about the origin that existed before time and space. We are ordinary people who must consider how to unite people born after heaven and earth with the Tao that

existed before heaven and earth. We do not want to be masters, so why think about such difficult issues?

My fellow seekers, the earliest human wars used wooden clubs, then came knives and swords, followed by guns, and eventually nuclear weapons. Einstein once said: *I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.* Time for humans to think is running out. If we do not think now, perhaps there will be no need to think in the future.

May the divine spirits bless you all to live forever in the light, without darkness and suffering.

5 - M° Tan Zhicheng 谭至成

Master of Beijing Baiyun Temple

Keep Tranquil, Happy and Free

(May 26,2023, Caserta, Italy)

Dear President Xuanzong, fellow Presidents, and fellow Taoists:

Good afternoon! I'm Tan Zhicheng from Beijing Baiyun Temple. I'm so honored to be here today to share with you the *Constant Tranquility Scripture* from the *Xuanmen Morning and Evening Practice Scripture*. This classic is a daily must-read scripture for Taoist priests and was included in the *Taoist Canon*, a collection of Taoist texts from the Ming Dynasty in China 600 years ago. There are eight annotations in the *Taoist Canon* for the *Constant Tranquility Scripture*, and several other Taoist books also provide annotations, indicating that the *Constant Tranquility Scripture* is an irreplaceable classic in Taoism. This scripture was written by Laozi, who is equivalent to God in the Bible. Due to time constraints, I will only share the main points with you. If you are interested, please find a complete translation to read.

Laozi said: The Great Tao is formless, emotionless, indescribable, and yet it generates everything in the universe, causing the cycle of birth and death and the rotation of yin and yang. Because it is indescribable, it is reluctantly called the "Tao." The Tao gave birth to yin and yang, which created movement and stillness, purity and turbidity, and these opposites transform into each other in unity. If one can maintain constant tranquility, all the deities and energies in life will return to their roots.

The deities that are born before heaven and earth naturally prefer purity, which is emptiness. However, they are easily disturbed by the heart that is born after heaven and earth. The heart has the ability to perceive the world, which is naturally calm, but is easily influenced by desires such as greed and hatred towards external things. If one can abandon these desires, the heart will calm down, and the deities will become pure and natural, free of greed, anger, and delusion. The reason why this is difficult is because desires are not easily to let go. If one can let go of desires and biases, observe oneself internally, and not cling to anything, one can achieve emptiness and nature. Furthermore, if one can even let go of the attachment to "not clinging," it is a more thorough emptiness and nature, where there is no desire, and the heart is calm, and the deities are pure. In this way, people can face everything in accordance with nature and achieve permanent tranquility. Achieving such tranquility is gradually attaining the Tao, but there is nothing to gain because it is putting down greed and attachment and returning to the original nature. Understanding this meaning brings one closer to the Tao.

Laozi said: Wise people follow nature and do not compete, while confused people have personal desires and views, leading to many conflicts. The highest virtue is to be in harmony with nature, which is not very glamorous. The next level of virtue is to be attached to the form and glamour of virtue but not fully understanding the Tao.

The reason why sentient beings cannot attain the true Tao is due to a confused mind, which leads to various attachments such as greed and rejection, disturbing the natural deities of emptiness, and causing various afflictions that make one's body and mind suffer and sink into the sea of bitterness between life and death, sometimes happy and

sometimes sad, far away from the true Tao. Those who can awaken naturally understand the impermanence and non-existence of the Tao and naturally become tranquil.

Immortal Ge Xuan said: Understanding thoroughly can make one a celestial official, while understanding partially can lead to a long life in the world.

Immortal Zuo Xuan said: Those who can recite the scripture every day will be blessed by many benevolent spirits, and their body and mind will eventually be in accordance with the Tao.

Immortal Zhengyi said: Those who can understand this scripture will have many spirits protecting their families, and disasters will not affect them. In fact, the *Constant Tranquility Scripture* teaches people to transcend their obsession with the mundane world and return to the Eden in the Bible.

I wish you all a happy and carefree life!

6 - M° Huang Jingyun 黄景运

Chairman of Associação Daoista de Portugal

Dear Masters, Brothers and Friends, Ladies and gentlemen,

Here we are, in this beautiful city of Caserta, celebrating the 30 years of journey of our brothers of the Chiesa Daoista of Italy. Here, among religions and nationalities, the hearts of all of us meet. In Taoism the teachings are transmitted between the 4 ears but, above all, from heart to heart. This means that it is in the resonance produced by the communion of hearts that the true word is spoken, the true teaching is transmitted, the realization takes place. So how to reach the heart of the other? How to achieve this resonance of enlightenment and how to transmit it?

Perhaps breaking down institutional barriers and speaking directly from person to person, seeking a direct relationship that allows, through the heart, to express the fundamental truths common to good people who seek and study the Mystery.

Breaking down barriers, eliminating mental astuteness, producing clarity and smoothness that allow an enlightened understanding of the various realities that make up the way we position ourselves before the Divine and the Sacred.

In the stillness in which the "I" stops interfering, the resonance is produced that allows overcoming duality. Overcoming duality means not having to choose. Not choosing, the probability of error by (re)action decreases. Thus, not choosing leads to not acting and this to stillness and peace. From this state of absolute emptiness or non-existence, of non-movement or non-action, impossible of description, visualization and sensation, which, in the words of LaoZi, is also impossible to name, arises, by negation, the truth (真 zhen). Therefore, the sage does not judge, rather "sees in the obscurity and understands in silence", avoiding classifying and dividing, but preferring to clarify the mind and reassure the heart, in order to maintain that state of stillness and internal peace, "[...] as those who obtain supreme peace in the heart [...], for the great man is tranquil and thoughtless, silent and pacified" (LIUAN, HuaiNanZi).

Only in this way can peace sprout.

Enlightened and limpid, imbued with truth and confidence, renewed in each moment of stillness cultivated in the most intimate part of the being, as "the one who is pure and tranquil and in this way the model of the universe" (LAOTZU, cap 45), thus producing the resonance truth that sustains all creation.

In this way, the peace that anyone can and must, in silence, build in himself, will be the same that tomorrow he will recognize in the places he frequents, because "if he cultivates it in his kingdom, virtue will flourish" (LAOTZU, cap 54), thus contributing to a more just, enlightened and peaceful society. Fair because it is integral and egalitarian, generating the balance that allows flourishing in a free, dynamic and creative way. Enlightened because clear and transparent and thus accessible. Peaceful because based on stillness and not action. This Peace, being silent, is the center of unity and the vehicle for dialogue.

Thank you very much

Cibei

i Tao Te Jing, cap. 45: 清靜為天下正 qing jing wei tian xia zheng.

ii Tao Te Jing, cap. 54: 修之於國，其德乃豐 xiu zhi yu guo, qi de nai feng

7 - M° Li Liyong 李理永

President of the Spanish Taoist Community

Is Taoism a utopia or is it a hope for humanity?

The answer, for me, is simple: it is not a utopia. If I were a utopia, I would not be a Taoist.

Historically, Taoism has been evolving, from a primitive way to a more complex way, in a Chinese civilization, and has been forging the characteristics of that civilization. That is not a utopia.

And, in addition, many schools have been appearing that have been studying, debating, the same concept, the Tao, from different points of view, without departing from the mysticism that surrounds the entire Taoist concept. And this has been applied in the political, in the economy, in human behavior, in internal evolution, in philosophy, in science, in technology, in medicine... and something that is a utopia cannot do all that.

Furthermore, Taoism is the only primitive doctrine that, having its spiritual aspects, has, in parallel, its scientific aspects, and they cannot be separated from each other. Taoism is not a utopian system, but rather a system that can be applied in all its components, in all situations, and in all dimensions.

It can also be seen in Chinese medicine, which has served to treat and cure a civilization for millennia. Chinese medicine that was later taken to Japan, Ceylon, Thailand... and cured basic diseases, when Western medicine had not yet been introduced. This is not a utopia.

Another example is the application of the classic text of the "Art of war" in economic and strategic fields.

There are many more examples, such as the application of the Dao De Jing to modern life; or the effectiveness of rituals.

Taoism is not a utopia, it has political, social, economic, educational, religious, scientific, family applications...

I am going to show some proposals that support my categorical affirmation that Taoism is not a utopia, but a hope that can become a reality. There is only one detail: that will depend on us, on all of us.

For me, Taoism is something that, well understood and well transmitted, is a hope for the salvation of the individual, and therefore of humanity. Because, when a large number of individuals improve, all of humanity will be a little closer to improving and being saved.

And that is because Taoism provides adequate and functional instruments that can be used in business, in government, in nature, at work, in relationships, in education... If we analyze it rigorously, it is easy to verify that Taoism is the objective solution for the current problems of the world and its drift.

I want to start by saying that I trust Taoism because it is a tradition that changes its form, but not its essence. It adapts to all times and all places. And I trust Taoism because I can apply it directly, because it is concrete, it is tangible, it is functional. And because it is the only ancient, ancestral doctrine that does not clash with scientific or technological concepts.

That is why I, as a Westerner, am interested in Taoism. And not just for me. But I consider it interesting and useful to all humanity, in general, and to society Spanish in particular.

Taoism is a highly social, highly political, highly naturalistic tradition, and I believe that this tradition is very necessary to restore Western society. And to give it a more real, pragmatic and ethical approach.

What do I propose? The first thing is to start with yourself and review Taoism in each one of us who call ourselves Taoists. That is, self-observe, self-correct and self-update. Because the first thing is to see if we are qualified as representatives and guides in Taoism. And how can we know? Seeing the results. Is what we do functional? are we whole? Let us remember what Laotse says in the DDJ: the sacred person becomes the model of the world. He is not just a guide, nor a governor. He is a model for the world. And being a model for the world means that you become what you preach, and that you inspire others to follow that path. And what qualities do I have to develop to be a model for society? First, integrity. Second, rectitude, you have to be a balanced person in your behavior, in your emotions, and that, from that rectitude, beautiful flowers such as sincerity, justice are born... And third, that you develop a harmonious personality, a harmonious way of being, where you harmonize what you study with what you practice. Because the Taoist must be a model under heaven.

The second thing I propose is to review and update Taoism as a doctrine, and apply it in the community in which we are as models. This implies continuous training with other teachers, and establishing a common agenda with the basic ingredients of this doctrine. An adequate methodology that is consistent with the Taoist tradition. And that it be a living teaching, that it go with the current circumstances, focusing on these current circumstances. Because Taoism is something alive.

The third thing is to focus on how to transmit Taoism. Knowing that Taoism has nothing to do with fashion, and that Taoism is free of dogmas. Because if there are dogmas, some will cling to these dogmas, and others will reject the doctrine precisely because it is dogmatic. As Master Tian said: Taoism was born in China and it is for all humanity. You also have to transmit Taoism from the simplest to the most complex, with small practices so that the person can apply that Taoism. For example, make them understand what WuWei is, and that they begin to apply it in their lives. And so little by little. When people see that, by applying Taoism, their life changes, improves, this will bring new people closer. Because Taoism has to be functional. If it is not functional, what do I want Taoism for? As decoration? No, the Taoism of adornment or folklore can work until you go deeper, when you go deeper the Taoism of adornment does not work.

Before beginning, I am going to define the three problems that humanity suffers today.

The first is ambition.

The second is violence, not only physical, but also the violence that is born of ambition and that tries to impose us on others, at whatever price, through lies, coercion...

Both ambition and violence go hand in hand with selfishness.

The third is ignorance. We have a lot of information, we have a lot of possibilities, but we are still very ignorant. Ignorance has nothing to do with the absence of information, in fact, we are in the information age. The problem is that we don't know how to be wise, we don't know how to apply that information, we have lost the ability to reflect. People don't reason, people speculate. In fact, Albert Einstein's "prophecy" has been fulfilled when he said that technology will make people less intelligent.

For this reason, as we will see later, the doctrine of Taoism begins in education.

The first thing that Taoism says is that you are nature, and that nature is in you. Therefore, if nature is damaged, it is because you, as an individual, act indiscriminately. Ecology is

directly related to fengshui, which is studying in which position I put myself as an individual to harmonize my actions with the environment. To benefit from nature without harming it.

To maintain ecology, the first thing to do is use awareness, go directly to the problem and analyze it objectively before applying an answer. The answer will always be linked to logic, and science. The individual is responsible for what happens in his environment. We do not own the world.

A Taoist lives in harmony with nature, he does not feel that he is the owner of nature. The Taoist couples with nature and flows. We have a Taoist behavior protocol before nature. In it is being aware of your garbage, not altering the ecological balance... And living as simply as possible, not using houses that are too big. The house is space, and space is vitality. And in space, energies are blocked if you don't use it. Laotse says: "knowing how to satisfy oneself is to achieve happiness, knowing how to be satisfied is to be rich".

In the field of health, I believe that the objective is for the person to have developed all the physical and mental capacities to be able to deal with everything that may affect them, whether they are external factors, such as the environment, or internal factors, such as emotions. Taoism proposes the cultivation of elemental, basic and common factors, such as adequate exercise, a balanced diet or working on personal spiritual practice. The goal of the Taoist is not to focus on curing, but to focus on preventing.

Taoism and science. There is a lot of relationship between the two. I will give just one detail (there are many more): Taoism is a language that fits perfectly with quantum physics. I know what I'm talking about. Taoism has all the characteristics to become a scientific language. The beginning of our existence begins in quantum physics.

The beginning of life, both of the universe and of a human being, begins with LIGHT. And what do we Taoists look for with our practices? The light, the yang. And from that light, Taoism builds all the language to justify and interpret our existence. That matches quantum physics. Taoism and quantum physics differ in that they consider these aspects from different perspectives. We have the three essential Taoist principles, consciousness, energy and essence, which coincide, in scientific terms, with the nature of the spiritual, the nature of power and the nature of matter. Science has not finished explaining consciousness; when it does, it will fully coincide with the concept of consciousness according to Taoism. I have no doubt. Taoism should develop these and other concepts. It would explain many things, and make sense of other things.

Taoism and politics. This is important, and there are certain details to consider. Taoism is born within society, within government. The Yellow Emperor, Huang Di, was a ruler. That is why Taoism has to try to expand its position within politics, I am not talking about political parties. And it must do so by demonstrating with theses and arguments the effectiveness that Taoism has had at the different times in which it has been in government. Taoism has studies that deal with the preparation of the ruler; in fact Taoism defends that a ruler has to be a cultivated person. The Dao De Jing says that only the person who loves the nation as his own body is the one who can govern it. Remember: the only way you can make a town transform is by setting yourself up as a model.

You also have to present social projects, structure them and define them well, from the Taoist approach of community service. As we know, transformation appears very quickly when social projects are generated.

And of course, you have to try to introduce Taoism, with trained people, in international political organizations. You can tell me that I am very ambitious, but I firmly believe that all this is possible.

Taoism and education. Firstly, create a study center, with well-prepared people, a serious center. A center that disseminates Taoist culture, in its multiple manifestations, calligraphy workshops, talismans, arts for health... give workshops, create strategies, to attract the attention of citizens, because if we do not show the beauty of things, nobody will perceive it. You have to generate strategies to show that beauty through workshops. It is important to create a museum of Taoism, to show the ancestral values of Taoism. All this to attract the attention of politicians, scientists and humanists. It is important that these people enter Taoism. But all this in a serious way. Today, in many places, Taoism is disseminated in a non-serious way, even on social networks, and that drives people away. Taoism must be shown as what it truly is: practical, effective and functional. And so Taoism will not be utopia, but will be a reality. The second thing is to create several centers in each country, with the same name, forming a single chain, to generate unity. These workshops should also be extended to universities, public and private centers, hospitals... to give people another perspective of thought.

On a religious level. The most important thing is to make known the characteristics that make Taoism a religion with peculiar and distinctive qualities. That will remove a lot of doubts and misconceptions that society has about the Taoist religion, and it would attract a lot of people who would no longer see Taoism as an archaic religion.

Second in importance is facilitating the understanding of rituals and ceremonies, by translating certain texts (songs and invocations) into the language of each country.

And the third is to standardize the basic rituals, marriage, deaths...

And it is necessary that all Taoists are united. In brotherhood and unity.

When Taoism spreads as it should be spread, and makes its way, Taoism is going to be criticized. All those who see themselves threatened with new ideologies, with new rituals, will criticize, will oppose. Hence the importance of the strength of unity, and the strength of conviction. These criticisms and oppositions, which will undoubtedly come, will generate more unity and strength for Taoism, because we will generate more strategies to expose Taoist thought.

At a global level, the world unity of Taoism is necessary, something that the China Taoism Association is achieving. Congratulations.

But, due to distances, unity at the European level is also necessary. It is necessary that a Taoism institute be opened in Europe, where all those people who decide to work for Taoism and decide to work in favor of Taoism, can graduate seriously. A European, Western federation, where "your Taoism" is not disseminated, but "Taoism", to dialogue, argue, develop, propose, activate... We need leaders with personality, and Priests who want to be True Taoists, who do not have afraid to search, to correct, to inspect and to debate with anyone who gets in the way. Taoism must be defended, as Lao Tzu defended it from Confucius, or as Zhuangzi defended it from his detractors... And a World Taoist Federation, with its own identity and an imposing personality, that truly and heartily serves Taoism.

Taoism is going to have to be rewritten again. Clearly and directly. Because he has lost many characteristics, with all the pseudo-taoisms that surround us. Because, as it is said in a Taoist classic,: "it is no longer known where the truth is." There is so much falsehood and fallacy in the pseudo-taoisms, so abundant, that the person has to

seek true Taoism through a filter, and that filter should be that of simplicity, simplification, logic and reason, through analysis. And that filter leads, without a doubt, to true Taoism. But you have to make it known as it really is. What is not shown and made known, does not exist, in this current world.

With maturity, I'm not here to waste time. That's why I know what I want. And what I want is the restoration and recognition of a deep Taoism, rooted in the experiential experience of nature (whether you are in the mountains or in the city), which acts profoundly in the life of each one, open to welcome whoever needs comfort, to be compassionate in the attitude of caring for the other, to be simple and devoid of purposes other than religious and spiritual purposes, just as the great masters who gave greatness to Taoism.

True Taoism allows one to dream, enjoy and live. And to feed life. And, for this, Taoism provides the appropriate tools: your blood, your breath, your energy...

I am prepared, with ideas and enthusiasm, to work for this Taoism that is not a utopia.
Thank you.

8 - M° Wu Xinhong 吴信弘

Chairman Quanzhen Taoist Association

Taoism World Religion Convention
道教世界宗教大会

Taoism World Religion. Utopia or hope for humankind? Visions and proposals
道教世界宗教。乌托邦还是人类的希望？愿景和建议。

Taoism advocates harmonious coexistence, and harmony is mutual tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. It embodies the life ethics of Dao Haosheng, attaches importance to human life and loves natural life.

The fifty- one chapter of the Tao Te Ching states: Dao produces virtue, animal form, and potential. Therefore, all things respect the Tao and respect the Tao. The pavilion, the poison, the overthrow, the life without doing anything, the action without relying on it, the growth without slaughter, this is called Yuande.

Explanation: Dao breeds the world and nourishes all things, and all things receive the favor of heaven and earth but do not make it famous, and silently nourish the world. This is why human beings value life as the most precious thing. Taoism attaches great importance to human life and the protection of nature. The natural of Tao is to value life. I hope that there will be more exchanges between associations in various countries, so that our positive energy can be spread to more countries.

9 - Dr. Darija Mavrič Čeh

Prorektorica Slovenskega Daoističnega Templja

DAOISM – A RELIGION OR A PHILOSOPHY?

Written by: MA Darija Mavrič Čeh, vice - rector of Slovene Daoist Temple

What is Daoism – a religion, a philosophy, or maybe both? This is the question to which the scholars have not yet been able to find a clear answer to.

To answer the question whether Daoism is a religion or not, we first need to define the meaning of the term. From an etymological point of view, it derived from the Latin word *religiō*, which has been subject to various interpretations over time: according to Cicero (1st century BC), it derived from the verb *re-legere*: "to read again, to read carefully, or to »understand the meaning beyond words«. At the same time, he attributed the word to *cultus deorum* – the prescribed manner of worship of the deities.

Early Christian thinkers such as Lactantius and St. Augustine thought that it originated from the Latin word *re-ligare*: to reconnect, to bind. The synthesis of the two could be that religion is an expression of the conscious decision to establish a connection with the Divine, the Holy, the Transcendent, the Origin, which we achieve and maintain with an adequate set of techniques, rituals, and worship.

Daoism is both a philosophy of life and a religion, even if an individual ignores the religious part. The central concept is the Dao - the Way, which is difficult to define:

***The Dao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Dao;
the Name that can be named is not the eternal Name.***
(*Daodejing* 1, transl. Paul J. Lin),

It is impossible to capture it, or put in a frame, because Dao is unlimited, for it existed before the beginning of everything and is omnipresent. It is the origin of everything:

***The Dao generates the One,
the One generates the Two,
the Two generate the Three,
the Three generate the ten thousand things.***
(*Daodejing* 42, transl. Fabrizio Pregadio)

»To follow the Dao, to follow the Way, to return to the Origin« is the highest purpose of our existence. Various ceremonies and rituals, worship, different techniques of self-cultivation, such as meditation, *neidan*, *yangsheng*, etc., all serve this purpose. It is all based on the search for inner balance and harmony with the external world: we are all part of the same cosmos in which everything works according to the same principles: even the slightest change of the smallest particle can rearrange the entire universe. In the words of poet John Donne:

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any

man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee

We should take this into consideration when presenting and promoting Daoism: to do so following our own example, with our own sincerity, modesty and devotion; by living the Daoist values and Virtues.

According to our experience in Slovenia, there are few people who know that Daoism is a religion in the narrowest meaning of the word. Many believe that it is a very complex and rich philosophy. They eagerly embrace the fundamental principles, such as establishing inner balance and harmony with nature, spontaneity (*ziran*), non-action (*wuwei*), Book of Changes (*Yijing*) as manual of divination... Usually, they encounter these principles when while taking part in courses or workshops on Daoist meditation, qigong, traditional Chinese medicine, inner martial arts... and other techniques for the cultivation of body, mind and spirit. We strive not only to teach them the skills, but also to allow them to look beyond, to comprehend their origins and context. Sometimes that's the point when they recognize that the cultivation of *qi* and the techniques for longevity or immortality are parts of a religious practice: intended to overcome the limitations of space and time, they are the way to connect to the Sacred, the Gods, the immortals, saints, and spirits all give support on this path.

The mention of religion often awakens resistance and fear: not of religion as such, but above all of the institution that molds one into its framework; it is a fear of indoctrination. Therefore, persistence and gradualism are necessary when presenting the Daoist religion. Getting to know Daoism from different points of view (meditation, energy exercises, lectures, massages, reading Daoist texts in Slovenian language) reveals that it can be an encouragement to us when dealing with the problems of modern times (relations to Nature, to all being, to ourselves ...); so become closer to people.

As written in the *Daodejing* 8:

The highest good is like water.

Water give life to the ten thousand things and does not strive.

It flows in places men reject and so is like the Tao.

In dwelling, be close to the land.

In meditation, go deep in the heart.

In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.

In speech, be true.

In ruling, be just.

In daily life, be competent.

In action, be aware of the time and the season.

No fight: No blame.

(trans. Feng Jia Fu and Jane English)

10 - M° Yan Meixi 阎美希

President of Australian Taoism Association

Dear guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

It is an Honor to share with you my thoughts on the vision and proposals of Taoism as a world religion, utopia, or hope for humankind at this international Taoist conference.

As we all know, Taoism is one of the oldest and most profound religions in China, with a history of several thousand years. From its core idea that "the Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao," we can see that Taoism focuses on personal cultivation, seeking inner harmony and balance, emphasizing ecological environment and harmonious coexistence between human and nature, and promoting national culture and civilization.

In today's world, we face many challenges and issues such as climate change, poverty, war, terrorism, and cultural conflicts. I believe that the core ideas and concepts of Taoism can provide us with guidance to address these challenges.

Firstly, Taoism emphasizes personal cultivation and the pursuit of inner harmony and balance. In this fast-paced society, we often overlook our inner balance and spiritual needs. Through Taoist cultivation methods, we can better adjust our mentality and emotions, find inner harmony and balance, and elevate our spiritual level and consciousness.

Secondly, Taoism attaches great importance to ecological environment and harmonious coexistence between human and nature. We are facing challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution, and need to find effective ways to protect and restore our natural environment. Taoism's natural view and ecological ethics can provide us with beneficial guidance and reference.

Thirdly, Taoism emphasizes the promotion of national culture and civilization. We live in a diverse world where cultural exchange and dialogue are essential to promoting understanding and respect between different cultures. Taoism's cultural values and concepts can contribute to the exchange and mutual learning between different countries and nationalities.

Lastly, we need to more widely disseminate and promote the values and ideas of Taoism. This requires us to strengthen research and promotion of Taoism in various fields, as well as to innovate and promote the essence and connotation of Taoist culture.

In conclusion, I believe that Taoism can bring hope and utopia to our world. We need to understand Taoism more deeply and apply its core concepts to our daily lives to address the challenges we face. Let us work together to promote the dissemination and development of Taoism, and contribute to the harmonious coexistence and progress of humanity.

Thank you.

11 - M° Li Ziling 李紫綾

Taoist Mission Singapore

ENGLISH

Venue: Caserta, Temple of Great Harmony

Date: 27 May 2023 (International Taoist Convention 2)

Speaker: Taoist Mission Singapore ~ Li Ziling / 新加坡道教协会 ~ 李紫綾居士

Taoism World Religious. Utopia or hope for humankind?

Thomas More was the first person to use the term “utopia,” describing an ideal, imaginary world in his most famous work of fiction. More was an English lawyer, writer, and statesman. He was at one time, one of Henry VIII's most trusted civil servants, becoming Chancellor of England in 1529.

The European society that Thomas More was living in at the time, one rife with intrigue, corruption and mired by scandal. At that time, European society is described as a place where, “Idle monarchs and nobles seek to increase their own wealth and power at the expense of the people, who are left in poverty and misery”. As such, Thomas More’s attempt to suggest ways to improve European society, using “Utopia” as an example. The book was written in 1516, describes a complex community on an island, in which people share a common culture and way of life, allowing its people to easily meet their needs.

In times of uncertainty and chaos, people tends to look forward to a better society to live in. They start to dream for a perfect world, no misery, no war etc. As early as the 4th Century AD, Jin Dynasty, there was a Chinese poet and politician by the name Tao Yuanming 陶淵明(317-420) , wrote an essay "Peach Blossom Spring" 桃花源记. It describes a traveller who came upon an isolated peach blossom valley beyond a cave where people seeking political refuge lived an ideal, harmonic life with nature and each other. Does this sound similar to Utopia? To the Chinese, this story is metaphoric to an imaginary unattainable Utopia where the peach blossom symbolizes luck, love, and longevity, and to some – immortality. Tao Yuanming believes in Confucianism and Taoism, and it can be seen in his essay "Peach Blossom Spring", which was greatly influenced by Laozi “Tao Te Ching”.

In Tao Te Ching Chapter 80, It describes that Lao Zi is tired of the spectacular and the grand. He longs back to the simple basic qualities of life, do not have to rush about or take risk to make a living. What he describes is a perfect life for everyone, human being can only experience it if we uphold to his teaching.

Tao Te Ching Chapter 80

Let there be a small country with a small population.

Implements are not used while thousands of them are available.

People cherish their lives and do not want to travel afar.

Having boats and carriages, they do not ride in them.

With armours and weapons, they do not use them.

People resume taking notes with knots.

Let them have sweet food, wear nice clothes, enjoy their family life, and delight in customs.

Neighbouring countries can be seen.
And dogs and chickens can be heard, yet they would not visit each other throughout their lives.

道德经第八十章，小国寡民

小国寡民。
使有什伯之器而不用；使民重死而不远徙。
虽有舟舆，无所乘之，虽有甲兵，无所陈之。 pg. 2

使人复结绳而用之。
甘美食，美其服，安其居，乐其俗。
邻国相望，鸡犬之声相闻，民至老死，不相往来。

Tao Te Ching Chapter 80 describes the ideal life which Lao Zi looking forward to. How can it be achieved? Dao De Jing Chapter 19 and Chapter 67 guided us through. In Tao Te Ching Chapter 67, it describes that all hypocrisy and contention will be rendered black when people return to nature. Lao Zi gave us 3 Treasures in Tao Te Ching Chapter 81. If everyone of us possesses these 3 Treasures, all conflicts in the world will be resolved, everyone will be leading a happy life, in peace & harmony.

Tao Te Ching Chapter 19

With holiness and wisdom abandoned, the people will benefit a hundred-fold.
With humanity and justice rejected, the people will revert to filial piety and compassion.
With guiles and interests discarded, thieves and burglars will disappear.
The above three, being not sufficient as rules, require strict adherence.
Exhibit plainness and keep to simplicity, reduce selfishness and minimise desire.
No learning, no worries.

道德经第十九章，清心寡欲

绝圣弃智，民利百倍；绝仁弃义，民复孝慈；
绝巧弃利，盗贼无有。
此三者以为文，不足。
故令有所属；见素抱朴，少私寡欲；少私寡欲；绝学无忧。

Tao Te Ching Chapter 67

I am told by everybody: Tao is great and unique, because it is great, it is unique.
If it is like anything, it will become trivial soon.
I have three treasures, which I hold and cherish.
The first is compassion, the second is frugality,
The third is not daring to be ahead of others.
Being compassionate, I can be brave; Being frugal, I can be rich;
Not daring to be ahead of others, I can achieve success.
I will die, if I am brave without being compassionate,
Get rich without being frugal or be adventurous without being cautious.
With compassion, I can win a battle, or set up a strong defense.
When Heaven wants to save somebody, it will protect him with compassion.

道德经第六十七章，我有三宝

天下皆谓我大，似不肖。夫唯大，故似不肖。

若肖久矣，其细也夫。

我有三宝，持而保之：

一曰慈，二曰俭，三曰不敢为天下先。

慈故能勇，俭故能广，不敢为天下先，故能成器长。 pg. 3

今舍慈且勇，舍俭且广，舍后且先；死矣！

夫慈，以战则胜，以守则固。

天将救之，以慈卫之。

Both Thomas More and Tao Yuanming has similarity. They were renowned politician in the era they lived in. Coincidentally, the society which both were living in, was corrupted and chaotic. Both looks forward to a better society, hence they wrote Utopia and "Peach Blossom Spring". Although they were born in different era, different part of the world, one from the West while one from the East but what they hoped to achieve was the same, a beautiful ideal place with everyone living happily.

Is it possible for a Utopia to exist?

Nothing is impossible, it is just a matter of choice. In my opinion, Bhutan is a very good example. What do you think? Start practising Tao teaching and you will be able to find your Utopia!

**Resonance with the Lord of the Most High, The Most Merciful Laozi.
Blessings from the Heavenly Jade Emperor, Boundless Blessings.
Miracles from Almighty, Happiness Longevity Good Health and Peace.
May Heavenly Blessings be with You.**

太上感应，三清道祖慈悲；
玉皇赐福，无量寿福；
三官众圣显灵，福寿康宁；
福生无量天尊。

12 - M° Chen Lilun 陈理轮

Taoist Mission Singapore

ENGLISH

Venue: Caserta, Temple of Great Harmony

Date: 27 May 2023 (International Taoist Convention 2)

Speaker: Taoist Mission Singapore ~ Chen Lilun | 新加坡道教协会 ~ 陈理轮居士

Taoism World Religious. Utopia or hope for humankind?

Taoist Thought of Peace Against War

Someone once summed up Lao Tzu's peaceful thoughts into two aspects: - Lao Tzu opposes all wars, and his attitude includes "not using troops to strengthen the world";“Laozi once said: "A soldier is an ominous weapon, not a gentleman's weapon. Use it as a last resort. Tranquility is the best. Victory is not beautiful."

Throughout its history, Taoism has retained a utopian vision of an ordered and harmonious society, although the means of achieving this have varied.

One constant component has been an emphasis on individual self-cultivation as a means of maintaining social harmony. For the individual, one's relationship with nature begins at home, not only within one's immediate surroundings, but within one's own body.

道教反战的和平思想

有人曾把老子的和平思想归纳为两个方面:一方面,老子反对一切战争,其态度包括“不以兵强天下”;另一方面,老子虽然在内心里极度厌恶战争,但有时却也支持正义战争。老子曾曰:“兵者,不祥之器,非君子之器。不得已而用之,恬淡为上,胜而不美。”。纵观其历史,道教一直保留着一个有序和谐社会的乌托邦愿景

一個不變的組成部分是強調個人自我修養, 以此作為維持社會和諧的一種方式。

13 - M° Ye Liman 叶理满

Taoist Mission Singapore

道教作为世界宗教 - 如何成为人类的乌托邦和希望？ 愿景和建议。

Venue: Caserta, Temple of Great Harmony

Date: 27 May 2023 (International Taoist Convention 2)

Speaker: Taoist Mission Singapore ~ Ye Liman / 新加坡道教协会 ~ 叶理满居士

Taoism world religion: utopia or hope for humankind? Vision or proposals

Dear distinguished guests, Tao brothers,

Fu Sheng Wu Liang Tian Zun.

I would like to extend my special thanks to Master Li Xuanzong of Chiesa Taoista d'Italia for his invitation. It is a great honor to attend this 30th anniversary celebration!

While economic globalization and the rapid development of modern science and technology have brought many opportunities to people's lives, they have also brought environmental crises, value crises, global conflicts, spiritual distress that leads to moral disengagement. As a world religion, how did Taoism become the "Utopia" and hope of mankind?

Looking at the chaotic world, the confrontation between countries, mutual distrust, world domination, forming cliques, military invasion that sparks global tension, the ruthless warfare has caused much destruction. Innocent civilians have to leave their homes and often their homeland. These forcibly displaced people have been tossed like a ball to seek refuge away from home.

War disputes have also affected the globalized economy and the global interlocking supply chain has been affected. Military conflicts and trade protectionism have led to global food shortages, inflations and the world economies. Interdependence in the economy that was once built on the basis of common interests was destroyed.

We live in nature and as technology and science advance rapidly, we demand more and more from nature, and regard nature as an inexhaustible resource pool and landfill. The ecosystem on which human beings depend is on the verge of collapse. Two-thirds of the earth's oceans and three-quarters of the land have been destroyed by man. Human greed and selfish desire has resulted in excessive deforestation. It has seriously endangered the natural ecology with excessive constructing of railways, buildings, tunnels, viaducts, and treating the natural world as the object of arbitrary slaughter. We have ignored the capacity of mother earth, resulting in the collapse of the ecological environment. The air we breathe and the food we eat come from nature. Any excessive movements toward urban development will inevitably result in an imbalance that nature will, of necessity, correct in the form of "natural disasters" such as smog, water pollution, species extinction, and depletion of natural resources. This destruction of biodiversity also contributes to climate change and has a serious impact on our planet.

“Internet” has essentially reduced the distances between people and places thus resulting in 'time-space compression'. It radically altered the way people interact with each other and changed our lifestyle. Social networking platforms bring great convenience to our lives but at the same time isolate our face-to-face communication with others. Countless people are addicted to the virtual world and losing the ability to communicate face to face with their love ones and friends. A common sight to see people bowing their heads at home, on the bus, at school, in the company, or on the road. Indulging in the virtual world has led to social distancing and isolation between people. To some extent emails, WeChat and other short messages have gradually replaced mailed letters. Saving some cost to mail out greeting cards as ecards have gained popularity. We are now drifting away from personal interaction and live in a virtual world.

As a society modernized and developed, moral dilemmas such as lack of integrity, corruption, and money worship have emerged. The pursuit of fame and fortune, luxury houses, luxury cars, luxury goods and success is often measured by wealth and material possessions. The global scam pandemic is on the rise, people fall prey to scams, a dehumanized and degraded society both physically and spiritually.

In such circumstances, human beings urgently need to re-moralize and rebuild human value relations and trust. What kind of society is "Utopia" in Taoism? What Laozi yearns for is "a small country with few inhabitants".

To quote:

Daode Jing Chapter 80:

The *Taode jing* proposed a utopian vision of society based on the notion of a wise and noble ruler whose strength of moral character (de) inspired moral behavior throughout the country. It described the ideal country as one which was small, with a small population that avoided technological advances in preference for simple living, uninterested in other small countries nearby. There might be an arsenal of weapons, but nobody ever uses them. The people were contented with their food, pleased with their clothing, satisfied with their homes, should take pleasure in their rustic tasks. And even though the next country is closed that people can hear its roosters crowing and its dogs barking, they are content to die of old age without ever having gone to see it.

Laozi believes that an ideal country has a small territory and few people. People cherish their lives and live and work in peace and contentment without risking their lives to move far away. Although there are advanced appliances, there is no need to ride.

Without conflicts and disputes, even if you have weapons and armor, they are useless. People return to the simple state of knotting and keeping track of events. Everyone is content with their own basic necessities of life. We get along well with neighboring countries, and we can hear each other's chickens clucking and dogs barking. However, the people do not associate with each other from birth to death since they do not interfere with each other. This is simply a harmonious and beautiful idyll, a peach blossom garden full of peace and joy.

There will be some extent of mutual benefits when people interact with one another and there will be a sense of loss whenever a dispute arises out of one's self-interest. Humans by nature are aversive to losses which is the root cause of disasters. When a wise and noble ruler whose strength of moral character (de) inspired moral behavior throughout the country and the nation is self-contained, the people could live and work in peace

without leaving their homes and moving to other places. There is no boundary between countries, the people are all contented and happy, they will not invade and hurt each other. There is no sense of distance and there is peace in the world! As there is no dispute and interference between neighbors, hence the people do not communicate until they grow old and die.

Harmonious coexistence between man and nature is the basis of various harmonious relationships. Human life is dependent on nature and the ecological environment is the basic condition for human existence. Mother Nature has nourished us, and we must respect it, protect it, follow its laws and work towards a sustainable development of man and nature. Failure to respect nature or follow its laws will only invite its revenge eventually and hurt ourselves.

Conform to nature and act in accordance with the objective laws of things. From this, Laozi thought of "governing the country by doing nothing (*wuwei*)" came into being. From the perspective of the logic of "governance by doing nothing", "follow the way and do nothing, simplify administration and delegate power", Laozi's ideal society of "small country with few people" is not only reflected in politics and governance, but also in people and life. He warned us that we don't need to blindly pursue too much material, and that a simple life is the happiest. In the form of life before the advent of words, human beings were very simple and innocent, and they would not blackmail, nor would they play with trickery words.

When social order is chaotic, each person has the moral obligation to take care of nature, others, and themselves and reposition the value of man and nature, others, and life. Man is just a part of nature, so we must respect nature, others, and ourselves. At the same time, create sustainable human development and live in harmony with nature.

Sense of security goes hand in hand with trust. Under fierce competition, people's trust suffers setbacks, and everything becomes uncertain. When there is trust between people, feeling being able to trust and be trusted, there is a harmonious relationship between one's self and the self, allowing the one's self to be in the state of tranquility. Tranquility is a state of being in which one can think what one thinks and do what one does without being insecure.

Promoting cross-cultural communication and negotiation to gain understanding is always essential. Avoiding the conflict in value between human beings and others lies in maintaining a "coexistence" attitude. Everything in the universe grows together without harming each other, and the roads run parallel without conflicting with each other, a world view that complements each other.

Laozi understands the lives of the people very well, and understands what the people are thinking. "Small country with few people" is actually Laozi's forward-thinking mindset, and it is an ideal social management method. The positive significance of thinking under the conditions of the new era is manifested in returning to a natural and simple way of life, abandoning war and maintaining world peace. So his "Tao" lives in the hearts of the people, and we can use it at any time.

Thank you!

14 - M° Ye Litai 叶理太

Taoist Mission Singapore

Taoism World Religion. Utopia or Hope for Humankind? Visions and Proposals

What is the definition of **HOPE**? "It is a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen".

In today's topic, the use of word is "HOPE" not "DREAM". Dreams are things we want to achieve in life.

But HOPE is a feeling of expectation about a particular event or thing to take place and we keep thinking about it. Hence, we pray or wish for it to happen in real life.

The driving force here is our belief. There is no guarantee that hopes come true but it gives you optimism in life and if you pursue it. It is a way to strengthen your inner self and expect the best, even at your worst times. Hoping for better times is a way of boosting yourself in times of adversity. That's why we always say... **NEVER LOSE HOPE!**

So... can Taoism, a religion practice by people in China and throughout the world gives hope for mankind?

Why mankind need hope?

Aren't we progressively leading a heavenly life? The concept of Open Economy has brought us modernization, improve our living environment and giving us more comfort. It widened our horizon as travelling were made easier. We can receive information through various communication channels. Mankind is living longer now because of breakthrough in bioscience etc.

As we progress, modernization has shown us dramatic changes in 3 main aspects: social, industrial and economical.

Modernization coupled with globalisation (the integration of economic, political and social cultures) has indeed brought us tonnes of benefits. Communication industries in particular enabled the spread of capitalism throughout the world.

Cell phones, for example, have changed the lives of millions throughout the world. It facilitates business-to-business communication, provides internet access to remote areas, widely dispersed populations are now connected, and with a consequential rise in literacy.

Meetings, teachings and learning are conducted on-line and without attendees' physical presence.

With cell phone and lap-top in hand, we enjoy the comfort, convenience and wide spread of on-line purchase choices and fast delivery of cooked food and goods to our door-steps.

The 3 modes of transport: air, water and land have improved the logistic distribution of goods and services. We are able to savour in our home country the wide spread of international cuisine. We eat fruits and vegetables produced across the continents.

The world has opened and travelling has become a popular leisure and get-away. As for the millionaires, traveling on earth is no longer attractive and demand for space adventure is growing.

Modern technology scores breakthrough in biomedical sciences, be it medical research, devices and genetics research. This accelerates the development and manufacturing of vaccines to contain the deadly infectious diseases and virus from spreading and reduce death rate.

The big leap in science has brought us the revolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) that is capable to mimic human intelligence to work, analyse and provide faster and more informative decisions.

For example:

- (a) Drone in agriculture – In crop spraying, delivery services, emergency search-rescue operation, security and infrastructure inspection
- (b) Censor AI – In Speech and face recognition
- (c) Application AI - In translating different languages
- (d) Autonomous Vehicles (self-driven bus, cars) – In transportation
- (e) Autonomous Cleaners - Robot taking up monotonous labour work and dangerous tasks

The above sound fabulous but do we only reap the positive benefits from these “wonders”?

In Tao's teaching "Tao Te Ching" chapter 58 says "禍兮福所倚，福兮禍所伏". It's literate translation means Blessings and Disasters penetrate and transform each other.

So, in our above illustrations, we see the bright side ie “Blessings” or “Yang” perceptive but we should not neglect the other inter-connected forces is also developing “Disasters” ie “Yin” perceptive (the unfavourable or shortcoming).

No doubt modernisation has brought as "affluent society" and we are getting the material benefits of prosperity.

We are finding ourselves chasing after time, a production-oriented economy driven by advertisers and private marketing firms who made money by lobbying people into purchase and many a time excessive and unnecessary.

This means more natural resources are consumed to meet unlimited purchases at a faster rate. This change in buying pattern will give rise to the following domino effects:

- a) Resources Depletion and Environmental Issues

It speeds up our natural resources depletion such as fossil fuel consumption, mining, water usage, fisheries, affecting forest ecosystem and air quality etc.

The greatest impact is global warming done at huge environment costs. Not to mention the race among countries to install satellite, space station and this latest space race is also creating space debris. The fuel combustion, carbon dioxide, toxic are sent right into the outer space, ozone layer damage. Situation is made worse because there is no international regulations keeping check.

The consequences were more frequent wildfires, heat waves, rising sea levels and climate disasters. This climate change will thus shrink water supplies, affect crops harvest and cause food scarce.

For countries who are heavily relying on agriculture for their living, the poor will become climate refugees; abandon their homes to find security elsewhere (live in refugee and displacement camps away from home etc).

b) Social Issues and Local Conflicts

Scarcity will push up prices. The rich will have more stock control of the resources and gap between the rich and poor widen. More families can't meet their daily necessities (eg. shelter, food, water, medical care, elementary education). At the centre of this are children being forced to abandon school to find work, or go hungry. Social conflicts will arise when gap between the rich and poor widen.

c) International Conflicts

The country and country relationship will turn sour when high demand supplies are scarce. One party may manipulate and complicate a specific product supply chain so that its production and use becomes exclusive to the party in control. This gives rise to frictions between countries.

For example, maritime boundaries dispute over fishing, natural gas and oil, water access in draught affected areas, current battle to control microchip technology and production etc.

d) Well Being

Modernization brings a faster pace of life and constant need are required to connect with others through phones, computers and other technologies. When the flow of information speeds up, our time span for respond and decision making is also shortened.

When we need to beat time to get work done, this eliminates our sense of peace and calm mind. This may cause a sprout in psychological and mental illness such as depression, anxiety, stress and panic attacks when one cannot handle or trying to avoid problems they face at work, at school or at home.

e) Culture

The growth in trade and technology will ultimately make mass production of food, clothing and shopping goods more economical sense. The economy of scale theory will bring about large-scale companies replacing smaller scale family shops, farms and businesses. The emphasis in trade is cheaper selling rate and fast fashions; emphasis is no longer on personal skills, creativity, identities and local

cultures. This has caused a loss of identity of belonging to a specific region and certain craftsmanship has become extinct.

f) Moral and Ethics

When a nation is driven by economy success and profit oriented, this will shift individual's focus to put materialism above their moral and ethics. From a civilian aspect right up to a statesman, moral and ethics degraded.

When one becomes self-centred and desire for more power and fame, one tend to chase after it. The society and nationwide follow suit and lost its moral and ethics. There will be corruption, oppression of political activism, violence, bullyism etc in the country.

“Tao Te Ching” was written approximately 2,500 years ago; in a political climate where the rich were very rich, the poor were very poor. There were interpersonal strife, civil wars and invasions among neighbouring countries over resources and power etc.

Rulers strengthened their military power by acquiring superior and new weapons. They waged war on people, destroyed environment. There were displaced refugees caused by wars and climate change (poor crops yield, shortage of water etc). It was too a messy time.

In “Tao Te Ching” Chapter 80, Laozi's perception of peace is a country without war (A small country with few people 小国寡民). “There are defensive armour and weapons, but they have no reason to use. They live in peace, lead a simple life and are easily contented. They eat what they sow and harvest. Because they rejoice in their everyday life, they taste the sweetness of their food, beautify its clothes, enjoy its customs and environment.

Neighbouring countries are so close to one another that they can hear the roosters and dogs of the other country.

They love their life-style so much that they don't feel a necessity to travel far. They are contented to die at old age without visiting other countries”.

Reading it today, we feel like Laozi is directly addressing this to our 21st-century problems: ie overdevelopment, the single-minded pursuit of profit and growth at the expense of the environment, conflicts and wars, disregard for the poor etc.

If so, then, in Tao's theory how should we see the vicissitudes of this world?

The common view of Taoism is encouraging people to live a balance life; with detachment and calm, resting in non-action and smiling at the vicissitudes of the world.

1. If we want to live well, we should take all our decisions in the context of the Tao, trying to see what will fit best with the natural order of things. We do what is required by events and their context and nothing more. We tend not to initiate action, but wait for events to make action necessary and avoid letting our own desires and compulsions push us into actions.

2. We must realize that human life is really only a small part of a larger process of nature and all things. This makes sense for us to live in harmony with nature and all things. Although different countries and various regions have their own cultures and values, only when we pursue harmony between humanity and nature, then, there will be no friction and no violence. Because we are part of this big environment, we must emphasize co-existence. Wide hearts embrace all, and all rivers run into the sea. That's the beauty of peace and harmony.
3. Seeing the small is clarity. It is easier and a lot more simple to manage when everything is kept in a smaller scale. A right proportion of resources, technology, policies, politics is better than "bigger is better".... Avoid wastage and complexity.
4. We must learn to cherish felicities with gratefulness. Resources should be treated as capital and subject to depletion and not renewable. We go back to basic; reduce waste and avoid excessive production. This makes us ethically responsive to take the stewardship of the environment and nature.
5. Taoism cherish life 贵生. We must pursue healthy living, cultivate a peaceful mind-body-soul. We are responsible for our well being.
6. Self-cultivation; your action speaks. Taoism teaches that a person should take action by changing themselves, and thus becoming an example of the good life to others.

Taoist ethics are inseparable from Taoist spirituality - both contain the same ideas. In practice, Taoism recommends the same sort of moral behaviour to its followers as other religions. It disapproves of killing, stealing, lying and promiscuity, and promotes altruistic, helpful and kindlier behaviour.

Taoists believe such good behaviour is not just self-improvement but also improve the world as a whole.

“Tao Te Ching” Chapter 54 stated:

- *Cultivate the Tao within oneself; and one's virtue will be perfected
- *Cultivate it within the household, and one's virtue will be abundant
- *Cultivate it within the neighbourhood, and one's virtue will be enduring
- *Cultivate it within the nation, and one's virtue will be overflowing
- *Cultivate it within the entire world, and one's virtue will be universal

We develop ourselves to live in complete harmony with the universe. So, the philosophy is not about doing good things; but to become a good person. We achieve self-fulfilment as we selflessly benefiting the lives of others, the community responded and we make the world a better place, because as a person behaves well towards other people and the world, the community will respond by becoming better self in line with Tao.

7. When this Tao context is applied to a nation's leader ie a leader should run his country by setting himself as an example and with minimal intervention (“Tao Te Ching” Chapter 57):

- *I take no action and the people are of themselves transformed
- *I love tranquillity and the people are of themselves rectified
- *I do not engage in affairs and the people of themselves become rich
- *I have no desires and the people of themselves become simple 6

He will gain respect from his people and his instructions are willingly followed. A good leader achieves this by living virtuously in private and living publicly and influence his people for the good.

8. "He who is contented is rich"

Taoism doesn't teach an outright rejection of desire. The type of desire to be avoided is the one driven by materialism and power. The desire which defines success as the accumulation of more and more things. What Laozi emphasizes "sufficiency" and knowing when you have enough to be contented instead of endlessly striving for more.

We can have ambitions, goals, and plans, but we should keep them within a framework that are morally doable and check that these don't cause harm to others.

9. Taoism requires man to be humble and recognise that becoming a good person who lives in harmony with all things and people are better than doing "good acts". "Tao Te Ching" teaches that man are indeed capable of intervening one's life events. However, such intervention is destructive to all involved, and thus we have a moral duty to refrain from taking such actions.

To conclude:

- a) Our indefinite desire for "more" (money, status, power etc) will only cause destructions.
- b) How to live a balance life and live in harmony with nature and all things begins with one's self.
- c) A peaceful and tranquility mind will help us to create self-awareness, improve modern life and return to Tao.
- d) One should cultivate and let our actions speak.

There was a famous saying "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it!"

Will our **HOPE** come true?

Heavenly Blessings! Thank you!

everything but is generated by no one. Eternal and unchanging in its essence.

2. Relation The belief that there is a relationship between man and this absolute. Relationship in which man, even in his subjectivity, finds the faith of his salvation.
3. Sacredness There needs to be a dimension of the sacred with its specific symbols, acts, etc. that form the bridge between the believer and his divinity. This relationship must take place in a Sacred Space, which can be both a concrete construct (place of worship) and an inner space.
4. Community An individual who is aware of his or her religious instincts, has a sense of sacredness, follows principles of faith, believes in a preternatural dimension and immortality (soul, spirit or whatever other term one wishes to use) does not constitute a religion but only a spirituality.
We can only speak of religion when all of this is experienced together with a community that shares the same faith, in history. If there is no community of believers, there is no religion. And ours has over 400 million believers.
5. Cultic praxis Set of acts (signs and symbols, rites and liturgies) specific to a religion that identify one believer from another.
6. Priestly body People who have a vocation, have felt the divine call within themselves, and give up themselves to put themselves at the service of the community and lead it by example.
7. Holy Scriptures A religion is built around scriptures revealed directly or indirectly by divinity.
8. Doctrine Religion also acts in history and society. It not only traces the path an individual follows to satisfy his or her religious need but also provides a set of principles, inspired by its metaphysics, to improve all humanity through values detached from matter and self-interest.
9. History Religion is an organism that develops over time. One certainly cannot exclude a priori a divine revelation to one or more individuals, but without history, we can only speak of religious movements, albeit with due respect to their right to exist. One cannot call the movement led by Jesus in his lifetime a "Christian religion," just as it makes no sense to speak of a "Daoist religion" referring to the early anchorites or even the Daodejing or Zhuangzi. Daoism, like other religions, is the result of a long, interminable, evolutionary, centuries-long process in history.

Now tell me whether or not Daoism has these characteristics. No one can deny it. Even more so if we believe in the teaching of Daode Jing chapter 16:

天乃道 - tian nai dao - The divine leads to the Dao

