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A Beautiful China

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Rebirth of a Civilization

China's Heavenly Mandate

Every nation has its own destiny — its role and mission on the grand stage in the unfolding of civilization.

Constitutional monarchy and the Industrial Revolution gave rise to the British Empire. It led humanity through the 19th century as the spirit of science illuminated the realm on which the sun never set.

The Mayflower carried Europe's dissenters to a new continent; their descendants founded the United States of America. This nation led humanity through the 20th century, twice defeating tyranny and championing the universal values of democracy and liberty.

China, the ancient giant that stumbled and fell down upon entry to the modern age. It was home to Asia's first republic, yet it became a spiritual wasteland ravaged by authoritarianism. To this day, it struggles to keep up with the progress of human political civilization. Once this ancient civilization, reborn through fire and hardship, rises again, what mission will it play for the whole of humanity?

For over two millennia, secluded spiritual worlds have given rise to diverse philosophies and religions. Gods and godlessness, your god and mine — civilizations have taken different paths to arrive at where they are in today's global village. Divisions, misunderstandings, and barriers of hostility permeate this world. Humanity's long-term future demands a new path—one we walk together.

America has a solid foundation in constitutional values. Europe, however, faces challenges as waves of migration and religious divides expose the fragility of its constitutional consensus. Behind political disputes lie deeper civilizational conflicts. Faith — fundamental beliefs about the world and the self — has always been a source of division. When large populations within a nation reject tolerance and believe heretics deserve death, how can the foundation of constitutional order remain strong?

With the great strides made in science and technology, people arrive at this era from different roads, meeting in the global village. Yet deep within the soul, prejudice and hostility persist as people cling to millennia-old tales. Rationality is a fragile thing, we never know when passions might ignite. Even in this age of peace, the threat of war is ever-present.

Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? Humanity's ultimate questions have received different answers in different times. Today, we yearn for a new Axial Age, one that keeps pace with technological advancements and offers new philosophies, and beliefs to transcend the divisions of the past age and arrive at a broad consensus.

As the sun shines during the day and moon at night, as spring comes to all nations, the ancient dream of great unity (大同) — a universal fraternity — sprouts anew. The seeds of this dream, long planted in Chinese civilization, are beginning to germinate. Leaving behind the cycles of dynastic suffering, China will be reborn as a new life founded on freedom, justice, and love. It shall stand as a model of a flourishing society, leading a new order of peace and righteousness.

A beautiful China belongs to every citizen. It also belongs to all humanity in the era of new civilization.

A Civilization far from God

Chinese civilization shares its origins with other great civilizations. The moment when early humans gazed at the stars was when they truly became human. A distant voice asked: What is this place? Who are you? Where did you come from? Where are you going?

Rational thought and reverence for heaven above set humans apart from animals.

In Sumer, Egypt, India, and Greece, temples to the gods stood at the heart of ancient civilizations' public life. Serving the gods was a central part of ancient communal existence, and the priestly class held sacred status. Chinese civilization was no exception.

However, after King Wu of Zhou overthrew the Shang Dynasty, with its downfall the practice of "serving the spirits and gods" came to an end. The priestly class lost its sacred standing, and

Chinese civilization began to secularize. The Duke of Zhou proposed the idea of “matching Heaven through virtue.” Heaven ceased to guide worldly life directly and became a distant presence. Paying respects to Heaven became the exclusive prerogative of the sovereign, with secular morality and the will of the people serving as the measure of his devotion to Heaven.

From this point forward, for three millennia, monarchical power reigned supreme in China. Divine authority did not even play a secondary role.

Among the Hundred Schools of Thought, Confucianism and Legalism had the most enduring influence. For two thousand years, the tree of Chinese civilization had Confucianism and Legalism as its trunk, while Daoism and imported religions like Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam formed the branches and leaves. Viewed from above, the landscape reveals two towering trees — Confucianism and Legalism — with other schools as smaller trees or undergrowth.

Legalism is intensely secular and utilitarian. It exalts the law of the jungle and exploits the instincts of pursuing benefits and avoiding harm. Through strict rewards and punishments, it drives and enslaves people to maximize the rulers’ worldly benefit. Legalist techniques of punishment, manipulation, and political intrigue became the essence of governance during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. This reached its zenith under the Qin Emperor, whose forcible unification became the template for later emperors.

Confucius advocated proper relationships between ruler and subject, father and son, emphasizing virtues like benevolence in rulers, loyalty in subjects, kindness in fathers, and filial piety in sons. This set of secular moral codes educated the masses and also served as a facade to constrain monarchical power. While Confucianism did not limit political power in practice, its rituals and etiquette exerted a degree of influence on individuals.

Confucianism was deeply, perhaps overly concerned with worldly affairs. Although it had a vague notion of the Heavenly mandate, its moral roots lay in narratives about the ancestors, sages, and legendary emperors, lacking the transcendental foundation necessary for a system of spiritual belief. Buddhism, by contrast, took the road of complete detachment, ignoring the physical concerns of this world. Christianity, after the Protestant Reformation, combined spiritual salvation with an active role in worldly affairs. It is no coincidence that Christian civilization came to flourish so greatly.

Socrates calmly drank his hemlock, believing in the gods and that death was a new beginning. The ancient Greeks explored the relationship between man and the gods, holding the original Olympic Games as acts of worship. They pondered human nature, asking what is good and what is just. They studied the natural world, questioning the laws governing the movement of the sun, moon, and stars, and two millennia ago envisioned Earth as it appears from space.

Compared to contemporaries like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, Confucianism lacked both the religious and scientific dimensions. Confucius avoided discussing the supernatural and refrained from speculating on the afterlife, focusing rather on practical moral concerns of the present world. However, exploring man's ultimate questions and the roots of moral civilization is the domain of religion.

Take the parable of the two boys debating whether the sun is closer in the morning or at noon. Confucius could not answer — and, more importantly, did not try to. Yet, contemplating nature and questioning the causes behind material phenomena is the essence of science.

One manifestation of this lack of scientific spirit is traditional Chinese medicine. Techniques like *gua sha* (刮痧 scraping therapy) and acupuncture are effective, and concepts like harmony between heaven and humankind have value, but the Chinese have historically avoided delving deeply into their underlying principles. For instance, while Western medicine extracted artemisinin to treat diseases, Chinese medicine largely remained at the stage of using sweet wormwood herb in its raw form.

The Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒) tried to bring Heaven closer to the human realm, seeking a divine mandate for secular politics. However, his theory of cosmic responses remained secular, emphasizing worldly fortunes and woes. Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming dynasties further distanced Heaven from humanity, focusing on the study of "principle" (理) to codify social norms and moral teachings.

Wang Yangming (王阳明) proposed that "nothing exists outside the mind," suggesting that the appearance of the world depends on the soul and that existence is defined by perception. However, he failed to develop a comprehensive argument. His axiom, the "unity of knowledge and action," posits that knowledge determines action and that the spiritual world shapes the physical world. Unfortunately, he did not explore the roots of the spiritual world in greater depth.

Longing for the other shore

Humans inevitably ask: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? A foundation of belief is indispensable for any civilization. When something is missing, it is often supplemented by other religions or philosophies.

Daoism had its gods, but maintained an overly close connection to the secular world. The Jade Emperor is a celestial emperor, and the heavenly bureaucracy mirrors the mortal court system.

The cultivation of immortality in Daoism does not aim for spiritual transcendence; rather, its immortals are akin to superheroes. Promoted during the Tang and Song dynasties, Daoism became deeply integrated into Chinese society, merging with Buddhism and shamanistic folk practices to form a uniquely Chinese indigenous religion.

Buddhism originally had no gods. It taught the cycles of reincarnation, the universality of suffering, and the causal relationships that govern existence, with the enlightened becoming Buddhas. However, in China, the Tathagata Buddha transformed into a god, and the religion adopted concepts like a heavenly realm — such as the Western Pure Land. Chanting “Amitabha Buddha” promised deliverance; Chinese Buddhism also stressed the salvation of all sentient beings, as well as a concept akin to *sola fide* (justification by faith alone).

Islam gained a significant presence in China following the Mongol conquests. As a faith blending religion and governance, it often clashed with the Chinese rulers. Christianity, introduced in the Qing Dynasty, also faced resistance from the authorities. China's powerful and enduring native culture prevented these foreign religions from dominating the spiritual life of its people.

Unlike European, Japanese, or Indian civilizations, which developed towering cultural systems like a single giant tree, the spiritual world of the Chinese people is fragmented. There has always been a hazy yearning for something more, yet no fully developed, dominant system of belief has emerged. Secularization came too early for China, like a premature birth.

In the absence of a clear spiritual foundation, the people created countless deities. There were also attempts to establish Confucianism as a religion, but it never fully addressed the transcendental realm, nor did it create intermediaries between the divine and mortal planes to serve as cultural anchors.

In Europe, the pantheon of Greek gods was followed by Christianity. Clerical authority served as a counterbalance to royal power; alongside the nobility's checks on kings, Europe developed a system of separation of powers and rational inquiry that gave rise to modern civilization several hundred years ago and has remained dominant since.

Only before an eternal and infinite Creator can all humans be truly equal. From God also arises freedom and love. Morality in this world is rooted in a transcendent spiritual realm. This is the foundation of modern civilization.

The scientific spirit only entered China in modern times.

But the kingdom of God remains barren in China.

A century of destruction

The 20th century was a century of turmoil, a century of destruction.

The New Culture Movement raised the banners of democracy and science. Rejecting both Confucianism and Christianity, it pushed China towards even further secularization. Modern Chinese intellectuals focused on tools and material advancements while neglecting culture and faith, paving the way for authoritarianism.

The Republic of China endured thirty years of internal strife and external threats. Modern civilization clashed repeatedly with ancient autocracy. In the end, it was the Communist Party, imported from the West, that triumphed. This wandering specter from Europe took root in the ancient East, nourished by the rich soil of entrenched despotism. The people still believed in the age-old idea that whoever seizes the throne with force rules. The countryside encircled the cities — farmers awaiting their new emperor overwhelmed the budding market economy, democracy, and rule of law.

Private property was eradicated. At its extreme, the People's Communes controlled even public dining halls, with every meal dictated by those in power. Dependence on authority for basic necessities stripped the people of their last shred of freedom and dignity.

Land reform eradicated the landlords and local gentry, uprooting the rural order based on personal virtue and propriety. The Anti-Rightist Campaign broke the intellectual backbone of China, severing its cultural continuity. Independent social organizations were destroyed, reducing individuals to isolated atoms, and society descended completely into a jungle-like, might-makes-right arena.

Religion was obliterated. God was declared nonexistent, and religion branded as the opium of the people. The Yiguandao (一贯道) faith was eradicated, destroying one of China's attempts at reviving indigenous faith. Christianity was suppressed, divided, and controlled; house churches were persecuted. Buddhism was trampled upon, temples occupied, and monks forced to return to secular life. Islam was humiliated, with some Muslims compelled to raise pigs.

Chinese culture was ravaged. The tombs of the Yan Emperor, Emperor Shun, the shrines of Wang Yangming and Wang Xizhi, along with countless other cultural sites, were destroyed. Confucius's grave was leveled and excavated, and the grand stele honoring him as "the Great Accomplished and Most Sacred Teacher" was shattered. Slogans like "Down with Confucius" turned the age-old virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness into "feudal dregs."

The triumph of Western totalitarianism over Western constitutional democracy was merely one sub-arc in the overall story. The 20th-century battleground of ancient Eastern civilization saw the Confucian outer shell torn asunder and discarded, leaving only the sinister scheming of Legalist machinations. Class struggle reigned supreme, human relationships and moral values were obliterated, and the entire nation descended into a savage and lawless jungle.

A new deity was sculpted through violence and lies. There was a cult leader, the people's great savior. There was a narrative: "The East is Red, the Sun is Rising." There was a promised paradise: communism. There was scripture: quotations spread everywhere. There were rituals: morning pledges and evening reports. All other gods were declared false; this was the sole, true deity. Worship it, and you could rise to power and revel in privilege. Betray it, and you would be publicly denounced, politically persecuted, and your family torn apart.

The idol built on the sand of lies soon collapsed. The materialist, jungle-like value system was swept away by the winds of change. In the era of Reform and Opening Up, the Chinese people have had wiggling room to begin a renewed search for spiritual belonging. A variety of beliefs flourished anew: materialism, nationalism, Neo-Confucianism, liberalism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam — creating a spiritual world of cluttered vibrance.

In the 20th century, China became the world's greatest land of atheism. Yet the seeds of faith were only suppressed, never destroyed.

Heaven has its arrangements for this land of spiritual desolation.

Rebuilding civilization in today's world

There is no turning back on the journey of civilization. All that has passed serves as a prologue and an inescapable foundation. As in the cases of postwar Japan and India, which developed modern civilizations by building upon their ancient cultural roots, the rebirth of a civilization does not require a complete erasure of the past. The historical legacy of a culture and its people is something that endures across the ages.

The roots of China's new civilization lie in antiquity: reverence for Heaven and love for humanity. Such noble values are always worth cherishing. Above imperial power is the vast firmament; divinities are watching three feet above one's head. The call of Heaven and conscience inspires this nation to strive for light and goodness.

Compassion and benevolence form the moral and ethical relationships among people. Faith in the will of Heaven led Confucius on his selfless travels across the Chinese states. The principles of universal love and non-aggression taught by Mozi promote peace and justice, encouraging

self-restraint and sacrifice. To honor the elderly as one's own elders and care for all children as one's own — this spirit embodies shared humanity. As poet Du Fu wrote, “How wonderful it would be to have a great shelter to warm the poor folk freezing outside!” To set a moral foundation for Heaven and Earth, establish a purpose for humanity, carry forward the teachings of the sages, and create peace for future generations. One day, when the Chinese people are no longer the cunning, exploitative, and resentful failures of the past, we shall reclaim a grander vision for the world under Heaven.

A more fundamental cornerstone for civilization is a renewed understanding of humanity's place in the cosmos. To know who we are, where we come from, and where we are going. To stand reverently before Heaven, humbly before nature, and justly and lovingly before others.

Materialism is a shallow, utilitarian, and morally void system of value.

Materialism fails to explain life. It claims that matter is the fundamental origin of the world and that consciousness and life are mere results of neuronal interactions. But why do neurons interact? Why do molecules undergo chemical reactions? What does such interaction signify at the level of subatomic particles? Why are there attractions and repulsions?

Non-living matter, no matter how it is combined, cannot produce the sensation of “I”—the spiritual phenomenon of self-awareness. A stone, though seemingly lifeless, contains a vibrant microcosm below the level of atoms. Chemical reactions are responses akin to attraction, repulsion, union, and rejection — hallmarks of life. What we assume to be immutable natural laws are reflections of life's individuality. Among all things, matter is but an illusion; life is the essence.

Materialism insists that only what can be seen and touched, or what is perceptible to the senses, is real. Yet the Earth is but a speck of dust, and what humanity can perceive, even with the aid of instruments, is minuscule. What is existence? Is matter tangible or void? Could the spiritual realm, something of even greater expanse than dark matter and dark energy, also be real?

Materialism denies that morality stems from a higher source. If morality stems merely from the outcomes of power struggles, the strong are entitled to break the rules at any time. If human life is limited to a single lifetime and lacks a foundation in faith or eternal love, morality becomes mere reciprocity: I help others so they will help me. But if others do not help me, why should I feel aggrieved? What results from responding to grievances with grievances? What justifies repaying grievance with virtue? Why should one tolerate differences or care for the weak? If a strong person is utterly invincible, why should it be wrong for them to use any and all means to achieve their ends?

The popularity of materialism as a doctrine is understandable. But what goes hand in hand with materialist doctrine is totalitarianism. It uses violence to suppress all religious faith, crushing humanity's innate yearning for the divine. People are forced to accept jungle-like values, stripping away their humanity and devastating their moral conscience.

With this, the soul is rendered barren. China has become the world's largest land of atheism—a spiritual wasteland. Without a spiritual refuge, people are anxious and restless. Without reverence and humility, material desires run rampant, leading to short-sightedness and the erosion of moral restraint.

The search for the meaning of life and the worship of an ultimate spirit are intrinsic to human nature. Animals lack this. Gazing at the stars and pondering the cosmos gave rise to religion and civilization. Religion is humanity's path to the divine. Each nation has walked different paths to where we are now, converging in our global village. Yet no single old path can accommodate everyone as we move toward the future.

In the age of a new civilization, humanity needs a new path — a higher understanding of nature, humanity, and the divine. This path must embrace diverse cultures, integrate science, and uphold freedom, forming the foundation of democratic constitutionalism. This new faith will belong not only to China but to all of humanity. In this new age of civilization, a shared path to the future is China's heavenly mandate.

Recreating civic spirit

The Chinese people are deeply complex — the complexity is written on their faces and revealed in their spirit and temperament.

In the spring of 2008, while waiting at Delhi Airport, I observed the flow of passengers and noticed the unique aura of the Chinese people, especially women. Westerners appeared natural and confident. Japanese and Taiwanese travelers exuded gentleness and humility. Mainland Chinese people, however, could be described with one word — complex. A mixture of pride, insecurity, vigilance, and curiosity, still tainted with an air of hard militantness of Mao's era. Such a complex history and environment make simply surviving an enormous challenge.

The Chinese are hardworking, patient, frugal, and adaptable, yet also selfish, dishonest, distrustful, and submissive. To reshape the national character means transforming selfishness, dishonesty, vigilance, and servility into justice, honesty, friendship, and freedom. Through this will be forged a new spirit of liberty, justice, and love.

This does not mean altering human nature. Human nature means variety among individuals, but it remains fundamentally the same across large groups — independent or conforming, introverted or extroverted, hostile or friendly, vigilant or trusting, honest or deceitful. Reforming the national character is a matter of controlling the uglier aspects of human nature and amplifying our nobler traits.

National character is not a product of race but of institutions and culture. North Koreans tend to be more distrustful and hostile, greeting strangers with a cold gaze. Americans, by contrast, are more friendly and open, often nodding and smiling at passersby. A North Korean child raised in the U.S. would likely grow up friendly and open, while an American who spent decades in North Korea might become distrustful and hostile. The environment shapes which traits of human nature are nurtured and which are suppressed.

Culture carries significant inertia, but it does not necessarily dictate destiny. China's national character has undergone transformations over its long history. In the Spring and Autumn period, it was simple and chivalrous; during the Tang dynasty, it was magnanimous and poised. Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, however, it has gradually become weak and apathetic. The trauma of authoritarian terror and materialistic excess has given rise to the complexity of today's Chinese national character.

Chinese people tend to sacrifice civic good for their personal profit. "Sweep the snow from your own doorstep; don't worry about the frost on your neighbor's roof." The indifferent spectators depicted in Lu Xun's works can still be seen craning their necks today, uninterested in what does not directly concern them. The actions of the Chinese are driven by an extreme pragmatism — leveraging public resources for private benefit, relying on connections to get things done, flaunting privilege, and indulging in corruption. Rules are disregarded, contracts unfulfilled, and counterfeit goods run rampant.

The Chinese lie habitually. Deception is so pervasive that it has lost its stigma. Teachers deceive students, claiming socialism's unparalleled superiority. Students plagiarize each other's "thought report." Superiors mislead subordinates with tales of brilliant macro visions. Subordinates lie to superiors to get by. From the state to the individual, from politics to daily life, from international dealings to domestic affairs, lies come easily, making honesty a rare commodity.

Distrust among Chinese is deeply ingrained. "The human heart is unpredictable," "Speak only three-tenths of what you think," "While you shouldn't harm others, you must always be on guard." Asking to borrow a stranger's phone on the street to make an urgent call is likely to result in refusal. Elderly people who fall on the pavement are often avoided instead of being helped. Smiling at a stranger may make them uneasy. From an early age, children are warned not to accept food from strangers.

Submissiveness is another defining trait of today's Chinese. "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down," "Better a dishonorable life than a noble death." Apathy and weakness manifest in silent endurance of injustice. Millions of online comments are censored, yet people remain silent. Despite high fuel prices, taxes, housing costs, and low social benefits, servility prevails. Cynicism dominates. In hierarchical structures, people bow and scrape before superiors while bullying subordinates. Dignity is lost, leaving pettiness, complexity, and darkness etched into our faces.

All this is the result of a long history of authoritarian rule.

When even the concept of "nation" is treated as a tool for the ruling party's private interests, who would care about the public good? When the nation's highest authority is openly built on lies, what does it matter if ordinary folk engage in minor deceptions? After surviving the jungle of "class struggle," how can one avoid distrusting others? Under a regime where life is as insignificant as that of an ant, who would dare stand tall?

Mongols relegated Han Chinese to inferiority, violating their wives and daughters. During the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang publicly flogged officials in court, stripping them of their dignity. After their ten-day sack of Yangzhou, the Manchus forced men to wear the queue on pain of death. Totalitarian ideology swept away Confucian ideals of benevolence, leaving millions prostrate on the ground. Wave after wave of barbaric despotism shattered the backbone and dignity of the Chinese people. This nation has suffered deeply; its numbness and weakness are heartbreaking.

Rebuilding the national character requires establishing new systems, restoring faith, To rebuild our national character, we must establish institutions, revive faith, highlight the beauty of human nature, suppress its ugliness, and craft a new spirit for our nation.

A just Chinese citizen is upright and honest, with an unyielding sense of righteousness. They stand up to injustice with courage and integrity, defending their own freedoms while respecting those of others'. They care for society, participate in public affairs, separate their personal interests from those of the public good, and carry themselves with conscience in leading their lives.

An honest Chinese citizen is simple and sincere, refraining from lying under any circumstance — whether to family, friends, in front of children, to the sick, or strangers. The ability to deceive is not cleverness, but shame. Political leaders in particular must take honesty as a fundamental principle in their actions.

A kind Chinese citizen embodies goodness as a natural instinct, a faith, and a fundamental virtue. They greet others, friends and strangers alike, with genuine smiles and lend a helping hand generously. They care for others, support the weak, not for personal gain but out of faith and a desire to reflect divine love.

A free Chinese citizen is authentic, living in truth and striving to become their best self.

A nation of honest, just, and kind citizens will build a new civilization.

An appropriate system

A regime built on the principle that power comes from the barrel of a gun, founded and maintained through violence, treats the country as its property. One leader stands above all, doing as he pleases, while countless others kneel in submission, fawning and servile. Such a system constrains the good in human nature and amplifies the bad. This is the law of the jungle — a politics of barbarism.

The worth, freedom, and dignity of every individual should be cherished. A country governed by the public good, with checks and balances, periodic, free, and fair elections, constrains the evil in human nature and amplifies the good. This is constitutional democracy — a politics of civilization.

Humanity has walked a long road from barbarism to the civilization of today. There is a science to this system. Wrongdoers are punished, victims are compensated, and people believe in fairness. Checks and balances distribute power; political elites play different roles, competing to win public favor, and freedoms are safeguarded. Political competition is free and fair, state power operates with integrity, and trust becomes the foundation of society. Power is subordinate to law, ensuring freedom and dignity for all, eradicating servility. When the great way prevails, the world belongs to all. One serves others while completing oneself; civic virtue comes naturally.

The foundation of such a system is faith. Before God, worldly distinctions of strength and weakness, wealth and poverty, height and stature, are utterly insignificant. We are all fundamentally equal, hence achieving this equality becomes a goal of human life. Only before God can we find a love that transcends utilitarianism. He created this world with its differences not for mutual enmity, but for mutual love, so that the most beautiful tapestry can be woven.

Maximal individual freedom — freedom of thought, creativity, and life — may be likened to the natural growth of grass and trees on earth, following the innate nature bestowed by Heaven. A nation and society built on justice and fairness, governed by democracy and the rule of law,

where all fulfill their roles, contribute their abilities, and find their places. Love is the inexhaustible fountain of life's happiness.

Civic education

We must promote civic education to ensure that everyone understands right and wrong, good and evil.

The primary and secondary school curriculum must include civics courses so as to foster civic awareness. Children should learn that they are citizens, not subjects, peasants, ants, or nobodies. The nation does not belong to a select few; it belongs to every citizen, for their freedom, safety, and well-being. The state is not an end in itself; human freedom and happiness are the ultimate goals.

We must teach children the value of democracy. Politics is everyone's business, and everyone is the master. Autocracy and tyranny are relics of a barbaric past; democracy and freedom are the future of civilization. Everyone has the right and the duty to participate in politics. Democracy is not just about elections; it is about daily engagement.

We have to teach children that laws are not tools of class oppression or shields for the arbitrary power of privileged groups. Laws protect the rights and freedoms of every individual. Democracy means laws are enacted through collective will, enforced rigorously, and adjudicated impartially, ensuring justice in the world.

It's also imperative to teach children the value of freedom and tolerance. Freedom is an inherent human pursuit and the ultimate purpose of society and the state. Never underestimate human folly and prejudice. Ideas that seemed absurd in Giordano Bruno's time became prophetic truths in another era.

Teach children about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Fundamental freedoms and rights — such as voting, freedom of speech, and freedom of belief — are deeply rooted in human nature and ultimately grounded in God's kingdom. Everyone is equal. Cherish your rights and respect those of others. Be honest. Follow your conscience, obey rules, and uphold principles.

Teach children that in modern civilized society, family background and lineage are irrelevant. What matters are character and service. We come from the same spiritual home, and the meaning of life lies in experiencing this perfect world with joy during our brief journey.

Teach children reverence and humility. Not everything visible is real, nor is everything invisible false. Life is not merely the result of material interactions or drifting aimlessly like duckweed. Life has roots; all things have roots, and we have our ultimate spiritual home.

Teach children that the wellspring of happiness is love. Distrust, fear, and hostility arise from ignorance and narrow-mindedness. Love your family, but also love strangers. Hold goodwill in your heart toward everyone.

Ritual and cultivation

To know right from wrong, to understand what ought to be — this rational awareness is not always able to govern our impulsive actions.

Human nature is multicolored, divided into good and evil depending on how it affects others. Living in the visible, material world, the body is endlessly tempted by worldly desires—sex, wealth, power. On the other hand, human nature encompasses reverence, trust, and boundless love, but these are often swept away or eroded. Half angel, half demon.

Ignorance, misunderstanding, suspicion, hostility, and desire make up the complexity of reality. Without guidance and nurturing, people are easily tempted and led astray. This is why the soul requires constant care and elevation.

This world is a battlefield between light and darkness, good and evil. Yet they are interdependent. In this divided, material world, ignorance is the root of sin. Humanity must set out on the path of self-cultivation, and like beautiful music, it helps us transcend the barriers of the heart, uniting us as one.

Eternal truth, goodness, and beauty awaken a deep yearning within the soul. Yet, temptations pervade the material world, and without vigilance, they lead us astray. This is why humanity needs art: to awaken beautiful memories that remain eternal in our spiritual realm. Humanity also needs religion for nurturing and guidance. Philosophy broadens our understanding of God, nature, and humanity, raising us to new heights. Rituals play a role too.

From ancient religion grew art, science, law, and morality. But what became of these faiths?

They settled as fertile soil, and from it, new seeds sprouted.

Humanity needs stories to accompany it on the long road of civilization. It needs public spaces to inspire and comfort one another, to share the stirring of our souls. Humanity needs collective prayer and collective song — new rituals, new reverence, and a heart of peace and happiness.

Politics and religion cannot be completely separated; nor have they ever truly been separate. Freedom of faith and the separation of church and state do not negate the mainstream faith consensus of the people, nor do they deny the expression of personal faith in public life. It is not about authoritarian indoctrination, but disseminating knowledge on the foundation of individual freedom.

A beautiful China must be rooted in freedom, justice, and love; the Chinese people must become a people of honesty, fairness, and kindness; China will become a nation that creates a new civilization and reclaims the glory of the ancient East. This is a new path, a new era of civilization.