

PROF YUAN XINGPEI:

Professor Cheng, ladies and gentlemen, just now the other two speakers have made speeches. They were brilliant speeches.

Today, the theme of this session is culture, core values and I would like to share with you my own thoughts on this subject. When we talk about core values, Prof Ge talked about the traditions of China and actually if you look at things from different angles, there could be different interpretations.

Because of time constraints, I could only talk one point or indeed one word, that's harmony.

"Harmony" means the sound is in tune, so it's about sound being in tune and then it can be extended to mean "harmony", "peace", "inclusion", "peace" even and "tranquility", whatever. We all know that in the analects, Confucius said that the gentlemen will set it -- said, "The superior man is affable but not idolatry, the mean man is idolatry but not affable".

So now a lot of people ask me, "Say the superior man is affable but the mean man is idolatry?" So here we're talking about a concept of harmony and agreement. How are they different? Perhaps we could also refer to the commentary of Zhao Gao Guang, 20 years, when Yang Ying responded to Zhi Hao's question, Zhi Hao came back from hunting, he said to Yang Ying, "There's only one person who's in harmony with me and that person's called Leung Chiu Jui." He said, "Only Leung Chiu Jui is in harmony with me". And then Yang Ying said, "Leung Chiu Jui is only in agreement with you." So that's not really harmony.

And then Zhi Hao asked, "What's the difference between harmony and agreement?" And Yang Ying answered, "Harmony means a harmonious relationship and that's just like the cooking process. It's just like water, fire, salt, prunes and fish meat together with fire. So it's just like cooking broth. Water, fire, as well as different ingredients were used together to cook fish and meat. And fire is used. There must be an appropriate use of these ingredients. If the broth is too thick, you add water. If it is too diluted, you reduce the water or add the ingredients. So that's actually characteristic of harmony."

Yang Ying used this analogy to describe the emperor and his ministers. And then the impracticable elements were pointed out. Practicable elements should be pointed out and expressed. And they should be complementary to one another to arrive at harmony. And Leung Chiu Jui was not like that.

What you think is practicable, he also thinks is practicable. If you think that's impracticable, he also thinks it's impracticable. It's just like using water to water and it's just like the adjustment

of different voices. What Yang Ying said clearly indicated the difference between harmony and agreement. In harmony, you can have an integration and adjustment of different views, but by agreement, you mean the duplication and repetition of similar views. And Confucius had a high regard for harmony instead of agreement.

This concept is a concept of high regard for harmony. Regard for harmony was actually manifested in the classics, Lao Zi of Taoism also mentioned harmony. In chapter 42 of Lao Zi, it is said that all things leave behind them the obscurity and go forward to embrace the brightness while they're harmonised by the breath of vacancy. So harmony is the summary of the interrelated relationship of different things in the world.

And then in Guo Yu, Zhang Yu, it's also said that harmony is the most precious relationship.

So harmony is also the principle of politics. It said in Guo Yu that harmony produced effects and agreement cannot be sustained. So new results and effects would result from harmony. With agreement, you cannot have sustainability.

And this description has raised harmony to a level above production. And this is a very significant philosophical thought in Chinese culture. It started from reality and as a result the high regard for harmony had developed, including harmony between nature and human beings, harmony among human beings. As regards the harmony between human beings and resources, humans can change nature to suit human needs and adjust the human style of living. As regards harmony among humans, people respect themselves as well as others. Both partial and overall interests should be taken into account.

As for the individuals, there are two areas of harmony. Through practice, the conduct and character of a person could be enhanced. I think in Chinese tradition the concept of harmony also involves integration and I would like to mention three aspects here.

First of all, harmony is a systemic harmony. It's not a partial and simplistic harmony. The feelings of happiness, anger, agony and joy within the inner soul of a person should first be harmonised and, in the end, there should be harmony with the nature. And then we have the middle level of harmony and then everybody can enjoy he or she requires and also the different elements of nature can also be put in their proper place. And then regulations should be up to a suitable level and in the end, human beings can harmonise with nature.

This progression from small harmony to medium harmony to big harmony is precisely the Confucius principle of regulating the individual, the family, the governors of the state as well as peace for the whole world. This is a kind of interrelationship and

interactive system. As a result, confrontation among people and between people and nature could be minimised.

Secondly, harmony can result from conflicts and confrontation. That is, a balance can be struck. In this regard, I would like to chip in a few words about balance. That is, mean -- the doctrine of the mean.

Near central, centre appropriate, which are used to describe the most appropriate manner and behaviour as well as state. In the analects of Confucius, it said that a person was to be made the emperor and then the emperor should master the doctrine of the mean, of medium harmony. And that was how Emperor Yu was taught. That is, to strike the balance. And that's also the saying that between the two extremities, a balance should be struck and the central point should be grasped.

As far as resources are concerned, balance is important. One shouldn't go to the extremes.

In Chinese tradition, the ultimate conflicts can be found between yin and yang. It said that yin and yang should be harmonised to strike a balance. So yin and yang should be adjusted and harmonised and the principle of changes should also be mastered and controlled in the best manner.

It's also said in the classics that the greater extremes are the yin and the yang for the heaven and the earth. And the most important principle is that a balance should be struck. Said that heaven and people should be harmonised. When people can live happily, that's the wish of heaven. The agony and happiness of people should be balanced. That's between balance and yin and yang. That means the emperor should resolve the plight and misery of his people and in the end, a peaceful society could be attained.

In Chinese culture, we've often been in pursuit of harmony between the extremities, heaven and earth, water and fire, winter and summer, emperor and ministers, husband and wife togetherness and separation, et cetera, et cetera. This pursuit for harmony among the extremes has influenced Chinese architecture, landscape, music, language, arts and so forth.

Take, for example, Chinese calligraphy. In the Tang Dynasty, there was a very important book known as "The Manual for Books and Calligraphy". It said that for calligraphy, there could be harmony among extremes. That means, a dilution and concentration, dryness and lubrication, vagueness and pragmatism, et cetera, could be balanced in Chinese calligraphy.

This is in line with Confucius teaching about harmony which was used in calligraphy.

Thirdly, harmony is a kind of movement -- is harmony in activity and movement. Well, extreme elements are not always in harmony. Sometimes there may not be harmony. However, eventually there'll be harmony. The Sung Dynasty (inaudible) said that eventually the extremes will come to harmony. That means the gentlemen will seek harmony or the mean. And harmony does not have any hard and fast rules. We should make adjustments as time goes by and as circumstances change. Only synchronisation with changing circumstances can assist us in attaining harmony and balance. That means we should always keep changing with time to suit different circumstances.

So changes, continuous changes, are actually part of our principles and conceptions and we should have flexibility. Flexibility leads to harmony. This has manifested the spirit of reform of the Chinese race and Chinese culture.

All in all, harmony represents the core values of Chinese culture. In the past, it had promoted the development and prosperity of the Chinese culture. It also has positive impact for the modern society. I think harmony is pluralistic unification. It does not mean that we should not differentiate between enemy or friend or the differences among people. Competition should take place under fairness and justice and then eventually we can arrive at harmony and consensus.

Peace and harmony have become the major trend of the world. Nevertheless, the human race still faces a lot of conflicts: conflicts between man and nature, conflicts among human beings themselves and conflicts among the individuals. Ecological damage, environmental pollution, regional conflicts, terrorism, religious crisis, psychological diseases, et cetera, have all posed challenges in the whole process and this concept of harmony in traditional Chinese culture should have a very important role to play in all these conflicts.