

APNME 2017

Wuhan, China



华中师范大学

道德教育研究所

Welcome from the Chair of APNME

Dear friends and colleagues,

On behalf of the members of the committee of the Asia-Pacific Network for Moral Education (APNME) and of our international Conference Organising Committee, I am delighted to extend a very warm welcome to APNME's 11th Annual Conference. I would also like to express our gratitude to our hosts at Central China Normal University for their excellence and determination to prepare a welcoming space for our gathering and discussions.

We are gathered here at the Central China Normal University, appropriately named "Central" as Wuhan is both very near the population centre of China and arguably also the economic centre of China. If you take the arc of coastal economic activities and draw a line from Beihai to Dalian, you will find Wuhan at the centre of that line. If you consider the recent movement inland of that activity and the fact that many powerhouses of the economy are on the Yangtze River with movement of people and goods including bullet trains, we can see the strategic location of this beautiful vibrant city, at the heart of the Middle or Central Kingdom (中国 Zhōngguó). It seems the APNME is in love with the centre of China, having had conferences in Nanjing and Shanghai in the last few years. Here we are again and the messages to those conferences referenced the critical challenges facing us and the moral imperative to act, especially to act virtuously in educating young people to see clearly the cooperative principles and behaviours that can achieve peace, harmony and trustworthiness.

This is not just a strategic location. We are also at a tipping point, or strategic challenging moment of history. In the history of human civilisation, the formula for successfully traversing impending chaos and collapse has been to move to higher forms of cooperation, unity and trustworthy relationships. It also requires telling the truth about what is going on. Professor Du will address this issue in his keynote address. In the new era of "post-truth" and "alternative truths", APNME's academic truth examining voices need to be raised and strengthened. From this central location, the APNME is yet again calling for attention to upright conduct or morality 正 (zhèng). What I am suggesting is that at this critical crossroad and tipping point in history, requiring great dynamic balancing, APNME is offering our very direct and open advice to our friends, both individually and collectively 正言直諫 (zhèng yán zhí jiàn). Of all the current civilisations competing for influence and power at this time, China has the most experience and proven success at re-inventing itself, which it has done three or four times. Western civilisation is in the process of collapsing for the first time (reference the great historian Arnold Toynbee). The world needs China to move to its most virtuous and upright conduct or morality (正 zhèng). "A peaceful and harmonious bilateral relationship between countries will make both winners, while a confrontational one will make both losers" (hé zé liǎng lì , dòu zé jù shāng). Or in world embracing terms: "Across the four seas, all men are brothers": sì hǎi zhī nèi jiē xiōng dì (四海之内皆兄弟). Even more fundamental to this thinking is the concept of yin and yang, who are not enemies. Yin and yang don't hate each other. Yin and yang are both necessary, like night and day, for the functioning of the world. From the Zen master Sengcan: "If you want the truth to stand clear before you, never be for or against.

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The struggle between for and against is the mind's worst disease." 鑑智僧璨 Jianzhi Sengcan. Now unfortunately, this "disease" has been caught by many of the world's leaders and peoples. The mindset that there are no dualities and no enemies is the only sane starting point for this endeavour.

China is also famous for absorbing foreign ideas and peoples and adapting itself using Openness and Creativity, as well as Discernment. These are all done by slowing down into awareness at the moment of confrontation and challenge. It requires listening to all voices, especially the weak ones. In English, people commonly think of a "meeting of the minds" to gain understanding. In Chinese, one way to say "understanding" with the implication also of "knowing" is a meeting of the hearts (会心). I want to speak to you from my heart (心 xīn) as a friend and elder, and as I retire from the Committee and Chair.

Each member of APNME may be only a small part of their university, school or other workplace, and some of us come from very small "powerless countries". A single idea or individual action, however, can have profound effects on history if it is catalytic or contains the seed of a new paradigm. These ideas do need uplifting to prominence by more powerful nations or people and I call China to support us in this.

I am from New Zealand, arguably the most remote country in the world, being the last stop before Antarctica and furthest from the heavily populated continents. New Zealand, however, is outstanding in its contribution to the world from its position of weakness. It has been ranked as the least corrupt nation in the world for most of the last two decades and in 2016 was tied with Denmark for the top spot. Leading by example often comes from the periphery. Einstein would not have gotten started without the New Zealander Rutherford. The New Zealander Rewi Alley (路易 艾黎 Lu-yi Ai-li) was a cabinet minister under President Sun Yatsen (孙中山 Sūn Zhōngshān) He was founder of the Gung Ho cooperatives (gōng hé 工合), which is a shortened version of the term: gōngyè hézuòshè (工業合作社) or Chinese Industrial Cooperatives. He also devoted his life to the upliftment of the Chinese people, particularly education of young people. Another New Zealander Kathleen Hall (何明清 He Ming Qing) set up a cottage hospital in Songjiazhuang, a small village in western Hebei, where the famous Canadian surgeon Norman Bethune (白求恩 Bai Qiu'en) asked her to help. She made 30 journeys and developed a smuggling network including mule and donkey trains for surgical instruments, medicine and newly graduated Chinese doctors from Beijing into mountains for the Eighth Route Army. Her ashes are buried in the Martyr's Memorial Cemetery in Quyang, Hebei. I have five family members buried in Fuzhou during the same turbulent times and one who fled Shanghai while her husband was imprisoned in Sūzhōu. Let us end such times once and for all. I recommend to you other stories from our assembled members some of whom published chapters in the book:

People without Borders: Becoming members of global communities.

Our keynote speakers will carry on several important themes related to these challenges.

Let us motivate each other (with regards to this topic) gòng miǎn zhī.

Kind regards, Derek W Patton 白登德

