

傳知傳善的哲人

— 費樂仁教授

Devoted to Knowledge and Goodness

— Professor Lauren Pfister



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在銀白的鬚髮和鬍子之間露出慈祥的笑容，他架着碩大的肚子卻沒有架子，溫文爾雅，謙遜有禮——他就是宗教及哲學系的費樂仁教授。這樣的外形，加上外籍人士的身份，讓系內同學常稱他為「聖誕老人」。然而，同學們都知道，這「老人」來自泰西遠方，背着的「禮物」卻萃取了中外多方精華，只待我們拆開收取。

專研中國思想，熟悉九文八語的費樂仁教授，於1987年來到浸會學院（編按：浸會大學前身）任教，為宗教及哲學系創系成員之一。憶及往事，費教授說只能以「奇妙」來形容。當年，費教授在美國夏威夷大學讀書，受同窗梁燕城博士支持與幫助，甫取得博士學位，收到邀請來浸會任教；博士畢業與教席無間斷交接，是極幸運的事。往後幾年，費教授更親身經歷本校由「學院」升格為「大學」的奇妙時刻。他認為一切背後，都有上帝在帶領。「我本來申請了南京大學的教席，沒想到最終上帝叫我來了這裡，而且一來就是三十年。」對身為虔誠基督徒的費教授來說，從事研究和教學是上帝的呼召；因此，無論是研究或教學都是神聖的，必須以侍奉上帝的心進行。

信仰如斯虔誠，為何最終選擇了中國思想為研究領域，而不從事神學工作？事實上，費教授在從事哲學研究前，已取得了神學碩士學位，所以他熟悉中文以外的各種古語言，如古希臘文、希伯來文等。中國首次進入他的視域，是上世紀七十年代中期。那時文化大革命臨近尾聲，費先生去了菲律賓的中國馬尼拉神學院，

Smiling through his silver mustache and warm friendly face, he holds a tall stature and hearty figure. Going with this is an air of gentleness and cultivation, honesty and courtesy—he is Prof. Lauren Pfister of the Department of Religion and Philosophy. Students have nicknamed him “Santa Claus” for his foreign identity and congenial appearance. However, they all know well that although this father Christmas has come from overseas, the “gifts” he sends out are gems crystalizing the essence of wisdom of the West and China.

Prof. Pfister specializes in Chinese Philosophy, and he writes in nine languages and speaks a total of eight. In 1987, he came to teach at the Hong Kong Baptist College (now HKBU) and became the co-founder of the Religion and Philosophy Department. Recalling his unique past, Prof. Pfister said he would describe his life journey with the word “magic.” Before coming to Hong Kong, Prof. Pfister was just finishing his Ph.D. degree at the University of Hawaii in the U.S. With the help of his schoolfriend Dr. Leung In Sing, he received an offer to teach at Hong Kong Baptist University. Prof. Pfister recalls that it was very lucky at that time to hold a teaching post immediately after graduation. In the years that followed, he witnessed the institution’s transformation from a college into the university it has become today. He believes that all these are under God’s will and lead. “Initially I applied to teach at Nanjing University, but God has taken me here in Hong Kong to stay for thirty years,” said Prof. Pfister, who is a devoted Christian. He thinks both his teaching and research have resulted from the calling of God, and as they are blessed obligations, they must be carried out in the same spiritual manner as he holds for his belief in God.

One may ask, with such a devotion, why has Prof. Pfister chosen to work in the field of Chinese philosophy instead of theology? In fact, before studying philosophy, he had already finished a master’s degree in theology. This explains why Prof. Pfister is well-versed in a number of classical languages including Chinese, Greek and Hebrew. It was in the 1970s, near the end of the Cultural Revolution, that China first caught his attention. In those days Prof. Pfister was teaching ancient Bible studies and

任教古代《聖經》和古代語言。他看見當地有華人崇拜毛澤東，大為震撼：沒想到竟有人真心視這個凡人，且殺戮無數的人為神。那時費先生正要決定博士論文題目，經過一番沉思和祈禱後，最終決定以中歐比較政治哲學為主，後來發展成比較康有為和兩位德國哲學家 Habermas 及 Rosenstock-Huussy 的政治哲學思想。此後費教授一路走來，鑽研日深，至今已學界這領域的翹楚，以及知名學術期刊的編輯。眾多研究中，他對理雅各（James Legge）的研究獨步天下；事實上，學術界現今對理雅各的研究風潮，可謂由費教授帶領掀起。

鑽研古代學問的老師多少有種學究氣質，但費教授在言談間卻不時展現出人文關懷：「我希望以比較哲學和比較宗教的方法重新審視中國不同時代的『意識型態』和儒耶文化交流。現今，探討外籍傳教士與中華基督教的領袖如何影響中國的現代化，是一大重要課題。」這種哲學和歷史問題不容易有清晰答案，要做出成績可能動輒得花上十年。身為哲學工作者，費教授似乎早已明白問題不可能由自己全部解決，事實上也必如此，因為後來者會繼承他的事業。

那麼，他是怎樣看待教育工作的呢？費教授直言香港的教育制度很恐怖，汰弱留強是其核心理念。他甚至不能想像如果自己生於香港，會變成甚麼樣子。他感到在這教育制度下，很多學生都迷失了，不清楚自己的興趣和價值所在。因此，他的教育方針一直是幫助學生建立正心修身的智慧和謙卑理性的生命，鼓勵他們追求除金錢和物質外，各種充滿智慧的價值與實踐工夫。

費教授已年愈花甲，一年後便要離開這工作了三十年的地方，但他一點都不認為研究和教學這兩項工作從此便告一段落。他計劃退休後在回美國西部購置一兩棟物業，讓那裡成為學術交流基地，更可能讓浸大學生到那裡短宿一兩個星期。總之，費樂仁教授肯定會繼續奉獻自己，把「禮物」贈與學生以及學術界，實現榮主事人，「止於至善」的目標。

classical languages at the Chinese Manila Theological Institute in the Philippines. He was shocked by the feverish admiration for Mao Zedong by the Chinese living in the Philippines at that time. He could not understand why a mortal who had caused the deaths of hundreds and thousands of people would be worshipped as a god.

At that time, Prof. Pfister was deciding on the topic of his doctoral thesis. His prayers and contemplation were answered, inspiring him to write on a comparison of political philosophies between China and the West. The topic eventually took shape to become the comparative study between the political philosophies of Kang Youwei and two German philosophers Habermas and Rosenstock-Huussy. Throughout the ensuing years, Prof. Pfister has developed an intense interest in academic research. Now he is a renowned scholar and the editor of a well-known academic journal. He pioneered the study of the famous sinologist and missionary James Legge, which has since become a bona fide area of academemc study in its own right.

Senior professors who are experts in ancient and classical studies might seem to be erudites belonging to another world. Prof. Pfister, however, shows a sense of humanistic concern grounded in the here and now. "I love to look into the ideologies of China throughout the ages and also the Confucian-Christian cultural exchange by the methods of comparative philosophical and religious studies," he says. "Right now, it is important for me to examine the influence of foreign missionaries and Chinese Christian leaders on the modernization of China." There are no easy answers within such an expansive set of academic queries, and such a pursuit can take years, if not decades, of research. As a philosopher, Prof. Pfister seems to realize that it is beyond his capacity to finish it alone—and he doesn't need to, since there are always newcomers to his field to continue their own investigations.

Prof. Pfister is equally devoted to his role as educator within the Hong Kong context. When asked to comment about the nature of "education," Prof. Pfister candidly remarks that the education system in Hong Kong has serious drawbacks, taking the concept of "survival of the fittest" to the extreme. He cannot imagine what he would have become had he been born a Hongkonger. In his mind, under such a system, there are too many students who feel frustrated and are unable to develop a clear idea of their own interests and values. To cope with this, his education principle has always been to help students to build up themselves mentally and morally in a city where financial and material wealth is often emphasized. He hopes his students would understand the value of living by modesty and reason, learning the wisdom of life and ways to achieve it.

Prof. Pfister is over sixty years old now and plans to retire next year after a career of thirty years at HKBU. This does not signal the end of his teaching and research, though. He plans to return to the U.S. and buy one or two premises in the western part to set up a base for academic exchange, probably inviting HKBU students to stay there for periods of a week or two. In this spirit, Prof. Pfister will dedicate himself and bestow "gifts" upon students and scholars in the future—all out of continued devotion to God and humanity.