

# Conference Report

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## 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Chinese Philosophy Beijing, 21–24 July, 2001

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON CHINESE Philosophy are held every two years at different places. This year, it was hosted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. The theme was announced to be *Chinese Philosophy and the Trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

The role of traditional Chinese philosophies, such as, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Mohism and the Theory of Changes in shaping the future was to be discussed. Comparison of Western and Oriental philosophies and civilisations was also included in the agenda. About 260 scholars from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Slovenia, Sweden, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore and China attended the Conference. Many of the participants, although citizens of different

countries, were Chinese in origin. Papers were read in English and Chinese over 4 days at the impressive Beijing Conference Centre. I was the only participant from Austria and the title of my paper was *How to Compare Western and Oriental Philosophies?*

Besides plenary sessions with simultaneous translation, there were group sessions in English and Chinese held in parallel. The organisation of the Conference and hospitality of the organisers were remarkably good. For a beginner like me, it was possible to learn a lot of new things and meet a number of scholars for informal discussions. However, because of the language barrier, communication was not always easy.

The next Conference, the 13th International Conference on Chinese Philosophy, it was announced, would be held in late summer of 2003 in Sweden.

Between the 6th and the 3rd centuries BC, two great traditions of Confucianism and Taoism as well as the variety of thinkers known as the Hundred Schools appeared in China. Chinese

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philosophy dealt with existential problems and, therefore, it is no wonder that it had predominantly practical character. It never developed the purely theoretical attitude characteristics of Greek philosophy. In the early Confucian and Taoist tradition metaphysical questions, such as what is real or unreal were not raised as in Indian traditions. In this sense, India has been closer to the Greek ways of thinking and consequently to the Western frame of mind than China according to one of the speakers.

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## *Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy : 24<sup>th</sup> International Wittgenstein Symposium*

EVERY YEAR IN SUMMER, THE AUSTRIAN LUDWIG Wittgenstein Society holds a philosophical meeting at Kirchberg am Wechsel, a beautiful mountain near Vienna, Austria from 12 to 18 August, 2001. The theme for the symposium was ***Wittgenstein and the Future of Philosophy : A Reassessment after 50 Years***. My report on the Centenary Meeting in 1989 was published in the Indian Science Cruiser, Vol 4, No 1, January 1990. This year marked the 50th Anniversary of

the death of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) , perhaps the most significant philosopher of our times. He was born in Vienna, but went to England in 1929 and acquired British citizenship in 1938.

The Anniversary Meeting was attended by 270 participants from 38 countries and the range of subjects in the papers presented in the plenary and the parallel sessions covered all the aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy and its recent interpretations. There was one participant from India; though another participant was expected, she could not make it to the meeting for some unforeseen reason.

It was a large meeting and the tight schedule was strictly followed. There was some opportunity for informal discussion outside the meeting. The sunny weather and the natural scenery provided an excellent background for such exchange of views. My paper bore the title *Philosophy as a Guide to Life?* And was well received.

Next year the 25th Symposium will be held from 11th to 17th August 2002 and the topic will be *Persons : An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*. Professor Edmund Runggaldier of Innsbruck, I was told, will be in charge of organisation. Needless to say, Kirchberg meetings offer an excellent opportunity for Wittgenstein scholars and other interested people to exchange thoughts in a pleasant surrounding.

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