# Dinner speech at the Global China Academy dinner

(House of Lords, 8 December 2023)

On behalf of the Fellows, I would like to thank President Chang, the Trustees and Council members for inviting us to this wonderful celebration. I add particular thanks for including my wife, Selina, and for giving us all the opportunity to meet colleagues from China.

Over 2000 years ago Confucius wrote that **‘When the perfect order prevails, the world is like a home shared by all’.**

Yet looking around at our current condition – with major wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and manifestations of violence and intolerance in many societies – the perfect order seems to be further away than ever.

If we are ever to attain Confucius’s desired state, humankind is going to have to move much faster. We have harmed and polluted our world so such a degree that the fragile elastic band binding nature to human life has become stretched and is about to snap. Who can now doubt the precarity of our very existence on earth?

There is a special responsibility given to academics to sort this mess out. We do not command armies. Nor do we have to please electorates and powerful interests. But we have the power of our ideas.

We need to build on the good aspects of our respective histories. The European Enlightenment was accompanied by significant advances in science, measurement and navigation and elevated the power of reason over superstition. We need to marry that part of the Enlightenment with the wisdom and creativity of Ancient China (controlling rivers, developing paper-making and printing, and inventing the compass)

Unfortunately, the Enlightenment also became generated the arrogance that came with colonial conquest. We do not need that, nor do we need xenophobia, imperialism and militarism.

We need instead dialogue between civilizations. We need pluralism, multi-culturalism and the recognition and tolerance of difference, without falling into the trap of nihilistic relativism.

Beyond that, we need to develop what can be called a planetary universalism (or perhaps ‘A New Enlightenment.). Our president, Professor Chang has made significant contribution to understanding how reciprocity and social exchange can lead to transculturality and ultimately to a global society. We need to build on her pioneering work.

I would like to propose a toast to the perfect order and to our future success in building a planetary universalism.

**Robin Cohen**

全球中国学院晚宴致辞

（上议院，2023年12月8日）

我谨代表全体院士，感谢常院长、董事会成员和理事会成员邀请我们参加这场美妙的庆典。我特别感谢你们邀请我的妻子塞琳娜，并为我们提供了与中国同事会面的机会。

2000多年前，孔子写道：“大道之行也，天下为公”。

然而，观察我们当前的状况——乌克兰和中东的战争，许多社会中暴力和不宽容的表现——完美秩序似乎比以往任何时候都更遥远。

如果我们要达到孔子所期望的状态，人类必须更快地行动。我们对我们的世界造成了伤害和污染，以至于连接自然和人类生活的脆弱橡皮筋已经被拉伸到极限，即将断裂。谁还能怀疑我们在地球上的生存已经岌岌可危？

学者们有特殊的责任来解决这个混乱。我们不指挥军队，我们也不需要取悦选民和强大的利益集团。但我们拥有自己思想的力量。

我们需要建立在各自历史的良好方面上。欧洲启蒙时代伴随着科学、测量和导航的重大进步，提升了理性对迷信的优势。我们需要将启蒙时代的这一部分与古中国的智慧和创造力（控制河流、发展造纸和印刷术、发明指南针）结合起来。

不幸的是，启蒙运动也产生了伴随殖民征服而来的傲慢。我们不需要这个，我们也不需要排外、帝国主义和军国主义。

我们需要的是文明之间的对话。我们需要多元化、多文化主义，以及对差异的认识和容忍，而不陷入虚无主义相对主义的陷阱。

除此之外，我们需要发展可以称之为行星普遍主义的东西（或许是“新启蒙”）。我们的院长常教授对互惠和社会交换如何导致转文化性，最终导致全球社会的理解做出了重要贡献。我们需要在她的开创性工作上继续前进。

我想提议为完美秩序和我们建设行星普遍主义的未来成功干杯。

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