

Welcome Banquet for the Great Philosopher Russell (1920)¹

Yesterday, at 7 o'clock in the evening, the Jiangsu Educational Association (*Jiangsu sheng jiaoyuhui* 江蘇省教育會), China College, China Vocational Educational Association (*Zhonghua zhiye jiaoyushe* 中華職業教育社), Progressive Association (*Gongjinhui* 共進會), Christian Association for Saving the Nation (*Jidujiao jiuguohui* 基督教救國會) and others, seven organisations in total, held a welcome banquet for the great philosopher Dr. Russell at the Great Eastern Hotel. Taking part in the banquet were Xu Jilong (徐季龍), Zhu Jinzhi (朱進之), Shen Xinqing (沈信卿), Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀), Zhou Yueran (周越然), Yang Duanyuan (楊端元), and Gu Yinting (顧蔭亭), as well as reporters from all Chinese and Western newspapers. Altogether, around 100 people were present at the occasion. Russell arrived at the venue at 7 o'clock, accompanied by his wife. First, a commemorative photograph was taken. Soon afterwards, the people who attended the banquet started the dinner. At the conclusion of the feast, the chairman of the reception, Shen Xinqing, gave a welcome speech:

Generally speaking, there are two main ideas behind welcoming Mr. Russell here today: Firstly, if Russell is a great English philosopher, he is

1 “*Huanyan da zhexuejia Luosu ji* 歡宴大哲學家羅素紀 (Notes from the Welcome Banquet for the Great Philosopher Russell).” *Shibao* 世報, October 14, 5.

also a great philosopher of the World. His philosophy has many points in common with teachings of China's forefathers. This is one aspect of why I would like to welcome Russell here today. Secondly, if Russell has come to China to advocate reformist thought, this is even more deeply in accord with China's current mentality. This is the second aspect of welcoming Russell. Today, we also hope that Russell will introduce European culture to China in simple terms.

After some more hopes for guidance had been expressed, Russell was invited to give a speech. The speech, which was translated by Zhao Yuanren (趙元任), went as follows:

Yesterday, when I arrived here in China, I was welcomed by the Chinese people in an extremely touching and heart-warming manner. In his speech the chairman mentioned the matter of reforms, asking me to introduce new European schools of thought to China. Although, only in the last century the new European schools have increase in number, they still contain many shortcomings. Let us suppose that China would not use them all, without distinguishing between superior and inferior among them, then, I am afraid that it will hardly attain good results. The beauty of Chinese culture and art have always been regarded as perfect. I have also always spoken favourably of them. I sincerely hope that you will work hard to preserve it. Because the prosperity of a state depends exclusively on the movement of new culture, therefore the so-called European culture is indispensable. But if you will only recognise strength in new culture and completely discard the national essence of this country, then I am afraid that this will be of no advantage to you. I hope, therefore, that Chinese people will only adopt the best parts of the European culture and discard all its shortcomings. Moreover, you must not exclusively tend towards the new culture and completely discard the merits of the old. We live in an age of extremes, from thought down to practice. It is in such a time of extremes that one will ultimately be unable to avoid the emergence of various corrupt practices. This is what happened in Europe, where various forms of immoral conduct occurred. Consequently, I hope that China will not thread on the same path as Europe. I sincerely hope that in point I will be of some assistance to you. The most and only effective method to achieve this is education...

This was followed by a speech from Zhu Jinzhi (朱進之):

Today China should rejoice. There are three reasons for that: (1) China is the world's most ancient country; (2) As the first republic in Asia, China is

also one of the world's newest states; (3) Today, Russell, one of the greatest philosophers in the world has come to visit. It is no disgrace that the armies protecting our borders are weak. It is not a disgrace that China's commerce is underdeveloped and that our industry is lagging behind. What should be called China's greatest disgrace, though, is the underdevelopment of its education, because China has always worshipped philosophers, in the same way as the Chinese people have worshipped Confucius. But the learning of Confucius is no more suitable to be practiced today. I hope, therefore, that today a new Confucius will arise. Russell, who is present here today, is almost like a new Confucius! I hope that he will work diligently to realise the cause of the new Confucius!

This was followed by the humorous speech by Xie Fuchu, which was rewarded with a round of applause. At about 10 o'clock, the guests started to leave the venue.

(Translated by Jan Vrhovski)