Philosophy

The Inner Philosopher: Conversations on Philosophy's Transformative Power
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In *The Inner Philosopher*, sixteen profound yet lively conversations between two philosophers, one Western and one Eastern, bring to light the ways philosophy is essential to a full and meaningful human life—a life that can contribute to the creation of a more humane, just, and compassionate world.

Lou Marinoff is professor and chairman of philosophy at City College of New York and the founding president of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association. His bestselling book, *Plato Not Prozac!* (2000), has been translated into twenty-seven languages; Co-author Daisaku Ikeda is the founder and president of Soka Gakkai International, a lay Buddhist organization with twelve million members worldwide. He has written and lectured widely on Buddhism, humanism, and global ethics. Together the two thinkers draw on the wisdom of Shakyamuni Buddha, Lao Tzu, Confucius, Aristotle, Socrates, and others to make a compelling case for philosophy as a means of helping people draw on their own inner strength to overcome suffering, live victoriously, and create value for the world.

The authors believe philosophy can be this powerful because it is distinct from ideology. Its purpose is to question, not to believe—as a result, philosophy keeps the mind agile, flexible and ready to adapt to change. Philosophy also provides a moral context that can help contain the excesses of “science run wild,” a scenario exemplified by the existence of nuclear weapons capable of extinguishing life on the planet, the authors say.

Readers will immediately notice the deep mutual respect between Marinoff and Ikeda; in this, they offer a model worthy of imitation, for, as they point out, true dialogue can only exist between equals. “We must co-create a reflective space in which people are heard, understood, and valued, but not judged,” writes Marinoff. Such a space, the two philosophers agree, fosters both humane dialogue and the healing of individuals and society; it encourages the resolution of

conflict through moral, not legal, means, and makes the misunderstandings and disagreements that lead to war much less likely.

Their interaction also reveals, in spite of the darkness of the times, a deep and abiding optimism about the human condition and philosophy's ability to serve as a remedy for the cultural problems that afflict affluent individuals and nations. Marinoff writes: "… each human being begins his or her life journey at its very foundations. Thus, it is supremely important that we imbibe teachings from past sages. …" Both he and Ikeda see a strong role for philosophy in treating culturally rooted epidemics including obesity, bullying, hedonism, and consumerism.

The Inner Philosopher is highly recommended reading for all who are concerned that, in spite of its material wealth, Western society is exhibiting a disturbing poverty of spirit. Marinoff and Ikeda strongly affirm that, through philosophy, wisdom and opportunities for positive change are within reach of everyone.

Ikeda writes, "If your mind shines, your life shines."

Kristine Morris