

BACK TO THE BASICS
THE SIMULTANEITY OF CAUSE AND EFFECT
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At the beginning of the 21st century, science and technology are advancing at an astonishing pace. But in direct contrast, when it comes to the realm of inner life, this is an age bereft of a guiding philosophy.

In the increasingly mech-anized, virtual-reality ethos of our society, without a convincing spiritual foundation capable of controlling and uplifting human desire, many people are adrift on a sea of suffering. Basing their lives on a partial view of existence, they may be motivated merely by immediate gain, or giving in to a sense of powerless resignation. Yet, deep inside they long for the meaning of being alive.

According to the Lotus Sutra, such a world is exactly where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth make their appearance.

Armed with the philosophy of the eternity of life, we have the unfathomable good fortune to spread the Mystic Law and create an unprecedented age of peace — where the dignity of life is given preeminence.

The concept of cause and effect as it applies to the inner workings of human life is a principle of vital importance for the current age. However, since the existence of cause and effect operating deep within our lives cannot be verified from purely objective scientific observation, such understanding, by necessity, must be relegated to the sphere of religion and philosophy.

Buddhism expounds that through thoughts, words and deeds we are constantly creating causes, the effects of which determine the future course of our lives. Implicit in the Buddhist view of causality is the concept of the eternity of all individual lives, without which, this principle would prove rootless.

It is through the personal experience of actual proof, which occurs in all areas of our lives as we chant and teach others *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*, that this most fundamental cause is verified, attesting to the limitless power of faith in the Gohonzon.

In connection with the current distortion of philosophy that obscures the vital principle of cause and effect in human life, it is interesting to note that during the Middle Ages it was generally believed that the soul is a substance that has an independent existence. At that time, matter was considered subordinate to the spirit.

And in a complete about-face to this erstwhile stifling of matter, today's scientific materialism posits that the workings of our minds can be entirely reduced to complicated bio-chemical processes. Now it is the mind that is thought to be merely a by-product of the body. And hence the modern prevailing mood, that life ends with the physical death of one's body.

Carl Jung makes the astute observation that the current bias toward matter is actually based on emotion and is an unconscious and irrational reaction to its former subjugation. For in truth, neither the existence of matter or spirit can actually be proven with the powers of reason alone. Both are "mere symbols" that stand for some unknown reality (*Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 174).

Nichiren Daishonin resolves partial views of matter and spirit, revealing the eternal foundation of cause and effect: "Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and non-existence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is

the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the ultimate reality” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 4).

The Daishonin’s Buddhism elucidates that both the cause and effect of Buddhahood exist in each moment of belief in the single law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Through our daily practice of chanting, each moment of our lives is imbued with the original wellspring of eternal life, allowing us to change all causes — even unfortunate ones — into causes for indestructible happiness.