

3. Why Must One Seek Dao?

Dao is the original nature of a person, the root-source of our nature and life-destiny. It resides within the human body and is something every person inherently possesses. Why, then, must one still seek it?

Because all human beings and myriad spirits, without exception, were born by receiving this wondrous Dao of Nature and Principle. From the very beginning of life, this nature-Dao was already bestowed upon them. Why then — in the first era, the Blue-Green Era; in the second, the Red Era; and now in the third, the White Era, amid the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras — has it been necessary for the Sovereign God to descend Dao into the world?

Because this nature-Dao is so subtly wondrous that it lies beyond words. Though it dwells within the human body, its going out and coming in has no form that can be seen; its coming and going has no sound that can be heard. And so, whether we speak of heaven and earth, human spirits, or the myriad kinds of beings, all possess it yet none know they possess it. Without the Heavenly Mandate of the Sovereign Emperor, specially descending the True Dao and conferring the mandate upon the enlightened master — who points out and transmits the True Transmission of Nature and Principle, opens the wondrous aperture, and elucidates the Great Dharma of the Heart-Seal hidden for ten thousand ages — then even if you surpassed Yan Hui and Min Ziqian in virtue, or exceeded Fan Zeng in wisdom, you would still have no way to know the source and origin of this wondrous Dao — the Mysterious Pass, that blessed ground. How could you know its profundity? Its preciousness? How could you know that it shares an intimate bond with heaven, earth, and all spirits and beings — a place of infinite mystery within creation itself?

This is why the ancient sage-king, the Yellow Emperor, bowed to seventy-two teachers. This is why Shakyamuni renounced the nobility of the royal palace and entered the Snow Mountains to cultivate Dao. This is why Confucius sought out Laozi and inquired about the rites. This is why Shengguang stood in the snow at Shaolin and severed his arm to prove his sincerity. All of them did so to seek the True Dao of the True Transmission of Nature and Principle.

How Original Nature Was Lost

Mencius said: "People, when their chickens and dogs are lost, know to seek them; when their heart is lost, they do not know to seek it — how lamentable!" From this we know that people of the world have long since let their original nature and innate conscience go astray, and have not known to seek them.

Yet if this nature-Dao and innate conscience dwell within our bodies, how could they be lost?

When the Realm of Principle bestowed this nature-and-principle upon human beings and the spirit entered the bewildering maze of the Great Ultimate, passing through its transformations as the primordial fell into the acquired, the pure and pristine original nature was constrained by the endowments of yin and yang, and the purely good innate conscience was obscured by worldly sentiment and material desire. The primordial true wisdom — the prajna-wisdom — was transformed into acquired emotional cleverness. The Original Spirit was transformed into the conscious mind. The true spirit was controlled by the Five Phases. The nature of principle became the temperamental nature, and the temperamental nature further became the material nature. Through these transformations, the master of the house — the true heart that walks the Dao — was banished to a corner. The true sovereign abdicated. The blood-heart seized power. The conscious mind took charge. What the Lord Jesus called "God yielding authority" refers precisely to this.

From that point on, people treated this true heart like a sheep lost at a crossroads, not knowing where it had gone, altogether ceasing to seek it. In time they came to recognize the thief as their own father — mistaking the blood-heart for the true heart — and let it act without restraint or scruple, committing reckless misdeeds without ever examining themselves, growing ever worse. The Demon King held exclusive power within, while the six thieves ran rampant without. The will-horse slipped its reins and trampled wildly upon the precious field of the heart. The mind-monkey broke free of its chains and wreaked havoc in the heavenly palace, beyond all control. Sins were committed and transgressions invited, grievances were formed and karmic offenses created, cause and effect became entangled, and the cycle of rebirth could not be ended. Human hearts declined by the day, morality perished by the day, and an unprecedented great catastrophe had its beginning.

From that time forward, all people of the world, without exception, were seeking life amid the sea of suffering and seeking the path of death toward hell. The straight road by which they originally came — no one traveled it anymore. The true scripture of the Eight Virtues — filial piety, brotherly love, loyalty, trustworthiness, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and a sense of shame — who would still turn to look upon it? And so this straight road of the true scripture became utterly overgrown and impassable, and before the gates of the Heavenly Paradise one could set nets to catch sparrows — so deserted had it become. As Mencius said: "A mountain path through the valley, if continuously used, becomes a road; if for a time it is not used, it becomes overgrown." This is precisely what he meant.

The Necessity of Seeking and Cultivating Dao

Because people have let their true heart go astray and do not know where it went — and because this straight road of the true scripture has been blocked by thorns and brambles — there is simply no way to recover this nature-Dao, this true heart. For this very reason, it is necessary to seek Dao, and necessary to cultivate Dao.

What is seeking Dao? It is to find and recover the true heart that has been let loose. What is cultivating Dao? It is to restore the straight road by which one goes to find the true heart. Without seeking Dao, one cannot understand the source and resting place of the true heart, nor can one know the reason why it was lost, nor the place where it is imprisoned. Without cultivating Dao, one cannot clear away the obstacles along the road — and without clearing the road, how can one advance? Without advancing, how can one drive back the demons and monsters that besiege the true heart? Therefore one must seek Dao and cultivate Dao in order to rescue the true heart, return to one's original homeland — the Land of Ultimate Bliss — so that our master of the house may once again see the light of day, pay reverence to Lao Mu, and rejoice at the Dragon-Flower Assembly. How perfect and complete that would be!

A verse:

“ The root-source of our nature and life-destiny, we once did not know;
how sorrowful — when chickens and dogs are lost, we know to search,
yet the lost heart we treat as nothing important.
Responding to the calling of this age, know to seek it and build the foundation of
Dao.

“ Awakening is like receiving a lamp in the night —
a windowless dark room, suddenly filled with light.
If this body is not delivered in this lifetime,
in what other lifetime will this body be delivered?

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