

4. What Benefits Does Seeking Dao Bring?

Dao means "the road." It is the straight road for returning to Heaven, to the Western Paradise of Ultimate Bliss. It is not the worldly road of the mundane realm, nor the confused path that plunges one into the sea of suffering, still less the dead-end road that sends one tumbling into the cycle of rebirth. Where is this road? For the awakened, it is right before one's eyes — a single step and one ascends directly. For the deluded, it lies 108,000 li distant; through tens of millions of cycles of rebirth one still cannot find it — even after tens of thousands of years, one still cannot reach it. It is the most wondrously secret road of all.

As it turns out, this road lies within our original nature and comes from the Realm of Principle. In the Realm of Principle it is called the True Principle of Non-Ultimacy; when bestowed within the human body, it is called "nature" — hence the term "Nature and Principle." Since it came from such a place, when departing it should also return to such a place. This is the true-scripture straight road that every person, in birth and death, coming and going, must travel. And so it is also called "the Dao" — this is the reason. Confucius said: "Who can go out except by the door? Why does no one follow this Dao?" This is precisely the meaning.

In brief, seeking Dao is nothing other than seeking to recover the Heavenly Principle and innate conscience of one's original nature. Mencius said: "The way of learning is nothing other than seeking the heart that has been let loose."

If one does obtain this True Dao of Nature and Principle, what benefits are there?

First: Transcending Birth and Death

First: One can transcend birth and death. What does this mean? It means transcending yin and yang, leaping beyond the Five Phases, escaping the cycle of rebirth, and ascending to Ultimate Bliss — freeing oneself from birth after birth and death after death, from being forever mired in the sea of suffering, from ten thousand kalpas without the power to turn one's fate around. Why is this necessary? Because both birth and death are not good things; the world of the living and the netherworld are both not good destinations. Zhuangzi said: "I did not wish to be born, yet suddenly I was born into the world; I did not wish to die, yet suddenly the time of death arrives."

Shakyamuni, in his time, renounced the nobility of the royal palace for the sake of the one great matter of birth and death. From this we know that the world is not a land of joy, and both birth and death are far from good. To live in this world is a living hell; to die and enter the netherworld is a dead hell. Birth and death always lie within the hell of the sea of suffering — neither realm is a blessed land, neither is paradise. Therefore we must seek Dao, receive the enlightened master's

pointing instruction of the True Transmission of Nature and Principle, and ascend to the Heavenly Paradise of Ultimate Bliss, so as never again to be born into the dusty world, never again to suffer the cycle of rebirth through the four modes of birth and six paths. This is why seeking Dao aims to transcend birth and death.

Second: Turning from Evil toward Good

Second: One can turn from evil toward good and leave the crooked for the straight. Only by seeking Dao can one recover one's original nature and innate conscience, and only then can one discern that the human heart has both a true and a false aspect. The true is the original nature and innate conscience — the Original Spirit. The false is the blood-heart, the human heart — the conscious mind. Every thought that arises in worldly people touches upon greed, selfishness, partiality, and crookedness. Every action partakes of treachery, cruelty, and cunning deception. This is so because the original nature and innate conscience have been entirely veiled by desire and sealed by emotion, unable to emerge, while the conscious mind of the blood-heart is left to conduct all affairs unchecked. Therefore one must seek Dao in order to recover the true heart and give rise to wondrous wisdom — only then can one see clearly right and wrong, good and evil, the straight and the crooked, transforming consciousness into wisdom, guarding the upright and expelling the crooked. All of one's actions then follow the Middle Way and original nature as their teacher. Confucius said: "When three walk together, there must be one among them who can be my teacher; choose what is good in them and follow it, and what is not good — correct it in yourself." This is to say that the original nature and innate conscience are precisely our truest teacher. In all one's deeds, if one acts according to this innate conscience, one will never go astray. "What is not good" refers to the enticements of the eyes and ears. By seeking Dao, one can truly turn from evil to good and leave the crooked for the straight — this is indeed so.

Third: Dissolving Calamities and Resolving Karmic Debts

Third: One can dissolve calamities and resolve karmic debts. Calamities and karmic debts are all created by people themselves, because everyone has let their true heart go astray and abandoned the Eight Virtues, with the blood-heart conducting affairs. Everything they do violates innate conscience and runs counter to the Heavenly Principle and the upright Dao. Grievance-debts are formed, karmic causes and effects accumulate, disasters link together, and over time there brews an unprecedented great catastrophe — all because people have lost Dao. Since calamities and karmic debts arise from losing the true heart and losing Dao, one must seek Dao and recover the true heart in order to dissolve them — this much is clear. If one can truly recover innate conscience and the upright Dao, one will naturally understand the origin of calamities and how karmic debts were formed. One will repent of past faults, hold oneself to blame and resolve to cut away the error, sincerely confess and repent, and exert oneself to cultivate merit and establish

virtue in order to repay the karmic offenses of past lives. Naturally, grievances will be resolved and karmic offenses dissolved, with no further entanglement. From that point forward, every thought follows the true heart as master, every action follows the Eight Virtues as guide. How could one form new karmic debts or create new causes of calamity? When no new enmity is formed and old grudges cease to exist, body and heart become pure and tranquil, and calamities and karmic debts dissolve of themselves — without needing to be resolved.

Fourth: Changing One's Destiny

Fourth: One can change one's destiny. Where does destiny come from? Is it decreed by Heaven? Determined by spirits? Created by people themselves? People create their own causes, spirits and Heaven assist the conditions, and in the end the effects come naturally to fruition. In sum, the predestined conditions of three lifetimes and the fruits consumed over many lifetimes, though spirits and Heaven assist, are all in truth created by the human heart. Observe: some are born as princes, lords, generals, and ministers, with vast estates, towering mansions reaching the clouds, and wealth rivaling an entire region — because in their previous lives their true heart was constantly preserved, their heart never departed from Dao, and their ancestors accumulated virtue deeply. Having sown good grain in their field of blessings, they naturally reap good fruit in this life — this is the natural Dao. Others, from the day they were born, are beset by illness, spend their lives in destitution, with not a patch of ground to stand upon, not a day's grain stored in the house, lonely and wretched, beset by one disaster after another — because over three lifetimes they did not cultivate, the true heart went into exile, and the blood-heart and conscious mind conducted affairs. Bad weeds were sown in the field of blessings; naturally, they cannot enjoy good fruit. As the saying goes: "Heaven's net is vast and loose, yet nothing slips through" — retribution is never in error.

Calamity and fortune have no gate of their own; it is people alone who summon them. Those who wish to change their destiny must recover the true heart, clear away every bad weed from the field of blessings, and replant good grain — in time, they will harvest good fruit. Master Hong said: "World-covering achievements cannot withstand a single word: arrogance. Heaven-filling sins cannot withstand a single word: repentance." Consider Patriarch Qiu, who originally bore the face-lines of "a golden serpent locking the mouth" — the most dire and malevolent destiny. After seeking Dao, he practiced with diligence and genuine effort, accumulating merit upon merit, until at last his grievances were resolved and karmic offenses dissolved. Without his knowing, in the unseen workings of fate, his shadow-lines were transformed into "twin dragons seizing a pearl" — the most exalted and noble configuration. The benefits of seeking Dao, from this example too, can be understood clearly.

Of all the roads traveled under heaven, cultivation alone never leads one astray.

A verse:



To escape King Yama and attain the Realm of Principle,
embrace the teaching and never lose it — as if standing at the edge of a deep
abyss.

Coming, one entered by this door; departing, one exits by this same door;
only by ascending directly can one accompany buddhas and immortals.

“ The fool craves worldly profit;
the common man prizes empty fame.
In the blink of an eye, all turns to emptiness;
in vain, karma follows the body.

Revision #2

Created 2026-03-08 17:43:11 UTC by Phil

Updated 2026-03-08 17:54:55 UTC by Phil