Chapter 8: What Does It Mean to Honor the Teacher and Treasure Dao?

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In the Final Catastrophe of the Three Eras, the true Dao has descended into the world. Whoever receives the Enlightened Teacher's transmission can personally escape catastrophe and avoid calamity, transcending birth and death. Even nine generations above and seven below can together ascend the heavenly ladder and jointly reach ultimate bliss. From this one can know how vast the teacher's grace is! How great!

But having received the teacher's virtue, how does one repay it? By honoring and respecting the teacher.

Yet the true meaning of honoring the teacher is not merely offering material support and showing surface respect. Even more, one must embody the teacher's heart, revere the teacher's instructions, emulate the teacher's conduct, carry on the teacher's aspiration, walk the teacher's Dao, fulfill the teacher's vow, and cherish the teacher's intention — achieving a mind-to-mind seal, deeds that coincide without prior arrangement. Only this constitutes truly honoring the teacher.

The Analects say: "When there is work to be done, the disciples take on the labor; when there is wine and food, the elders are served first." This too expresses the meaning of honoring the teacher. Consider how the seventy-two disciples honored Confucius, and how Wan Zhang and others honored Mencius. Although each case differed, they converged on the same destination by different paths. Without exception, they honored their teachers through the seal of heart upon heart, putting into practice the true honoring of the teacher.

What does it mean to treasure Dao? It means making Dao the foremost consideration in all things. One would rather humble oneself and defer to others, witnessing Dao and bringing it to completion, than act out of selfishness for personal gain, or let poverty and hardship cause one to betray one's integrity.

Therefore those who treasure Dao will surely hold fast to death in defense of the good Dao, never compromising the greater principle — in haste or in hardship, never depart from this.

The ancient sages said: "The noble person plans for Dao, not for food; worries about Dao, not about poverty." It is also said: "To take benevolence as one's own burden — is that not weighty? To cease only at death — is that not far-reaching?" All of these testify to how precious Dao is. Do not regard it lightly.

However, honoring the teacher and treasuring Dao cannot be separated. Dao is transmitted through the teacher, so one cannot but honor the teacher. The teacher's fundamental purpose is to transmit Dao, so Dao cannot but be treasured. If one leans too far toward honoring the teacher, one falls into clinging to appearances, and it becomes mere personal sentiment. If one leans too far toward treasuring Dao, one falls into barren emptiness, and it becomes hollow abstraction.

Therefore honoring the teacher and treasuring Dao are interconnected — truly one yet two, two yet one, nothing more than two faces of a single body. I urge you all to contemplate this and awaken to it!

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