

[性理釋疑~~01]

Ninety Questions Concerning the Great Tao

1. What is Tao?

Tao exists prior to the presence of Spirit and Earth. Lao Tze, the creator of Taoism, said, "Something complete and shapeless is the existence prior to the creation of Spirit and Earth. Serene! Tranquil! Boundless! Abiding along and unchangeable! Extending over everywhere without risk. It may be styled the "Mother of Universe". Although the Tao is invisible, yet it creates and dominates all the visible and audible objects. Moreover, the Tao bears no name as Lao Tze said, "I do not know its name, but designate it – the Tao. Arbitrarily forcing a name on it, I call it the Great." Since the Tao is invisible, it is symbolized by an unbroken circle "O" – a forcibly limited symbol in view of the limitation of the human mind. The unbroken circle "O" represent the Tao in quietness whereas a straight line "-" represents the Tao in motion. When the Tao is in activity, the unbroken circle becomes a straight line. There will be an evolutionary process of differentiation from unity to multiplicity. (The Chinese character "One" (一) is a straight line.) The Tao creates Spirit, Earth, and Man. It gives lives to all the creatures and plants. Besides, it dominates the rotations of the earth and the rest of the planets. Indeed, the Tao is the cause of all things. But, if the straight line is shortened, it will become a dot. So the unbroken circle, the straight line and the dot represent the Tao in quietness and in motion respectively. Furthermore, if the straight line elongates, it will become the longest line. Indeed, the Tao is the greatest of all, for it is shapeless. The Tao creates and dominates everything. But, if the straight line is shortened, it will become a dot. In other words, the Tao can also be the smallest of all, for the Tao is formless.

As far as man is concerned, the Tao is referred to his Eternal Spirit. Man is endowed with his Eternal Spirit, but he is not aware of it. If he realizes the presence of his Eternal Spirit and preserves it well, he will become a sage. On the contrary, if he does not know how to preserve his Spirit well, he will go to hell after death. Therefore, to realize the presence of the valuable Spirit is much better than read thousands of books.

It is obvious that man owns the five cardinal principles of his moral and intellectual nature, namely, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and sincerity. So, he will become a sage if he regulates his affairs by the five constituents of man. To preserve his Eternal Spirit, man must first render his filial respect to his parents and love others. Moreover, he should sacrifice himself in order to benefit other people and should always be polite and humble. Finally, he should be considerate to others and should abide by his words.

Apart from this, if we write the Chinese character "One", which is a straight line, vertically, it will become a vertical line. If both the straight line and vertical line combine together, a cross + will be formed. Indeed, the Tao is the creator of all things. It is not surprising therefore that Lao Tze said, "Though the Tao is invisible, it creates Spirit and Earth and dominates the rotation of the earth and the moon. And, though the Tao bears no name, yet it gives lives to everything." In conclusion, before the presence of Spirit and Earth, there is the presence of the Tao. But, the Tao is invisible and inaudible. The Tao creates the universe and the earth

and helps everything to grow and prosper. No doubt, all visible and audible objects cannot exist without it.