

CHAPTER ONE

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王鳳儀  
十二字薪傳

A Transmission in  
Twelve Characters

王善人讲的道只有十二个字，就是“性、心、身”“木、火、土、金、水”“志、意、心、身”。

性、心、身三界是人的来踪，为入世之法；运用木、火、土、金、水五行当人，为应世之法；志、意、心、身四大界是人的去路，为出世之法。会了这十二个字，才能来得明，去得白。性、心、身三界归一，五行圆转，四大界定位，便当体成真，能为圣为贤，成佛做祖。

The Dao that the venerable Wang Fengyi taught consists of only twelve characters: Inner Nature (*xing* 性), Heart (*xin* 心), and Body (*shen* 身); Wood (*mu* 木), Fire (*huo* 火), Earth (*tu* 土), Metal (*jin* 金), and Water (*shui* 水); and Commitment (*zhi* 志), Intention (*yi* 意), Heart (*xin* 心), and Body (*shen* 身).<sup>2</sup>

The Three Realms (*san jie*)—the Inner Nature, Heart, and Body—contain the ancestral footprints that we humans arrive with, the imprinted pattern with which we enter the world. How we use the Five Elements (*wu xing*)<sup>3</sup>—Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water—in our actions as human beings is the imprinted pattern with which we respond to the world. The Four Great Realms (*si da jie*)—Commitment, Intention, Heart, and Body—are the road to our future, the imprinted pattern with which we exit the world. Only when we master these twelve concepts can we understand where we come from and go to. When the Three Realms (Inner Nature, Heart, and Body) have returned to a state of oneness, when the Five Elements succeed each other in a perfect cycle, and when the Four Great Realms occupy their proper place, then we can manifest our true selves in our present body, act as saints and sages, and then become Buddhas and join the ranks of our esteemed ancestors.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this book, we have decided to capitalize key terms that are used in Wang Fengyi's teachings with an added layer of meaning that transcends their common English usage. For a complete list of these terms, see the Appendix to this book, where they are listed with the Chinese character and pinyin pronunciation. While it is admittedly impossible to find a single English word to convey the meaning of a character like *li* 理 (in the following pages translated somewhat awkwardly and untraditionally as "Guidance"), we have chosen this strategy as a lesser of two evils, so as to make Wang Fengyi's teachings as accessible as possible to readers with no background in the Chinese language.

<sup>3</sup> In spite of my personal reservations, I have chosen to continue the common English practice of translating *wu xing* 五行 as "Five Elements" because of the popularity of that term and its established use in other English literature on Wang Fengyi's teachings. It is important to note, however, that the Chinese term literally means "Five Movements" and does NOT refer to elements in the sense of basic material constituents but rather to characteristics of movement and directions of change in the continuous transformation of qi. As such, translations like "five dynamic movements" or "five phases" come much closer to the sense of the Chinese term than "five elements."

可惜世人，只注重身外的事物，不注重自己的心性，真是舍本求末。有的人因为不知道不去行；有的人明明知道而不肯实行，得不着其中奥妙，享不着人生幸福，糟蹋了成佛作祖的材料。所以善人说“讲道不离身，打铁不离砧。”我们听了道，得往自己身上归，努力实行，才能得着受用。讲道不往身上归，好象铁匠离开铁砧打铁一样，如何能成呢？

现在的天时是天不爱道、地不爱宝、人不爱情，万教齐发，科学日进。科学越进步，人类越需要以道德为主，才能享受到物质的幸福。人要能各正性命，爱人如己，就不会为争物质而牺牲人命了。世上的人，要全有宗教信仰，各行各业，各做各德，谁也妨碍不着谁，人多福大，道多德大，天堂极乐世界就在眼前了。

How unfortunate that most people only focus on matters outside themselves, instead of on their Heart and Inner Nature! This is indeed a case of “abandoning the root to pursue the tip.” Some people, on account of their ignorance of the Dao, fail to walk it; others, however, have a crystal clear understanding of the Dao and yet are unwilling to walk it in practice. As such, they are unable to grasp the subtle mysteries at its center, to enjoy all the blessings and good fortune that human life has to offer, and they ruin the raw material that is their potential for becoming a Buddha and esteemed ancestor. For this reason, the venerable Wang Fengyi said: “When teaching the Dao, do not stray from your personal experience, just as you do not stray from the anvil when forging iron.” Once we have heard the Dao, we must turn inward and apply it to our own personal situation, sparing no effort to put it into practice. That is the only way that it will be of any use. If we do not reflect back on our personal experience when teaching the Dao, this is just like a blacksmith who leaves the anvil to forge iron. How can this be effective?

Our modern times are such that Heaven does not begrudge the Dao, Earth does not begrudge its treasures, and humans do not begrudge their feelings. Thousands of teachings are developing side by side, and science is advancing day by day. And yet, the more scientific progress we experience, the greater the need for humanity to let itself be ruled by Dao and by Virtue (as the manifestation thereof),<sup>4</sup> if we are to enjoy our material bounty. We must each individually rectify our Inner Nature (*xing*) and our Destiny (*ming*) and love others as we love ourselves, to avoid sacrificing our lives in the fight over material things. Every person in the world must have religion and faith, each must walk the Dao and practice Virtue, and nobody must hinder another person's progress. Then humanity will be greatly blessed and the Dao will manifest abundantly in Virtue. The Heavenly Paradise and Pure Land<sup>5</sup> will be right before our eyes.

4 *Daode*: Literally translated, Dao means simply “Way,” the path that shows us where to walk and how to act. From this basic meaning, the term has come to assume a deep significance in Chinese philosophy, in the Confucian context as the way for humans to interact with each other, and in the Daoist context as the cosmic Dao, the Dao of Heaven and Earth. Virtue (*de*) is the manifestation of the Dao in human actions.

5 *Qing tu* 淨土: “Pure Land” is a technical term from Mahayana Buddhism that refers to the celestial realms where Buddhas or bodhisattvas reside.

用不着向外去追求，人人笃行五伦人道，家庭一定和乐。人人有正当职业，国家一定平靖。人人有道德，世界就大同了。如果只知争贪物质，不知爱人，科学愈发达，战场就越扩大，物质越文明，世界就越混乱。不但自己的身命难保，就是性灵也将万劫难复。言念及此，真使人胆战心惊！

佛家说：“人身难得，中土难生，大道难闻。”现在大道昌明，各教都把道送在人的眼前，好象山珍海味，都摆在面前，只要你肯吃，就得着了。道研究明白了，还要诚心实行，越行越能证道，越做信心越坚，就能做个顶天立地、继往开来的圣贤，也就能造福人群，立住万古。善人说：“道不行，用不着道；德不作，就没有德。”大家应该好好研究研究吧！

There is no use in searching for solutions on the outside. If everybody earnestly walks the human Dao of the Five Relationships,<sup>6</sup> the family will most certainly be harmonious and happy. If everybody has a proper occupation, the country will most certainly be at peace. If everybody has Dao and manifests it in virtuous actions, Great Harmony will rule in the world. But if people only know how to fight over material things and not how to love others, then the more science develops, the more the battlefields will expand, and the more sophisticated material goods become, the more chaos will reign in the world. Not only will it be difficult to protect our own lives, but it will spell disaster for our souls, and it will be difficult to retrieve them. Just reading these words strikes terror into my heart!

Chinese Buddhists have a saying: “It is a rare gift to incarnate in a human body, it is a rare gift to be born in the Middle Kingdom,<sup>7</sup> and it is a rare gift to hear the Great Dao.” At present, the Great Dao is shining forth brightly, each religion delivering it straight in front of people’s eyes, like a banquet of rare treasures from the mountains and seas arranged right before us. All we have to do to get it is to be willing to open our mouths. After we have studied and comprehended the Dao, we still have to wholeheartedly walk it in practice. The more we walk it, the more we prove it; the more faith we have, the more solid it becomes. In this way, we can become saints of indomitable spirit, holding up Heaven while grounded in Earth. We are also able to do good deeds for the benefit of humanity, standing firmly for eternity. As the venerable Wang Fengyi said: “If you don’t walk the Dao, you don’t know how to use it. If you do not translate Virtue into action, there simply is no Virtue.” Everybody, investigate this topic with great care and attention!

<sup>6</sup> This is a reference to the five relationships that regulate Chinese society in traditional Confucian thinking: father to son, husband to wife, ruler to ruled, elder brother to younger brother, and friend to friend. To translate these roles into modern life, we can transcend their gender-specific limitations and instead read them as parent to child, life partner to life partner, superior or inferior, older sibling to younger sibling, and friend to friend. The key point is still relevant, namely that these roles are clearly defined and properly fulfilled.

<sup>7</sup> Chinese people refer to China as *Zhongguo* 中国, the “Middle Kingdom.”