

Climate and Health:

The Daoist Perspective of “Resonance between Heaven and Mankind” 天人感應

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The core classic of Daoism, *Daode jing* 道德經, teaches us an important law: “Mankind takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Dao. The law of the Dao is its being what it is” 人法地，地法天，天法道，道法自然. “Nature” 自然 here does not simply refer to the “natural world” of the ecological environment, but a principle that allows things to adapt to their own regular rules. To put it simply, the law of “Dao” is to let all things develop naturally and spontaneously without unnecessary intervention, and this is also the foundation of Daoist beliefs. As a senior Daoist priest from Hong Kong, it is my pleasure to stand here to share the Daoist wisdom and the religious point of view to facilitate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The “climate” we talk about in the modern sense refers to the statistics of weather over long periods of time. For example, sea level rise and weather anomalies caused by the effects of global warming are the effects of climate change. From this perspective, climate is a scientific issue of geography or physics. How does it relate to religion? I believe many people may agree that the current situation of climate change is not a neutral natural phenomenon, but a harmful consequence caused by a series of long-term cumulative human intervention. This is a crisis in the relationship between mankind and nature. Therefore, reshaping the relationship between mankind and nature, redefining our understanding to nature, and thus awakening human awareness of environmental protection in the long term has become an important direction for

addressing climate change.

The natural world we know is supposed to have clear rules. There are four seasons in the climate, and the stars operate according to the established orbital motion in the space. Human life is like a cycle of ups and downs in the four seasons. Our way of life has adapted to the laws of nature since ancient times. But it is impossible to not interact with the natural world when you live in this modern time. Do we just regard our living world as a physical environment? Or can we cherish it with love and humility as a precious life? In the Daoist perspective, I encourage human beings should obey the “Dao” through the “following the Heaven and Earth” 法天象地. From the perspective of ecological ethics, human lifestyle should coordinate with the laws of nature to form a harmonious coexistence relationship.

In the Daoist belief, the whole world is not a dead thing but alive. The most typical representatives are Heaven and Earth, both of which are the source of life for all. Daoism inherits the idea of “Resonance between Heaven and Mankind” 天人感應, and believes that human spirit and behavior mutually connect with the natural world. The emergence of various natural disasters is a warning to human beings and a direct response to human moral disorder. Without the natural world to nourish all living things, human ethics and social order are difficult to maintain. The stability of ecology is the foundation and guarantee of human civilization. If we simply promote the abstract idea of “Resonance between Heaven and Humans,” it may be regarded as a mysterious philosophy. Even if not everyone can link up with nature, the reality is that nature is not a resource that allows humans to exploit and does not respond. It is a complex organic life system. The natural disasters caused by the indulgence of human development are the tragedies that can be experienced by everyone, no matter they

can link up with the heavens and the earth or not. For example, the temperature rise caused by the intense impact of global warming and urbanization will increase the number of hot weather days, average rainfall intensity, number of rainstorms and sea level rise. Human beings have also destroyed the balance of nature while improving their lives. These tragedies of the commons, whether caused by personal or public interests, are ultimately endured by all human beings and their offsprings. It is also an unethical behavior from the Daoist point of view. Nature can exist without human beings, but human survival cannot be without the grace and favor from the nature. We need to establish a more harmonious relationship with nature out of the utilitarian human orientation. In recent years, the United Nations and the environmental organizations in the world have been actively promoting carbon emission reduction and energy conservation campaigns globally. Activities such as “Earth Day” and “Earth Hour” have also effectively promoted environmental awareness among the public. All these are the good signs for the public awakening on this issue.

In the religious practice of Daoism, we also actively promote the use of environmentally friendly incense, sacrifices, and furnaces to reduce air pollution and unnecessary waste. The Daoist belief is based on the idea of “respecting the Heaven and Earth” 敬畏天地 and “return to the simplicity and truth” 反樸歸真. People should not violate the laws of nature but respect this natural environment. This is also the way for Daoist believers to maintain health and longevity. Perhaps people are born with unlimited happiness in the universe, but our desire and modernization process have disturbed the laws of nature by technological progresses. Because of greed, human destroy the natural balance, the four seasons are out of tune, and the disasters occur frequently. Finally, our modern development and economic achievements will only be built in the danger of being trapped. *Daode jing* says: “Colour's five hues

from the eyes their sight will take; Music's five notes the ears as deaf can make; The flavours five deprive the mouth of taste; The chariot course, and the wild hunting waste make mad the mind; and objects rare and strange, sought for, men's conduct will to evil change” 五色令人目盲；五音令人耳聾；五味令人口爽；馳騁田獵，令人心發狂；難得之貨，令人行妨. Just to warn us that we can't get out of control because of indulgence. *Daode jing* also says: “Misery! - happiness is to be found by its side. Happiness! - misery lurks beneath it” 禍兮福之所倚，福兮禍之所伏. When we enjoy the comfortable material life brought by high technology in luxury, we are also overdrafting our future happiness. The foundation of sustainable development is to respects the heaven and earth.

In fact, climate and human health are also closely related. *Constitution of the World Health Organization* defines “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition means that health is not only a good state of the physical level, but also a holistic development of mental psychology. However, direct natural environmental anomalies such as hot weather, changes in infectious disease transmission patterns, and air pollution all contribute to new disease risks, these conditions will inevitably lead to human health disorders. If the main cause of the aforementioned climate change is artificially excessive intervention in nature, then the crisis of dealing with human climate and health is not simply a superficial “eliminating physical illness”. It is to start from “treatment of the heart” 治心 and let human beings understand that their health is closely related to the balance and harmony of ecology. Caring for the natural environment is equivalent to loving your body.

We hope that the future climate will be like the famous poems of the Song

Dynasty. - Spring has hundreds of flowers and autumn has moon, summer has cool breeze and winter has snow.

Again, let's hand in hand to work together for the above natural life always.