

德 (DE)

德字 古作(直心) 字從直從心 取其直心之義
直心者 蓋言人貴本其中和之理 發為正氣 上通於天 下達於地
易所謂 與天地合其德 是也

The character DE (Ethics) in the old form was written with a combination of the words straight and heart.

Straight-hearted people, in general, are valued for their equanimity, and their centered and harmonious conscience, which can be set forth as a righteous spirit, a channel to Heaven and Earth.

This spirit is what is written in I-Ching¹, 'It can be the same DE (Ethics) as the Heaven's and Earth's!'

Note¹: I-Ching is the first written Chinese sutra which attempts to explain all natural phenomena.

夫天有好生之德 而天不崩 地有成物之德 而地不傾
人能修德以配天地 則精神不死 而可與天地參矣

Heaven exists because of its DE of loving life. Earth exists because of its DE of creating lives. The essence of Man can last forever, when He practices DE to attempt to equal that of the Heaven and the Earth, and becomes one of them!

自道德陵夷 四科六藝化為烏有
余雖山野村夫 罔有學識 而睹茲世道衰微 人心不古 聖人之德 已無遺存
浩劫之來 瀕於眉睫
意欲有志君子 立德以挽天心
不料十餘年來 有志之士 竟不一見 忍無可忍 出而倡辦天德聖教
求忠實前輩 指示廿字精微 救此危亡之世局 出生民於水深火熱之中 實所幸也

In recent times, morality is in chaos. The 'Classic Four Subjects¹' and 'Six Disciplines²' are no longer emphasized.

I³, although a mere villager without much education, have sensed that the trend of the world is degenerating. People's hearts are no longer the same as the ancients'. The virtues of the Sages are forgotten. The coming disaster is as close as our eyelashes.

I hope that there are ambitious honorable people can behave DE to restore the confidence of the heart of Heaven.

But I have waited with anticipation, more than ten years, and no sage is coming into sight. I have reached to the point that I cannot seclude myself but must actively promote this Tien De Religion.

I hope that honest peers will disclose the essence of the Twenty Characters to reverse this trend

and rescue people from their chaotic world. It would be fortunate for everyone!

Note¹: The Classic Four Subjects and the Six Disciplines are part of Confucius educational topics.

The Classic Four Subjects are:

- 1) Moral Behavior /德行
- 2) Language /言語
- 3) Politics /政事
- 4) Literature /文學

Note²: The Six Disciplines are:

- 1) Propriety/禮
- 2) Music/樂
- 3) Archery/射
- 4) Horse Riding/御
- 5) Calligraphy/書
- 6) Mathematics/數

Note³: The author, Master Hsiao, Chang Ming, founder of Tien De Religion, was born in 1894 and died in 1942. Having lived through World War I and died during World War II in China, Master Hsiao surely could sense the chaotic situation in the world at that time and hoped to promote this Religion with Twenty Character tenets to salvage this world and to restore the confidence of the heart of Heaven so that disaster could be forestalled.

夫德者 眾善之稱也 故婦人有三從四德 君子有五倫八德

八德者 即孝弟忠信禮義廉恥之謂也

Hence, DE is a condensed name for all virtues. Thus, a female has Three Duties of Assistance¹ and Four DEs²; a male has Five Cardinal Constant Human Relationships³ and Eight DEs⁴.

Note¹: Three Duties of Assistance are:

To assist her father when young; her husband when married; and her son when widowed.

Note²: Four DEs are:

Female's virtue, speech, demeanor, and domestic skills.

Note³: Five Cardinal Constant Human Relationships are:

父子有愛/love between father and son,
君臣有義/righteousness between ruler and official,
夫婦有別/sense of difference between couples,
長幼有序/rank between siblings,
朋友有信/trust between friends.

Note⁴: Eight DEs are:

filial piety, brotherly love, loyalty, trustfulness, propriety, righteousness, integrity and conscience.

人有一善 斯有一德 有百善 斯有百德 故有公心者 即為公德 有仁心者 即為仁德
德無定位 隨一善而名之

Whoever has a single virtue has one DE; having one hundred virtues, he would have one hundred DEs. So, one who lives impartially has the impartial DE; one who lives benevolently has the benevolent DE.

DE has no set place, but DE comes with each virtue.

嘗聞德乃道之本 苟不至德 至道不凝 是以人欲修道 不可無德
即如天地鬼神 草木春秋 皆有德於人 為人所不可忘者也

I have heard that DE is the principle of TAO. Without immense DE, immense TAO will not exist. Therefore, one who wants to practice TAO cannot go without DE. Even Heaven and Earth, Deities, plants and the four seasons all have DEs to mankind. Thus, mankind must not take those DEs for granted.

何也 人為天地所生 又為天地所養 苟天地昏亂 則寒暑不定 人必多災
鬼神者 歲月日時 各有司責 吉凶禍福 各有職權 推濛別霧 亦德之至也
春秋執四時之柄 草木有利人之功 皆人所不可少者也

Why? Mankind is created and nourished by the Heaven and Earth. If the Heaven and the Earth are not in order, the cold and hot temperatures do not come in a timely manner and mankind surely will have more disasters.

The Deities have their own functions all year round. They are responsible to deliver prosperity or accident, fortune or misfortune to mankind and push away the fog or the mist. These consequences are all derived from their immense DEs.

The four seasons have power to control the weather. The plants are a beneficial factor to mankind. All these are necessities and mankind can't live without them.

然此四者 非人有德不足以感之 蓋人不修德 則天地紛亂 刀兵時見 春秋顛倒 水火不調
神鬼夜號 瘟疫時降 是皆無德之所致也

Those four bodies (the heaven and earth, deities, plants and four seasons) are not easily touched unless mankind has DE. If mankind does not comport itself with DE, the world will be in turmoil; war will be declared frequently; the four seasons will occur in a reverse order; time's unfolding is not smooth; ghostly cries will be heard at night; epidemic diseases come often. These are all due to lack of DE.

方今天地無主 悲憫之士少 造亂之人多 人居三才之一 能修其德
上可以正天 下可以定地 中可以悅鬼神而利萬物
是豈在於他求哉 蓋我心無有違背 則天心自順矣 我心無有缺陷 則地膽亦寧矣

Nowadays, the principle of the world is so lost that people who are merciful are few; people who provoke violence are many. As a part of the three main entities in this world (Heaven, Earth and Mankind), if Man practices DE, he not only can guide the Heaven and calm the Earth, but also please deities in the middle of the world and ultimately benefit all living things.

Man need not pray for any other than Himself, because when our hearts haven't emptied of DE, Heaven is smoothed down; when our hearts are fully-supplied with DE, the earth is also calmed.

君子好德 坦然其心 太上好德 無人無我

The hearts of people who live in DE are calm and have no doubts; just as the ancient Sages live in DE, the state of mind of such people are neither containing to 'self' nor 'other'.

人能以貪財愛色之心愛其德 以沽名釣譽之心據於德 其德至矣
德既至 則由一德發揮二三德 而千百德 皆可貫通以入焉

Mankind should cherish its DE as greedily as money, as passionately as color¹. Mankind should let DE occupy its heart instead of fishing for fame and compliments all the time. In this way, its DE is obtained.

Once one DE is there, others will follow. Then, hundreds or thousands of DE can come one after the other!

Note¹: To the Chinese way of thinking, all the world's existing phenomena are color, rather than things which have color.

余天德聖教 以德字為主 良以德之一字 語乎其小 語乎其大 雖聖人有所不能盡也

My Tien De Religion uses the character DE as the principle. Take heed, because when DE is regarded as a small virtue, anyone is able to achieve it; when DE is regarded as an immense virtue, even Saints cannot fulfill it thoroughly.

書曰 人心惟危 道心惟微 惟精惟一 允執厥中

中庸曰 不偏之謂中 不易之謂庸 中庸大道 五教之所共宗 聖凡之所同具 願我有志君子 以此為入德之門焉

The Book mentioned, "The heart of Mankind¹ is dangerous; the heart of TAO² is endangered. To save the heart of TAO, it must be crystallized and pure. This is certainly the ultimate principle of TAO."

The book of Zhong Yong said, "Non-bias is Zhong; universal truth is Yong. The boulevard of Zhong Yong, which is the source of all religions, is attainable by Saints or ordinary people." May all aspiring, well-behaved people embrace this teaching and enter through the door of DE.

Note¹: The heart of Mankind is concerned with the material circumstances.

Note²: The heart of TAO lies outside of material circumstances.