

Two Entrances and Four Practices

(Translated from Chinese by the Chung Tai Translation Committee)

To enter the Great Way there are many paths, but essentially they are of two means: by Principle and by Practice. Entering the Way by Principle means to awaken to the Truth through the doctrine, with a deep faith that all sentient beings have the same true nature. Obscured by the fleeting dust of delusions, this nature cannot manifest itself. If one can relinquish the false and turn to the true, fix the mind in “wall meditation”, understand that there are neither self nor others, that mortals and saints are equal and one—abiding this way without wavering, clinging not even to the scriptures, then one is implicitly in accord with the Principle. Being non-discriminative, still, and wu-wei is to Enter by Principle. Entering by Practice means following four practices that encompass all other practices. They are: accepting adversity, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and acting in accordance with the Dharma.

菩提達磨大師略辨大乘入道四行觀

夫入道多途，要而言之，不出二種：一是理入，二是行入。理入者，謂藉教悟宗，深信含生同一真性，但為客塵妄想所覆，不能顯了。若也捨妄歸真，凝住壁觀，無自無他，凡聖等一。堅住不移，更不隨文教，此即於理冥符；無有分別，寂然無為，名之理入。行入謂四行，其餘諸行，悉入此中。何等四耶。一報冤行，二隨緣行，三無所求行，四稱法行。

What is the practice of accepting adversity? When suffering, a practitioner of the Way should reflect: “For innumerable kalpas, I have pursued the trivial instead of the essential, drifted through all spheres of existence, created much animosity and hatred, maligned and harmed others endlessly. Even though now I have done no wrong, I am reaping the karmic consequences of past transgressions. It is something that neither gods nor men can foresee or impose upon me. Therefore I should accept it willingly, without any resentment or objection.” The sutra says, “Face hardships without distress.” How? With thorough insight. With this understanding in mind, you are in accord with the Principle, advancing on the path through the experience of adversity. This is called the practice of accepting adversity.

云何報冤行。謂修道行人，若受苦時，當自念言。我往昔無數劫中，棄本從末，流浪諸有，多起冤憎，違害無限。今雖無犯，是我宿殃，惡業果熟，非天非人所能見與，甘心甘受，都無冤訴。經云：逢苦不憂。何以故。識達故。此心生時，與理相應，體冤進道。故說言報冤行。

Second is the practice of adapting to conditions. Sentient beings are without a self, being steered by karmic conditions. Suffering and joy are experienced together as a result of causes and conditions. Any reward, blessing or honor is a consequence of past causes, and is gone when the necessary conditions are exhausted. So what is there to be joyful about? Knowing that success and failure depend on conditions, the Mind neither gains nor loses, remaining unmoved by the winds of joy. This is to be in harmony with the Way. Therefore it is called the practice of adapting to conditions.

二隨緣行者。眾生無我，並緣業所轉，苦樂齊受，皆從緣生。若得勝報榮譽等事，是我過去宿因所感，今方得之。緣盡還無，何喜之有。得失從緣，心無增減，喜風不動，冥順於道。是故說言隨緣行。

Third, to seek nothing. Ordinary people, in their perpetual ignorance, crave and form attachments to everything, everywhere. This is called seeking. The wise are awakened to the Truth, and choose reason over convention; their minds are at peace and wu-wei. All forms change with karma, all existence is empty, and hence there is nothing to be desired. Blessing and Darkness always follow each other. This long sojourn in the Triple Realm is like living in a burning house; to have a body is to suffer, how can one attain peace? Those who understand this renounce all mundane existence, cease desires, and stop seeking. The sutra says, “To seek is to suffer, to seek nothing is bliss.” It follows that to seek nothing is to truly follow the Way. This is the practice of seeking nothing.

三無所求行者。世人長迷，處處貪著，名之為求。智者悟真，理將俗反，安心無為。形隨運轉，萬有斯空，無所願樂。功德黑暗，常相隨逐，三界久居，猶如火宅，有身皆苦，誰得而安。了達此處，故捨諸有，止想無求。經曰：有求皆苦，無求即樂。判知無求，真為道行。故言無所求行。

Fourth, to act in accordance with the Dharma. The principle of intrinsic purity is the Dharma. By this principle, all forms and characteristics are empty, without defilement and attachment, without self or others. The sutra says, “In the Dharma there are no sentient beings, because it is free of the impurities of sentient beings. In the Dharma there is no self, because it is free of the impurities of self.” When the wise believe in and understand this Principle, they should act in accordance with the Dharma. There is no stinginess in the Dharma, so practice the giving of body, life, and possessions, with a mind free of parsimony. Understand and achieve “triple emptiness”, with no reliance and no attachment. Practicing for the sake of removing impurities, one liberates others without becoming attached to form. This benefits oneself, benefits others, and also glorifies the Bodhi path. This is the perfection of dana; it is likewise with the other five paramitas. In order to relinquish delusions, one practices these six perfections, yet there is nothing that is practiced. This is to act in accordance with the Dharma.

四稱法行者。性淨之理，目之為法。此理眾相斯空，無染無著，無此無彼。經曰：法無眾生，離眾生垢故；法無有我，離我垢故。智者若能信解此理，應當稱法而行。法體無慳，身命財行檀捨施，心無吝惜。脫解三空，不倚不著，但為去垢，稱化眾生而不取相。此為自行，復能利他，亦能莊嚴菩提之道。檀施既爾，餘五亦然。為除妄想，修行六度，而無所行。是為稱法行。