

Free will creates habitual karma, which in turn affects free will.
This force that counteracts free will is called karma.
The law of causality is not the same as fatalism or determinism.

The Essence of Happiness and True Freedom

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FREEDOM

HAPPINESS

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About the Author

Kristen, a wise scholar from the East, skillfully blends the religious, cultural, and philosophical ideas of both the East and the West with his profound knowledge and unique perspective. His exceptional wisdom and profound insights are admired by many.

Kristen graduated from the Physics Department of Shandong University. His understanding in modern physics laid a solid foundation for his later in-depth exploration of philosophy, especially Eastern Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism culture. He also conducted thorough research in Western religious scriptures and classics such as the Bible, clarifying historical facts and interpreting their deep meanings without favoring any specific denomination. He grasped the essence of Jesus' teachings and discovered the core of religious wisdom.

Kristen, through long periods of retreat as self-improvement, has seamlessly integrated the teachings passed down by the sages

and discovered profound realizations. He shares his experiences and guides people in their quest for truth and the meaning of life. His wisdom transcends the boundaries of religions and faiths, encouraging people to look beyond surface differences, and focusses on the humanity and spiritual needs that we share. He inspires people to seek personal growth and inner balance through meditation and introspection. His guidance is not simply theoretical, but has greater emphasis on practicing and applying wisdom.

Kristen's mission is to enlighten people's hearts, helping them discover the true purpose of their lives and contribute their wisdom and strength to create a better world. His wisdom and compassion will certainly continue to influence and guide people's hearts, serving as a beacon during their life journeys.

Introduction

From the moment of birth, humans begin to experience various sufferings. The suffering experienced by infants is mainly hunger, cold, and heat. Usually, they express their needs by crying.

As they grow older, during toddler-hood and childhood, they enjoy playing and are curious about nature. They want to observe and try various things. They may like different toys. If they get their favorite toys, they will feel happy; otherwise, they will feel sad. And if their toys are lost or damaged, they will also get upset.

During childhood, they are energetic and enjoy hanging out with their peers. Although they have various needs, usually they are easily satisfied and happy.

During adolescence, their affection towards the opposite sex grows. Instinctively, they want to date and feel happy while dating.

On the contrary, if the person they admire rejects them they will feel gloomy.

After growing up, with the growth of knowledge and abilities, they have more and more desires and hobbies.

Some people enjoy arts such as singing, dancing, and acting; some love sports such as martial arts; some like reading and writing; some like traveling; some like to pursue power; while some keep their curiosity and passion for exploring truth. Humans seek happiness and satisfy desires through a wide range of activities.

Most humans look for food when hungry, and seek clothing when cold, like other animals. Their lives are about instinctively alleviating suffering and pursuing what they consider to be freedom and happiness. Very few people take the time to ponder what is the root of suffering, what is the essence of happiness, and what is true freedom.

Now, let's delve into these questions.

Chapter 1

Types of Sufferings

There are two types of human suffering. The first is physical suffering, which is commonly referred to as pain of the body. The second is psychological suffering, which is mainly rooted in desires and emotions. We call it suffering of not getting what one wants, suffering of separation from what one loves, and suffering of encountering what one dislikes.

Let's analyze it step by step, starting with physical suffering. There are several types of physical suffering: the suffering of illness, injury, aging, and dying.

Let's take the suffering of illness as an example. When humans fall ill, the physical pain and discomfort persists and may even intensify over time. Meanwhile, they may also have various negative emotions, such as stress, fear of death, worry about work, children and grandchildren, and worry about money.

For example, if a person has acute rhinitis, he may suffer from

nasal congestion, runny nose, difficulty breathing, and discomfort in the head and lungs. When applying medicine to clear the nasal passages, he will feel comfortable and his mood will improve as well.

While treating an illness, when inflammation or virus is cleared, the pain will diminish or even disappear, and the body will feel comfortable. After recovery, as the pain disappears, the physical comfort will disappear. Subsequently, the various negative emotions will also gradually alleviate, and a relaxing and joyful mood will last for a while.

Similarly, when a person is hungry, he may feel weak, stomach discomfort, and anxiety. When he starts eating, the pain of hunger gradually alleviates, energy gradually recovers, negative emotions fade away, and happiness emerges.

In short, the feeling that emerges from the relief or the elimination of physical pain is relaxation, pleasure, or comfort in the body. They are simply two different ways to describe the same feeling. However, humans are ignorant, clinging to the feeling

that arises from the relief or the elimination of physical pain, while rejecting the pain itself. Physical pain is lasting, while the feeling that arises from the relief or the elimination of physical-pain is fleeting. In the term 'Kuai Le' (happiness), 'Kuai' means fleeting, while 'Le' means alleviation.

Chapter 2

Psychological Suffering

There are three main types of psychological sufferings: the suffering of not getting what one wants, the suffering of separation from what one loves, and the suffering of encountering what one dislikes.

I. The suffering of not getting what one wants

When people crave or desire something, they strongly want to obtain it. However, before obtaining it, they must restrain their craving and desire. At that time, the suffering of not getting what one wants arises. The stronger the craving and desire, the greater the suffering. Meanwhile, they may also have various negative emotions, such as tension, anxiety, and worry.

For example, if a person wants to own an apartment, they may work hard, devote themselves, and do their utmost to achieve it. However, after years of hard work, the apartment price may have already increased before they have managed to save enough for a down payment. Or due to not being able to secure a loan, buying an apartment becomes even more hopeless. The

suffering of not getting what one wants remains with them throughout their life.

When a person is attached to something or a career, there is a strong desire to achieve success. However, before achieving success, they must endure various hardships and setbacks and restrain the inner desire for success. The suffering of not getting what one wants continues to accompany them throughout their journey of striving.

For example, an athlete who has dedicated over a decade to intense training and competition finally earns an opportunity to participate in an international game. On the way to the game, right up until the night before, he is heavily burdened by the strong desire to win. Even at night, he can't sleep well. During the game, the desire to win makes him feel extremely nervous. If he loses, he would feel frustrated, gloomy, and even cry. He can only endure the suffering and wait for the next opportunity. The suffering of wanting to win but not being able to may motivate him to endure various hardships and continue intense training.

There are numerous examples of the suffering of not getting what one wants. In this high-tech era, humanity experiences numerous sufferings of not getting what one wants. Those who have no apartment want one; those who own an apartment desire a mansion; and those who own a mansion want more mansions. Those who have no car want one; those who own a car desire a luxury car; and those who own a luxury car want more luxury cars. Some even want to buy an airplane. The world's richest person, Elon Musk, is even preparing to immigrate to Mars. I believe that saving the Earth is more conscientious and meaningful than immigrating to Mars. If we take good care of our planet, it can be used for millions of years. Isn't that better?

In terms of clothing, food, housing, and transportation, the more needs humans have, the more suffering of not getting what one wants they experience; the stronger their desire for those needs, the stronger the suffering of not getting what one wants. Meanwhile, the suffering of not getting what one wants may be accompanied by other negative emotions, such as sorrow, sadness, inferiority complex, envy, complaint, and worry about gains and

losses. When one's needs are met, the suffering of not getting what one wants is alleviated or eliminated, and negative emotions are also relieved and gradually fade away, leading to a sense of happiness.

II. The suffering of separation from what one loves

The suffering of separation from what one loves refers to the immense suffering that arises when loved ones are separated or unable to be together due to some reason. It may be accompanied by various negative emotions such as longing, tension, anxiety, and sorrow.

In earthly life, when men and women engage in romantic relationships, they develop strong emotional attachment to each other. If they are separated due to some objective reason, they will experience intense distress and attachment, enduring immense torment. The stronger the emotional attachment, the greater the suffering of separation. Emotional attachment brings great suffering.

If one partner in a romantic relationship dies, the surviving

partner may be devastated. Some may even pass away in a depressed state. If one partner in a relationship falls in love with someone else, the other may be overwhelmed with strong anger or a desire for revenge. Some may even commit suicide or murder their partner. The incidence of homicides caused by romantic conflicts ranks second among all homicides .

Besides, the emotional attachment between parents and children, as well as among siblings, can also give rise to the suffering of separation from what one loves, resulting in various tragedies in life.

By the same token, if a beloved item is lost or damaged, it can also give rise to the suffering of separation from what one loves, as well as strong anger towards the one who damaged it. If the loss is due to one's own carelessness, then strong regret and distress will also arise. This is also the suffering of separation from what one loves.

When a beloved person or item is regained, the suffering of separation from what one loves is alleviated or eliminated, and negative emotions are also relieved and gradually disappear, leading to a sense of happiness.

III. The suffering of encountering what one dislikes

When a person encounters an adversary or enemy, resentment, disgust, or aversion may arise. Meanwhile, they may also have various negative emotions, such as tension, fear, anxiety, and sorrow. As a result, they will be constantly anxious and on guard, in fear of being hurt, attacked, plotted against, or even killed by the enemy. Even in mildly hostile situations, if they have to be around someone they dislike, they will be in a bad mood.

The resentment and hatred between people is mainly due to one party stealing, deceiving, or robbing items that the other party loves; or one party assaulting, insulting, slandering, defaming, persecuting, or deceiving the other party, or the person or animal that the other party loves. Therefore, the suffering of encountering what one dislikes is also indirectly caused by craving and desire.

If one reconciles with their adversary or enemy, the suffering of encountering what one dislikes will be alleviated or eliminated, and negative emotions will be relieved and gradually disappear, leading to a sense of happiness.

From the analysis above, we can see that attachment and desire inevitably lead to the three types of mental sufferings and various negative emotions. These sufferings can lead to physical pain such as illness, injury, and death. Physical pain, in turn, amplifies various negative emotions, thereby further increasing physical pain.

In conclusion, whether it is physical or mental suffering, its arising is suffering; its process is suffering; its alleviation or elimination, as well as the relief of negative emotions, is essentially the reduction of suffering, without any other feeling. Human beings, however, mistakenly label the reduction of suffering as comfort, happiness, and pleasure. In reality, this is a psychological misconception. We refer to the reduction of suffering as the suffering of change. In other words, the feelings that humans label as comfort, happiness, and pleasure are essentially the suffering of change. From now on, we can know that terms like comfort, happiness, pleasure, and joy are synonymous with the suffering of change.

Chapter 3

The Suffering of Change (Happiness) Increases Greed, While Greed Increases Suffering

Today, let's continue to explore the suffering of change (happiness) and desire.

In the previous lecture, we discussed that if a person does something that alleviates their psychological and physical suffering, as well as their negative emotions, then they will develop an attachment for this suffering of change (happiness), wanting this alleviation of suffering to continue. As a result, they will keep repeating this action until the suffering is temporarily removed. However, suffering and negative emotions will arise again, so they have to repeat this action over and over again.

The term "attachment" means that when the suffering of change (happiness) arises, the mind is attached to it, like oil stains on cloth that are difficult to wash away. When the mind is attached to the suffering of change (happiness), it is difficult to let go. As we repeatedly alleviate from suffering, our attachment grows, which

further increases the suffering of not getting what one wants, the suffering of separation from what one loves, as well as various psychological and physical sufferings.

Every time when we repeat this activity, we habituate this attachment; then we become more fond of doing it, and this attachment turns into desire. At this point, this activity has become one's hobby, and one will do it more frequently. As a result, the constantly growing attachment turns into greed. As greed grows, one becomes addicted to the activity, and the greed turns into avarice. This is known as an addict.

What does "addiction" mean? In medical terms, "addiction" is defined as a habit or dependence formed due to frequent external stimuli on the central nervous system. "Addict" refers to a person who has a certain addiction beyond their control. Therefore, addiction is already pathological, which is difficult to treat.

When a person becomes addicted to something, it will severely impact their life, family, and work. In more severe cases, it may even lead them to commit crime, resulting in various physical

and mental sufferings.

The most typical example is drug addiction, so let's use it as an example to elaborate. Most drug addictions are the result of spiritual emptiness, boredom, negativity and pessimism, high mental stress, long-term low mood or depression, or feeling disgusted and helpless about life. Drugs can numb the nervous system, providing temporary relaxation to the body and mind. Under this influence, hallucinations and a sense of ecstasy may emerge, thereby temporarily alleviating the negative emotions such as spiritual emptiness, decadence, and depression.

However, taking drugs is like drinking poison to quench thirst. After the drug's effects have diminished, their meridians become blocked and tightened again. Their nervous system, like a deformed mechanical spring, is unable to naturally recover. As a result, indescribable and excruciating suffering will arise in their body and mind. Consequently, they need more drugs to numb the nerves, open up the meridians, relax the body and mind, and alleviate the suffering.

In fact, many activities, if done frequently over time, will turn into hobbies. For example, making money, binge-watching, idolizing celebrities, music, calligraphy and painting, dancing, gaming, ball games, sports, competing, playing mahjong, gambling, pursuing power, and even seeking truth, etc. During the hobby stage, not getting satisfied may bring some mental suffering and negative emotions, but it can still be controlled. However, if we continue to indulge in it and become increasingly immersed, it is no longer in the same category as hobbies—it becomes an addiction. If not satisfied, the mental suffering and negative emotions will be intense. At this point, we can't help ourselves. Over time, our organs may start to go wrong, and gradually, the body will fall ill.

For example, nowadays many people suffer from heart disease, the three highs, cancer, etc., and even more psychological illnesses. Various weird illnesses in the body and mind lead to various physical sufferings. Long-term suffering will accelerate death.

Another possibility is that when a person engages in an activity

and becomes more and more addicted, then over time, the psychological suffering such as the suffering of not getting what one wants and the suffering of separation from what one loves, along with various negative emotions, will intensify and torture them for a long time. As a result, they may turn to immoral or even illegal activities. In the end, they may find life unbearable, or even commit suicide. They may also end up with a mental breakdown and be sent into a psychiatric hospital.

In summary, the root of desire is the suffering of change (happiness). By constantly habituating and increasing the attachment to the suffering of change (happiness), desire arises. If a desire is not satisfied, it will cause psychological sufferings such as the suffering of not getting what one wants, the suffering of separation from what one loves, and the suffering of encountering what one dislikes. It may also indirectly lead to physical illnesses. If the desire is satisfied, then due to habituation, it will grow stronger, turning into greed or even avarice. If the greed and avarice cannot be continuously satisfied, it will lead to stronger psychological suffering and negative emotions, as well as various physical pains. If the greed and

avarice can be continuously satisfied, that's even worse. It will quickly consume one's energy and spirit, causing rapid aging, illness, and death.

Now let's summarize from another perspective. Human beings, driven by various physical and psychological needs, have to constantly explore and learn to find fast and convenient ways to meet those needs. In order to get the conditions for satisfying their needs, humans have to work hard.

While meeting their needs, attachment arises and grows, which further gives rise to various physical and psychological sufferings. Being compelled by various physical and psychological sufferings, humans are constantly seeking methods to alleviate them. Yet, when their suffering is alleviated, attachment arises and grows too, giving rise to various negative emotions such as anger, creating a vicious circle. This is our life.

In this high-tech era, both in the East and the West, with the lack of faith and the decline in morality, most people advocate individualism, hedonism, and liberalism. More and more addictive activities are

emerging, and humanity is falling from grace. More and more factors lead to psychological illnesses, and their incidence rate is also increasing. The future of humanity is really alarming!

Chapter 4

Every Life Comes With a Unique Factory Setting

Today, let's further explore the reality of life. First, let's understand a concept called "the factory setting of life".

The factory setting of life refers to our innate intellectual quotient, emotional quotient, spiritual quotient, moral quotient, and various potentials. The factory setting of life, combined with the growth environment, composes a person's life dimension, which can vary greatly among individuals.

So, what is the life dimension? Simply put, it refers to a person's current state of life. For instance, the Monkey King and the Buddha are vastly different in their states of life. Monkey King, with his 72 transformations and fiery eyes, has immense supernatural powers. However, he can never escape from the Buddha's palm. After enduring 500 years of suffering and receiving guidance from Avalokiteshvara and teachings from Monk Tang, Monkey King's state of life improves, his life dimension changes.

Now let's first learn the meanings of IQ (intelligence quotient), EQ (emotional quotient), SQ (spiritual quotient), MQ (moral quotient), etc. IQ is the measurement of cognitive intelligence. It reflects a person's abilities in observation, memory, thinking, imagination, creativity, as well as problem analysis and solving. A normal person's IQ is usually between 85 and 115.

EQ encompasses the abilities of self-control, enthusiasm, perseverance, as well as self-motivation and self-discipline. It's worth noting that EQ also covers human interaction. Daniel Goleman, a psychologist with a Ph.D. from Harvard University, identifies five key components of emotional intelligence:

- I. The ability to be aware of one's own emotions. This is the core of emotional intelligence.**
- II. The ability to control one's emotions and express them in a timely and appropriate manner.**

- III. The ability to motivate oneself and regulate emotions. It enables one to elevate from low points in life and start anew.**

- IV. The ability to understand others' emotions and needs. This is the basis for healthy interactions and effective communication.**

- V. The ability to regulate one's own and others' emotional responses.**

SQ (spiritual quotient) refers to the spiritual intelligence of humans, that is, the ability to penetrate the essence of things, to gain insight and intuition beyond logical thinking. Both SQ and IQ are intelligence in understanding things, but SQ has a higher dimension than IQ. SQ itself also has different dimensions. The higher the spiritual quotient, the higher the dimension.

MQ (moral quotient) is the ability to integrate knowledge and action. It determines how humans apply universal principles

such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, and forgiveness to their beliefs, visions, and behaviors. MQ encompasses qualities such as empathy, respect, patience, forgiveness, honesty, responsibility, equanimity, loyalty, politeness, humor, and all other virtues.

The values of IQ and EQ are not related to the dimension of life. In the same dimension, their values are proportional to abilities. The higher the value, the stronger the ability.

The values of MQ and SQ are proportional to the dimension of life. The higher the value, the higher the dimension.

MQ and SQ are like two sides of the same coin: MQ emphasizes kindness, while SQ emphasizes wisdom. When they reach a certain dimension, they merge into one, which we can call "Wisdom Quotient".

Individuals with lower dimensions tend to judge those with higher dimensions based on their own state of life. For example, those with low MQ but high EQ may show flattery, hypocrisy, and

strong execution towards their leaders. On the other hand, individuals with high MQ and high EQ, show respect, loyalty, understanding, and strong execution towards their leaders. However, individuals with low MQ but high EQ may regard those with high MQ and high EQ as being similar to themselves, assuming that they are skilled in flattery, hypocrisy, etc.

IQ, EQ, SQ, and MQ are collectively known as the "Four Quotients", which are not inherited. Human genes refer to the genetic information on DNA, which have two characteristics: one is to faithfully replicate themselves; the other is the possibility of mutation due to external radiation, leading to diseases. Therefore, human genes can only work on the physical level; they may result in the similarity in appearances between children and parents. However, the Four Quotients of children may be vastly different from their parents. Thus, they cannot be inherited. How can the Four Quotients be reflected in DNA?

DNA is composed of molecules. It is a biomacromolecule that is essential for the development and normal functioning of organisms. It is a chemical-level substance. Whereas, the Four

Quotients are mental faculties, whose energy form are not at the molecular and atomic level, but rather at the biofield energy level.

The values of a person's Four Quotients are completely unrelated to the values of their parents' Four Quotients. For example, parents with high IQ and EQ may have children with low IQ and EQ, and vice versa. Similarly, parents with low SQ and MQ may have children with high SQ and MQ, and vice versa.

Some individuals exhibit high levels of all Four Quotients, which is exceptionally rare. However, their parents may have only average levels of the Four Quotients.

A person's innate factory setting and subsequent growth environment determine their Four Quotients. However, the factory setting, as the main factor, plays a dominant role. Of course, external factors such as the growth environment, including living environment, social environment, educational environment, etc., are also important for the development and cultivation of the Four Quotients. In the next chapter, we will continue to discuss this topic.

Chapter 5

Factory Setting and Growth Environment

Every individual's innate Four Quotients are gradually developed through their growth environment, which includes living environment, social environment, educational environment, etc. The Four Quotients are likened to the four types of minerals: gold, silver, copper, and iron. The total quantity of each ore and the metal content within are comparable to a person's innate potential of the Four Quotients. The development and cultivation of an individual's Four Quotients are likened to the processing and refining of these four ores. Therefore, the quantity, the metal content, and the processing and refining techniques of each ore determine the purity and quantity of the extracted metal.

The higher the metal content in the ores and the better the processing and refining techniques, the higher the purity of the extracted metal. The greater the quantity of ores and the more diligent the workers, the higher the overall quantity of the extracted metal. The theory of the development and cultivation of an individual's Four Quotients is similar, so here we won't elaborate on that. Well, this analogy may not be very accurate,

as humans are spiritual beings and their physical and mental operations are very profound, beyond the comprehension of ordinary people.

From modern biology, we know that children and parents are genetically similar. However, even without any genetic mutation, their Four Quotients may have significant differences. Therefore, we can conclude that the Four Quotients of humans don't come from the physical body. The human body is just a complex and sophisticated instrument, while the Four Quotients can be separated from the body. Later, we will provide a more detailed analysis on this topic.

Furthermore, the growth environment is crucial. Each person's development of the Four Quotients may vary in different growth environments. Nowadays, the education system primarily focuses on developing individuals' intelligence quotient (IQ) and cultivating various skills. Due to variations in IQ, significant differences in academic performance among individuals can be observed from an early age.

Of course, IQ and education level are not directly proportional.

Some people have only primary school education, but their IQ is high. Whereas, some have a university degree but their IQ is mediocre; they simply have the fortune or opportunity to pursue higher education.

Due to the lack of emotional quotient (EQ) development in the current education system, EQ is only developed and cultivated in social and family environments to a limited extent. Only a few people with high EQ demonstrate impressive qualities. They often excel as leaders, entrepreneurs, or executives.

In the current school education system, there is almost no development of spiritual quotient (SQ). Only very few people with high SQ have the potential to become true innovative scientists or wise masters with spiritual attainment.

Currently, schools are also promoting moral quotient (MQ) education to some extent. However, due to a severe shortage of qualified teachers and the lack of a systematic and professional training system, the development and cultivation of MQ are relatively poor for most people. Only very few people with high MQ potential can truly become social elites and the backbone of the nation.

Chapter 6

To Live Is to Continue Living

Today, let's further explore the reality of life. Due to different four quotients and different dimensions of life, humans have different attitudes towards work.

Those with low spiritual quotient (SQ) and moral quotient (MQ) simply work out of selfish motive and attitude. Only very few people with high SQ and MQ work with a pure altruistic attitude or motive. Most people's motive and attitude fall somewhere in between.

Those with lower spiritual quotient (SQ) and moral quotient (MQ) have a lower dimension of life. They tend to have more needs, desires, suffering, and vexations. On the other hand, those with higher SQ and MQ have a higher dimension of life. They tend to have fewer needs, desires, and vexations, are content with what they have, and lead a happy and peaceful life.

Those with higher spiritual quotient (SQ) and moral quotient (MQ) are more popular. They treat others equally and refrain

from imposing on others what they themselves don't desire. They are honest, humble, friendly, open, humorous, contented, frugal, generous, have no interest in competing with others, etc. On the other hand, those with lower SQ and MQ tend to be ungrateful, envious, deceitful, discontented, and like to compete, complain, compare, seek pleasure, etc. Consequently, they are less popular.

In this era, due to society's lack of emphasis on cultivating moral quotient (MQ), most people, whether rich or poor, tend to be discontented, envious, enjoy competing and seeking pleasure, but are reluctant to give.

For the poor, their greatest wish is survival. Some people toil in fields, some work long hours day and night, like oxen. With meager earnings, urban residents use them to buy apartments, burdened by mortgages and enslaved to their homes, while rural inhabitants use them to build bigger and bigger houses. Despite living in expensive homes, these individuals are spiritually impoverished. There is little joy and freedom in their lives; they are simply living, in order to continue living.

As for the rich who have accumulated wealth, they may buy multiple apartments, build houses, or purchase fancy cars, to show their status. They work even harder than the poor, trading their lives for money. Due to high expenses and strong greed, they often take risks to make further investments, while many blind investments lead to bankruptcy.

Through the wellness retreats we offer for entrepreneurs, we find that entrepreneurs are often mentally and physically exhausted. Many of them are burdened with chain debts and negative assets. Due to immense psychological pressure, most of them suffer from long-term anxiety, resulting in a poorer state of health compared to ordinary people.

After humans have fulfilled their basic needs, if they have surplus wealth, most people, due to low spiritual quotient (SQ), are less inclined to think about elevating the dimension of their lives. Instead, they prefer to engage in leisure activities, games, travel, singing, dancing, sports, and various forms of entertainment. They cultivate various hobbies to pass the time, wasting their lives.

As humans accumulate more wealth, they tend to pursue a more luxurious lifestyle, such as mansions, fancy cars, beautiful companions, fine dining, traveling around the world, jewelry, etc. Some individuals are also fond of collecting antiques, calligraphy, and paintings.

There is a group of people who have a strong desire for fame, status, dignity, and prestige. They enjoy holding positions of power, being leaders, and controlling others. They prefer to have as many subordinates as possible and even seek admiration from others.

Another group of people is passionate about literature and art. Many of them rely on their creative writing or art performance to make a living. However, nowadays, art has become increasingly commercialized and mediocre, lacking the innocence and purity found in the works of past art masters. Those who are skilled at marketing themselves are in the spotlight, while true masters and experts are in the grassroots.

Many people enjoy learning and acquiring knowledge, but most

of them do so to better satisfy their own needs and desires. Only a few individuals have a genuine curiosity and are willing to explore the truth and reality of the universe and life, and to develop and cultivate their spiritual quotient (SQ) and moral quotient (MQ).

Life is full of diverse experiences that are difficult to fully describe.

As said in Dream of the Red Chamber:

What a mess! As each one leaves, another takes the stage. We mistakenly regard a foreign land as our homeland.

How absurd it is that in the end, all our labor is making wedding clothes for others to wear!

Chapter 7

Happiness vs. Peace

There is a kind of joy called peace, which is different from happiness.

In Chapter 1, we mentioned that human suffering is primarily physical suffering, as well as psychological suffering, namely, the suffering of not getting what one wants, the suffering of separation from what one loves, and the suffering of encountering what one dislikes. When these sufferings are alleviated, various negative emotions such as anxiety, worry, tension, and fear are also relieved. Humans refer to the experience of this process as "happiness". In the term 'Kuai Le' (happiness), 'Kuai' means fleeting, while 'Le' means alleviation. We refer to happiness as the suffering of change, because in this process, there is only the alleviation of suffering, without anything else.

However, when suffering or negative emotions are temporarily relieved, that is, when the suffering of change (happiness)

disappears, this state of freedom from suffering, negative emotions, and suffering of change (happiness) is called "peace". Simply put, it is a state where there is neither suffering nor happiness. Peace is pure and free. However, this peace is relative and temporary, because suffering and negative emotions can emerge again at any time.

In fact, ordinary people rarely experience temporary peace. Most of their time is lived in suffering or the alleviation of suffering, in negative emotions or the alleviation of negative emotions.

When a person has weak attachment to their loved ones or things, they experience less suffering. With less suffering, they also experience less suffering of change (happiness). In this way, the relative and temporary peace they experience are more.

When a person has no attachment to their loved ones or things, they won't suffer due to them. Without suffering, they won't experience the suffering of change (happiness). In this case, concerning their loved ones or things, they have attained complete peace. As long as they don't crave, they will attain lasting peace.

Let's take the example of a smoker. When the craving for a cigarette arises, they experience suffering; when smoking, they experience the suffering of change (happiness). Initially, they may smoke one pack every two days, then progress to one pack per day, two packs per day, or even three packs per day. The greater the addiction, the more intense the suffering, and the stronger the suffering of change (happiness) when smoking.

If an occasional smoker is not addicted to smoking, then their suffering of craving smoking is very weak, and their suffering of change (happiness) is also very weak, almost negligible. Compared to those with a smoking addiction, this state is relative peace.

If a person doesn't smoke at all, not even a single cigarette, then they have neither suffering nor suffering of change (happiness) related to smoking. As a result, in regard to smoking, their peace is complete, lasting, pure, and free.

Let's take playing mahjong or other gambling as another example. When the addiction arises, they experience suffering; when they lose a round, they experience another layer of suffering. Initially,

they may start with small bets, and then gradually increase their bets. (The gambling addiction intensifies over time.) When gambling, regardless of winning or losing, they prioritize satisfying their gambling addiction. If they win, the suffering of change (happiness) is intense. If they lose, despite another layer of suffering, due to strong gambling addiction, some people still cannot stop even when they are about to go bankrupt.

If an occasional gambler is not addicted to gambling, then their mental suffering of craving gambling is very weak, and their suffering of change (happiness) is also very weak, almost negligible. Compared to those with a gambling addiction, this state is relative peace.

However, if a person doesn't gamble at all, then they have neither suffering nor suffering of change (happiness) related to gambling. As a result, in regard to gambling, their peace is complete, lasting, pure, and free.

Some people may say, "If I have no hobby or desire at all, what's the point of living?" Actually, this is impossible for humans.

Humans are born with many innate and potential needs, leading to numerous suffering. As they age and under the influence or stimulation of the environment, the suffering of not getting what one wants, the suffering of separation from what one loves, and the suffering of encountering what one dislikes, as well as the suffering of various illnesses, will constantly emerge. Thus, they have to seek methods to alleviate or temporarily remove the sufferings.

We should understand that in most cases, when something is in the hobby stage, people are willing to do it. This is because the suffering of not getting what one wants is relatively weak, and it is easy to implement and satisfy them. During implementation, both suffering and negative emotions are alleviated, and this suffering of change (happiness) seems to be a reason for ordinary people to continue living.

When a person's basic physical needs, such as food and clothing, are satisfied, other innate and potential needs will constantly emerge. For example, social needs, the need for respect, the need for knowledge, aesthetic needs, etc. Meeting these needs

is accepted by the general public. Hence, the entertainment and education industries are prosperous, as they are not only legal but also in line with universal values.

However, most people have never thought that interests may become hobbies, hobbies may become obsessions, and obsessions may become addictions. And all hobbies may intensify, without exception.

For example, let's consider the attachment to cleanliness, including cleanliness of the living environment, cleanliness of food, cleanliness of clothes, cleanliness of one's own body, etc. Ordinary people appreciate cleanliness but don't have a strong attachment to it. In most cases, they can live in relative peace. There is a group of people who love cleanliness and have a strong attachment to it. They have high requirements for the cleanliness of their environment, food, clothing, and body. They enjoy cleaning or washing. Moreover, there is a small percentage of people with mysophobia, whose attachment to cleanliness has become pathological. They have to constantly clean and wash in order to alleviate their

psychological suffering and negative emotions. In essence, the love for cleanliness and mysophobia are the same. In both cases, when individuals perceive something as unclean, they experience suffering. The difference lies in the intensity of this attachment.

Without guidance from the wise, humanity wouldn't turn to introspection and self-control. Therefore, in today's society, most people are becoming more and more greedy. As a result, various sufferings and negative emotions are growing in quantity and intensity, making it difficult for people to free themselves. Consequently, they have to constantly seek methods of alleviation.

Chapter 8

The Principle of Dependent Arising

Einstein had a famous quote, "God does not play dice." It means that this world is unified, harmoniously ordered, and follows the law of causality. God only gives humanity souls, where there is free will, as well as differences in the Four Quotients and personality.

In the book *The World as I See It*, Einstein used several articles to elaborate his religious views and explain the relationship between religion and science. Einstein said, "A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which are only accessible to our reason in their most elementary forms—it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude." He also emphasized, "In this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man." Einstein told people, "Enough for me the mystery of the eternity of life, and the inkling of the marvellous structure of reality, together with the single-hearted endeavour to comprehend a portion, be it never so tiny, of the reason that manifests itself in

nature." In other words, Einstein acknowledged that the existing human reason is unable to fully penetrate the mysteries of the universe and life.

We know that all theoretical frameworks of modern science are based on axioms. The so-called axioms are self-evident basic facts based on human reason. They are basic propositions which have been examined through long-term repeated practice and don't require further proof. For example, through two points, there is one and only one straight line. Every cause has an effect, and every effect has a cause. These are all axioms.

Axioms are the foundation for all theorems, and theorems need to be proved through logical methods. The law of causality is an axiom, which serves as the theoretical foundation for all science and philosophy. Without the law of causality, all scientific theorems and philosophical theories cannot be established.

The law of causality states that any phenomenon or thing must have its cause, that is, "Things have their root and branches, affairs have their end and beginning." In other words, any result

or phenomenon arises from the combination of causes and conditions. The law of causality is also called the principle of dependent arising, with the following three characteristics:

I. Results arise from causes.

No cause, no result; where there is a result, there must be a cause. It is sequential: causes always precede results, and their sequence cannot be reversed.

II. Everything follows the universal law.

The relationships among objective phenomena are objectively existing, not subject to human will, and universal. For example, birth is inevitably followed by death, gathering is inevitably followed by farewell, union is inevitably followed by separation, and formation is inevitably followed by destruction. These are universal laws. The diversity of connections among objective phenomena determines the complexity of causal relationships.

III. Existence arises from emptiness.

The so-called "birth" means transitioning from non-existence to existence, and "cessation" means transitioning from existence to non-existence. The arising of anything is based on emptiness, from non-existence to existence. The cessation of anything is based on gradual change, gradually transitioning to emptiness.

The existence of anything must have the above three characteristics.

Let's take a tree as an example. The tree is a result. When the tree seed has the right temperature, humidity, and sufficient nutrients, it starts to sprout. Then, with ample sunshine, it grows and finally blooms and bears fruits. This is known as "Results arise from causes."

The gene of a tree determines its species characteristics, following the universal law, so an apple seed cannot grow into a pear tree. This is known as "Everything follows the universal law."

Before being planted, the tree doesn't exist. It only comes into

existence after being planted. This is known as "Existence arises from emptiness."

If we use these three characteristics to examine the existence of things, we will find that everything in the universe has these three basic characteristics. Nothing can escape dependent arising and cessation—the law that causes and conditions lead to arising and cessation.

All things follow the law of causality and have their corresponding causes and effects. The Four Quotients in the human soul and the factory setting of personality are just a result. So, what is the cause? We must discuss this question based on the law of causality.

In Chapter 5, we have demonstrated that the Four Quotients are mental faculties. A person's Four Quotients are vastly different from their parents'. The potential of the Four Quotients is not inherited. The genes of the human body are inherited from parents, and the human body is just a tool of the mind.

Based on the law of causality or the principle of dependent arising, the Four Quotients in the human soul and the factory setting of personality must have their underlying causes, while free will is inherent in the human soul.

Chapter 9

Talents, Hobbies, and Personality Are Not Inherited

Today, let's further prove that the human mind is not inherited from parents, that is, the human mind is not copied into the body.

We know that besides the innate potential of the Four Quotients, everyone is also born with potential for various skills and hobbies. Potential can also be called talent. In fact, talent and potential are two aspects of the same thing. From the perspective of being innate, it is called talent; from the perspective of development and cultivation, it is called potential (latent ability).

For example, everyone has different talents in sports, music, painting, calligraphy, etc. As the saying goes, "Every trade has its master." In other words, everyone has talent in some area. Of course, the level of talent can vary greatly.

For example, the differences in talent among Go players are most evident. In amateur stage, there are 13 levels and 8 ranks,

while in professional stage, there are 9 ranks. We will not discuss the amateurs for now. Among the professional players, they spend a similar amount of time playing Go, but their skills vary greatly, especially at the higher ranks of professional players. The higher the rank, the more difficult it becomes. This clearly shows the differences in talent.

In Chinese culture, there is a traditional custom called "One-year-old catch", which has been passed down among people since the Southern and Northern Dynasties. When a child turns one year old, parents would place various objects such as an abacus, pen, book, and scale in front of the child. Based on the object the child grabs, predictions can be made about their future career choice. This reflects the wisdom passed down by our ancestors for thousands of years.

In the novel Dream of the Red Chamber, there is a scene that in Jia Baoyu's "One-year-old catch", he grabs a rouge and a hairpin, foreshadowing his future temperament.

Furthermore, in Tibet, there is a tradition used to recognize reincarnate lamas. They place various sets of prayer beads in front of the child being tested, and check whether the child grabs the set of prayer beads that the deceased lama had used before. This is used to determine if the child is the reincarnate lama they are seeking.

As humans grow older, various potential preferences and desires emerge. For example, young boys may show interest in weapons, vehicles, various ball games, etc., while young girls may be drawn to dolls, singing, dancing, pretend-play toys, etc. Of course, there are exceptions, but this is true in most cases.

Some children enjoy eating meat or fish, while others prefer a vegetarian diet and feel nauseous when eating meat. Some children have a sweet tooth, while others prefer spicy and sour food.

As they grow older, girls tend to pursue beauty, while boys prefer to be cool. After reaching a certain age, their clothing preferences and aesthetic tastes vary greatly. Their individual hobbies, such

as playing musical instruments, chess, calligraphy, painting, and sports, gradually emerge.

Having grown up, humans have more and more vexations. Due to pressures of making a living, jealousy, competitiveness, arrogance, and anger may arise. These are all innate. However, some individuals exhibit friendliness, kindness, patience, and humility. In terms of temperament, there can be significant differences between individuals and their parents.

Adults tend to choose their careers based on their preferences. Whereas, some individuals may not have specific talents or hobbies; they have to learn a skill to find a job. However, they still have some talent in that area. They naturally choose to learn a skill they have some talent for, and then find a job to make a living. At this point, hobbies are not prioritized, as survival is the primary concern.

Everyone's innate personality and temperament differ greatly from their parents' and siblings'. Since the differences are so evident, we won't provide specific examples.

In conclusion, a person's innate talents, hobbies, personality, and temperament are not inherited; they differ greatly from their parents'. Thus, they cannot be passed down through DNA.

Humans' potential, talents, hobbies, personality, and temperament all belong to the human mind. While the genes of the human body are copied from parents, the mind is not copied from parents. Therefore, the human body and mind can be separated. The body is not the carrier of the mind; it is just a tool of the mind.

In the following chapters, we will continue to elaborate on this topic.

Chapter 10

Free Will and Pervasive Suffering

Today, let's further explore the reality of life. We know that humans have subjective agency, that is, humans have free will and creativity.

According to natural science, based on the second law of thermodynamics, an isolated system tends to increase in entropy, eventually reaching a state with maximum entropy, which is the most disordered state of the system. However, in an isolated system, if there is an organism with free will, the entropy of the isolated system can continue to decrease before the organism dies. This seems to violate natural science.

Let's consider a simple example: a river flows eastward. This is in line with the law of nature. In the river, everything without free will inevitably flows eastward. However, living organisms with free will can swim against the current all the way to the source of the river. Furthermore, things driven by organisms with free will can also move against the current.

Human beings are called spiritual beings, because their spirituality is reflected in their free will. However, although humans have free will, they don't understand the reality and truth of the universe and life. Thus, their free will tends to act ignorantly, which is blind action. The actions of free will produce inertial force, which doesn't disappear but is stored as energy in each individual's mind.

Free will is constantly acting, and in the process, it accumulates more and more inertial energy. We refer to the inertial energy accumulated from the actions of free will as "karma". The energy accumulated through repeated karmic actions is known as "karmic habit".

Karma is categorized into positive karma, negative karma, and neutral (neither positive nor negative) karma. The habituation of positive karma is called positive karmic habit, the habituation of negative karma is called negative karmic habit, while the habituation of neutral karma is called neutral karmic habit. These karmic habits are stored as energy in each individual's mind.

In our daily lives, we have heard the term 'Zào Yè' (creating karma). 'Zào' means creating or generating, while 'Yè' refers to the inertial energy accumulated from the actions. Creating karma doesn't mean "committing sins". "Committing sins" specifically refers to creating negative karma.

In our daily lives, we have also heard terms such as 'Shì Yè' (career) and 'Jiā Yè' (family property), where 'Jiā Yè' refers to the wealth and assets accumulated by family members through hard work.

It's important for us to have a clear and profound understanding of the term "karma". "Karma" is inertia energy, and the habituation of karma is called karmic habit. Karmic habit, in turn, exerts a force on free will, and this force is called karmic force. As the karmic habit and karmic force grow stronger and stronger, the freedom of humans becomes less and less.

Let's take smoking as an example. If a person doesn't smoke at all, then in regard to smoking, they have neither karmic habit nor karmic force, they are completely free.

However, one day, tempted by a friend, they decide to try smoking. Initially, they only smoke occasionally without getting addicted, so the compulsion to smoke is very weak. In other words, their karmic habit of smoking is very weak. In regard to smoking, they still have a relatively high degree of freedom.

After a period of habituation, they gradually increase their smoking frequency from one pack every two days to one pack per day. The karmic habit of smoking gradually intensifies, and they start to become addicted to smoking. At this point, somehow the karmic force of smoking makes them feel compulsive and lack freedom. We refer to the sense of compulsion and lack of freedom brought by the karmic force as pervasive suffering.

As the addiction to smoking intensifies, they have to smoke two or even three packs per day. At this point, the karmic force generated by smoking already becomes very powerful. In regard to smoking, they have very little freedom. If they choose not to smoke, the karmic force will make them experience great suffering; if they succumb to the karmic force and smoke, they will experience the suffering of change (happiness), which further strengthens the

karmic habit. From then on, the pervasive suffering brought by the smoking addiction drives them to live a life of continuous smoking under the compulsion of the karmic force, thereby constantly switching between suffering and suffering of change (happiness), creating a vicious cycle. In regard to smoking, they have transitioned from a state of freedom and bliss to a state without freedom and bliss.

Let's take playing games as another example. If a person doesn't play games at all, then in regard to gaming, they have neither karmic habit nor karmic force, they are free.

However, one day, tempted by a friend, they decide to try playing games. Initially, they only play games occasionally without getting addicted, so the compulsion to play games is very weak. In other words, their karmic habit of gaming is very weak. In regard to gaming, they are still relatively free.

After a period of habituation, they gradually increase their gaming frequency from one or two hours per day to four or five hours per day. The karmic habit of gaming gradually intensifies, and

they start to become addicted to gaming. Somehow the karmic force of gaming makes them feel compulsive and lack freedom. In other words, they start to experience pervasive suffering.

As the addiction intensifies, they may often play games all day long, and even stay up all night. Some individuals have even played to the point of exhaustion or sudden death. These news reports are not isolated cases.

At this point, the karmic force generated by gaming already becomes very powerful. In regard to gaming, they have very little freedom. If they choose not to play, the karmic force will make them experience great suffering; if they succumb to the karmic force and continue playing, they will experience the suffering of change (happiness), which further strengthens the karmic habit.

From then on, the pervasive suffering brought by the gaming addiction drives them to get addicted to gaming under the compulsion of the karmic force, thereby constantly switching between suffering and suffering of change (happiness), creating

a vicious cycle. In regard to gaming, they have transitioned from a state of freedom and peace to a state without freedom and peace.

In summary, the blind actions of free will generate karma, and the accumulation of karma forms karmic habits. When a karmic habit exerts a force on free will, the karmic habit is also called karmic force. Karma inevitably brings about a sense of compulsion and lack of freedom to humans. In other words, karma inevitably leads to pervasive suffering.

Chapter 11

Humans Are Deceived by Happiness

We know that happiness is the suffering of change, a temporary relief from suffering. The more suffering it is, the happier we will feel when the suffering is alleviated.

Perhaps some people might argue: Even without the relief of suffering, we can still experience happiness (suffering of change). For example, today I am in a good mood, full of energy, without vexations or physical pain. When a skilled massage therapist gives me a back massage, I feel comfortable and happy.

However, the truth is, there is an underlying suffering in your body. Why do you go for a massage? This is because, at your age, your muscles have already worn out, making you prone to fatigue; and the energy channels in your back have become somewhat blocked. As a result, when you alleviate this discomfort through massage, you feel comfort and happiness (suffering of change).

If we were to massage the back of a healthy five or six-year-old child, they wouldn't feel any happiness (suffering of change); they might even feel pain and discomfort.

As time passes, we begin to age and experience the "suffering of aging". However, this kind of suffering may not be severe enough to prevent us from living or working; instead, we can still endure and persevere.

If we carefully observe ourselves, we will find that throughout the day, we have numerous needs and desires, many of which we may not even be aware of. They are hidden in our minds, causing us to worry about gains and losses, feel inexplicably irritable, depressed, tend to complain and lose our temper, or even feel anxious. When a desire cannot be satisfied, we can only endure and shift our attention to satisfying other achievable desires, thereby temporarily forgetting the ones that remain unfulfilled. Alternatively, when a desire cannot be satisfied, we may endure it while making efforts to study and work, in order to get the conditions and abilities to satisfy our desires.

Most people are ignorant. They only seek happiness (suffering of change), but in reality, they are deceived by happiness (suffering of change).

When humans are satisfying their desires in order to obtain happiness (suffering of change), their greed is repetitively habituated, thereby reinforcing the habit of greed. As the habit of greed grows stronger, the suffering of not getting what one wants intensifies, leading humans to satisfy their desires more frequently to alleviate this suffering.

As the suffering of not getting what one wants intensifies, the suffering of separation from what one loves, the suffering of encountering what one dislikes, and various negative emotions also intensify and increase, creating a vicious cycle. In this way, within the cycle of suffering and suffering of change (happiness), humans worry about gains and losses, fluctuating between joy and sorrow. The most terrifying thing is that this situation tends to worsen over time, causing humans to be trapped in it and unable to escape, like devils.

In reality, what humans truly seek is peace, not happiness (suffering of change). So, what is peace? As mentioned in the previous chapters, peace is a pure and free state. When a person has fewer desires and is more content, they experience less suffering and happiness (suffering of change). As a result, their physical health tends to be better, their inner state is more tranquil and relaxed, they experience fewer vexations and negative emotions. This is relative peace.

The fewer desires a person has, the healthier and purer their body and mind become, leading to a higher level of peace. To increase our level of peace, we need guidance from wise teachers to see the reality of life, understand ourselves, ignite our wisdom, and elevate our state of life.

From this, we can understand that in order to attain relative peace and increase our level of peace, the first step is to identify the root of suffering—desire. Then, we need to use the right methods to reduce desire, thereby truly eliminating suffering, rather than temporarily alleviating suffering by blindly satisfying our desires. This is the biggest misconception for most people:

they believe that by satisfying their desires, they can alleviate suffering and attain happiness (suffering of change). However, this approach actually intensifies desires, leading to even greater suffering that needs to be alleviated. In this manner, it creates a vicious cycle, trapping them deeper and deeper.

So, the key is how to master the right methods to reduce desire. Here, we can briefly introduce them.

Firstly, learn and understand the law of cause and effect. Be aware of the relationship between karmic cause, karmic effect, karmic force, and karmic habit. Realize that as humans continuously satisfy various needs and desires, the karmic habit of desire intensifies, leading to endless and increasingly severe suffering in the future. Make efforts to deal with desire and stay away from external influences that trigger desire.

Secondly, practice yoga or meditation. By cultivating the body and mind and controlling our breath, we can tame our desire.

Thirdly, follow a wise teacher to learn wisdom. Understand the

root of suffering and the essence of happiness (suffering of change). Realize that everything is impermanent, like fleeting clouds.

Here, we will not provide detailed explanations. However, there are dedicated teachings available to guide us to learn the right methods, which can help us reduce and even eradicate the karmic habit of desire, leading us to genuine and perfect peace.

Chapter 12

Humans Are Deceived by Freedom

Today, let's continue to explore the reality of life. First, let's talk about the conventional understanding of freedom.

From the perspective of humans, freedom is believed to be the right to do whatever one wants within the boundaries of laws and morality. In other words, as long as one doesn't impede or infringe upon the freedom of others, one can do whatever they want, and that is considered freedom. So, freedom is conditional; it is subject to constraints. The condition for freedom is that individuals must restrain themselves, not violate laws or morality, that is, not impede or infringe upon the freedom of others.

When a person exercises their legal and ethical right to freedom, if they face interference, constraints, control, compulsion, or even force by others, then their freedom is impeded, violated, or deprived by other individuals or groups.

Please note that the key point of the freedom: "I can do whatever

I want" is the word "want", which conveys willingness, liking, and preference. When a person is driven by their karmic habit and compelled by their karmic force, that is, compelled by the pervasive suffering or pain, in order to alleviate these suffering, they generate the thought of wanting to do something. The thought: "I want to do something" seems proactive but is actually passive. Next, they need to obtain the freedom to do it.

When a person has the freedom to do whatever they want, the next step is to obtain the conditions to achieve that freedom, which include having sufficient wealth and various supporting factors, as well as being free from interference, constraints, control, or infringement by others. If they fail to obtain the conditions necessary to achieve freedom, then their pervasive suffering and pain will persist, and they can only endure them.

When a person has obtained the conditions to achieve freedom, their willingness to do something varies. Willingness can be categorized into stages of interest, hobby, obsession, and addiction.

If a person's willingness to do something is at the stage of interest, then the pervasive suffering and the suffering of not getting what one wants that they experience are not intense, and they can still restrain themselves.

If their willingness has increased to the stage of hobby or obsession, transitioning from a sense of compulsion to a sense of agitation, then the pervasive suffering and the suffering of not getting what one wants that they experience become very intense. At this stage, if they have the conditions to achieve that freedom, they will find it hard to restrain themselves. They may often disregard the feelings of their family, friends, or colleagues and do whatever they want, or even infringe upon the freedom of others.

If their willingness has turned into addiction, they will experience intense pervasive suffering and suffering of not getting what one wants. At this stage, if they have the conditions to achieve that freedom, they will find it hard to restrain themselves. They may become consumed by madness and harbor intense resentment when their desires are not satisfied, or even resort

to physically harming others, stealing, or robbing others' possessions. This aligns with the saying, "Better to die than to live without freedom."

The choices made by humans based on their willingness and preferences are actually driven by karmic habits and compelled by karmic force. That is, in essence, the pursuit of freedom is to temporarily alleviate pervasive suffering and pain. In summary, humans desire freedom and the conditions to achieve it, because they experience pervasive suffering and pain. To temporarily alleviate these suffering, they have to follow their karmic habits to do what they want.

Most people are ignorant. They desire freedom and the conditions to achieve it, but in reality, they are deceived by freedom. When humans freely do what they want, their karma is repetitively habituated, thereby reinforcing their karmic habit of "wanting to do something". As the karmic habit strengthens and attachment grows, the pervasive suffering and pain intensify. Consequently, humans tend to do what they want more frequently, in order to temporarily alleviate the pervasive

suffering and pain. This creates a vicious cycle. As a result, humans' pervasive suffering and pain become more and more severe, leading to even stronger greed and avarice. The most terrifying thing is that this situation tends to worsen over time, leading humanity to fall into the abyss and become trapped like devils, unable to free themselves.

Let's take smoking as an example. A person who never smokes doesn't have the karmic habit of "craving smoking"; they can freely choose to smoke or not without pervasive suffering.

Whereas, a person addicted to smoking has the karmic habit of "craving smoking". When they crave smoking and can do so, they feel they have the freedom to smoke. When they have the freedom to smoke, as well as the necessary conditions, they feel they have achieved the freedom to smoke.

Let's recap. Humans refer to the right to temporarily alleviate pervasive suffering and pain as freedom. However, as they freely do what they want, the karmic habit of greed grows. Since there are too many things humans desire to do, as the karmic habits

of various desires grow, the objective conditions to achieve freedom become more and more difficult. The pursuit of freedom will inevitably impact or infringe upon the freedom of others. Therefore, the freedom of humans will be subject to more and more constraints or control and may not be allowed. As a result, humans will eventually lose freedom in the pursuit of freedom. This is an inevitable result.

In reality, the freedom that humans pursue is not true freedom. True freedom is inner freedom. Inner freedom means one can choose to do or not do something, without pervasive suffering, pain, or the suffering of change (happiness), without the notion of being free or not. This state is called inner freedom.

So how can we attain inner freedom? Let's continue using smoking as an example. When a person with a smoking addiction starts to quit smoking, they still have the tendency of "craving smoking", but rationally, they want to quit smoking, and behaviorally, they restrain themselves from smoking. During this process, they may experience the pervasive suffering, the suffering of not getting what one wants, and the suffering of

separation from what one loves. However, as long as the method is right and one perseveres, their smoking addiction will gradually weaken, and the pervasive suffering, the suffering of not getting what one wants, and the suffering of separation from what one loves will also diminish. After this person has completely quit smoking, they no longer have the tendency of "craving smoking", and thus they are free from the pervasive suffering, the suffering of not getting what one wants, and the suffering of separation from what one loves. They no longer need the so-called freedom; they have regained inner freedom.

Therefore, to attain inner freedom, we must completely eliminate the pervasive suffering and pain. To achieve this, we must use the right methods to weaken karmic force and reduce karmic habits, rather than blindly following the karmic habits in order to temporarily alleviate the pervasive suffering and pain.

This is the biggest misconception for most people: if they blindly follow their karmic habits to achieve temporary freedom, the result is an increase in those habits and the growth of attachment, creating a vicious cycle and eventually losing freedom.

Chapter 13

Past Lives, Present Life, and Causality

In Chapter 8, we discussed the principle of dependent arising, also known as the law of causality. Now, let's recap. The law of causality is an axiom, which serves as the theoretical foundation for all science and philosophy. Without the law of causality, all scientific theorems and philosophical theories cannot be established. The law of causality states that any phenomenon or thing must have its cause, that is, "Things have their root and branches, affairs have their end and beginning." In other words, any result or phenomenon arises from the combination of causes and conditions.

The principle of dependent arising has three characteristics:

- (1) Results arise from causes;
- (2) Everything follows the universal law.
- (3) Existence arises from emptiness.

Everything in the universe has these three basic characteristics. Nothing can escape dependent arising and cessation—the law

that causes and conditions lead to arising and cessation. The material world follows the law of causality, and the spiritual world also follows the law of causality.

The inertia energy generated from the actions of free will is called "karma". In other words, all our thoughts and actions will leave imprints, creating a kind of inertia. The inertia energy accumulated through repeated actions forms karmic habits. The karmic habits formed from the actions of free will, in turn, will influence free will. This force that acts back upon free will is called karmic force. In fact, the law of causality is always present in the actions of free will. So, the cause is the force of karmic cause, or simply karmic cause; the effect is the force of karmic effect, or simply karmic effect; and the condition is the force of karmic condition, or simply karmic condition. When free will is acting, karmic causes also influence the actions of free will, giving rise to karmic effects, which then become new karmic causes. Therefore, the law of causality is not determinism or fatalism.

Anyone with logical thinking can understand that since there is

causality, there must be reincarnation. Why? Some wicked individuals commit evil throughout their lives and die without experiencing any retributions. Whereas, some virtuous individuals lead a righteous life but pass away without receiving any rewards. If there were no afterlife and no consequences to face after death, where wicked individuals would escape their deserved retributions and virtuous individuals couldn't receive their deserved rewards, then the law of causality wouldn't be established, and ethical values would be meaningless.

In the real world, evil often seems more profitable than justice, so why should we still uphold justice? Some individuals engage in immoral actions, only pursuing their own benefit, yet seem to live happily. If there were no retributions for their actions, wouldn't it be more reasonable to do evil deeds? Therefore, only when immoral actions inevitably lead to retributions, virtuous deeds eventually bring rewards, and justice prevails, do we have a reason to uphold righteousness and find a meaning in pursuing justice.

A person's innate potential of the Four Quotients, as well as

various hobbies, skills, personality, and temperament are different from their parents. They are not inherited, nor are they set by God. The karmic effects we are born with in this life must have their causes from our past lives.

Even among siblings raised by the same parents in the same family environment, their personalities may differ significantly: some are compassionate, some are indifferent; some are empathetic, some are selfish; some are strong, some are weak; some are open-minded, some are conservative... These personalities begin to manifest in early childhood, prior to formal education. This can also be observed in their interests and behaviors.

Some individuals are born with severe intellectual disabilities, while some are born geniuses. Some are kind-hearted from an early age, while some are selfish. Some are naturally easygoing and gentle, while some are stubborn and impatient. Without underlying causes, there wouldn't be such innate karmic effects. Moreover, some people are even born with memories of their past lives. Such variations exist. If there were no past lives, the law of causality wouldn't be established.

Even more convincing evidence can be found in identical twins. They have the same genetic makeup, same appearance, same parents, grow up in the same environment, wear the same clothes, and receive the same education. However, as they grow older, between the ages of three and seven, their different personalities, preferences, talents, potentials, as well as different intelligence quotient, emotional quotient, spiritual quotient, and moral quotient start to manifest.

The statement that humans have no past or future lives lacks scientific basis. No scientist can claim to have proven this statement through experimentation. A statement that hasn't been proven through experimentation and practice is merely a speculation. How can we blindly believe it?

Some people may ask, "If there are past lives, why don't I remember them?" In fact, if we calmly reflect, we will realize that even without considering past lives, an ordinary person can hardly remember anything before the age of six. How many things can you still remember from several decades ago or even just a few years ago? How can you say that things you don't remember

never happened?

After spending nine and a half months in the mother's womb, it's normal to completely forget about past lives. Of course, there are very few individuals who remember their past lives, but as they grow older, these memories usually gradually fade away. Such cases have been recorded and reported throughout history. Scientific researchers in the West have also confirmed the existence of souls after death through hypnosis as well as research on individuals who have come back to life after death (near-death experiences).

Of course, to verify reincarnation, there are usually two possibilities: The first is through the practice of yoga, mindfulness, or meditation. After reaching a certain level, one may be able to directly perceive and experience it. This has been confirmed by numerous practitioners. The second possibility is that scientists may invent more sophisticated instruments in the future that can detect souls after death.

Everything has its cause and effect. From the formation of

galaxies to being bitten by a mosquito, there are always causes and conditions behind them. Nothing happens without a cause. Causes give rise to effects, and effects further become causes. Causes and effects interconnect like an endless circular chain that won't stop. Based on the continuous nature of causality, we can also prove that the law of causality is inevitable throughout past, present, and future lives.

The law of causality is a natural law governing the universe and life. Nothing is accidental or disorderly. The experiences and ups and downs in our life, as well as the people we meet and the circumstances we face, are not random.

Since there is the law of causality in the universe, there must be reincarnation. Many people are not willing to believe in this truth, primarily due to their arrogance. They are unwilling to accept that there are great sages in this world, with wisdom and abilities far beyond ordinary people. Additionally, many people assume that ancient sages are just deified and idolized by later generations. Such a belief is deeply ingrained and difficult to change. These various doubts and prejudices hinder them from

learning with an open and humble attitude, making it difficult for them to absorb the wisdom of sages.

Every ordinary person is drawn into this world by their own karma. Apart from death, which is certain, they know nothing about the future. Their subconscious is filled with anxiety and fear. Those who don't believe in reincarnation don't know the reasons behind such feelings, nor do they ponder why it happens. When they are alone and idle, this inexplicable restlessness, fear, and loneliness often haunt them. Not daring to face themselves, they tend to seek refuge in the company of others, engaging in entertainment activities like chatting, gaming, and dancing, to pass the time and forget these feelings. They may also choose to immerse themselves in art. The most common phenomenon in modern society is watching TV or scrolling through smartphones, to aimlessly pass the time.

People who don't believe in life after death, in their subconscious, think: Humans are nothing more than highly complex yet not mysterious electrochemical machines. They believe that after death, there is nothing left, so while alive, they should enjoy life

to the fullest. As for those criminals, they think that after death, they can escape all responsibility for their actions. Thus, they commit crimes with this mindset of luck and greed.

In today's world, humans have a blind faith in science. Obsessed with the developments in technology, they are facing a severe spiritual crisis that continues to spread throughout the world. In Western countries, various confusing social issues are becoming more and more prevalent and challenging.

Nowadays, individualism, liberalism, materialism, and hedonism are once again growing and spreading, subtly shaping the social atmosphere. People all over the world are becoming more and more materialistic, seeking quick success, being short-sighted, unscrupulous, spiritually empty, and irresponsible.

Chapter 14

Karmic Cause, Karmic Effect, and Hao Liao Ge

Let's first review the main points of the previous chapter. Although humans have free will, they don't understand the truth and reality of the universe and life. Thus, their free will tends to act ignorantly, which is blind action. The inertia energy generated from the actions of free will is called "karma". When free will is constantly acting, karma is accumulated and karmic habits are formed.

When karmic habits act back upon free will, it is also known as inertial force, or simply karmic force. We know that while free will is acting, it is influenced by karma. We refer to the function of karma as karmic cause, and the effect of joint actions of free will and karmic cause, as karmic effect. Karmic effects then become new karmic causes, continuing to participate in free will's actions and giving rising to new karmic effects. In this way, various and countless karmic causes and effects are generated in our minds. The law of causality will never go wrong.

Let's take an example. Suppose your home is located near a

river, and there are two bridges to reach the town on the other side. One bridge is on the east side of your home, and the other on the west side, both about 200 meters away, with equally good roads to travel. Every day, you ride your bicycle across the river to run errands. Today, you might choose to take the bridge on the east side, while on another day, you might choose the one on the west side. Over the years, the probability of using each of these two bridges would be around 50%. This demonstrates free will.

One day, a new family moves in on the east side, and they have a Tibetan Mastiff. Every morning, when you cross the bridge, the owner would walk the dog on the bridge, which makes you feel afraid. Thus, you stop using the bridge on the east side. This fear is the karmic cause. Influenced by the karmic cause, your free will changes your behavior. After several months, you coincidentally meet the owner of the dog and find she is a beautiful actress you admire. From that point on, you overcome your fear and start using the bridge on the east side again, hoping to have a chat with her. In fact, her dog doesn't bite. In this way, influenced by other karmic causes, your free will changes your

behavior once again. Consequently, your inner freedom is affected by karmic forces, making you less free.

Another possibility is that you are not afraid of dogs; in fact, you particularly like Tibetan Mastiffs. So, you start using the bridge on the east side every day to see the dog and even bring some snacks for it. The dog's owner is an ordinary woman. This continues for several months. Then one day, you have a small conflict with the dog's owner and you no longer want to see her. From that moment on, you overcome the desire to see the Tibetan Mastiff and start using the bridge on the west side instead.

Human beings are like this, becoming less and less free under the influence of karma. Every individual has their own free will. For countless lifetimes, due to each of our thoughts, we have created countless karma, formed various karmic causes, and accumulated countless karmic habits. Towards other individuals or races, we have accumulated various karmic causes such as affection or aversion, jealousy or contempt, fear or anger. Towards various things, we have accumulated karmic habits

Asuch as attachment, desire, greed, and avarice.

All the karmic habits accumulated in the past and present lives, whether positive, negative, or neutral, become the karmic causes for the next rebirth. After rebirth, the innate potential of the Four Quotients, as well as various talents and interests, personality and temperament, are all karmic effects resulting from the karmic causes accumulated from countless lifetimes.

The karmic forces, karmic habits, karmic causes, and karmic effects of all living beings intertwine and influence each other, forming the course of human history. Free will, influenced by karmic forces, creates everything, like an artist. Karmic causes and effects grow cycle after cycle, arise and cease due to various conditions, inconceivably, giving rise to all phenomena in the world, like a dancer.

The karmic habits of humans lead to pervasive suffering, giving rise to countless pains and suffering of change (happiness). Every individual goes through birth, aging, sickness, and death; every family faces joy and sorrow, separation and reunion; every

career undergoes rise and fall, success and failure; every heart experiences happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy. The world is like a stage, where a complex and ever-changing drama is constantly unfolding at every moment.

Mountains move, valleys change, sea transforms into fields.
Youthful faces of the past are now adorned with gray hair.
Emotions fluctuate between joy and sorrow, laughter and anger.
Day and night rotate, winter and summer alternate.
Cloudy or sunny, dark or bright, the weather is unpredictable,
the sun and moon are chasing each other.
Life is filled with cycles of wealth and poverty, gains and losses,
rise and fall, without a fixed pattern.
Relationships are changeable: yesterday's flattery may turn into
today's conflict.

Humans don't know whether there are immortals in the world.
Some people may believe in the existence of immortals, but
they don't know what kind of beings they are. In their imagination,
immortals are beings that live eternally and freely. In reality,
what people truly envy is not immortals, but inner freedom.

Therefore, the original Hao Liao Ge from Dream of the Red Chamber is adapted as follows:

Everyone yearns for freedom, yet they cannot let go of fame and success!

Where are the great ones of days gone by? In grassy graves they lie now.

Everyone yearns for freedom, yet they cannot let go of gold and silver!

Every day, they grumble about not having enough, but when they finally have enough, their eyes close forever.

Everyone yearns for freedom, yet they cannot let go of their darlings!
Day by day, their darlings express love, but once they pass away,
their darlings are off with another one.

Everyone yearns for freedom, yet they cannot let go of their children and grandchildren!

Loving parents have been numerous since ancient times, but who have seen truly filial children?

Chapter 15

Anything That Makes You Feel Pleasure Will Surely Make You Suffer

Humanity has a basic characteristic: we tend to rely on things that make us feel pleasure. So, how does pleasure arise?

In the human brain, there is a neurotransmitter called dopamine, which is a chemical that helps cells send signals. When individuals experience external stimuli and their latent attachment, desire, greed, and avarice are satisfied, dopamine will be released in large amounts. For instance, a hug, a compliment, or a daydream can trigger an increase in dopamine levels. When the external stimuli are strong enough to satisfy a person's desires and temporarily alleviate the hidden suffering of not getting what one wants, they experience a sense of relaxation and relief in their senses, which is pleasure.

Arvid Carlsson's discovery of dopamine as a neurotransmitter in the brain earned him the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2000. Dopamine is associated with various addictions. Excessive dopamine release can cause damage to the brain, heart,

and blood vessels.

The shallow experiences of pleasure include jokes, delicious food, teasing, praise, rubbernecking, or even fear. Moderate experiences include smoking, gaming, or undergoing cosmetic surgery. Deeper experiences include sexual activities, excessive gambling, or drug use, commonly referred to as "sex, gambling, and drugs". Comparing these three, if sex increases dopamine levels by 100%, cocaine elevates dopamine by 350%, and methamphetamine leads to nearly 1200% increase. Thus, it's very hard to quit drugs.

The world is becoming increasingly open and unrestrained. People are constantly seeking various pleasurable experiences on the internet, such as dating, entertainment, gaming, gossip, and secrets. What is alarming is that anything that brings you pleasure will surely bring you suffering as well. For example, beautiful women, delicious food, sweet words, tobacco, alcohol, and drugs can bring a sense of pleasure, but they can also cause harm: delicious food can lead to weight gain and health issues, sweet words can make people lose themselves and

disconnect from reality, beautiful women can trigger desire and make people lose their minds. Not to mention the side effects of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. This is also mentioned in the Tao Te Ching: "The five colors blind eyes, the five sounds deafen ears."

Even more terrifying is that when dopamine is often overproduced, the threshold for experiencing pleasure will be surpassed, leading to desensitization to pleasure. As the threshold keeps rising, if a person wants to continuously experience pleasure, they must constantly intensify the level of stimuli. They need to be stimulated more continuously and intensely to continue experiencing pleasure.

For example, some people start smoking at one pack every two days, then progress to one pack per day, two packs per day, and eventually reach a point where they even need to smoke two cigarettes at once to get the feeling. Similarly, those who enjoy spicy food may find themselves craving increasingly spicier dishes. This pattern applies to all addictions such as gaming, drug use, and gambling.

There is an experiment like this: an electrode is implanted in the brain of a mouse, and the mouse is allowed to press a pedal to deliver an electrical stimulation. With each press, the electrode stimulates the dopamine-producing neurons, causing excitement. As a result, the mouse presses the pedal at a rate of several hundred times per minute until it becomes exhausted and dies.

The feeling of pleasure can be engineered. What is most terrifying in this era is that the feeling of pleasure can be engineered by modern technology and algorithms. For instance, there are more and more entertainment apps, and what lies at the core of most apps? Behind each app, there is a powerful team employing cutting-edge technology (AR+VR) and leveraging greater computing and data processing capabilities (cloud computing+big data). Through various means such as sound, light, interaction, and feedback, they use algorithm-driven precise recommendation systems guided by various theories in psychology, consumer behavior, neuroscience, etc. They continuously bombard you with stimuli, satisfy your every desire, and give you constant pleasure, making you increasingly dependent on them.

In the eyes of capitalists, there is only money and profit, but no humanity and righteousness. Metrics such as registrations, daily active users (DAU), monthly active users (MAU), and average online time determine the value of an app. Nowadays, there is no app that is not measured by these standards.

If a person's desires can be endlessly satisfied, their destruction is not far away. The internet is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it provides us with various conveniences; on the other hand, it also offers various junk content, such as vulgar shows on live streaming platforms, misleading talent shows or reality shows, perplexing fantasy novels, etc. The logic behind them is based on endlessly satisfying human desires. Never before has anything been able to comprehend human nature as thoroughly as the internet.

The foreword of *Amusing Ourselves to Death* says: "Those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism... the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.... we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal

bumble puppy..."

Those capitalists or businessmen take advantage of their discourse power to create an "information bubble" around you, trapping you in the world they create, such as various holiday sales, brainwashing advertisements, and manipulative tactics designed to lure you in. In this era of free information dissemination, all kinds of vulgar information permeate every corner, such as belligerence, idolizing celebrities, stock trading, gossip, violence, rubbernecking, and abuse, all triggering and fulfilling various dark aspects of human nature and desires.

Everyone yearns for freedom, but if there is no education and constraints in law and morality, and no study and practice in self-discipline, freedom can only lead to decadence, diseases, and even destruction. Dopamine plays a role in regulating various physiological functions of the central nervous system. However, when dopamine is overproduced for a long period, it can lead to disruptions in neural regulation, resulting in various disorders such as Parkinson's disease, schizophrenia, chronic multiple tic disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), pituitary tumors, etc.

Relying solely on self-discipline and self-cultivation is not enough; there must be a regulation mechanism in society to restrain the dark side of human nature and nurture its bright side. We firmly support the state's control over the internet and entertainment industry because without such regulations, people's lives would become polluted and they would sink deeper and deeper.

The most fundamental teaching in Chinese culture is self-discipline, which essentially means to properly control one's desires. However, nowadays, very few people proactively restrain their desires. When most people choose to be numbed, only very few people choose self-discipline and patience. Only those who use strong willpower to overcome desire and anger can achieve spiritual awakening, transcendence, and elevation. It is often these determined individuals who never follow the crowd and can accomplish great things.

Good medicine tastes bitter, and honest advice is hard to accept. I hope you who watch this lecture will strive to learn self-discipline, not cling to pleasure and excitement, cultivate and strengthen your independent thinking ability, continuously study and work hard in your dedicated fields, and become pillars of the future. Cheers!