

BLUE PAPERS

Xìng 性

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Innate nature (*xìng* 性) is our original and inherent connection to the Dào 道 (Tao/Way). It is the heart-mind (*xīn* 心/惺) with which we were born (*shēng* 生). Associated with **stillness** (*jìng* 靜), a condition beyond agitation and contention, it is the Dao-as-Stillness manifesting through us. Silence within Silence.

As *xìng* may be used as a conventional designation for disposition or personality, Daoists sometimes speak of “**original nature**” (*běnxìng* 本性) and even “**Dao-nature**” (*dàoxìng* 道性). Such qualifications bring attention to our sacred (non)identity beyond social conditioning, familial obligation and expectation, and personal habituation. From a Daoist perspective, there is divine connection and presence beyond and within any apparent distortion or obstruction. We are originally and fundamentally aligned, attuned, and well. Infused with Mystery.

In the earliest moments of the Daoist tradition (ca. 300s BCE), innate nature was basically synonymous with *mìng* 命 (“**life-destiny**”), which is also translated as “fate.” This is a decree (*lìng* 令) from the cosmos made manifest through our very bodies. Endowment, embodiment, constitution. Here both terms relate to various “beyond” or “non-states.” “Merging with desirelessness (*wúyù* 無欲) is called **unhewn simplicity** (*pǔ* 樸). Through unhewn simplicity, innate nature is realized.” 靜•性•樸. Stated positively, it is emptiness (*xū* 虛) and stillness (*jìng* 靜.) This is suchness (*zìrán* 自然).

In the later Daoist tradition, innate nature and life-destiny receive a more distinct and nuanced connotation. Innate nature is associated with the heart and spirit (*shén* 神), while life-destiny is associated with the kidneys and vital essence (*jīng* 精). In addition to conservation and non-dissipation, these are cultivated through stillness practice (*jìnggōng* 靜功) and movement practice (*dònggōng* 動功), respectively. These primarily refer to meditation and Yǎngshēng 養生 (Nourishing Life), or health and longevity techniques. Thus, we commit ourselves to the “**dual cultivation of innate nature and life-destiny**” (*xìngmìng shuāngxiū* 性命雙修), to holistic and integrated Daoist practice-realization.

As our practice deepens, we live more fully and completely in/as/through innate nature, listening to spirit. We find ourselves infused with the Dao’s mysterious and sacred presence. This results in **numinous pervasion** (*língtōng* 靈通), mysterious inner power (*xuándé* 玄德), mysterious perception (*xuánlǎn* 玄覽), and so forth. We follow the movement (*chuò* 辍/辍) resonating through the patterns and currents encountered (*yǒng* 甬). Our heart-mind (*xīn* 心) becomes aligned and directed (*zhí* 直), and this alignment is expressed as beneficial and transformative activity (*chì* 彳) in the world. We perceive (*jiàn* 見) the openings and leadings (*jiān* 監). Responding to subtle patterns and currents. The energetics of being and experiencing.

This is Daoism as **Xuánfēng** 玄風 (Mysterious Movement). The “**teaching beyond/without words**” (*bùyán zhī jiào* 不言之教) and the “form of formlessness” (*wúxíng zhī xíng* 無形之形). Our illusory sense of separate identity dissolves; we enter a transpersonal state in which the Dao manifests through us and in which we perceive being beyond appearances. Innate nature meeting innate nature.