



This section will only focus on the following aspect: How people define their personal nature to work itself.

Two questions: Listen carefully for the difference:

Question 1: What do you do?

Question 2: What do you do?

To most people these questions are the same. For instance: I can answer to question one:

What do you do? I am an author.

Compared to the vastly different question:

What do you do? I am a poet.

Seemingly the difference is the answer, yet no, the basic difference is in the two questions: The first question asks a person what is their job, the second question asks how one lives life.

An author is a person who writes to earn cash, with all sorts of job-related issues of publishing, royalties and other such yada. An “author” is a job. It’s about cash flow.

A “poet” refers to a life style. A poet lives in happiness & sadness, mixes & explores the world thru living and at times expresses commentary within poetry as an attempt to understand the daily grind of what is called life. Being a poet is not about cash, as much as about experiencing life.

This distinction is very important. Defining a person as a job will end up defining that person’s life as the job. This is the ultimate in de-humanization, I am not a person. Nope! I am only a worker: all I do and **will** do suddenly gets forced by that one statement.

Many very basic examples exist of this defining of our nature to a job. Look at the many generations of last names carrying a tradition in labeling people to their work. Smith, Carpenter, Koch (cook), Mason. Showing this is something which isn't unique to the modern age. While last names rarely shift much today (children aren't labeled John Programmer) identifications to work still happen at the earliest ages: "Oh, you want to be a Doctor when you grow up!"

People tend to automatically identify themselves to a job.

What do you do?

I am an electronic radiation shielding specialist, hair beautician.

Of course this is logical, as on average a person spends more time at work than even with family. Work is a very important aspect of human society, and always has been. Nothing new here except the refinement of the high art of modern business economics.

Where does this leave us?

First and foremost, let's go back to the two questions: What do you do? This should be truly two separate questions: 1) What trade do you perform, and 2) Who are you. Western culture merges the questions together. The "who are you" question tends to get dropped as knowing our nature typically takes a lifetime in learning. It's easier just to label oneself as a "Job" and not worry about life's trickier and often unanswerable questions in small talk.

It's very important to untangle these questions with a change in understanding.

We are not a job! Work is performed as a method to survive in society. Now here is the change in understanding: A wise man once taught me sometimes you just need to change the question you are answering. In this case the question should be shifted to:

Why do we work?

The main reasons to list could be the following

- For survival
- For consuming
- For serving
- For passion/belief
- For the work itself

While no classification is perfect or will cover all possibilities. These five categories are an excellent starting point to help understand the relationship between ourselves and the reason for working. In exploring these with friends, an interesting fact became clear: when people work for reasons that matched their nature, they tended to be content. When people work for reasons against their nature, they tended to be discontent. The job itself wasn't as important as the reasons for working.

A few examples:

- Some people don't like to work, they only work to survive. These individuals, to be happy, will work just enough to cover what they consider basic needs and then live appropriately for their survival.
- If a person is a true consumer, who enjoys living life as an expression of consumption, then a person's job should be geared to support consumption. If you live to ski, then work in such a way so you can ski. Nothing is inherently wrong in being a consumer, life is a fire, we burn to live, we consume, and it's a natural state. However, consumption has limits, so a balance needs to exist lest we turn the planet and ourselves to ash, but life is as we live it.
- A direct example from my life working in the drug abuse treatment field: I know many social workers with a passion to help addicts recover from drugs. Without the passion to help others, this job burns out most people in the first few months.

All this might seem terribly basic. However, how often is the question seriously posed, "Why do I work?" with an attempt to then try to find a balance between the job and life. Usually people are chasing dollars or expectations of rewards. Or more tragically and universally true: they need to take any job possible as they are starving, supporting a family and have no outside support. Yet know, understanding why we work is more important than the job choice itself. Once we understand our nature, in why we work, then it becomes much easier to find work, a job, which fits your lifestyle and needs. Of course when people are taught to think the job is more important than the reason for work, then people will cling to or be attracted to jobs which will continually cause discontentment, as they will be working cross purposes to their own needs.

The point simmers down to: people are not a job. We have lives and work is an important aspect of life. Yet work and life shouldn't be thought as meaning the same thing. Attempting to separate our identities and work can be very complicated, since the two can become very entangled in day to day life. To help find answers it becomes necessary to change the question slightly to first understand why you work. Once understanding why you work, it becomes possible to balance work and lifestyle in a more acceptable nature.

===== Paths =====

To work as a Taoist means to live fully as a person. To work means working to your nature, to support your nature.

Part of the problem is we think a job is a path to walk down in life. Work is not a path. The actual path is living life. Work is merely an activity within life. The second someone substitutes "a path of living" to be "a career path", often becomes the moment of ~~birth~~ *creation* of a cog in the uncaring machinery of a working society.

Are we a job or are we living humans? We are always the latter, work is always an activity to support our lives. This is one key to finding a balance in work and life.

===== Pondering Area for Frustrated Workers =====

Why do you work?

Go ahead list the reasons here:

What is important for your own expression of your own humanity?

Don't worry about connecting the two questions here. Just let the two different questions simmer after writing down initial answers. Opportunities typically present themselves, provided a person opens their awareness to the larger world while beginning the process of understanding their nature.