



# The Wisdom of Zhuang Zi on Daoism

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Translated with Annotations and Commentaries by  
CHUNG WU



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american  
university  
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PETER LANG

New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern  
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# Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction . . . . .  | 1   |
| A An Overview of Schools of Philosophical Thought<br>in the Pre-Qin Period in China . . . . .     | 1   |
| B The Impact of Political Instability on the Rise of Private<br>Tutoring System . . . . .         | 4   |
| C Resurgence of Daoism as a Way to Spiritual Freedom:<br>The Life and Work of Zhuang Zi . . . . . | 6   |
| D A Brief History of the <i>Zhuang Zi</i><br>and Plan for the Present Work . . . . .              | 15  |
| <br>  |     |
| I The Inner Series  |     |
| 1 A Leisurely and Blissful Journey [逍遙遊] (three sections). . . . .                                | 23  |
| 2 On Equality [齊物論] (seven sections) . . . . .  | 35  |
| 3 Nurturing the Spirit [養生主] (three sections) . . . . .   | 57  |
| 4 The Mundane World [人間世] (seven sections) . . . . .  | 63  |
| 5 The Fortitude [德充符] (six sections) . . . . .  | 81  |
| 6 The Grand Tutor [大宗師] (10 sections) . . . . .   | 93  |
| 7 Governance by Non-Action [應帝王] (six sections) . . . . .   | 111 |
| <br>  |     |
| II The Outer Series   |     |
| 8 Webbed Toes [駢拇] (two sections). . . . .  | 121 |
| 9 Horses' Hoofs [馬蹄] (two sections) . . . . .   | 129 |

|     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 10  | Stealing Trunks [胠篋] (two sections) . . . . .                     | 135 |
| 11  | On Being Content and Comfortable [在宥] (five sections) . . . . .   | 145 |
| 12  | Heaven and Earth [天地] (14 sections) . . . . .                     | 159 |
| 13  | The Way of Heaven [天道] (eight sections) . . . . .                 | 177 |
| 14  | Heavenly Revolutions [天運] (seven sections) . . . . .              | 189 |
| 15  | Sharpening the Will [刻意] (three sections) . . . . .               | 205 |
| 16  | Polishing the Natural Disposition [繕性] (three sections) . . . . . | 211 |
| 17  | The Autumn Rain [秋水] (seven sections) . . . . .                   | 217 |
| 18  | Extravagance [至樂] (six sections) . . . . .                        | 231 |
| 19  | Understanding Life [達生] (12 sections) . . . . .                   | 241 |
| 20  | The Mountain Tree [山木] (nine sections) . . . . .                  | 253 |
| 21  | Tian Zifang [田子方] (11 sections) . . . . .                         | 267 |
| 22  | Zhi Wandering North [知北遊] (11 sections) . . . . .                 | 281 |
|     |   |     |
| III | The Miscellaneous Series  |     |
| 23  | Gengsang Chu [庚桑楚] (12 sections) . . . . .                        | 297 |
| 24  | Xu Wugui [徐無鬼] (15 sections) . . . . .                            | 311 |
| 25  | Zeyang [則陽] (11 sections) . . . . .                               | 331 |
| 26  | Things External [外物] (13 sections) . . . . .                      | 347 |
| 27  | The Allegories [寓言] (seven sections) . . . . .                    | 359 |
| 28  | Abdication [讓王] (15 sections) . . . . .                           | 367 |
| 29  | Zhi, the Brigand [盜跖] (three sections) . . . . .                  | 383 |
| 30  | A Discourse on Swords [說劍] (two sections) . . . . .               | 399 |
| 31  | The Old Fisherman [漁父] (two sections) . . . . .                   | 405 |
| 32  | Lie Yukou [列禦寇] (12 sections) . . . . .                           | 413 |
| 33  | All Under Heaven [天下] (eight sections) . . . . .                  | 423 |
|     |   |     |
|     | Epilogue . . . . .  | 441 |
|     | Bibliography . . . . .  | 443 |
|     | Index of Personal Names . . . . .                                 | 447 |

# Introduction

## A. An Overview of Schools of Philosophical Thought in the Pre-Qin Period in China

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” In the long history of China, the period from *ca.* 730 to 221 B.C., known to the historian as the era of pre-Qin philosophers, stands out as the most prolific and prominent period in the founding of many leading schools of philosophical thought. I shall begin with a survey of the more influential schools of thought, each with its leaders and their central beliefs. As some of them were contemporaries of Zhuang Zi, formerly Chuang Tzu, he referred to them often in his writings. The reader will find from time to time the following brief descriptions to be a useful source of information for easy reference.

*The Confucianists.* The foremost scholars in this pre-Qin period were the Confucianists, led by Kong Qiu, better known as Confucius (551–479 B.C.) and his followers, Meng Ke, better known as Mencius (*ca.* 380–295 B.C.), and Xun Qing, also known as Xun Zi<sup>1</sup> (*ca.* 313–221 B.C.).<sup>2</sup> Confucianism centers on *ren*— the noblest form of love, filial piety, loyalty, and forgiveness. In this book, many spurious conversations have been written between Confucius and his disciples and others.

Before Confucius, the mainstream philosophical thought in China was loosely covered in the term *Ru*, meaning elegance and scholarship based on the five classical works, namely the Books of Poetry, History, the *Yi*, Rites, and Music. Since Confucius edited these existing classics and elaborated on them, and founded his own school of philosophical thought, the term *Ru* has continued to be used for his teachings in China to this day. “Confucianism” is simply an English equivalent of *Ru* and “Confucianist,” an English equivalent of *Ru Jia*.



*The Daoists.*<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly, Lao Dan, better known as Lao Zi (b. ca. 571 B.C.), was the founder of Daoism. His ideas, as presented in the *Dao De Jing*, were so original and revolutionary that we do not know where they came from. The center of his teachings is: Live by the law of nature. According to Chapter 33:5<sup>4</sup> near the end of this book, there was a man named Guan Yin at the time of Lao Zi. But nothing about him has passed down to us. There is a book called the *Guan Yin Zi*, but it is an outright forgery. Adding to the confusion is the fact that the two characters *guan yin* mean the title of an officer of a pass at that time. A story tells when Lao Zi resigned his office as an archivist of the Zhou dynasty, he intended to leave the capital city and go to a land of wilderness. As he traveled through a pass, its *guan yin* asked if he would like to leave some words to posterity. Lao Zi obliged and wrote what is now known as the *Dao De Jing*, and then disappeared. That is why his death date is unknown to us. We have the insolvable conundrum in this case whether *guan yin* could be the title of a pass officer who had spoken to Lao Zi or the personal name of a presumed Daoist or both.

A little later than Lao Zi, there was Lie Yukou, also known as Lie Zi, who lived in the fifth century, B.C. Unfortunately, most of his writings were lost. What is available to us is a collection of parts of his thought. About two hundred years later, came Zhuang Zhou, also known as Zhuang Zi (369–286 B.C.). As we shall see soon, Zhuang Zi quoted Lao Zi's words many times in his writings. He also mentioned Lie Zi from time to time in his book, such as Chapters 1:1, 7:5, 21:9, and 32:1. We do not know of any other Daoist of fame who lived between the time of Lao Zi, Lie Zi, and Zhuang Zi. At this time in history, Daoist ideas were greatly overshadowed by Confucianism. Not until five hundred years later, did Daoist teachings gain some respectful attentions under the pen of Wang Bi (34), who annotated the *Dao De Jing* of Lao Zi. The first annotation of the *Zhuang Zi* came a little later (see below).

*The Mohists.*<sup>5</sup> What we now know of Mohism comes from the *Mo Zi*, a compilation of the philosophy of Mo Di<sup>6</sup> (ca. 490–403 B.C.). Qin Guli was a better-known disciple; others were Sui Chao and Hu Fei. Mohism preaches love without distinction and is against any offensive war. The Mohists were energetic practitioners of their belief. They were a group of ordinary people, well organized and well disciplined. They toiled tirelessly, often beyond their physical strength, to dissuade warring kings from committing cruelty to the common people. They were second in number only to the Confucianists. Hence, in this period, Confucianism, Daoism, and Mohism formed the three

legs of a tripod of the major philosophical thought of China. However, by the end of the pre-Qin period, Mohism had lost most of its influence.

*The Legalists.* One of the earliest was Guan Zhong (ca.720–645 B.C.). He was prime minister of the Qi State. The book, *Guan Zi*, is a collection of essays on political matters presumed to have come from his ideas, if not his pen. Confucius had kind words about his administration. Deng Xi (d. 501 B.C.) practiced law and was well known for his schemes and tricks in arguing his cases in court. For the latter, he is considered by some historians to be a logician. Later, Gongsun Yang, also known as Shang Yang (d. 338 B.C.), Shen Buhai (d. 337 B.C.), Han Fei (ca. 280–233 B.C.) also known as Han Fei Zi, and Li Si (d. 208 B.C.) were prominent in this period. All of them were deeply involved in politics as a means of experimenting and executing their own favorite policies in serving their princes, but at the same time making numerous enemies within the establishment. Some of them were executed after their mentor princes died. More than administrators, they were also authors, especially Han Fei, a prince by birth, who summarized the contemporary legal thought in a book bearing his name, the *Han Fei Zi*.

*The Logicians.* The most prominent in this school were Hui Shi (ca. 370–300 B.C.), also known as Hui Zi, and Gongsun Long (b. ca. 340 B.C.), also known as Gongsun Long Zi. Both of them were contemporaries of Zhuang Zi. Unfortunately, Hui Shi's writings were completely lost. What we now know of his famous ten propositions comes from a section in Chapter 33 of this book. For example, he wrote, "Heaven is as low as earth and mountains are at the same level as wetlands. The moment the sun reaches its zenith, it reaches its nadir; the moment a living thing is being born, it is dying." Gongsun Long was famous for his two arguments: a white horse is not a horse and a stone may not be called white and hard at the same time. Apparently, some people talented in eloquence developed the art of sophistry to the fullest and applied it to political and military maneuvers to fulfill personal ambitions in such an extraordinary, turbulent period. Read what follows.

*The Framers of the Vertical and Horizontal Axis.* Near the end of the Warring States period, China was ruled by seven feudal states, the strongest being the Qin State. What the other six weaker states should do to avoid being conquered by Qin was of paramount importance to them. Of course, a combination of the natural resources, manpower, and land areas of the six states exceeded by far those of Qin. Could the six ruling princes agree on one single strategy? First came Su Qin (d. 316 B.C.), a unifier of the six states against the Qin

State and he became simultaneously prime minister of all the six states. This is known in history as the Vertical Axis (for Resistance). Not long afterwards, there came Zhang Yi (d. 314 B.C.), who worked hard to break the Vertical alliance and succeeded in convincing the six princes that the only way to keep the kingship was to yield a little to Qin's wishes. This worked for a little while and Zhang Yi became simultaneously prime minister of all the six states, too! This is called the Horizontal Axis (for Appeasement). Of course, the situation could not be stabilized for long and Qin took one state at a time.

*The Naturalists* (also known as the Yin-yang Scholars). Zhou Yan (ca. 350–270 B.C.) was the leader of this group. He was a native of the Qi State and a member of the Ji Xia Academy (see below). He pioneered the application of the yin-yang theory and the theory of the five “elements” to explain natural phenomena. He used the deduction method by starting with the smallest object and deduced it one step at a time until it became infinitely large beyond apprehension. For instance, he theorizes that the nine “regions” (*zhou*) of China constitute only one ninth of the eighty-one regions of the world. In other words, China's land area is about one ninth of the world's land area. He did this not only in space, but also in time. His lectures attracted the interest of the ruling princes of various states. He enjoyed their respectful and warm welcome wherever he visited. His teachings were the only science-oriented philosophical thought at that time. His followers did not seem to be able to carry his torch forward. After his death, some of his teachings were accepted into Daoism and only few into Confucianism.

## **B. The Impact of Political Instability on the Rise of the Private Tutoring System**

If we wish to understand why so immense an advance in literature, philosophy, law, government, logic, and ideas in science came in the relatively short (by Chinese historical standards) pre-Qin era, we should first examine the then prevailing political and social conditions that made, so to speak, the blooming of one hundred flowers possible. In 1122 B.C., the Zhou dynasty set up a feudal system to govern China by dividing the nation into many states, each headed by a prince of the royal family, a descendant of an ancient king or a meritorious statesman. Apparently, the political system worked well for some 350 years. Then larger states began to assimilate smaller ones and became even larger. As this process of assimilation continued, the remaining states were

fewer but stronger, and the central authority headed by a king was rapidly waning long before the time of Lao Zi and Confucius. Each head of state holding one of the five nobility ranks was more concerned with his power and territorial expansion than with the welfare of the people. First, there was the Spring-Autumn period (770–476 B.C.) when the central authority was respected only in pretense. Then, the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.) followed, when the king was openly ignored and each head of state proclaimed himself king, too. There were as many kings as states, the weakest being the king at the center. (Some writers have narrated this period of Chinese history and erroneously used “emperor.” Misnomer aside, there was never an emperor in China before 221 B.C. Imperial and feudal systems are two distinct political systems; they do not and cannot coexist!)

Throughout the last four hundred years of the Zhou dynasty, the Chinese people made countless sacrifices and lived a miserable life. Inequality and injustice prevailed everywhere. The conditions were ripe for a thorough overhaul of the political and social systems as a whole. It was against this horrible historical background that the men of letters cited above lived and did their work for posterity. They looked around and did not like what they saw. They were sensitive to the sufferings of others. They did not choose revolution because it merely resulted in more misery and greater loss of lives. They presented a series of propositions aimed at re-focusing on the importance of living. Their approaches were to change how one would perceive the relation of oneself with the rest of the world. Each of them conceived a way to save the spirit and liberate the sufferings of the oppressed. The three great men, Lao Zi, Confucius, and Mo Zi, led their followers on three different paths to try to attain the perfect life. They had one conviction in common—love of men and aversion to war—but expressed it in different philosophical contexts. Lao Zi despised war and ridiculed that a victory parade should be viewed as a funeral procession. Confucius preached the noblest form of love, *ren*. When asked by the belligerent Duke Ling of Wei about warfare, he flatly cut the prince off by saying, “I learned nothing of it.” Mo Zi proposed love without distinction and condemned offensive war. He practiced what he preached almost beyond the limit of his physical strength. In short, it seemed to be an extreme of irony that one hundred flowers bloomed not because of peace and prosperity, but because of war and misery.

I might add another condition that helped speed up the development of various schools of thought. There had been a change in the ways young people were educated during this critical period in China’s history. At the

beginning of the Zhou dynasty, promising young men were selected at the state level to be taught poetry, history, the *Yi*, rites, and music at the School of Preliminary Studies supported by each feudal state. The brightest students from this group were recommended by the various states and sent to the School of Advanced Studies at the capital. The system worked well for a few hundred years. Later, as the feudal government was weakening in authority and the states were preoccupied with conquering each other by force, spending public funds on education became a low priority. Fortunately, the deficiency was remedied by a rapid rise in private tutorship by well-known scholars, such as Confucius, Mo Zi, Mencius, Xun Zi and others. For instance, Confucius is known to have had three thousand pupils. This number might represent the total number of pupils who attended his lectures in his lifetime. Seventy-two of them excelled in literature, diplomacy, government, the arts, and other disciplines. We know their names, a staggering number indeed. It is to be noted that at a time when freedom to explore thoughts was encouraged, pupils of a great master might not follow in his footsteps. A case in point is that Li Si, a pupil of the Confucianist Xun Zi, became a legalist and later prime minister to the first emperor of China. In addition, there were academies, where members could freely exchange ideas, of which the most prestigious was the Ji Xia Academy in the State of Qi. Xun Zi was elected, not once but thrice, as the honorary head of the Ji Xia because of his seniority and prestige. I hope that the foregoing paragraphs will be adequate as a summary of the background that nurtured the germination and growth of so many schools of thought in such a short period of time. It has not been repeated since in China's history.

### **C. Resurgence of Daoism as a Way to Spiritual Freedom: The Life and Work of Zhuang Zi**

The man whose work we are going to study a great deal about was also a product of this turbulent pre-Qin period. He was Zhuang Zhou. With due respect for his literary and philosophical accomplishments, we will call him the Honorable Master Zhuang or Zhuang Zi. He was born in the City of Meng of the State of Song, part of the present Henan Province, in 369 B.C. He was once an officer of the Varnish Garden in his hometown. We do not know what kind of office this was. Apparently, he did not hold it long, for he detested official protocols. He was married and his wife died before him. We learn from his

writing that they had children. His family was poor and sometimes ran out of rice. From reading his book, we learn also that Zhuang Zi had disciples, but we do not know any of them by name, with one possible exception (see Chapter 20:8). In fact, we know very little about Zhuang Zi, the man. This may come as no surprise, as we know even less about Lao Zi.

Who was Zhuang Zi? He was a Daoist. He believes that the universe was formed naturally, perchance that is, without a design or purpose. Dao is Nature, the creator. It has no conscience. It does not judge. It supports all things, living as well as lifeless, without conditions, and does not accept requital. If we could do things in conformity with Nature, we would be far better off than doing them in our own ways. He put it succinctly, "Heaven and earth and I live together; myriads of things and I are but one." (See Chapter 2:5). There is a union with nature on the one hand and with everything else on the other. This union is a completely new idea. Lao Zi did not go this far! Even though Zhuang Zi quoted Lao Zi many times in his book, the Dao of Zhuang Zi is more exquisite than that of Lao Zi. Each one made his own contributions to Daoism. For this reason, we may not consider Zhuang Zi to be an elaborator of Lao Zi's ideas in the same sense that Mencius was an elaborator of Confucius' ideas. Some modern scholars even go one step further by suggesting that without Zhuang Zi's fresh interpretations of Daoism, Lao Zi's teachings might not have survived through to this day. How true this proposition is may be debatable. The point is that Zhuang Zi for his outstanding contributions should be considered a co-founder of Daoism. So far, we have discussed briefly Daoism, the philosophy. Daoism, the religion, which evolved centuries after Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, has different implications. The term Daoism as used in this work refers exclusively to the former. So let us keep a clear distinction between Daoism, the philosophy, and Daoism, the religion.

We know very little about how Zhuang Zi was educated. According to Cheng Xuanying (3), Prince Changsang was his tutor. We do not know who Prince Changsang was. No doubt, Zhuang Zi must have read Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing*, as he quoted Lao Zi's sayings many times in his book. They lived some two hundred years apart. There is no record of transmission of teachings from Lao Zi through intermediaries to Zhuang Zi, as Lao Zi had no known disciples. There is a contrast here. Zhuang Zi was a contemporary of Mencius, the great elaborator of Confucianism. He never mentioned Mencius in his writings, nor did Mencius mention Zhuang Zi in his writings. We could assume that these two brilliant men might not have met at all.

But Zhuang Zi's relation to Lao Zi was different from Mencius' relation to Confucius. Mencius showed awe toward Confucius. Zhuang Zi did not show any respectful feeling toward Lao Zi. In fact, he addressed Lao Zi by name. This would seem to reflect the Daoist view of informal personal relationship.

As has been said above, we know nothing about the source of Zhuang Zi's inspiration in philosophical thought. Being a southerner and not a nationwide traveler, he had not been a member of the prestigious Ji Xia Academy in the State of Qi (in the northeastern seaboard), where many well-known scholars of varied disciplines, like Xun Qing, Tian Pian, Shen Dao, and many others, had lectured and exchanged ideas. He must have done a great deal of studies by himself. Although we see a clear connection of his thought in Dao to Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing*, he mentioned Lao Zi's name only fourteen times in his book. On the other hand, he mentioned Confucius' name forty-four times! Of course, we understand that Zhuang Zi did not write every chapter of his book. Nevertheless, the divergence in the number of references given to these two men seems striking. Furthermore, when we analyze the forty-four references given to Confucius, we find that they may be classified into four categories: (a) historical, more or less, such as in Chapter 17:3, (b) propagandizing in making Confucius into a Daoist, such as in Chapters 4:1,2, 5:4, 6:7, 21:2, 25:5, (c) outright derogatory, such as in Chapters 29:1, 31:1,2, and (d) somewhat laudatory, such as in Chapters 6:6, 27:2.

Of all historical figures before him, why was Zhuang Zi most interested in Confucius? A logical answer may be because he was most familiar with Confucius. How was he most familiar with Confucius? One possible answer may be because he was once a Confucianist! Of the many disciples of Confucius, Zhuang Zi admired Yan Hui most. How do we know that? More than ten of the forty-four references to Confucius involve Yan Hui, too. Moreover, in Chapter 21:3, Zhuang Zi rewrote a story about Confucius and Yan Hui that closely duplicated what is told in *The Analects*. Zhuang Zi truly admired Yan Hui, because the latter's simple lifestyle like his own impressed him a great deal. How could it be possible for him to have access to the early "draft" of *The Analects*? It is quite possible that in his youthful years, he had close contacts with Confucius' second- and third-generation disciples. After all, Confucianists were not so pure in those days as during and after the reign of Emperor Wu (140–85 B.C.) of the Han dynasty. Furthermore, in the many stories about Confucius in this book, Zhuang Zi referred to Confucius by his courtesy name Zhongni, as any Confucianist would. What has been

presented in this paragraph does not prove anything, but based on the circumstantial evidence narrated here, this translator believes that Zhuang Zi was a Confucianist first and a Daoist last. Of course, this is only hermeneutic. Absolutely, this not only has nothing to debase Zhuang Zi's marvelous contributions to Daoism, but also it shows how talented and creative a scholar he really was.

Zhuang Zi was a discriminating observer. He chose ordinary subjects that would not be attractive to most people and developed them into an essay on philosophy. He wrote about the umbra and penumbra. He also wrote about dreams and came to the conclusion for the first time that "Life is like a dream." Since then, this idea has been elaborated countless times in literature in China and elsewhere.

Zhuang Zi was a humanist. He valued highly the fortitude of physically deformed people, not to pity their misfortune but to admire their accomplishments. He was proud of them and of being with them. He was critical of well-formed men who looked down at them. He even made fun of Confucius in a spurious story for failing to appreciate the usefulness of physically deformed people. What he considered to be true deformity was in those who were morally deformed.

Zhuang Zi was against establishment. He despised government and rulers alike. This had a great deal to do with his love of freedom. Once a prince of the Chu State dispatched messengers to offer him a ministerial appointment. He likened the appointment to being a decorated tortoise on an altar. He declined the offer by saying that he preferred being a tortoise free to play in the mud. On another occasion, while he was visiting the Wei State where his friend was the prime minister, a rumor spread that he was going to become the new prime minister. His friend was deeply worried. On hearing this, he ridiculed the senseless concern of his friend like an owl having gotten hold of a dead mouse and worrying about a phoenix wanting to grab the mouse away from it.

Zhuang Zi was a cynical philosopher. He was totally dissatisfied with the prevailing social and political orders. He shouted with desperation at the establishment for its practice of *ren* and justice and all. He declared, "When sages are not dead, big bandits cannot be stopped. Although we favor the sages in ruling the nation, we actually also favor bandits like Zhi the Brigand in accumulating their takes. We made the *dou* and *hu* to standardize volume measurements, and they stole them as well. We designed the beam and weight of a



steelyard to standardize weight measurements, and they stole them, likewise. We adopted tallies and seals to formalize credentials, and they stole them, too. We promoted *ren* and justice to correct irregularities, and they stole them, also. How do we know that? He who steals a belt buckle will be executed; he who steals a state becomes a prince! Then *ren* and justice are kept behind the gates of the princes. Is this not a theft of *ren* and justice and the wisdom of the sages? Therefore, those who follow big bandits, admire the princes, steal *ren* and justice, and *dou, hu*, beam, weight, tallies and seals for their advantages will not be moved by the attraction of the cap and chariot, nor will they be dissuaded by the threat of execution. Thus, it is the fault of the sages that this emphasis on gains by the likes of Zhi the Brigand cannot be overridden.” (Chapter 10:1).

Zhuang Zi went on to denounce the ills of the penal code. He was critical of the teachings of the sages and wrote: “In the present generation, corpses from various kinds of punishment form piles; those wearing cangues and shackles push against one another, and those sentenced to be executed look at each other in despair. Finally, the Confucianist and the Mohist sense the urgency of the situation and cry out for those held in fetters and handcuffs, ‘Alas, this has gone too far!’ How could they be so conscienceless and shameless! I have not known that teachings of the sages are not the wooden pieces that assemble into cangues and shackles, *ren* and justice are not the round and square openings of fetters and handcuffs. How would I know that Zeng Shen and Shi Yü were not the forerunners of King Jie and Zhi the Brigand? Therefore, it is said, ‘If sagacity is abolished and craftiness abandoned, the world will be in complete peace.’” (Chapter 11:2).

Zhuang Zi considers death as a part of the life cycle. When his wife died, he played by beating on a basin and sang. When a friend asked him if he was going too far, he replied that he felt sad for a while and then realized that she was enjoying peace somewhere between heaven and earth and he would be naïve in apprehending destiny if he were to continue to mourn for her. On another occasion when Zhuang Zi was on his deathbed, his pupils wished to give him an elaborated funeral instead of a naked burial that he preferred. On hearing about it, he said his body would be consumed either by worms and ants from below or by hawks and vultures from above, and why his pupils were partial to worms and ants. Another story is about his dream of a human skeleton. In talking to the skeleton, Zhuang Zi realized how peaceful and pleasurable the other world was and the skeleton never wanted to come back to live in this world again. All three stories show how Zhuang Zi viewed death.

Zhuang Zi's idea of the omnipresence of Dao may be understood from a dialogue between Dongguo Zi and him as follows:

Dongguo Zi asked Zhuang Zi, "Where is really the so-called Dao?"

Zhuang Zi said, "Everywhere."

Dongguo Zi: "Please give a specific instance."

Zhuang Zi: "In ants."

Dongguo: "How does it come so lowly?"

Zhuang: "In tares."

Dongguo: "How does it come more lowly?"

Zhuang: "In tile chips."

Dongguo: "How does it come even more lowly?"

Zhuang: "In dung."

Dongguo Zi asked no more. (Chapter 22:6).

Another aspect of Daoism is its interest in exploring nature. Joseph Needham (27), a well-known British Sinologist and scientist, whom this translator had the privilege of meeting some half a century ago, considers Daoists the most science-oriented scholars in ancient China. There are many instances we can cite to support this view. Let us illustrate as an example from Chapter 18:6 as follows:

"All species begin with minute germs. In water they grow into a kind of silky grass. In areas bordering water and soil, they grow into moss. In high ground, they grow into a grass called *juqiancao*. When the *juqiancao* gets to rich soil, it grows into a grass called *wuju*. The roots of the *wuju* grow into baby *jinguichong*. The leaves of the *wuju* grow into butterflies. Butterflies soon metamorphose into insects born under the stove. They look like the exuviae of insects called *juduo*. After one thousand days, the cricket-like insects change into birds named *ganyügu*...*Qingning* eventually produces leopards. The leopard eventually produces horses. The horse eventually gives rise to human beings. Human beings [upon death] return to minute germs. Hence, all living beings come from germs and return to germs."

What the author of this essay proposed is in essence a crude idea about the origin of species, although this is not what he had in mind. We sense that in one extreme is the tiniest creature about the size of the cross section of a silk thread and in the other extreme is the most complex creature called man. For the time being we may leave out what goes in between the two of them. These

Daoists in this period of about 300 B.C. told us that the two creatures, germs and men, are inter-transformable, if time is not limited. This is the story.

Of course, Zhuang Zi described Dao on numerous occasions. A sample of his description may be as follows. Borrowing the mouth of Xu You, he repeated, "Ah, it cannot be known for sure. I can tell you a general idea. My grand tutor! My grand tutor! [Dao] is not cruel in leaving all things alone, not willful to be benevolent in leaving behind work benefiting ten thousand generations, not old in being older than the highest antiquity, and not crafty in covering heaven, carrying earth, and carving out all shapes of things. This is where my spirit will wander." (Chapter 6:8).

Zhuang Zi was both a philosopher and a literary giant. His prose is beautiful and his vocabulary discrete. He elaborated Lao Zi's ideas, but did this in his own way. While Lao Zi stated his ideas concisely, Zhuang Zi expanded them with stories, making them more realistic and readily understandable. In a way, he was a storyteller. He often used allegories in making his points. Ordinarily, people would use as allegories obvious objects or events to explain more complicated incidents. But Zhuang Zi's allegories may not be simple to grasp, as we shall see later. He also often took historical personalities out of context and made them say and do as he pleased. For instance, he would relate a spurious conversation between Confucius and his pupils and make the sage talk like a Daoist propagandist. Moreover, he would tell stories about how a few historical people who lived more than one hundred years apart gathered together to comment on an issue. He did not intend to fool his readers with the falsehood of his story, but he used historical figures to say what he wanted them to say, instead of saying the same thing himself. He made his reader feel like he was reading history, but in reality he was reading his story. This is a characteristic of his writing style.

There are other differences in the literary style between these two Daoists. Lao Zi was an expert in aphorism. This, coupled with his mastery of short sentences, makes his statements sharp and forceful. Like other philosophers, he took simple words, such as *dao*, *de*, *wu*, and *you*, and simple phrases, such as *wu wei*, and *sheng ren*, and assigned a specific meaning to each of them. Zhuang Zi did the same and more. He preferred stories with many players, which Lao Zi never did. He coined more than one hundred terms, and was particularly fond of putting words with contrasting meanings together, such as running while sitting, dimmed brightness, tranquility in chaos, and many others. Those with meanings still obscure after translation will be explained further in the annotations and notes of this work. Zhuang Zi also coined

terms, which have been accepted widely in Chinese literature without our ever knowing the origin. For instance, he coined the character *yu* meaning infinite space and the character *zhou* meaning infinite time into *yuzhou* to mean “universe” in Chinese. Zhuang Zi used all these literary techniques artfully in making his presentation attractive and persuasive. For reasons stated above, he used numerous personal names in his stories. Some are historical and many others fictitious. He often mixed the two together in the same story giving his readers an impression of reality and imagination. He made up these personal names mostly to lend certain characteristics to his creations, because these names often have specific meanings.

For over 2000 years, Zhuang Zi’s work has been valued for its originality in thought and uniqueness in literary style. His critical analysis of the real world and his penetrating insight into the abstract world beyond have no equals before or after him in Chinese literature. Furthermore, his sensitivity to human inequality and sufferings and his ridicule of the ills of government still shine like a beacon today as ever. Some famed scholars of modern times like Zhang Binglin (56) admire Zhuang Zi as the single most eminent philosopher of the pre-Qin period.

It is true that Zhuang Zi’s writings are full of mysteries. We should realize that this is his way of literary expression and may not be taken literally. For example, he retold the following story from the *Book of Lie Zi* about a physiognomist in Chapter 7:5.

“In the State of Zheng, there lived a spirited wizard named Ji Xian. He foreknew like a god the death and birth, misfortune and fortune, dying young and living old of a person, accurate to the day, month, and year. When the people of Zheng saw him, they ran away from him. Lie Zi met him and was fascinated. When he returned, he told Hu Zi about it and said, ‘Earlier, I thought, my master, your Dao was supreme. Now I realize there is greater supremacy.’

“Hu Zi said, ‘I have taught you the appearance of Dao and not yet the substance of it. Do you really think you have learned everything? How can any number of female birds lay eggs without a male? You try to extend your superficial knowledge to engage in complicated situations. In doing so, you allow yourself to be examined by a physiognomist. Try to come with him and let him examine me.’”

As the story goes, Lie Zi brought in the wizard to see Hu Zi several times in as many days. Hu Zi managed to change himself every day, making it

impossible for the wizard to diagnose him. The wizard failed and fled. What this retold story shows is: Dao overcomes wizardry. The other side of the coin is that this story also shows: A Daoist can neutralize wizardry or the like of it. When this line of reasoning is developed further, Daoism becomes less a philosophical discipline than an applicable enterprise. Especially after Zhuang Zi's death, his disciples, who often strayed from his teachings, wrote many chapters in this book. Let us examine some more related incidents.

Later in Chapter 11:3, we read what Guangchen Zi said to King Huang, "I have cultivated my body for one thousand and two hundred years and my look has not been feeble." How old was he then? No wonder some Daoists have wished to live like fairies!

In Chapter 21:9, after Lie Yukou (Lie Zi) demonstrated to Baihun Wuren how good a sharp shooter he was, Baihun Wuren commented, "You did the shootings mindfully, but not unmindfully. If you and I climb up a high mountain, stand on a shaky rock, and look at an abyss one hundred *ren* below, can you shoot?" So Baihun Wuren climbed up a high mountain, stood on a shaky rock, and walked backward to an abyss one hundred *ren* below with two-third of his feet in the air. He motioned Yukou to come forward. Yukou crawled on the ground, sweating all over down to his heels.

Who were they? Daoists or stunt performers? Let us read on.

In Chapter 24:11, a man asked a physiognomist to identify which one of his many sons could one day be prosperous. The wizard picked out one son and the reason was that this son would dine with the head of a state in his lifetime. Later, in a journey this son was kidnapped. The bandits maimed his legs so he could not escape and sold him to a wealthy family as a gatekeeper. He had wine and meat every meal in his lifetime! Whether the physiognomist had been right about his prediction is debatable. Other points brought up, unrelated to physiognomy notwithstanding, the fact that this Daoist writer (certainly not Zhuang Zi) found it close enough to Daoism to be included herein is enigmatic to this translator. Apparently, to some believers in these episodes and in many others, Daoism could be used as a base to extend or justify the search for the elixir of life.

About a century after Zhuang Zi, the Warring States period ended and China was unified under one emperor for the first time. His primary concern was how long he could live to enjoy the glory and majesty. Immense efforts were made to find the elixir of life for him. According to Sima Qian (32-a), the Grand Historian of the Han dynasty, there was no shortage of enthusiasts

led by Xu Shi, Lu Sheng and Hou Sheng. The emperor listened to Xu Shi, who described that the immortals would live in misty islands far away in the sea. If he could have a few hundred virgin girls and boys to make the journey, he might be able to find the elixir of life. With the imperial blessings, Xu Shi made the ill-conceived expedition more than once. This showed the mentality of the emperor and his negligence in daily state affairs. Consequently, they doomed the first imperial dynasty to be the shortest in China's history.

### **D. A Brief History of the *Zhuang Zi* and Plan for the Present Work**

Sima Qian (32-b) stipulated that Lao Zi's surname was really Li, not Lao. This is something we will never be able to sort out for sure. In any case, the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906) was founded by a general named Li Yuan. The royal family considers Lao Zi to be its distant ancestor by virtue of having the same surname, Li. Since Zhuang Zi had been closely identified with Lao Zi, a royal decree in A.D. 742 honored Zhuang Zi, the man, with the title *Nan Hua Zhen Ren*, or South China's True Man, and the book bearing his name, *Zhuang Zi*, was renamed *Nan Hua Zhen Jing*, or South China's True Classic. "True Man" is a Daoist title roughly correspondent to "Saint" in Catholicism. The term *Nan Hua Zhen Jing* has been used synonymously with the *Book of Zhuang Zi* in Chinese literature ever since. I mention these facts here in case the reader comes across these unfamiliar terms in English.

The book, *Zhuang Zi*, contains thirty-three chapters divided into three series: the Inner, the Outer, and the Miscellaneous Series. Each chapter contains a number of sections that may not be related to one another. We really do not know why there are three series. Cheng Xuanying (3) of the Tang dynasty explained, "The Inner Series consists of statements of the basic rationale, the Outer Series consists of narratives of the supportive evidence, and the Miscellaneous Series is a mix of the two." A general assumption has been that the Inner Series contains writings of Zhuang Zi, the Outer Series contains the master's unfinished works completed later by his pupils, and the Miscellaneous Series contains works of his pupils on the master's ideas. This assumption appears to be an over-simplification. This translator would suggest to add the word "largely" before "contains" in each of the three clauses in the sentence above starting with "A general assumption..." In this way, we would be able to take care of exceptions. For instance, in the Inner Series, the story in Section 10 of The Grand Tutor (Chapter 6) tells of a poverty-stricken man who

found no other reasons but to blame his destiny. Did Zhuang Zi really want us to blame destiny? He lived through his own life in sheer poverty, and not only never complained about it, but found satisfaction in his lifestyle. Must he have written this story, simply because it is in the Inner Series? Again, we have just read a story about how a Daoist used his changeable countenances to defeat a physiognomist. On the surface, the story implies that orthodoxy wins over heterodoxy. Would Zhuang Zi have taken the risk of mixing his philosophy with occultism? These are the questions we have to sort out before we can categorically call all in one series or none in other series as coming from his pen.

We are thankful that, as alluded to earlier, Zhuang Zi's prose has certain characteristics in both the syntax and the choice of words, and above all, the ideas behind all of them. If we apply these criteria carefully to the various chapters in the book, we will find, for instance, the first section of The Autumn Rain (Chapter 17) is almost certainly from Zhuang Zi's pen, although it is in the Outer Series, and A Discourse on Swords (Chapter 30) is a poor imitation done in the late Warring States period and has nothing to do with Zhuang Zi's writing or thinking at all. Historically, although some Chinese scholars might have serious reservations about the authenticity of certain chapters in this book, such as Chapters 28, 29, and 31, they have accepted that each one of them contains a little Zhuangian idea. However, since the Song dynasty (960–1279), all Chinese scholars have agreed that Chapter 30 is a downright forgery. There is nothing Zhuangian in it. It makes Zhuang Zi talk like a Vertical/ Horizontal adventurer. (See Section A of this Introduction.) Therefore, this translator finds it regrettable and unbelievable that some recent translators, such as Hamill and Seaton (12), consider Chapter 30 to be "essential" in reading the *Zhuang Zi*. By the way, this chapter is one of a few marked "spurious" by Giles (8).

Almost five hundred years after the death of Zhuang Zi, Xiang Xiu, (fl. A.D. 250), a Daoist himself, made a serious effort to annotate *Zhuang Zi*, the book. Unfortunately, he died before he finished his annotation. After this point, two different stories have appeared in literature. One story is: Guo Xiang, (d. A.D. 312), also a Daoist, took Xiang Xiu's unfinished work and completed it, but without giving due acknowledgements to Xiang Xiu. The other story is: Guo Xiang did his own work with no help from Xiang Xiu's manuscript. The truth is not known. Many Chinese scholars have taken the middle ground that Guo Xiang used some of Xiang Xiu's interpretations in his work. In any case, Guo Xiang's work (11) has been

considered the earliest complete annotation of the *Zhuang Zi*. According to Ban Gu (1) of the Han dynasty, the *Zhuang Zi* had fifty-two chapters. There are only thirty-three chapters in Guo Xiang's work. However, Sima Biao (31) of the Jin dynasty, a contemporary of Guo Xiang, also annotated the *Zhuang Zi*. His work shows fifty-two chapters as follows: Inner Series seven chapters, Outer Series twenty-eight chapters, Miscellaneous Series fourteen chapters, and Annotations three chapters. Possibly, Guo Xiang and Sima Biao worked on two different editions of the text. Actually, there were at least three other editions annotated by lesser-known authors. All of them flourished in the Jin dynasty (265–419). Historically, this came as no surprise. Sima Biao was a member of the royal family and once a secretary of the imperial court. Guo Xiang was once an assistant to the Grand Tutor of the Crown Prince. The Jin dynasty was undoubtedly the best of times for Daoism in China's history.

Since then, there have been no less than fifty better-known annotations of the *Zhuang Zi* by Chinese and a few Japanese scholars. Many of them were Confucianists! Apparently, many editions of the textual material were used. Since each edition was hand copied, errors in copying could not be avoided. There have always been differences in some characters and passages from one version to another. In the translation of an ancient classic, the text used for the translation is of paramount importance. This is especially true in the case of the *Zhuang Zi*, where there have been many credible and distinguishable versions. The more recent work (1975, 1981 printing) by Chen Guying (2-a) based on Guo Xiang's edition appears to have adopted an eclectic approach to the numerous variations on the textual material and is used as the text reference for this work. Chen's contribution is in listing the better known variations of a certain passage from diverse sources and showing what he thinks to be the preferable interpretation. It is up to the reader to make a choice. This is scholarship. Since this is the case, some short passages in a section, the whole section of a chapter, and a whole chapter in the so called "general edition" have been found to be non-textual materials serving formerly as explanatory notes, or simply added by literary forgers in the centuries past. They are determined to be forgeries because the messages contained therein are neither Zhuangian nor Daoist. When this is the case, the reader will be notified why and where each deletion from the general edition has taken place.

Zhuang Zi often used words with subtle meanings, depending less on the words he wrote but more on the meanings he thought. This is particularly true



as he used allegories often. We need to look into the lessons behind each allegory and decide which one is closer to what he thought. In addition, Zhuang Zi did not write every chapter of the book or every section of a chapter attributed to him. We need to identify as much as possible what he penned by examining the rhetoric, the syntax, and the vocabulary used in a given passage and more importantly the idea. Of course, the first three literary characteristics disappear in a translation. Obviously, this is a very important issue. If authenticity cannot be certain, any hermeneutic studies made on a forgery is a waste of time.

On the subject of a sampling of recent translated works, there are selected chapters only, such as by Cleary (4) and Hinton (13); there are few complete translations of all the chapters, such as by Palmer and Breuille (28) and Watson (40) with footnotes. I am pretty sure that Watson used the general edition noted above as the text in his translation. In no translations of the past were annotations and commentaries to the text ever done. Since Zhuang Zi used words with obscure meanings and played with historical facts loosely, footnotes alone will not serve the readers well, let alone if there are none. I beg to disagree to this simpler and easier practice of omitting annotations and commentaries, as they are needed to help the readers appreciate the stories and admire the delicate thought the author wanted to distill into every one of us. In summary, the present work is the first ever to use annotations and commentaries, whenever they are needed after a paragraph of text.

Besides translation, I might mention briefly that Coutinho (5) and Graham (9) made some hermeneutic studies of the text, and Merton (26) analyzed many stories in this book. Mair (25) edited "Experimental Essays on Chuang Tzu." It would seem that the general edition was still used mostly as the text in recent works and the reader was not cautioned about the dubious authenticity of certain textual materials.

In the present work, all thirty-three chapters are translated and in most cases, all sections of a chapter are included. However, if in the judgment of this translator, as well as other valued literary critics, a certain chapter is a spurious imitation, the chapter will be translated without annotations, and the reader will be informed accordingly. Similarly, when a paragraph or a section is determined to be wrongly inserted in the general edition, it will be corrected and the reader will be notified.

At the beginning of each chapter, I will introduce its theme with a succinct statement. As stated earlier, since Zhuang Zi used abundant metaphors and purposefully and spuriously restated historical facts, adequate annotations are

deemed necessary to clarify the seeming discrepancies. Explanations are also needed for many of his coined terms. They will appear as annotations, commentaries, and notes printed in regular type. In contrast, original text of the *Zhuang Zi* will be set in a slightly heavier type. I believe the reader will find his essays full of mysteries and imagination, but with a down-to-earth reality.

Finally, the reader will find a bibliography of nearly sixty references at the end of this volume. Some of them were written centuries or even millenniums ago and are in classical Chinese. Whenever possible, the time periods of these authors are given in parentheses, so that the reader will see at glance the time periods of their works. The names of authors are also given in Chinese characters for references written in Chinese or Japanese. Since the translation of the text is based on an eclectic selection from various sources, it is neither feasible nor useful to identify the sources for each. Hence, no specific references are given for the translation of each portion of the text. In other words, the bibliography shows general references used in this work, although some references are also cited specifically, when needed. Moreover, the text contains nearly 300 personal names, some historical and some fictitious. The reader will find them in an index for easy reference. I hope that this little volume will serve the purpose of providing some basic knowledge to the Daoism of Zhuang Zi.

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La Jolla, California  
September, 2007

### Notes

1. The word Zi used after a surname as in this case is not part of the personal name. It is a respectful title for a scholar who has founded an independent school of thought. Thus, “Xun Zi” has the meaning of “the Honorable Master Xun.” We shall read many zi’s in the following paragraphs.
2. There is no reliable source of information about Xun Zi’s year of birth or death. Those shown here are based on the calculations by Yang Jialuo (50).
3. Throughout this work, the terms Daoist and Daoism are used in their philosophical senses and have nothing to do with their religious implications, developed in subsequent centuries.
4. This notation is used for indicating the chapter and section of this work.
5. “Moist” would seem simpler, but could be confused with “moist.” I use Joseph Needham’s spelling (27).
6. His name has been Latinized to Micius in tune with Confucius and Mencius, but it is not often used.

I

# The Inner Series



# 1

## A Leisurely and Blissful Journey

When we are attracted to worldly desires, our spirit will be bound by them. Only if our spirit can “wander in the illimitable” space, will it become free. A word on the translation of the chapter title may be in order. It is leisurely because it is natural and free. It is blissful because Zhuang Zi was a believer in heavenly joy, which he elaborated in a later chapter.

### Section 1

There is a fish in the North Sea by the name of *kun*.<sup>1</sup> The size of *kun* is enormous and it measures many thousand *li*.<sup>2</sup> It undergoes metamorphosis into a bird called *peng*.<sup>3</sup> The back of *peng* is so big that we don't know how many thousand *li* wide it is. When the bird is aroused to fly, its wings are like clouds stretching to the edges of the sky. Waiting for the violent whirling winds from the sea, the bird will fly to the South Sea. The South Sea is Nature's Pond.

The opening paragraph sets the stage for a grand plot. The mysterious metamorphosis from a fish called *kun* into a bird called *peng*, the biggest of all the creatures, and the apparently illimitable stage are the prerequisites for carrying out the lofty ambition. Bigness is the idea overriding every phenomenon. The flying was not wandering, because the bird had a destination in mind. There was no North Sea in China. Zhuang Zi did not mean to fool his readers, but he reminded them to use plenty of imagination.

According to Lin Xiyi (20), the two Chinese characters *hai yun* in the sentence next to last of text, which literally mean “sea movements,” actually mean “violent winds from the sea.” It is so translated here. This is one of numerous examples where this translator adopts the best meaningful translation instead of a rigid literal translation. To avoid redundancy, similar treatments will not be noted later.

Qi Xie records mysterious happenings in Qi.<sup>4</sup> It reads: “While peng is flying to the South Sea, billows roar as far as three thousand li and winds whirl upwards to a height of ninety thousand li. The bird is riding on the wind in the sixth month of the year.” Floating energy like wild horses, floating particles like dusts, and floating living things are all being carried by the wind. Is the blueness of the sky its true color? Is the far non-reaching distance its limit? All this is what the peng can see looking down!

We do not know if there was a book called the *Qi Xie*, meaning literally the folklore of Qi (a northeastern region in China). Even so, the quotation cannot be real. Zhuang Zi told his story here for the first time. It could not have been in any book. But he would like us to believe that he was retelling an old story. Why the sixth month? According to the calendar of the Zhou dynasty, which Zhuang Zi must have been using, the sixth month was the beginning of spring, when the wind was most forceful.

If the water is not deep, it will not have the ability to carry a big boat. Pouring a cupful of water into a small depression on the ground can only float a blade of grass. Putting the cup into the depression can only make it sit on the ground, because the water is shallow and the cup is big. If the wind is not massive, it will not have the strength to support the big wings. Therefore, with the support of the wind from below and with its back to the blue sky and without encountering the slightest resistance, the peng then flies ninety thousand li southward.

The cicada and the quail make fun of the peng and say, “When we want to fly, we stop when we bump into an elm or a fang tree. Sometimes before we reach a tree, we land on the ground instead.

What is flying ninety thousand *li* to the south for?” Those who go to enjoy the green pastoral need bring food for three meals only; on returning, they still feel full. Those who go one hundred *li* away need overnight provisions. Those who go one thousand *li* away need enough food for three months. How could these two little creatures know that?

To make certain that we would appreciate bigness, Zhuang Zi brought in what was small for comparison. In the preceding two paragraphs, he illustrated the futility of the small in accomplishing big undertakings. He teased small creatures like the cicada for their inability to understand the grand plan of the *peng*. Throughout this section he emphasized the discrimination between the big and the small. A mature *fang* tree, also known as a sandalwood tree, is about the same size as an elm.

Those who know a little do not understand those who know a lot. Those who are short-lived do not understand those who are long-lived. How do we know that? Creatures that live only for one day do not know the duration of one month. Cicadas live only for one season and do not know spring and autumn. These are the short-lived. In southern Chu,<sup>5</sup> there are spiritual tortoises taking five hundred years for one spring and five hundred years for one autumn. In ancient times, there were the *chun* trees that would make eight thousand years into one spring and eight thousand years into one autumn. These are the long-lived. Yet, Peng Zu<sup>6</sup> has been well known for his longevity. People want to match his record. Wouldn't this seem to be a pity?

Zhuang Zi further extended the meanings of big and small to include the long-lived and short-lived. He explored the idea of relativity. In the last sentence, he sounded sarcastic about people wanting to live as long as Peng Zu. Compared to the lifespan of a *chun* tree (*Cedrela sinensis*), living eight hundred years is short-lived. All is relative.

What King Tang asked Ji<sup>7</sup> is a similar question:

King Tang asked Ji, “Is there a limit to what are above, below, and the four directions?”



Ji answered, “Beyond the illimitable, there is still the illimitable. North of the vast barren land there is a big sea, Nature’s Pond. A fish lives there, its width several thousand *li*, its length unknown to us, and its name being *kun*. A bird lives there, its back like Mount Tai,<sup>8</sup> its wings like clouds reaching to the edges of the sky, riding on the ram’s-horn-shaped whirling wind and flying ninety thousand *li* upwards, surpassing all the cloudy atmosphere with its back to the blue sky, and then turning southward to reach the South Sea. Sparrows living by the marshes ridicule the big bird and say, ‘Where does it want to go? We jump up and down only in short distance, and fly back and forth in the reeds. We have done all the tricks in flying. Where does it want to go?’” There is a distinction here between the small and the big.

King Tang and Ji were historical persons. Some of their conversations can be found in the *Book of Lie Zi*, of which the dating is uncertain. Zhuang Zi repeated the *peng* story a few times, each with a different emphasis. Here he concluded that it is impossible for the small to appreciate the intentions of the big. Many of his stories have since become aphorisms in Chinese literature. For example, this *peng* story becomes the aphorism, “A sparrow doesn’t understand the soaring ambitions of a wild goose.”

Therefore, some people whose ability may be suitable for an office, whose deeds may be qualified to lead a district, or whose character may be appreciated by a ruler and trusted with the administration of a state will look at themselves in a similar way—like the sparrows. Song Rong Zi would have laughed at them. He would not have felt encouraged if the whole world praised him; he would not have felt distressed if the whole world ridiculed him. He was able to focus on the separation of the inner self from the outer world and to distinguish the conditions for glory and humiliation. This was all. He did not seek worldly fame. Even so, he did not get all his work done. Lie Zi went with the wind effortlessly, as if floating like clouds; he returned after fifteen days. He did not seek worldly fortune. Although going with the wind beat going on foot, it still showed a kind of dependency.

Before we analyze the thought of Zhuang Zi contained in this paragraph, let us learn who these two historical personalities, Song Rong Zi and Lie Zi, were. Song Rong (*ca.* 400–320 B.C.) also appeared as Song Jian in the *Book of Xun Zi* and in the last chapter of this work, and as Song Keng in the *Book of Mencius*. All three names refer to the same person in Chinese literature. He was a senior member of the Ji Xia Academy (see the Introduction). His teaching of anti-war puts him close to Mo Zi. Once Mencius went to see Song Keng to discuss the explosive conflict between the States of Qin and Chu. Mencius praised his efforts to dissuade the rulers from going to war, but criticized his rationale of dissuasion.<sup>9</sup>

Lie Zi's personal name is Lie Yukou, who is mentioned again in Chapters 7:5, 21:9, 28:6, and 32:1 of this work. He was a native of the Zheng State and probably lived in the late Spring-Autumn period, but was antecedent to Zhuang Zi. His work was widely quoted in the *Book of Han Fei Zi*, the *Lü's Spring and Autumn*, the *Strategies of the Warring States*, and others. The bulk of his work had been lost in the Later Han dynasty. He is considered a Daoist. The *Lü's Spring and Autumn* considers abstractness or emptiness to be the essence of his teachings.

Apparently, Zhuang Zi admired the two men for what they stood for, but not for what they had accomplished in their lifetimes. He commented that Song Rong Zi “did not get all his work done” and the life of Lie Zi “still showed a kind of dependency.” In his view, Song Rong Zi's thinking was still bound by his discrimination between “inner self” and “outer world” and between “glory” and “humiliation.” Lie Zi was still dependent on things like wind, over which he had no control. These two men might have different degrees of freedom, but they were not truly free. To be truly free in both body and spirit, a person must overcome dependency. This is the key idea in the whole paragraph. Thus, Zhuang Zi summarized his theme with the following terse sentences.

If one could live by the law of nature, ride on the changes of the six *qi*, and wander in the illimitable, he would have depended on nothing. Therefore, a superior man seeks no self, a spirited man seeks no merit, and a sainted man seeks no fame.

It is difficult to define *qi*. It is a form of energy permeating everywhere, in our bodies as well as in the universe. We really do not know what specific

meanings Zhuang Zi gave to “the six *qi*.” Few have been suggested and none has been accepted unequivocally. For instance, Sima Biao (31) explained it to mean: yin, yang, wind, rain, darkness, and brightness. Fortunately, it may not be instrumental in understanding the gist of Zhuang Zi’s message. The basic concept is: Live by the law of nature. If we can do that, the distinction between selves and things would disappear, and selves and things would always be in full agreement. On the other hand, if we cannot do that, we would always use our points of view (prejudices) to judge things around us and create endless problems. Hence, the term “self” in the last sentence means self-centered prejudices, not the physical presence of oneself. Zhuang Zi was critical of Song Rong Zi, because the latter could not come to terms with the law of nature and still maintained the separation of self from everything else. In the statements on merit and fame above, Zhuang Zi hinted that we should get rid of dependency altogether, including the desire for merit and fame. In this last compound sentence, the thrice-used “seeks no” may also mean “is indifferent to.” Finally, the term, “superior man,” is translated from the Chinese *zhi ren*, meaning a man with supreme apprehension in Dao. It has nothing to do with, and should be distinguished from, the same English term used in older translations for the Chinese *junzi*.

Superficially, we might feel Zhuang Zi did not organize his presentation well, for he brought up a series of concepts without further elaboration, such as considering all our points of view to be prejudices. In fact, as we shall see soon, he explored this idea fully in Chapter 2, as how our prejudices became a source of inequality. If we go over his passages carefully, we can easily find a tightly knitted matrix and identify the thread connecting an earlier to a later deliberation.

## Section 2

Yao offered to abdicate in favor of Xu You and said to him, “The sun and the moon have shone, but small flames continue to burn trying to compete for brightness. Isn’t it useless? Timely rains have come, but more water continues to pour into the fields. Isn’t it labor in vain? If you, my master, take the throne, the nation will be in peace and prosperity. Yet, I am still here. I feel regretful. I beg you to accept it.”

Xu You answered, “You have ruled the nation and the nation is already in peace and prosperity. For me to take your place, am

I after fame? Fame is the predicate of reality. Shall I be after the predicate? The tailorbird nesting in the forest needs only one branch. The mole drinking from a river only fills up the stomach. Please go back to your throne. I have nothing to do with national affairs. Even if a chef chooses not to cook, the priest superintending the sacrifices will not exceed his duties by cooking for the chef.

King Yao was a legendary cultural ruler of high antiquity. Some literary critics have doubted if he had ever existed. Xu You was a worthy recluse under Zhuang Zi's pen and his name is not found in any other historical record. The conversation between these two men has no historical value, but Zhuang Zi lent a lesson to his story.

Yao was humble in giving his reasons for wanting to abdicate, saying that Xu You was like the sun and the moon and the timely rains, and he himself was merely little flames and little un-needed water. So why should he stay on? This sounds simple enough.

Xu You's reply is a little involved. He was polite in praising the king for doing an excellent job. What would make a simple man like him want to take the awesome responsibility? A little bird does not need to go to a forest to build a nest; a little mole does not need to go to a river to drink a mouthful of water. His personal needs can be met in a simple way. Finally, a priest may not overstep his duty by being a chef. How could a ruler expect a recluse to want to govern a nation?

The last sentence of text above has been rendered into a proverb. It reads like this, "He oversteps his duties as a substitute for a cook." It carries the notion that his eagerness may not produce satisfactory results.

Jian Wu said to Lian Shu, "What I heard from Jie Yü was far-reaching without justification and forward looking without reservation. I was frightened by his words like numerous stars in the boundless sky, incomprehensible and unreasonable."

Lian Shu asked, "What did he say?"

There came the answer: "[Jie Yü said,] 'Far, far way, in a mountain called Gu Xie, there lives a spirited man, whose skin is like ice and snow, and his composure is like a maiden. He eats no grains, inspires wind and drinks dewdrops; he rides on a flying

dragon in the cloudy atmosphere and takes journeys beyond the four seas. He concentrates his attention so that nothing is being neglected and crops will ripen on time.' I consider it a wild talk and don't believe it."

Lian Shu said, "Of course. A blind man cannot admire the beauty of a colorful pattern. A deaf man cannot admire the sounds of music. But who says blindness and deafness are from organic defects only? They can come from spiritual defects also. What he said applies exactly to you! That man with his capability will commingle with everything into oneness. The mundane world opts for disorderliness. Why would he want to do anything with the vulgarity? For that man, nothing would hurt him, floods reaching sky high would not drown him, volcanoes melting metals and rocks and charring mountains would not make him feel the heat. Even trifles from him could mold ordinary men into the likes of Yao and Shun. Why would he want to get himself interested in worldly things?"

Jian Wu and Lian Shu were apparently practitioners of Daoism. Their names did not appear in any historical record. Perhaps, they were Zhuangian<sup>10</sup> creations. Jie Yü was a real person. He was mentioned in *The Analects*<sup>11</sup> as a recluse in the Chu State. Once, Confucius wanted to talk to him. He politely declined. Like King Yao, King Shun was also a legendary cultural ruler of high antiquity. These are brief notes for the players named in the story.

Whether Jie Yü actually did tell the story attributed to him or Zhuang Zi simply put his story in Jie Yü's mouth, we cannot be certain. However, we do know Jie Yü lived nearly three hundred years before Zhuang Zi and, being a recluse, he wouldn't have kept a written record. It would be next to impossible for Zhuang Zi to quote him. In any case, the authenticity of the quotation is not important in reading Zhuangian essays. Then what is the idea he wanted to impress on his readers? In the final analysis, it is not the fascinating supernatural power of the spirited man at all. It is about the misfortune of blindness and deafness, not of people who cannot see or hear, but of people who are spiritually blind or deaf. Zhuang Zi introduced it here without any notice. This is his style. We have to sort it out. I have done this once before at the end of Section 1. Later, he dedicated the whole Chapter 5 to elaborate on the theme of spiritual or moral deformity. He considers inequality and spiritual

deformity more threatening to the quality of our life than anything else. More of this will be said later.

A hat salesman from the Song State went to the Yue State. The people there are used to shaving their heads and tattooing their bodies. They have no use for hats.

Yao ruled all people in the nation and rendered peace under his administration. He went to the distant Gu Xie Mountain at the north bank of the Fen River to pay homage to four Daoist elders. In so doing, he almost forgot his national position.

These two paragraphs are not meaningful as such in this location. More likely, they are fragments from some other sections. Hence, no further comment is to be made.

### Section 3

Hui Zi said to Zhuang Zi, “King of Wei gave me seeds of a giant gourd. I planted them and one of them grew a gourd as big as five dan.<sup>12</sup> I used it for storing water, but it is not strong enough to hold water. I cut it up to make a ladle, but it is too big to fit into any space. Not because it isn’t big enough, I find it useless and smash it into pieces.”

We learn early in reading the work of Zhuang Zi to grasp the central thought and to play down the detailed physical description surrounding the message. For instance, in the opening paragraph of Section 1, if the size of the bird *peng* were described as many hundred *li* wide instead of many thousand *li* wide, nothing would have changed. By the same token, Zhuang Zi here exaggerated the size of the gourd to be about nine cubic feet, an unheard of size for a gourd.

Zhuang Zi answered, “My master, you are really naive in applying big ideas. Once there was a man from the Song State good at making herbal medicine for treating chapped hands. For generations his family earned a meager living sorting silk threads from silkworm cocoons soaked in hot water. A visitor heard about his medicine and offered one hundred coins

for his recipe. He gathered his family members to discuss the offer and said, “Our family has worked on sorting silk threads for generations and earned only few coins. Now we can sell the recipe for one hundred coins. I think we should sell it to him.” The visitor bought the recipe and went to convince the king of the Wu State [about the medicine]. Just at that time, the Yue State invaded the Wu State. The king [of the Wu State] made him the commander. That winter, the marines of the two states engaged in a decisive battle and the Yue State was defeated. He was conferred the head of a territory. Being capable of keeping hands from chapping was one reason. Utilizing it to get a conferment or utilizing it to avoid sorting silk threads depended on a difference in application. You had a five-dan gourd, why wouldn’t you tie it to your waist and float on lakes and rivers? But you only worried about where to store the gourd. It seems, my master, you still haven’t thought it through yet!”

Hui Zi, also known by his personal name Hui Shi (see the Introduction), and Zhuang Zi were close friends. Their outlooks of life were quite different. Hui Zi was once prime minister to King Hui of Liang (Wei),<sup>13</sup> who gave the gourd seeds to Hui Zi at the beginning of this story. Incidentally, he was the same king that Mencius met and conversed with in the opening paragraph of the *Book of Mencius*. Zhuang Zi, on the other hand, had no interest at all in politics. He was a Daoist and Hui Zi, a logician. When they were together, they always argued endlessly. Hui Zi died before Zhuang Zi. Once visiting his grave, Zhuang Zi sighed, “Since your death, I have had no one to talk to.” Apparently, these two men knew each other very well and did not let their disagreements spoil their friendship.

In the story, Zhuang Zi talked like a utilitarian. Things big and small can be put to good use if we give them enough thought. An herbal medicine may be worth one hundred coins or a principality. It depends on how it is used. Zhuang Zi would have liked to float with the gourd, but it was certainly beyond the imagination of Hui Shi.

Hui Zi said to Zhuang Zi, “I have a big tree. People call it ailanthus. Its trunk is tumorous and useless in carpentry. Its branches

are crooked and cannot be shaped. It grows by a road and carpenters won't even look at it. Now, what you have just said is exaggerating and impractical. People will reject it."

Zhuang Zi answered, "Haven't you ever seen cats and weasels? They lie low and wait for their prey; they jump back and forth, high and low after their catches; sometimes they fall into traps and are killed. Now think of the Tai bull<sup>14</sup> with its size like the clouds spreading to the edges of the sky. It has enormous capability, but it cannot catch mice. Now you have a big tree and you are worried about its uselessness. Why not have it planted in a barren land or remote wilderness, so that you can freely wander around it and leisurely take naps underneath it? Your tree won't get axed off or damaged. It is not useful, but what harm will come out of it?"

This second conversation between these two men is a continuation of the theme developed in the first. Utility is not related to size and utility itself is only relative. A huge gourd may not be useful to everyone, but it can be made useful to some. A huge animal may not be able to do what a small animal can for lack of agility. A huge tree may not be useful for producing lumber of good grade. But this should not be a reason to destroy it, for it can still be useful in some other ways. Zhuang Zi was preaching relativity.



## Notes

1. A tiny fish used mythically here by Zhuang Zi to mean the biggest fish in the sea.
2. A unit of length, approximately 1900 feet or one third of a mile.
3. It is not necessary to know what kind of a bird *peng* is, because the real *peng* is not what the mythical *peng* Zhuang Zi described here.
4. A region in part of present Shandong Province. It got its name because the State of Qi had been here.
5. A region corresponding to the present Hunan and Hubei Provinces.
6. A legendary person credited with having lived to the ripe age of 800-years-old.
7. The name of a worthy man living at the time of King Tang's reign (1766–1752 B.C.). He could have been a counselor to the king.
8. The most sacred mountain in China, in the present Shandong Province.
9. Cf. the *Book of Mencius*: Gao Zi, Lower.
10. This translator coins this term to mean “by or of Zhuang Zi” in this work. It makes expressions, such as the one referred to above and others like “the prose is definitely Zhuangian,” concise and direct.
11. *The Analects*: Wei Zi.
12. A unit of volume roughly equivalent to 1.8 cubic feet. Five *dan* are about nine cubic feet.
13. Wei was the name of the state; Liang or Da Liang was the name of the state capital; and Hui was the posthumous title of the king. This is how the king came to be known in history.
14. Tai is the name of a district in northern China. Tai bull probably means a bull from Tai. From the description Zhuang Zi gave to it, it was a mythical beast.

## 2

# On Equality

The central idea of this chapter resides in the equality between people and all things in the world. One obstruction to equality is that we use prejudice to judge people and things around us. Our first effort should be to eliminate prejudice by forgetting “selves.”

### Section 1

Nanguo Ziqi reclined on his couch, looking up at the sky and exhaling a mouthful of air as if forgetting the contrast between him and the world. Yancheng Ziyou standing and waiting at his side asked, “What’s the matter? Can the body be like dried wood and the spirit, ashes? The one reclining on the couch at present is not the one reclining on the couch in the past.”

Ziqi said, “Yan, how excellent your question is! At present, I have lost Me. Do you know that? You may have heard sounds from humans, but you have not heard sounds from earth; you may have heard sounds from earth, but you have not heard sounds from heaven.”

The setting of this section is simple and records a dialogue between an old master and his disciple. The old master, by the name of Nanguo Ziqi, was a fictitious Daoist, who sat and leaned on a couch. Nanguo literally means south city. An ancient sometimes used the location of his residence as part of his name. Apparently, he lived in the south side of the city. Ziqi was his given name. The surname of his disciple was Yancheng; his formal given name was Yan; and his courtesy name, Ziyou. It was customary for a master to address

his disciple by his formal given name. It was also customary for a disciple to be standing by and waiting on the master, so that he would be ready to listen and to learn whatever wisdom came from the mouth of his master. This explains the setting at the beginning of the story.

One of the Daoist practices is to sit still in deep introspection, so that a state of abstractedness is attained in which the person's self and the rest of the world merge into oneness. The Daoist refers to this state as *zuo wang*, or roughly "sitting to forget." This is close to the entry into the contemplative state practiced by the Buddhist. One apparent effect of the *zoo wang* is: "I have lost Me." "I" is the person's true self, devoid of prejudices. "Me" is the remainder of the person with prejudices and other worldly ills. In deep introspection, these two entities can be separated, allowing "I" to be united with nature, while "Me" remains as the visible shell.

Obviously, the disciple keenly observed a difference in the appearance of his master and popped the question about the difference between the present and the past. The master did not answer his question directly and brought up a metaphor of sounds.

Ziyou asked, "May I be instructed?"

Ziqi answered, "When air moves on earth, it becomes wind. When there is no movement, it is quiet everywhere. When it moves through ten thousand openings, it makes numerous kinds of sounds. Haven't you ever heard the long shrill sound? The rugged hilly slopes and the cavities of aged tree trunks look like noses, mouths, ears, squares, circles, mortars, deep cavities, and shallow cavities. Some give off sounds like running water, flying arrows, crying, quarreling, breathing, yelling, weeping, and lamenting. The wind at the front sings, and the wind at the rear rhymes. Small winds have gentle echoes; big winds have loud echoes. After the big winds have blown over, all the openings are deadly silent. You will see the branches and leaves still rocking and rolling."

Ziyou said, "Sounds from earth come from air passing through cavities and holes. Sounds from humans come from playing bamboo and reed instruments, such as flutes. May I ask what sounds from heaven are?"

Ziqi answered, “The so-called sounds from heaven come from wind blowing through all shapes of openings. What makes every one of them sound so distinct from all others comes from the natural shape of each passage. Who could have caused them to make all these sounds?”

The simplest answer is that sounds from heaven come from nature. Wind comes naturally. Numerous openings and cavities are shaped by nature to give numerous sounds. Spontaneity is the rule of nature. What we can hear with our ears are the sounds from earth, which are objective. What we can hear with our minds (hearts) are the sounds from heaven, which are subjective.

## **Section 2**

Great knowledge is broad and far-reaching; little knowledge is narrow and specific. Big talks are aggressive and small talks are argumentative. While sleeping, these people remain restive; while awakening, they continue to be nervous, find no peace with others, and scheme for advantages. Some speak with slow deliberations, some set up traps, and some use carefully chosen words. Little fear turns into despair, big fear leads to depression. Some talk like an archer discharging an arrow to settle a yes-or-no issue. Some keep their mouths shut as if from swearing, just waiting for the right moment to attack. They feel lonely and desolate like autumn and winter because of daily wasting of their spirits. They are given over to what they are doing and there is no return from it. Their vitality is smothered as if sealed inside a box, like the complete exhaustion of an aging man. Nothing will be able to revive a spirit so close to death. They are sometimes joyful, angry, sorrowful, happy, worried, lamenting, hesitating, frightened, temperamental, reckless, crazy, and clownish, like music coming from instruments and fungi growing from moisture. These feelings come forth alternately day and night with their origins unknown. This will do for now. One day when we apprehend the reasons for their being, we will apprehend their origins.

This long paragraph is really an extension in thought from the last few paragraphs of the preceding section, which deal with the sounds from earth. Zhuang Zi described then numerous shapes of openings giving rise to numerous sounds, and all these sounds becoming mute once the wind passed away. This happened in a natural environment. It was so because the openings had no prejudices and no memories. Once the wind was over, they returned exactly to what was before. Zhuang Zi gave us a different story now in a human society. The kinds of thought that many of us may have in dealing with one **another** are very revealing, indeed. The resulting feelings from joyful to clownish closely parallel to the sounds like running water, flying arrows, crying, *etc.* from openings described earlier. But there is an important difference. The sounds from nature have transient existence only, because nature is prejudice-free. Human feelings last for days and nights, because people have prejudices. These prejudices consume both mental and physical well-being. Zhuang Zi reminded us of the quotation, "I have lost Me."

Without these feelings, Me will not exist. Without Me, these feelings will not exist either. Me and these feelings are mutual, but it is not known who made it this way. Perhaps, there is a true power,<sup>1</sup> but we don't have the slightest idea about it. Its many manifestations suggest to us that its existence is credible. We cannot see it. It is affectionate but formless.

There are one hundred pieces of bones, nine openings, and six organs<sup>2</sup> in every one of us. Am I partial to any of them? Do you like all of them or only some of them? If they are equal, do all of them serve as your servants and maids? If they are all servants and maids, do some of them supervise others? Do they rotate to be supervisors? Does there exist a true authority?<sup>3</sup> Whether we can determine its nature or not has no bearing on its being true.

Once a human being is conceived, it is destined to die [someday] if not [spiritually] transformed. It keeps uneasy relations with other things, dashes back and forth, and knows not to stop. Isn't this tragic? It labors hard through its life without success. Being sick and tired, it knows nowhere to turn back. Isn't this sad? People say life like this is not dead. What difference does this make? While its shell is undergoing degradation, its spirit

disappears, too. Isn't this the greatest tragedy of all? Is life in this world full of dullness? Am I the only dull person? Are there some not dull?

In the preceding three shorter paragraphs, Zhuang Zi discussed one topic in each. First, he introduced the concept of the true power. Next, using the human body parts as an example, he showed there was equality in nature. No one part was more important than any other. Finally, he led us back to revisit Me again. The source of Me is prejudices. The catalyst of prejudices is feelings. Me is a pretender of I. I is the true self, where the true power is presumed to be seated. Philosophers like Zhuang Zi, Xun Zi, *et al.* of the pre-Qin period would like to think that the heart was where the true I or spirit (as opposed to the outer form or shell) was situated. They used the term, true heart, synonymous with true power or true authority mentioned earlier. Since, as Zhuang Zi put it, "while its shell is undergoing degradation, its spirit disappears, too," the true heart is not everlasting either. He took pains to re-emphasize the evil of prejudice, because he believes it is responsible for inequality, a shameful human invention.

### Section 3

If a person follows the instruction of his prejudice, who wouldn't have an instructor? Why is it necessary that only the one who understands the rationale of changes can have it? A fool can have it, too. That a person has not had prejudices but has already shown a judgmental right or wrong is like a person going to Yue today and arriving there yesterday.<sup>4</sup> What it means is to consider having nothing as having something. To consider having nothing as having something, even someone like the Holy Yü<sup>5</sup> could not explain it. How could I alone do anything about it?

Talking [by people] is not blowing [by wind]. Speakers make speeches, but what they speak is not consistent. Did they really say something? Or, haven't they really said anything? They maintain what they said is different from the chirping sound of a newly hatched chick. Is one distinguishable from the other or not?

How is Dao<sup>6</sup> obscured to become true and false? How are words obscured to become right and wrong? Where doesn't Dao exist? How do words get rejected? Dao is obscured because of

small success. Words are obscured because of pomposity. Therefore, there has been the debate between the Confucianist and the Mohist based on calling wrong whatever others consider right and calling right whatever others consider wrong. If they really want to do so to each other, they would do better to examine the truth with open-mindedness.

The first paragraph shows it is very easy for us to be prejudiced without our knowing it. It comes so naturally that we are used to judging right from wrong, as if it were part of our nature. Zhuang Zi viewed our judgments as nothing more than an expression of our prejudices. In the second paragraph, we are again reminded of the contrast between the noises made by the humans at the prompt of prejudices and the sounds made by the winds that come and go freely without traces. Finally, Zhuang Zi explored the reasons for obscuring truth. Sometimes, a preliminary observation leads us to a partial understanding of truth (small success). If we mistake the partial for complete understanding and stop further search for truth, we have in effect unknowingly obscured the Dao. Likewise, pompous words obscure their real meanings. The logicians liked using sophistry to score points. Zhuang Zi despised this technique, for the more they talked the less equality remained. Debates between different schools of thought were often imbued with prejudices and hence not valuable in revealing the truth. He suggested that with open-mindedness we might be able to come close to it.

Nothing in the world is not the That of another thing or the This of itself. From That, one does not see This; from This, one recognizes it. Therefore, it is said that That exists because of This and This exists because of That. That and This come into being together and co-exist because of contrasts, even though what is being born is what is dying and what is dying is what is being born, what is being permitted is what is being prohibited and what is being prohibited is what is being permitted, and right makes wrong and wrong makes right. Therefore, the sainted men<sup>7</sup> do not walk on this path [of contrasts], and succeed in union with nature for the same reason.

In this and the following concluding paragraphs, Zhuang Zi presented the thrust of his arguments on equality. He introduced the contrast between This and That or between the I and everything else. To begin with, everything by nature, including I, is equal. We, the humans, have persistently exercised our prerogatives to judge things with our prejudices. We call this right and that wrong. We call this good and that evil. When prejudices are commingled with equality, the product is inequality. The many contrasts he mentioned are artifacts of human efforts. Therefore, if we want to secure equality for all, we should stop being prejudiced.

This is also That and That is also This. That is right and wrong; This is right and wrong. Are there really This and That? Isn't there really This or That? When This and That lose their contrast, they become the pivotal of Dao. Once they become the pivotal of Dao, they are at the center of Dao and can meet infinite circumstances. This is infinite. That is infinite. Therefore, we could do better to examine the truth with open-mindedness.

According to Zhuang Zi, the union of This and That or that of I and the rest of the world is doable. We should remember that the idea of the union of I and the rest of the world is characteristic of Zhuang Zi's Daoism, not described by Lao Zi. Should the union take place, we would be at the center of Dao. Of course, the expression is a metaphor. It means our free spirit would be so situated that it would not be affected at all by whatever motions or changes that might be happening outside of it.

#### **Section 4**

Using an attribute to illustrate that an attribute is not an attribute is less convincing than using a non-attribute to illustrate that an attribute is not an attribute. Using a horse to illustrate that a horse is not a horse is less convincing than using a non-horse to illustrate that a horse is not a horse.

Heaven and earth are [like] one attribute. Myriads of things are [like] one horse.



Zhuang Zi was never interested in sophistry because it obscured truth. But he would use sophistry to illustrate a point, if it would make people understand his point more readily. "Attribute" as used herein literally implies something pointing or designating. It is equivalent to "concept" or "idea." Likewise, "horse" is equivalent to "symbol," anything visible to us. "Essays on Attributing Things" and "Essays on White Horses" were two of the popular arguments used by the logician Gongsun Long, a contemporary of Zhuang Zi. He rephrased the logician's arguments to make another statement of his own. In each of the two sentences in the first paragraph, whether the first statement is less or more convincing than the second is unimportant in the present context. Zhuang Zi was discussing the contrasts between That and This, which plagued our outlook of the world. If we followed his suggestion of substituting "a non-attribute" and "an attribute" or "a non-horse" and "a horse," as the case may be, with That and This, we would get essentially the same statement. It means that That and This are interchangeable without causing a ripple. Zhuang Zi used this instance to remind us: That and This are indistinguishable. When we realize the "I" within us and the world beyond are no farther apart than a non-horse from a horse, or a non-attribute from an attribute, we wouldn't have felt it necessary to use our judgments to criticize others. When we extend this concept further, we realize, "Heaven and earth are like one attribute. Myriads of things are like one horse." Dao envelops the attribute and the horse into one, the highest resting place for equality!

Roads are formed, because people walk on them. Things are named, because people call them. What is acceptable has reasons for being acceptable, what is unacceptable has reasons for being unacceptable.<sup>8</sup> What is correct has reasons for being correct, what is incorrect has reasons for being incorrect. Why is it correct? Of course, it has reasons to be correct. Why is it incorrect? Of course, it has reasons to be incorrect. Why is it acceptable? Of course, it has reasons to be acceptable. Why is it unacceptable? Of course, it has reasons to be unacceptable. Everything has its way of being acceptable. Everything has its ways of being correct. Nothing is unacceptable. Nothing is incorrect. Therefore, a small [blade of] grass and a big [piece of] wood, a leprous woman and a beauty like Xishi,<sup>9</sup> and all sorts of strange, mysterious happenings have one thing in common. They divide, they complete; they complete, they disintegrate.

There is no completion or disintegration. They all return to the one in common.

Only men of wide attainments can apprehend the one in common, such that they do not use prejudices, but train their thoughts on the usefulness of things. This is all. Being able to follow the path of nature without knowing the reason is called Dao.

We classify things as acceptable or unacceptable, correct or incorrect according to our standards. These standards are relative and come from our prejudices. They make things unequal—acceptable and unacceptable, correct and incorrect. Naturally, all things are equal— acceptable and correct. Even the distinctions we make between what is big and small, beautiful and ugly, and ordinary and mysterious are superfluous. Then there comes the sentence, “They divide, they complete; they complete, they disintegrate.” The sentence structure is so pithy that it leaves a plenty of room for interpretation, as long as it is within the realm of Zhuangian philosophy. Being a keen observer of nature, Zhuang Zi must have noted that a hen laid many eggs and a fish laid even more eggs (division), eggs grew into individual organisms (completion), and organisms eventually died (disintegration). “There is no completion or disintegration,” because it is a cycle. There is a common thread running through all the things we venture to differentiate, such as beauty and ugliness, but he did not say what until the very end. “Without knowing the reason” means coming naturally. We shall find a similar theme from a different angle on a broader scale in Chapter 18:6 later.

We exhaust our minds to render things equal, not realizing that they are already equal. This may be called “three in the morning.” What is “three in the morning”? A monkey keeper feeds nuts to the monkeys and says to them, “You get three in the morning and four in the evening.” The monkeys are all angry. Then he says, “You get four in the morning and three in the evening.” The monkeys are all happy. The fact remains the same, but it makes the monkeys angry or happy. Therefore, the sainted men do not insist on the arguments over right or wrong in order to maintain a natural balance. This is called the mutual solution.

What the keeper has said is substantially the same, but the monkeys use their subjective judgments and consider what the keeper has said to be different.

Therefore, the sainted men do not insist on how an argument is presented as long as we are happy with it. Zhuang Zi was teasing those of us who “exhausted our minds” to keep our subjective viewpoints and got nothing more than the monkeys.

Knowledge of the ancients had a limit. Why was there a limit? At the very beginning when there was not anything, this was the limit, the end of it, and nothing could be added. Later, people considered things, but did not classify them. Still later, people considered classification, but did not label it right or wrong. As the idea of right and wrong prevailed, Dao was being eclipsed. As Dao was being eclipsed, favoritism succeeded. Were there really failures and successes? Were there really no failures or successes? If failures and successes were [contemplated], then Zhao Wen<sup>10</sup> would play the *qin*.<sup>11</sup> If failures or successes were not [contemplated], then Zhao Wen would not play the *qin*. Zhao Wen playing the *qin*, Shi Kuang directing an ensemble, and Hui Zi leaning on a *wu*<sup>12</sup> tree, these three men accomplished immensely in their respective fields and therefore became best known in their advanced years. But Hui Zi’s favorites were different from those of others. He wanted to flaunt his favorites before others and to make others unwillingly accept his favorites as theirs. Hence, he indulged himself with the enthusiasm of his arguments on hardness and whiteness to the very end. His son sought to continue his work, but had no success either. Can it be called success? Even though we are not successful, it can be called success. If it cannot be called success, then we can’t ever be successful. Therefore, fascinations that disturb the mind are what the sainted men wish to avoid. They do not use sophistry, but train their thought on the usefulness of things. This is called open-mindedness.

This paragraph begins with a discussion of our mental attitude toward the world around us with respect to the development of inequality. In the very beginning, the ancients’ desires of the world were simple; their lives were simple; natural things living and lifeless were simple. Although the world was the limit, it was, in essence, limitless for the ancients. As time went on, they

had to deal with many more things (in the broadest senses of the word); they began to identify them by their common denominators. Later, they added their subjective feelings of likes and dislikes, from which right and wrong were perceived and inequality among things was established. An unfortunate outcome of this development was that the Dao was obscured.

The middle section of the paragraph deals with an answer to the basic question whether we can still be able to do anything perfect. Zhuang Zi gave us his answer in these sentences: "If failures and successes were contemplated, then Zhao Wen would play the *qin*. If failures or successes were not contemplated, then Zhao Wen would not play the *qin*." Even a master musician cannot perform every note with perfection. If he chooses to play, he expects certain failures and successes. However, he can avoid imperfection and its accompanying failures and successes, only if he chooses not to play at all.

In the closing remarks, Zhuang Zi mentioned three well-known personalities with outstanding accomplishments, but he chose to deliberate on one of them only. Despite his close friendship with Hui Zi, who died many years before him, Zhuang Zi was critical of his friend, not as a person, but as a proponent of sophistry, which, as Zhuang Zi believed, further eclipsed the Dao. Only by looking at all things with open-mindedness, can we appreciate the equality among them.

## Section 5

Now let me say something here. I do not know whether what I say is of the same kind as, or of a different kind from, what others have said. Whether it is of the same kind or of a different kind is not different from having something said by others or me. If so, then the other speakers and I are also not different.

Although this is the case, let me say something. There was a beginning. There was a beginning that had not begun. There was a beginning that had not begun that which had had not begun. There was *you*, there was *wu*. There was *wu* that had not been *wu*. There was *wu* that had not been *wu* that had had not been *wu*. Suddenly, there was *wu* and it was not known whether *wu* was really *you* or *wu*. Now, I have spoken, but I do not know whether what I have spoken is what I meant to say or not what I meant to say.

Nothing in the world is bigger than the tip of a down in autumn, and Mount Tai is small by comparison. Nothing is more long-lived than a stillborn fetus, and Peng Zu<sup>13</sup> was short-lived by comparison. Heaven and earth and I live together; myriads of things and I are one. Since there is oneness, does it need comments? Since it has been called oneness, doesn't it need comments? Adding one to what is said makes two. Two and one make three. Going forward from here, even the best arithmetician cannot get an answer, let alone an ordinary person. Therefore, from *wu* to *you* we have created three. We don't know how many there are from *you* to *you*. Let us stop here and have nature take it over.

Let me explain first the two Daoist proper terms *wu* and *you*. Apparently, Zhuang Zi took these two terms from Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing*<sup>14</sup> and used them with the same meanings and implications. Both *wu* and *you* are derived from Dao and the three are related in a sequence: Dao → *wu* → *you*. Dao gives rise to *wu* and *wu* gives rise to *you* and *you* gives rise to all things. Literally, *wu* means not being or not having, and *you* means being or having. Evidently, their literal meanings are not what Lao Zi wanted them to be. Wang Bi (31), an early authoritative elaborator of the *Dao De Zhen Jing*, the same as the *Dao De Jing*, explained, "It is called *wu*, because it cannot be seen; it is called *you*, because it causes all things to be formed."<sup>15</sup> Hence, *wu* and *you* are not the opposite of each other. Nor are they the equal of each other. They represent two different states of Dao. There seem to be no equivalents in English. I think it would be counterproductive to try to translate them. I hasten to add though that in some passages in the *Dao De Jing*, *wu* and *you* are used with their literal meanings.

Zhuang Zi led us to revisit relativity in both time and space. The beginning of the universe can be pushed farther and farther back. We have also learned, "Dao produced one, one produced two, two produced three, and three produced myriads of things."<sup>16</sup> How many are myriads of things? Countless. When "myriads of things and I are one," that one can be unimaginably small or big. This leads us to examine the relativity of smallness and bigness. Zhuang Zi did not deny that things were bigger or smaller when they were compared with the same subjectivity, but their sizes were a function of how they were seen and hence changeable. Of course, a mountain is larger than a

down. However, if we could view the mountain from a point far, far away in space, we would find it smaller than a down seen close up. Likewise, a man having lived for several hundred years was as short-lived as a stillborn fetus when compared to the age of the universe. Therefore, if we could free our thought from the confinements of time and space, we would have moved one step closer to nature.

Furthermore, the single sentence, "Heaven and earth and I live together; myriads of things and I are one," has great significance in placing man within the universe. Elsewhere we learn that we should follow the path to Dao. Here Zhuang Zi perceived that we could be living in it with everything else and become part of it without ever knowing the oneness. He was talking not only about equality for man, but also about equality for all things. This realm of reasoning was never touched by Lao Zi. This is but one example of differences in the philosophy between these two great Daoists.

Dao has not by itself had divisions. Sayings have not by themselves had consistencies. Debates have risen over rightness. Let us talk what the debates are about. They are the left and right, the order and justification, the discrimination and rebuttal, and the competition and conquest. These are the eight contentions. The sainted men acknowledge, but do not discuss what is beyond the six limits.<sup>17</sup> The sainted men discuss, but do not comment on what is within the six limits. The sainted men comment on, but do not criticize the spring and autumn<sup>18</sup> that form the records of governance by past kings. So there are discriminations in some, but none in others. There are criticisms in some, but none in others. One may ask: Why? The sainted men keep them in their hearts. Others use criticism to make an ostentatious show. Therefore, those who are critical overlook something.

The great Dao is without a name. Great arguments are without words. Great warm-heartedness is without partiality. Great modesty is without flaunting. Great courage is without harm [to others]. Dao that can be explained is not Dao. Arguments that can be expressed in words have shortcomings. Love that is narrowly focused cannot reach afar. Modesty that is self-regarding lacks sincerity. Courage that seeds ill feelings cannot be successful. A person who can observe these five rules has come close to Dao.

Therefore, a person who knows to stop at what is unknown to him is superb. Who understands the wordless arguments and the inexplicable Dao? If a person does, he may be called a nature's storehouse, which will never get full on filling or empty on withdrawing. He doesn't know where it comes from. This is called the latent brightness.

Zhuang Zi was critical of those who played tricks with words, particularly Confucianists and Mohists who quarreled endlessly on who were right. In addition to these two largest schools, several other smaller schools also engaged in similar debates. The more they argued, the farther they were from the truth. Many of them were contemporaries of Zhuang Zi. He saw their exercises serving little useful purposes, except in "making an ostentatious show. Therefore, those who are critical overlook something." Apparently, this "something" refers to the debaters' own shortcomings.

In the preceding paragraph beginning with "The great Dao is without a name," except for the two sentences, "Dao that can be explained is not Dao. Arguments that can be expressed in words have shortcomings," the rest of text in the paragraph reads like a Confucianist writing. It shows there are some common grounds for both the Confucianist and the Daoist.

Zhuang Zi coined many terms for purposes of expressing certain peculiar connotations not found elsewhere in literature. The last two words "latent brightness" in this section of text are translated from his coined term, *bao guang*, meaning the brightness of a person having been willfully hidden or dimmed (in contrast to those who are more than eager to flaunt it).

## Section 6

Once King Yao asked Shun, "I wish to conquer Zong, Kuai, and Xu Ao. I have felt disquieted every time I sit on the throne. Why?" Shun answered, "The chieftains of these three tribal states are living in lowly, remote regions. Why should you feel disquieted for that? There were once ten suns in the sky shining on myriads of things, let alone the benevolence of a ruler shining brighter than the sun!"

The story told by Zhuang Zi has no historical support. Apparently, he made it up. The story inside the story about the ten suns appeared in literature before Zhuang Zi's time. It runs something like this: Once there **were** ten suns in the sky. King Yao asked a skillful archer named Yi to shoot nine of them down. The fabulous story aside, the author's point is clearly shown in the closing remark that the benevolence of a ruler should shine brighter than the sun.

Nie Que asked Wang Ni,<sup>19</sup> "Do you know whether all things have a common standard?"

Wang Ni answered, "I wouldn't know it."

N. Q., "Do you know why you wouldn't know it?"

W. N., "I wouldn't know it."

N. Q., "Then will things be known?"

W. N., "I wouldn't know it. Although this is the case, let me try to explain it. How do you know what I say 'know' is not 'wouldn't know'? How do you know what I say 'wouldn't know' is not 'know'? Moreover, let me try to ask you a few questions. When people sleep on a damp place, they will get backaches or paralysis. Would the loach get it? When people climb up a tall tree, they become trembling and scared. Would the monkey feel that way? Which way of living would be considered standard for these three creatures? People eat meat, deer eat grass, centipedes like snakes, owls like rats. Which one of these four knows the standard taste? The anthropoid ape mates with female ape, the tailed deer mates with deer, and the loach mates with other fish. Mao Qiang and Xi Shi were beauties by our standards. When fish saw them, they swam to the bottom. When birds saw them, they flew high above. When the tailed deer saw them, they quickly ran away. Which one of these four knows the beauty standards of the world? From my point of view, the essence of warm-heartedness and justice, and the path of right and wrong are full of confusion and disarray. How can I know the distinction?"

Nie Que said, "If you do not care about advantages and disadvantages, then does a superior man<sup>20</sup> also not know advantages and disadvantages?"



Wang Ni answered, “A superior man is spirited. A forest fire does not make him feel the heat. Frozen rivers do not make him feel the cold. Sudden thunders that shake mountains do not hurt him. Severe storms that cause the roaring of the sea do not frighten him. Such a person supported by clouds and riding on the sun and the moon wanders beyond the four seas. Life and death make no changes on his person, let alone the distinction between advantages and disadvantages.”

The purpose of the dialogue is to settle a question: whether all things have a common standard. From the many examples cited, the answer is that there is not only no common standard, but also no standard at all. This should come as no surprise, as the Daoist disregards any importance in appearance of things. For instance, if the distinction between the quality of being beautiful and that of being ugly is removed, any standard naturally becomes meaningless. From the concluding remarks, we can visualize Wang Ni could be considered a superior man, but Nie Que was deemed too worldly to be one.

Ju Que Zi asked Chang Wu Zi, “I heard from my master, ‘Sages do not manage business, do not care about profits, do not run away from danger, do not ask for favors, and are not bigoted to Dao. What they do not say is like what they do say; what they do say is like what they do not say. So they wander beyond the mundane world.’ My master considered it to be a careless speech, but I think it is wonderful. What do you say?”

This and the following four paragraphs form part of a dialogue between two persons invented by Zhuang Zi. One of them, Ju Que Zi, claimed to have heard what Confucius said. So the two dialogists should have been contemporaries of Confucius. There is no record showing Confucius ever said anything of the kind. This is not an important issue here. But we may want to keep in mind that Zhuangian stories need not be historically accurate.

Chang Wu Zi said, “Even King Huang<sup>21</sup> would find these words a conundrum, how could Confucius understand them? But you are also rushing your expectation too much, like seeing an egg and expecting a rooster crowing the dawn, and seeing pellets

and expecting a roasted quail. Now let me say something and you listen. How about it? The sainted men accompany the sun and the moon, clasp the universe under the arm and unite with it, bother not the confusion of right and wrong, and treat equally the noble and the lowly of the world. People come and go in crowds. The sainted men live in quietude and simplicity. They unify myriads of changes through the ages into oneness, which comprises all things in their simplest forms.

“How would I know the desire of clinging to life is not a delusion? How would I know the fear of facing death is not like the bewilderment of a homeless child knowing not where to return? The beautiful royal concubine was the daughter of a border patrol at Ai. When she was first selected by the court of Jin, she wept so hard that her tears wet through her dress. As she entered the king’s chamber later and shared his bed and dined on beef and mutton, pork and chicken, she regretted that she had ever wept. How would I know that the dead would not regret their earlier desires of clinging to life?

“Those who dream of drinking wine might weep and cry after waking up. Those who dream of weeping and crying might go hunting after waking up. While dreaming, they do not realize they are dreaming. Sometimes, they dream in their dreams. They realize they had a dream after waking up. Only those with the deepest perception can tell that life is a big dream. Ordinary people find themselves perceptive of everything: from rulers to subjects. How pretentious and superficial! Both Confucius and you are dreaming. When I say you are dreaming, I am also dreaming. What I have said sounds weird. If after millenniums a great saint finds it and knows how to interpret it, this would be like a chance of the morning meeting the evening.

Zhuang Zi successfully “borrowed” the tongue of Chang Wu Zi to deliver a lengthy lecture on the Dao. He talked about how the sainted men would live and what they would do. Ordinary people like us often face hard choices in life. Apparently, what seems to be the right choice may turn out to be a regrettable one. He used the girl’s story to write a “punch line” on a Daoist principle of uncertainty, “How would I know that the dead would not regret their earlier

desires of clinging to life?” Then he used dreaming to illustrate its contrast with the real world in which people lived. I think the meaning of the following two sentences of text can be made more readily understandable with the addition of possible words in the parentheses. Thus, “Those who dream of drinking wine (happily with friends) might weep and cry after waking up (because of ongoing misfortune). Those who dream of weeping and crying (because of a sad incident) might go hunting after waking up (with the realization of merely having a nightmare). Zhuang Zi seemed to be not optimistic at all about spreading his teachings, when he concluded in the name of Chang Wu Zi, “If after millenniums a great saint finds it and knows how to interpret it, this would be like a chance of the morning meeting the evening.” Although the chance of the morning meeting the evening is zero, more than two millenniums after Zhuang Zi, we are here trying to show that he was probably wrong.

In the fourth century B.C., Zhuang Zi gave us the much-quoted aphorism, “Life is a dream,” without our knowing its origin.

“Suppose you and I are having a debate. If you win and I lose, does it mean that you are right and I am wrong? If I win and you lose, does it mean that I am right and you are wrong? Is one of us right? Is one of us wrong? Are both of us right? Are both of us wrong? Both you and I do not know. Everyone has prejudice. Whom do we ask to judge right and wrong? If we ask a person who agrees with you to judge, how can he judge since he has already agreed with you? If we ask a person who agrees with me to judge, how can he judge since he has already agreed with me? If we ask a person who disagrees with both of us to judge, how can he judge since he has already disagreed with both of us? If we ask a person who agrees with both of us to judge, how can he judge since he has already agreed with both of us? Therefore, neither you nor I or anyone else can judge right and wrong. For whom do we wait?

“A contest over right or wrong is based on contrasts. The contrasts could be made to disappear by harmonizing them with the unity of nature, causing them to spread freely through one’s lifetime. What is meant by harmonizing them with the unity of nature? The answer is: Whenever there is right, there is wrong. Whenever there is yes, there is no. If right is really right, then

right is distinguishable from wrong. There is no need for contest. If yes is really yes, then yes is distinguishable from no. There is no need for contest. When one can forget about life and death and about right and wrong, he can wander in a boundless world and reside in a boundless world.”

This concludes Chang Wu Zi’s long lecture on Daoist philosophy. The preceding two paragraphs discuss the issues pertaining to right and wrong. The first paragraph presents arguments that right and wrong cannot be judged, because (a) every one of us has prejudice, and (b) right or wrong is a subjective perception. The last paragraph proposes harmonizing with nature as a way of resolving our constant contests over right and wrong, not by sharpening, but by obscuring, the contrasts between them. If we could, in most cases we cannot, tell “right is really right, then right is distinguishable from wrong,” as black from white. “There is no need for contest.” The reason for incontestability has been given in the preceding paragraph.

### Section 7

The penumbra asked the umbra, “A while ago, you walked; now you stop. A while ago, you sat, now you stand. Why can’t you make up your mind?”

The umbra answered, “I did so because I had something to wait for. I had something to wait for something still. What I was waiting for is like a snake waiting for its underside skin or a cicada waiting for its wings. How would I know why, and how would I know why not?”

A cicada flies because its wings vibrate. Whether a snake moves because its underside skin moves is not an issue here. The point is if we don’t know why or why not, we cannot discuss right or wrong.

Once, Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly and fluttered about like a butterfly. He was contented and happy, not knowing he was Zhou! Suddenly, he woke up and found himself to be Zhou. It is not certain whether Zhou dreamed of changing into a butterfly or a butterfly dreamed of changing into Zhou. There

must have been a demarcation between Zhou and a butterfly. This is called “transformation of things.”

Zhou was Zhuang Zi’s formal given name, and Zhuang Zhou, his formal full name. We have come from dreams to shadows and back to dreams again. He suggested that dreaming could be a setting that makes interchanging of things possible. In the real world, the demarcation among things keeps them from crossing over one another. In a state of dreaming, such demarcation is temporarily removed and things of diverse kinds can undergo transformation, a phenomenon he called *wu hua*, or transformation of things. We shall read more about this term later.

## Notes

1. True power is considered the supreme guiding force residing within each of us. In the pre-Qin period, the concept of a universal supreme being had not been well developed in China. Certainly, Zhuang Zi had mentioned nothing of it in his writings. In a following paragraph, he hinted that the true power was perishable with the shell of a person. Moreover, one person's true power might not be identical with that of another person. Hence, this term should not be translated into "God."
2. The nine openings are two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, and one opening each for urinary and intestinal tract. The six organs are heart, lung, liver, spleen, and two kidneys.
3. True authority has the same meaning as true power (see above).
4. Hui Zi proposed the argument of going to Yue today and arriving there yesterday (see details in Chapter 33 later). Zhuang Zi did not accept Hui Zi's argument and he used it here to mean "impossible."
5. King Yü, also known as Yü the Great, the founder of the Xia dynasty (2205–1767 B.C.).
6. Throughout his writings, Zhuang Zi used Dao with the same inscrutable implications, as did Lao Zi. That is: "The Dao that can be told in words is not the everlasting Dao." Chen Guying (2-a) summarizes Dao to mean the substance that formed the world, the force that created the universe, the law that prescribes the motions of all things, and the standard that governs all human activities.
7. This term was first introduced in the last paragraph of Chapter 1:1. It is used here to mean those who live by the law of nature. Although the Chinese term *sheng ren* is the same for the Daoist sainted man and for the Confucianist sage, I have translated them differently for the sake of distinction, because they have completely uncompromising implications.
8. In former editions, the text of several sentences in this paragraph was wrongly transposed in such a way that their meanings were largely incomprehensible. Fortunately, their correct sequence remains intact in Chapter 27:1. Hence, the wrong transposition has been duly corrected.
9. A historical beauty, Xishi lived *ca.* 470 B.C. in the State of Yue.
10. Zhao Wen and the following Shi Kuang were ancient accomplished musicians.

11. *Qin* is an ancient 5- or 7-stringed musical instrument made of one piece of wood with a slightly convex surface, about five feet long and ten inches wide. It is placed horizontally on a bench in front of the player, who plucks the strings with fingers of both hands.
12. Probably *Sterculia platanifolia*, the *wu* is a beautiful tree with a straight, green trunk.
13. See note 6 for Peng Zu, and note 8 for Mount Tai in Chapter 1.
14. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: chapters 1 and 40.
15. Cf. *Annotations to the Dao De Zhen Jing* by Wang Bi (34).
16. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 42.
17. The universe: the four sides, the above and below.
18. The term, spring and autumn, is used synonymously with “history.”
19. Both Nie Que and Wang Ni are fictitious personal names. The literal meaning of *nie que* is imperfection in Dao; that of *wang ni* is dawning of Dao. Zhuang Zi used these two names again in Chapter 12.
20. A Daoist proper term, first used in Chapter 1:1.
21. I have corrected certain longstanding translated terms that are specious and misleading. Before 221 B.C., China was a kingdom, not an empire. There could not have been emperors in a kingdom. Terms, such as “Yellow Emperor,” “Emperor Yao,” *etc.*, translated by famous translators nonetheless should not continue to be used. In the case of replacing “Yellow Emperor,” for instance, translation into “King Huang” is acceptable. It is never too late to correct errors.

## 3

# Nurturing the Spirit

Do things nature's way and succeed greatly without efforts. Follow the principles of Dao and proceed without deviation.

### Section 1

Life has its limits and knowledge has no limits. Setting what has limits to pursue what has no limits is wearisome. Still, if one insists on pursuing, he will end up with plenty of weariness. A person doing what is commonly considered good deeds may not expect to be recognized. A person doing what is commonly considered bad deeds may not expect to be punished. Constantly guided by what comes naturally, one can protect his body, perfect his personality, nurture his new [spirit], and live out his years.

The Daoist considers life a precious commodity and the spirit that lives with it even more precious. Hence, everything should be done to protect and enrich it. If life is the physical presence of a person, then spirit is the unseen entity. In the preceding chapter, Zhuang Zi described the conditions that the two could be separated at least transcendently, such as “I lose Me,” in Chapter 2:1, and “sitting while running” in the following Chapter 4:1. But Zhuang Zi also wrote: “While its shell is undergoing degradation, its spirit disappears, too.” (See Chapter 2:2). Apparently, this was his philosophical interpretation, not a religious teaching developed long after his death.

The following two sentences of text show that Zhuang Zi considers vernacular standards to be irrelevant and what is important is the spirit within. Knowing what is proper or improper, or what is right or wrong does not



necessarily change the way people do things, but it merely burdens the spiritual wellbeing with weariness.

The last sentence is a prescription for living a longer and better life. The original text, probably having a typographical error, gives us a problem, though. As listed in the original text, the four objectives are to: protect body (*bao shen*), perfect personality (*quan sheng*), support parents (*yang qing*), and live out years (*jin nian*). For centuries, scholars have felt an error in “support parents,” because supporting parents is not a Daoist idea and does not appear in the writings of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, except in this lone sentence of text here. This translator agrees that there was an error in *yang qing* and suggests that the correct term be *yang xin*<sup>1</sup> meaning “nurture new (spirit).” This sounds more like Zhuangian thinking. It also reflects the thought in the opening sentence of this paragraph of text and is so translated here. Moreover, there has been a precedence of changing *qing* to *xin*. In the opening sentence of the *Great Learning*, Cheng Yi (1033–1107) changed *qing* to *xin*, and Zhu Xi (1130–1200) supported the change.

## Section 2

A butcher demonstrated dissecting an ox in the presence of Prince Wen Hui. With what his hands were touching, his shoulders were leaning, his feet were treading, his bent knees were pressing, and with an artful use of his knife, he made the sounds of dislocating joints and separating bones from muscles form rhythms and a succession of musical tones corresponding to the Sang Lin and Jing Shou.<sup>2</sup>

Prince Wen Hui said, “Ah! Excellent! How could your technique reach such perfection?”

The butcher laid down his knife and answered, “What I have wished is Dao, far more superior to technique. When I first dissected oxen, what I saw was nothing less than the whole ox. After three years, I no longer saw the whole ox. And now, I let my intuition, not my eyesight, lead the way, such that functions of the organs are accessories to initiatives of the mind. I proceed on what comes naturally, attack the hollow cavities between tendons and bones, and sink knife into joints, taking advantage of their natural structures, without interfering with the big and small blood vessels around small muscles

and bones, let alone bigger bones. A good butcher changes his knife every year; he uses it to cut muscles. An ordinary butcher changes his knife every month; he uses it to cut bones. I have used the same knife for nineteen years to dissect several thousand oxen. It looks like new from the sharpening stone. Since the bone joints have empty space in between and the knife blade has no thickness, inserting what has no thickness into where it is hollow leaves plenty of room for maneuvering. Therefore, after nineteen years it still looks like new from the sharpening stone. Even so, every time I come to complex formations, I find it to be a tough job and call for extreme caution. I look at it with great attention and proceed with deliberate slowness. With a slight movement of the knife, the dissection is over, as swiftly as throwing mud on the ground. The ox doesn't even know it is dead!"

The butcher picked up his knife and stood still. He looked around and felt satisfied. He wiped the knife clean and put it away.

Prince Wen Hui said, "Excellent! I heard what the butcher said and learned the way to nurture the spirit."

Prince Wen Hui is probably a fictitious person. No historical records will fit into the description. There was not and has never been such a butcher as described in the story, which is purely Zhuangian. The essence of the story is: one could master the technique of doing a certain thing thoroughly, if he could do it naturally. The butcher summarized it in one key sentence in the whole story: "What I have wished is Dao, far more superior to technique." The author told us that the butcher was more than a superb technician and he had learned the Dao of doing it. He did not depend on his senses of touch and sight, which are organic in origin, but mostly on his mental apprehension of the undertaking. "The way to nurture the spirit" is by way of Dao. "The ox doesn't even know it is dead!" This is such a powerful and yet humorous sentence that only Zhuang Zi could have written it.

### Section 3

Gongwen Xuan met an officer and was surprised to see that he had only one foot. He remarked, "Who is he? How did he get

only one foot? Was he born this way or was he made to be this way?” Then he soliloquized, “He was born this way; he was not made to be this way. He was born with one foot, for nature gives us our appearance. Hence, I know the deformity came with birth and was not man-made.

Gongwen Xuan was from the State of Song, the same as Zhuang Zi. Gongwen was his surname, Xuan his given name. The subject matter of this paragraph is about deformity. In ancient times there was a corporal punishment by cutting off one foot from a criminal. This little background information about the criminal codes helps us understand the deliberation between natural and man-made deformities. Zhuang Zi had a firm view that we should treat deformed people equally. We will find a fuller discussion of his attitude toward deformity in Chapter 5.

Wild waterfowls would rather walk ten steps to pick up a grain of food and one hundred steps to get a drink of water than live in a cage. Although life is easy [in a cage], there is no freedom.

Comfortable living is nothing if it lacks freedom.

When Lao Dan died, Qin Yi went to mourn for his friend. He wailed three times and left.

His pupil asked, “Was he not master’s friend?”

“Yes.”

“Then is this the proper way to mourn?”

Answered Qin Yi, “Yes. Formerly I considered him to be a superior man. Now I do not. When I went in to mourn, I saw an old man weep for his death as if he were weeping for his son’s, and I also saw a young man weep for his death as if he were weeping for his mother’s. They must have a certain emotional attachment to him that makes condoling or weeping superfluous. This is really fleeing from nature, betraying the true feeling, and forgetting what we have received from nature. The ancients called this a punishment for escaping from nature. When it was the right time for the master to come, he came. When it was the right time for the master to leave, he left. While living in

this world, we enjoy peace with time and find harmony with changes. We allow neither sorrow nor happiness to affect us. The ancients called this the liberation from hanging upside down.”

The fat is consumed to make fire, but the torch passes on forever.

Lao Dan is commonly written in Chinese literature respectfully as Lao Zi. In Zhuang Zi's writings, he simply referred to him by name without formality. Many scholars have considered Qin Yi, described as a friend of Lao Zi in the story, was most likely not a real person. This translator thinks he was, for the reason given as follows. If Qin Yi was a fictitious figure, he became a spokesman for Zhuang Zi. If so, what Qin Yi had spoken about Lao Zi, “Formerly, I considered him to be a superior man. Now I do not,” would also be Zhuang Zi's comment about Lao Zi. This seems to be most unlikely. The dilemma could be resolved if we assumed Qin Yi was a real person and the story was a real story. Hence, Zhuang Zi was merely quoting what another person had said about Lao Zi. It had nothing to do with his own impression.

From this short paragraph, we learn certain aspects of Daoist philosophy. Life and death are not two separate worlds. We come naturally and we leave naturally. It is not an occasion to be overjoyed when we come; it is not an occasion to be over saddened when we leave. While we are here, we do things naturally. This is what is meant by “keeping peace with time and finding harmony with changes.” The sentence, “We allow neither sorrow nor happiness to affect us,” might give us an impression that the Daoists are insensitive to human feelings and passive to human progress. This is not true. They have very progressive views of the future. Read the last sentence of text again; it means: let yourself be consumed to light the world!

The Daoist talks a great deal about nature. There is “a punishment for escaping from nature,” there is “the liberation from hanging upside down,” depending on how we choose to live with nature. What is “natural” to the Daoist is close to what is “optimal” to the Confucianist. The latter is derived from the Doctrine of the Mean.

### Notes

1. These two characters *qing* (親) and *xin* (新) are close in pronunciation and also in script, for the left half of these two characters is identical.
2. Both are titles of ancient musical pieces. Sang Lin was the music of Shang (1766 B.C.); Jing Shuo the music of Yao (higher antiquity).

## 4

# The Mundane World

War and tyranny make the world unfit for living. Innocent idealists are eager to try out their convictions to improve the conditions for the people with little meaningful results.

### Section 1

Yan Hui came to see Zhongni<sup>1</sup> to bid farewell.

“Where do you go?” Zhongni asked.

“To [the State of] Wei.”

“What for?”

“I have heard that the ruler of Wei is in his prime years and makes arbitrary decisions. He handles state affairs with frivolity, and admits no mistakes. He considers the death of his people lightly, and lets bodies pile up like dried woods on lowlands. People do not know where to turn. I have heard what Master said: ‘You leave behind a well-governed state and you go to an ill-governed state, because there are more sick people at the gate of a healer.’ I wish to follow what I have heard and put it into action. Perhaps, the state may then be saved.”

Yan Hui was a favorite pupil of Confucius. But the story as told here is strictly Zhuangian. He wanted each of them to say exactly what he wanted. Who the ruler of Wei was is not important, because the story is not historical. However, it does describe a general situation prevailing at the time of Confucius (*ca.* sixth century B.C.). A well-governed state did not need a reformer, an

ill-governed state did. Unfortunately, at that time most states were ill-governed. Borrowing these two famous personalities as his mouthpiece, Zhuang Zi wrote a long story about his perceptions of the situation from philosophical, political, ethical, and psychological points of view. It would be interesting to see how it develops.

In this book, Zhuang Zi told stories about the heads of two Wei States. The two *wei* characters are different in Chinese, but transliteration makes them the same. Perhaps, it makes little difference in reading the stories, but scholarship demands clarification. (1) The Wei State that was formerly a part of the Jin State and flourished through the Spring–Autumn period and till the end of the Warring States period is mentioned in this book mostly in stories associated with Confucius or a Duke Ling. (2) The Wei State that came into being later and flourished from the beginning to the end of the Warring States period is mentioned in this book mostly in connection with stories about Hui Zi or Zhuang Zi. Hence, for instance, the story we are reading now is related to the Wei State in (1) above and the story we have read in Chapter 1:3 is related to the Wei State in (2).

Zhongni said, “Ah! I am afraid if you go, you may be killed. Dao does not want to get complicated; once complicated it becomes superfluous; once superfluous it becomes disturbed; once disturbed it becomes distressed; once distressed it cannot save you. The superior men<sup>2</sup> of ancient times made themselves safe before making others safe. While the safety of one’s life is uncertain, how could he have time to expose the conduct of a ruthless ruler? Moreover, do you know how virtue is being violated and how tactfulness is gaining dominance? Virtue is violated because of fame. Tactfulness gains dominance because of contest. Fame is the cause for subversion; tactfulness is the tool for competition. Both are deadly weapons and should not be deployed.”

Confucius’ advice to his pupil is essentially like this: In a turbulent time when virtue is being ignored and tactfulness promoted, only crafty people can do well in making themselves heard. You are not one of them and you may risk your life if you try.

“Moreover, although virtue is generous and sincerity truthful, people may not appreciate them. You will not compete for fame and reputation with people, but people may not understand you. If you insist on lecturing a code of conduct with warm-heartedness and justice before the ruthless ruler, you will be viewed as a man showing off your own virtue by picking on the shortcomings of the other. You will be called an offender. An offender will in turn be offended. You will eventually be harmed. If the ruthless ruler would enjoy the company of gentlemen and distance himself from worthless characters, why would you have to distinguish yourself this way? Unless you say nothing to displease him, he will wait quietly for an opportunity to attack you. Your eyes will be confused with dizziness, your expression bashful, your words self-defeating, your countenance compromising, and your mind agreeable to his ideas. Like trying to put out fire with fire and to avert flood with water, this is called making a bad situation into a worse one. You obey his commands from the beginning and there is no end to it. If he does not listen to your loyal advices, you will be dead in front of the ruthless ruler.”

Confucius elaborated his reasoning against his pupil's good intention of meeting the ruler. Confucius cautioned that the ruler was a sharp debater and Yan Hui was no match for his acumen. Yan Hui could either end up as one of his servile sycophants or be killed. It was a losing proposition either way. Confucius continued.

“In times past, King Jie<sup>3</sup> executed Guan Longfeng and King Zhou<sup>4</sup> executed Prince Bi Gan. These men cultivated themselves to love and protect people and to contravene their kings from lower positions. They were executed because of their self-cultivation of characters. They wanted to leave good names in history. Further, King Yao subdued Cong, Zhi, and Xu Ao, and King Yü<sup>5</sup> subdued You Fu, turning these regions into wastelands and executing their chieftains, because these kings were aggressive and avaricious. Haven't you ever heard of them? Fame and



wealth are what the sages cannot overcome, let alone you. Even so, you must have your plans. Let me hear from you!”

Confucius brought in a few historical records to illustrate his point of view. He tried to impress on Yan Hui that even a loyal minister like Guan Long-feng and Prince Bi Gan met their deaths, because “they wanted to leave good names in history.” King Yao or simply Yao was a legendary king of high antiquity. Cong, Zhi, and Xu Ao were most likely the names of the three tribes he conquered. King Yü conquered You Hu. Both Kings Yao and Yü could not overcome avarice and turned lands into ruins and innocent people into corpses. What for? Fame and Wealth!

The reader should be aware of the fact that Kings Yao and Yü were sage kings of the Confucianist. Here Zhuang Zi put his words into Confucius’ mouth, thereby making Confucius talk like a Daoist propagandist. The story does not end here. Let us read on.

Yan Hui said, “Being dignified and humble, I prepare to exert myself with persistence. Is it good enough?”

“Oh, no! The masculinity of the arrogant ruler is overflowing and his temperaments are unpredictable. People dare not disobey him. He suppresses advice of others to pride himself on being superior. Even minor improvements are hard to enter his head, let alone major ones. He will remain intransigent and will not be moved to change. His face may look agreeable, but his mind is stubborn. How can your way be effective?”

“Then I will be upright inside and crooked outside, and I will quote sayings of the ancients to support my presentation. What is upright inside is to be with nature. To be with nature is to recognize that kings as well as I came from nature. Then I need not be concerned whether people consider what I say is correct or incorrect. If so, people would say that I have the heart of a child. This is the so-called to be with nature. What is crooked outside is to be with people. Holding a tablet, kneeling and making obeisance, and bowing are what is required of a subject [before a king]. Everyone does it. How dare I not do it! Doing what people do is reasonable. This is the so-called to be with people. To quote sayings of the ancients is to be with

the ancients. Although they are instructive, they are factual. They have been there for a long time; I do not make them up. For these reasons, they may be cutting, but do not make me guilty. This is the so-called to be with the ancients. If so, will it be practicable?”

Zhongni said, “Oh, no! There are too many simplistic ways, but none effective. You won’t be punished, but not much else. How could he be reformed? You are overly prejudiced with your favorite approaches.”

Yan Hui was facing a formidable task of trying to reform an arrogant ruler having a sharp tongue and quick wit. One misstep could easily cost him his life. He finally proposed a safe approach. Confucius considered his conjecture superficial and ineffective. What Zhuang Zi tried to show us is that aggressive, manipulative leaders engineered tumults in the land. They were immune to persuasion by traditional, rational means. We shall now see what Zhuang Zi in the person of Confucius prescribed as a resolution for the difficult situation.

Yan Hui replied, “I am at my wits’ end. May I ask for your instruction?”

Zhongni said, “Fasting. I will tell you. If you do it wholeheartedly, it will not be easy. If it is easy, it will not be natural.”

Yan Hui replied, “Hui’s family is poor. For several months, there has been no wine or meat. Can this be called fasting?”

“This is sacrificial fasting, not fasting of the heart.”<sup>6</sup>

Yan Hui asked, “May I ask what fasting of the heart is?”

Zhongni said, “Solidify your will. Do not listen with your ears; listen with your heart. Do not listen with your heart; listen with your *qi*.<sup>7</sup> Listen not with the ears; feel not with the heart. The ears do not do beyond hearing and the heart does not do beyond affecting. That emptiness which is *qi* receives things. Once you arrive at the state of emptiness,<sup>8</sup> Dao will be with you. This state of emptiness is [the ultimate attainment from] fasting of the heart.”

Yan Hui said, “Before Hui learned of your instruction, there was Hui. After Hui learned of your instruction, there has been no Hui. Can this be called the state of emptiness?”

The Master said, “Exactly. Let me tell you. If you can wander inside the fences and are not attracted to fame, you speak out when your ideas are welcome and you keep quiet when your ideas are not welcome. Do not knock at the door of the powerful or walk on the crooked path. Find peace in your heart. Accept what comes naturally and do not press on with strenuous efforts. You will come close [to Dao].

“It is easy not to walk and it is hard to walk without leaving footprints behind. It is easy to be pretentious of whatever comes from desires and it is hard to be pretentious of whatever comes naturally. We have heard that things with wings can fly and we have not heard that things without wings can fly. We have heard that people use intelligence to search for knowledge and we have not heard that people use no intelligence to search for knowledge. Look up at the emptiness where it shines in white and where goodness rests. If you still feel restless, you will have what is called sitting while running.<sup>9</sup> If you can follow the lead of your ears and eyes from within and shut off temptations from without, even *gui shen*<sup>10</sup> will trust you, let alone people. This is the way all things have been reformed. Kings Yü and Shun used it like a pivot in ruling and Fu Xi and Ji Jü<sup>11</sup> used it as the standard for living. How much can ordinary people do?”

In this concluding dialogue with his pupil, Confucius talked like a Daoist, lecturing on the importance of purifying one’s spirit through fasting of the heart. It would be a very time-consuming practice to attain the state of *qi*, if it is ever attainable. We recall the state of “I lose Me” mentioned earlier (in Chapter 2:1), which is comparable to the state of emptiness. But from a practical point of view, would a person who had attained the state of emptiness be concerned with reforming an arrogant ruler? The Zhuangian prescription seems to have fallen short of practicality.

## Section 2

A certain Duke of Ye named Zigao<sup>12</sup> was to become an envoy to the State of Qi and said to Zhongni, “The king has appointed Zhuliang for an important mission. Qi is known to have treated

envoys with respect superficially, but rudeness in fact. It would be difficult to move a man with this kind of attitude, let alone the head of a state. I am scared. My master, you have told Zhu-liang, 'A mission, big or small, can rarely be successful if it does not conform to the principle of Dao. If the mission is unsuccessful, there will be reprimands. If the mission is successful, there will be yin-yang conflicts. If there will be no distress with either success or failure, only those with virtues can do it.' I eat crude, not delicate food. Simple cooking will not make the house need fresh air. When I received the order in the morning, I drank ice water in the evening. There is heat inside of me. I have not analyzed the matter further and I have gotten the yin-yang conflict. If the mission fails, I will be reprimanded. These two misfortunes, reprimands and conflicts, are what a king's subject cannot endure. My master, what would you advise me?"

The name Duke of Ye appeared a few times in *The Analects*, under Shu Er and Zi Lu. Apparently, he had come to seek advice from Confucius, but not for the appointment described here. He was a magistrate of the Ye district, but he arrogated to himself the title of duke. His formal personal name was Shen Zhuliang. In talking to Confucius, he followed the protocol of calling himself Zhuliang instead of I as a matter of courtesy. This dialogue describes the dilemma of a ranking officer facing a new assignment. The yin-yang conflict may be explained by assuming that these two forms of energy within us are excited by the feeling of success and keep our spirit off balance.

Zhongni answered, "There are two fundamental precepts to be observed. One is destiny and the other justice. A son loves his parents; this is destiny because it need not be explained by reasoning. A subject serves his king; this is justice because there will be a king wherever he goes and there is no escape in this world. These are known as the fundamental precepts. Therefore, he who serves his parents finds comfort wherever he may be; this is the acme of filial piety. He who serves his king finds comfort in doing whatever he is asked; this is the acme of loyalty. He who serves his own ideal will not be affected by joy or sorrow and finds comfort in doing what he must do as destiny; this is

the acme of virtue. A subject of a king sometimes does what is the only thing possible. Do the best you can and forget about the consequence. How can you have time to worry about life and death? My master, you may proceed.”

Confucius deliberated on destiny, justice, filial piety, loyalty, and virtue and concluded that Zigao had no better choice **than** to accept his king’s appointment. In this paragraph at least, Zhuang Zi stayed pretty close to the spirit of these topics as attributed to Confucius in *The Analects*. For instance, filial piety<sup>13</sup> includes being not contradictory to common sense, maintaining a gentle manner, and caring with respect. If caring for parents without respect, then what is the difference from caring for dogs and horses?

“Let Qiu<sup>14</sup> tell you what I have heard. When two states are neighboring, their relations can be maintained with mutual trust. When two states are farther away, their relations will be maintained with words of sincerity. Words must be communicated through the two envoys. To convey the joy and anger of the two heads of state in words is the most difficult task in the world. Fulsome praise will be used to convey the joy. It can become unrealistic, which in turn becomes untruthful. Once it becomes untruthful, calamity will fall on the speaker. Hence, there is an old saying, ‘Transmitting the real situation, not the fulsome praise, the speaker will mostly be safe.’ Furthermore, those who wrestle with skills start in fairness, often follow with crafty tricks, and end with treacherous schemes. Those who drink wine with good manners begin with politeness, often follow with wild talk and end with crazy entertainments. Doing business is the same. It begins with sincerity and ends with treachery. The beginning is simple, the end complicated.”

Zhuliang, the appointee, was a minister in the State of Chu. He was going to be an envoy to the State of Qi. At this time in history, Chu was mainly in the present Hubei Province in central China and Qi was in the present Shandong Province, the eastern seaboard. They were not neighboring states. This was the geographical basis of Confucius’ remarks about the risky business of

representing one's own king in the court of another king. Whether there was such an appointment is inconsequential. Zhuang Zi simply wanted to describe certain facets of political reality at that time.

“Spoken words are like wind and waves. Transmitting words may bring success or failure. Wind and waves are easy to arouse disturbances. Success or failure is easy to cause crisis. Anger arises from no other reasons than artful words and plausible arguments. A pent-up beast cries out loud with ferocity and tries to attack people. Whenever a person uses excessive manipulations, people will take vengeance against him, and he may not know the reason for it. If he is ignorant, how can he know where it will lead? There is an old saying, ‘Don’t be zealous about an official order; don’t insist on success. Overdoing makes overflowing.’ Being zealous about an order and insisting on success will jeopardize your work. Fulfilling a mission takes time. Once you make a wrong decision, it is hard to correct. Be careful! Furthermore, if you could harmonize with nature, wander about with satisfaction, and find it impossible not to nourish the empty-heartedness, this would be the best of all. Why do you have to requite the king’s appointment? Why don’t you just truthfully carry out the king’s order and do your best for him? This is a difficult task.”

Zhuang Zi in the person of Confucius concluded the lengthy dialogue with the last few sentences of advice to the envoy. It is harder to be truthful and sincere than to be scheming and treacherous. He stressed the importance of nurturing the empty-heartedness, which is close to the state of emptiness elaborated in the preceding section of this chapter and the principle of emptiness in Dao (in Chapter 3:1). The many stories told in this chapter describe the conflicts between the powerful and the common. This is the characteristic of the “mundane world” in this period of history.

The next to the last sentence in the preceding paragraph of text has tripped some experienced translators like James Legge (19), who rendered the sentence to mean “be prepared to sacrifice your life for the king.” The key word is the character *ming* in this sentence. Does it mean “command” or “life”?

### Section 3

Yan He was soon to become tutor to the heir-apparent of the Duke Ling of Wei and said to Jü Beiyü, “Here is a person whose aptitude is low. If he is allowed to do as he pleases, his country will suffer. If he is disciplined, my life is endangered. His intelligence is enough to pick on the mistakes of others, but he does not know his own mistakes. In situations like these, what shall I do?”

Yan He was a worthy man of the State of Lu. Jü Beiyü was a minister of the State of Wei, where this story was related. Duke Ling of Wei was a contemporary of Confucius. Zhuang Zi wrote more than one story about the duke. At that time, it was not uncommon for the head of one state to invite well-known persons of another state to serve in his court.

Jü Beiyü replied, “How excellent your question is! Be alert and cautious. Keep your composure firm. You may want to be warm on the outside and instructive on the inside. Even so, these two approaches may still bring harm. Warmness should not be excessive and instruction should not be too obvious. Excessive warmness results in failure and destruction; obvious instruction arouses his suspicion that you are after fame and honor, which in turn leads to disaster. If he acts like a child, you act like a child, too, for the time being. If he acts without regard to protocol, you act without regard to protocol, too, for the time being. If he acts without restraints, you act without restraints, too, for the time being. Gradually, you will lead him to be a man without foibles.

“Haven’t you heard of the praying mantis? In great rage, it would try to use its feelers to stop a chariot. Knowing not its puny strength, it over-evaluates its ability. Be alert and cautious. If you over-estimate your strength and affront the young prince, you will face immediate danger.

“Haven’t you heard of the tiger caretaker? He dares not feed the tiger with live animals, for fearing that when it kills them, the killing arouses its savage instinct. He dares not feed the tiger with a whole animal, for fearing that when it tears the carcass

apart, the tearing arouses its savage instinct. He knows when the tiger is hungry or full and when it is happy or angry. The tiger and men belong to different species. It appeases the caretaker, because it senses his consideration. It attacks other men, because they do things contrary to its nature.

“A man who loved his horse used a bamboo basket to collect its dung and a shell utensil to collect its urine. Accidentally, he saw a horsefly on the horse and used his hand to swat the fly. The suddenness of his motion frightened the horse to bite off the bit and damage the bridle. Loving intention produced unexpected results. How can one not be cautious!”

The dilemma of Yan He is summarized in the opening paragraph of this section, “If he is allowed to do as he pleases, his country will suffer. If he is disciplined, my life is endangered.” His friend Jü Beiü counseled him to proceed with extreme caution and suggested probable ways to achieve his goal of educating his pupil without jeopardizing his own wellbeing. Whether we agree with his friend’s didactics based on psychoanalysis is probably unimportant. What we can see is the predicament of a learned man willing to make the utmost contributions and at the same time being handicapped by the very system he wanted to reform.

Zhuang Zi’s story about the praying mantis has become another aphorism on teasing and warning a man who would ignore or miscalculate his feeble ability to oppose a huge undertaking.

#### **Section 4**

A master carpenter named Shi went to the State of Qi, arrived at Qu Yuan, and saw an old, worshipped,<sup>15</sup> chestnut-leaved oak. Its size could give shade to several thousand heads of cattle; its girth measured one hundred feet; its height reached the top of a hill; it branched out some seventy feet up from trunk, and it had more than ten branches suitable for making boats. People came to see it like going to the market. The master carpenter did not bother to look at it and kept on going. His apprentices took a close look at it and then hurried up to master Shi and said, “Since we



picked up tools and followed you, our master, we have not seen such beautiful material. And yet, master, you didn't even look, just kept on going. Why?"

Then came the answer, "Well, let me say a few words and no more. That wood is useless. Used for boats, it will sink. Used for coffins, it will soon get rotten. Used for tools, it will quickly disintegrate. Used for doors, it will give off stains. Used for pillars, it will be eaten by termites. It is a wood of poor quality, not useful for anything. That is why it gets to be so old."

Master Shi went home. That night he dreamed of the worshipped oak saying to him, "What do you want to use for comparing to me? Do you want to compare me to a quality wood? Look at those tangerine, pear, orange, pomelo and other fruit trees. When the fruits ripen, branches are ripped away. Big ones are cut and small ones are torn. Because of their abilities to produce things useful, they are not allowed to live out their natural lives and meet untimely deaths. This is true of all things. I have searched ways to become useless for a long time, and once I was almost put to death. Now I have achieved uselessness and it becomes great usefulness to me. If I were useful to others, how could I have grown so big? Further, both you and I are things. Why should one thing be critical of another thing? How could a dying, useless man understand a useless wood?"

Carpenter Shi woke and told the dream to his apprentices. One said, "Since it meant to be useless, why would it bother to be worshipped?"

The carpenter replied, "Quiet, say nothing. The oak tree merely uses worshipping as an excuse, so that people who understand its intention will not be critical of it. If not because of worshipping, it would certainly have been cut down. Granted the method it uses to protect itself being different from others, if you only look at it superficially, you are way off the mark."

Here Zhuang Zi introduced the idea of usefulness in uselessness. Uselessness is relative, because it is subjective. Hence, nothing is truly useless. The tree in the story can give shade to one thousand heads of cattle; it is useful in some way. When its sheer age causes people to worship its spirituality, it attains a

certain status of usefulness. In other words, an object can be useful or useless depending on how we view it. "If not because of worshipping, it would certainly have been cut down," is really a one-sided statement. The truth is: "It is a wood of poor quality, not useful for anything. That is why it gets to be so old." Later, old age leads to spirituality and finally to being worshipped.

Moreover, Zhuang Zi used metaphors often. We need not be too serious about the authenticity of his stories. There might not have been a tree that fit all the properties he assigned to it. This is unimportant. What is important is that we try to learn lessons from his stories, such as the usefulness of being useless in this one.

### Section 5

Nanbei Ziqi was taking a leisure trip to Shangqiu and saw a big tree. It was so unusual that it could give shade to one thousand chariots. Ziqi said, "What kind of tree is this? Must it have peculiarities?" He looked up at its small branches and they were curled and twisted and were not suitable for beams. He looked down at its huge roots and they were split at the core and were not suitable for coffins. Licking its leaves made the mouth burn; smelling it caused drowsiness for three days.

Ziqi sighed. "This is truly a useless tree and this is why it is let to grow so big. Ah! This is also the way the spirited men show their uselessness."

This section continues the theme developed in the preceding section. Nanbei Ziqi is considered to be the same fictitious Daoist Nanguo Ziqi mentioned in Chapter 2:1. Nanbei literally means the elder of the south side (of the city). For a description of the spirited man, see Chapter 1:1.

In Jingshi of the State of Song, the catalpa, juniper, and mulberry flourished. When their trunks grew to a size that could be grasped with one or two hands, they were cut as pegs for tying monkeys. When they were three to four spans, they were cut for building houses of the famous. When they were seven to eight spans, they were cut for making coffins for the nobles and for

wealthy merchants. Therefore, these trees never had a chance of living through their life span, but were cut down by axes before maturity. This is the calamity of usefulness. Moreover, in sacrifices to the spirits of the river for blessings, oxen with a white forehead, pigs with a snout turning upwards, and humans with hemorrhoids would not be acceptable. They are known to the wizards as misfortunes. However, they are considered by the spirited men as great fortunes.

This last paragraph of text tells more stories about how usefulness leads to calamity and uselessness guarantees safety in life. The basic message seems didactic: There is no absolute standard; everything is relative.

### Section 6

A man named Zhili Su had his face hidden below his navel, his shoulders higher than his head, his hair lock pointing to the sky, his five organs above his head, and his thigh bones even with his ribs. He made a meager living by sewing and washing clothes for people. He earned enough to support a family of ten by winnowing rice to sift the chaff. When the government enlisted soldiers, Zhili bared his arms and jokingly challenged them. When the government enlisted laborers, Zhili was excused for reasons of deformity. When the government gave aids to the sick and poor, Zhili received three zhong<sup>16</sup> of rice and ten bundles of firewood. Behold, he who is physically deformed can still manage to make his living and live out his life, let alone the one who is spiritually deformed!

Zhili was a fictitious surname, literally meaning severely deformed. This person had the misfortune of having the upper part of his body bent more than 90 degrees down. Ancient men wore long hair bound into a round ball at the back of head. This man's head bent down so much that his hair lock now faced the sky. The five internal organs were above his head level, as his neck bent downward farther than his trunk. The fact that he received subsidies from the government indicates there existed a subsistence program in this

300 B.C. period. This may be of interest to those who study social security in ancient society.

Zhuang Zi usually reserved his topic sentence to the last. A deformed person like a useless tree did not lose his usefulness. He made a clear distinction between physical and spiritual (moral) deformities, a topic he elaborated fully in the following chapter.

### Section 7

Confucius journeyed to the State of Chu. While walking by the house Confucius stayed in, a native recluse named Jieyü sang:

“Oh, the phoenix! Oh, the phoenix! Why is virtue so debilitated!

The future may not be expected; the past may not be rectified.

When the Way prevails, the sages accomplish their work;

When the Way is obstructed, the sages preserve their lives.

At the present time, people only pray to avoid persecution.

Fortune is lighter than a feather, but people know not how to take it;

Misfortune is heavier than the earth, but people know not how to evade it.

That’s all! That’s all! Dazzle your virtue before others.

Beware! Beware! Watch out where you are tramping.

Oh, thorns! Oh, thorns! Don’t hinder my path.

Turn around! Turn around! Don’t hurt my feet.”

The beginning of the story is told in *The Analects* under Wei Zi. So it is true that Jieyü met Confucius. The rest of the story seems to be Zhuang Zi’s invention. The speaker or singer in the story was a man named Lu Jieyü. As a recluse, he pretended to be lunatic, unrestrained, and eccentric to escape social responsibilities. In the last four lines, he directed at Confucius and appeared to tease and caution him of what he had been doing.

Trees in the mountain are cut because of self-inflicting usefulness. Fat burns [to give light and warmth], but consumes itself. The cassia tree is cut because it can be used as medicine. The

varnish tree is slit because its sap is useful. People know how to use the useful, but do not know how to use the useless.

It would be logical to conclude the theme of this section with this short paragraph. However, we may be at a loss as how the preceding paragraph on Jieyü's story could have any direct bearing on the theme. One possible interpretation remains. Jieyü's advice and warning to Confucius could be: If Confucius considered himself *useful* in preaching his doctrines, he could be "consumed" like the burning fat.

## Notes

1. Traditionally, a gentleman in China has a formal name and one or more courtesy names. A formal name consists of family name and given name. The given name in a formal name may be one or two characters. A courtesy name is also a given name and always a two-character name (different from those in formal name). There is no middle name in a Chinese personal name. As the term suggests, the formal name is used on formal occasions or in presenting oneself to his elders or to his equals with courtesy. By the same token, the courtesy name of the addressee is used by a caller as a show of courtesy or respect to the addressee. “Confucius” is a Latinized word for Master Kong, not a personal name really. His formal name is Kong (family) Qiu (given) and his courtesy name is Zhongni (given). Since this was a dialogue between Confucius and his pupil, Zhuang Zi followed the tradition in using Zhongni for Confucius.
2. For a description of this term, see Chapter 1:1.
3. The last tyrant king of the Xia dynasty ( 2205–1767 B.C.). Guan Longfeng was his able minister.
4. The last, tyrant king of the Yin dynasty ( 1765–1122 B.C.). Prince Bi Gan was his upright uncle.
5. Zhuang Zi was not consistent about King Yü; he called him the Holy Yü in Chapter 2:3.
6. Fasting of the heart, *xin zhai*, is a process of purifying the heart (spirit or mind).
7. *Qi* is a state of mind arrived at through fasting of the heart.
8. The state of emptiness, *xü*, is the purest state of *qi*.
9. *Zuo chi*, a term coined by Zhuang Zi to mean physically sitting still, but mentally running afar.
10. The term *gui shen* refers to two entities of spiritual beings. *Gui* generally refers to the spirit of a dead person. The spirit is not necessarily evil, but generally mischievous. *Shen* is a god or a good spirit, who is conceived to uphold justice and render protection to those on his side. Hence, *gui* is a lower form of spirit than *shen*. When used together, *gui shen* generally connotes spirits of the mysterious world. For lack of an English equivalent for translation, the term will remain transliterated in the present work.
11. Fu Xi and Ji Jü were prehistoric legendary rulers. The Confucianists consider them to be cultural heroes, but not the Daoists. Zhuang Zi mentioned them here for no other purposes than to make the speaker sound like real Confucius.

12. A man formally named Shen Zhuliang with courtesy name Zigao was District Magistrate of Ye in the State of Chu. He called himself the Duke of Ye, not a real duke. Here he addressed himself as Zhuliang for the sake of courtesy. (See note 1 in this chapter for the courteous ways personal names are used in presenting oneself and in addressing one's elder.)
13. See *The Analects*: Wei Zheng.
14. Confucius' formal given name. He used it here also for courtesy's sake. See note 1 in this chapter.
15. The ancients believed that long-living trees were spiritual and should be worshipped.
16. *Zhong* is a unit of measure in volume, equal to about 60 *dan*. See note 12.

## 5

### The Fortitude

The physically deformed can live and do as well as any one of us. It is the morally deformed that is truly handicapped. The inner strength of a person far exceeds in importance the outer deformity.

#### Section 1

In the State of Lu, there lived a man named Wang Tai, whose leg was mutilated. He had as many pupils as Zhongni had. Changji asked Zhongni, “Wang Tai is one-legged. His pupils and Master’s are equal in number in Lu. While standing, he does not teach; while sitting, he does not comment. Pupils went to see him empty-headed and returned home fully laden. Is there really such a thing as wordless instruction or formless indoctrination? Who is he?”

Nearly every section in this chapter involves one person who is physically impaired in one way or another. Zhuang Zi showed in his stories that these men were morally and mentally superior to many of us. He considered it a pity that we would despise their presence in our midst.

Zhuang Zi chose to adhere to his protocol of using the courtesy name of Confucius, Zhongni, whenever appropriate (see a previous note). Changji was a pupil of Confucius. Wang Tai was a fictitious name. The story has no historical support.

Zhongni said, “The master is a saint. I am behind and have not gone to see him. I will treat him as my teacher, let alone those



who are inferior to me. I will lead not just the State of Lu, but the whole world to follow him.”

Changji said, “He is only one-legged and he is already superior to you, Master. He will certainly be even more superior to ordinary people. If this is true, how does he use his intelligence?”

Zhongni said, “Life and death are serious matters, but they do not affect him. Even if heaven and earth turned upside down, he would not get hurt or lost. He has the advantage of being independent without having to make changes, observing the rules of natural changes, and holding fast onto the crux of the matter.”

Changji asked, “What does that mean?”

Zhongni said, “Seen from the point of their difference, liver and gallbladder are like the States of Chu and Yue; seen from the point of their similarity, all things are one. If you agree to this view, you will not be concerned with what your eyes and ears find to be pleasant colors and sounds, but with what your heart feels to be in harmony with virtue. Thus, when you see things from the point of oneness, you do not see what is lost, and you feel the loss of a foot like losing a chunk of mud.

Changji said, “He is cultivating himself. He uses his intelligence to cultivate his heart and then uses his heart to cultivate his constant heart.<sup>1</sup> Why would people gather around him?”

Zhongni said, “A person does not look at flowing water to see his image; he looks at still water. Only things at stop can stop things that want to be stopped. Receiving a verdict from earth and with natural endowment, the pine and juniper are evergreen in summer and winter. Receiving a verdict from heaven and with intelligent life, Yao and Shun were the leaders of all things. Fortunately, they were capable of rectifying their lives so that they could lead others. The evidence of preserving the original characteristic is the fact of fearlessness. One single valiant man of indomitable courage would challenge an army. A soldier seeking merits can do this much, let alone a person who leads the world, possesses all things, takes a lodging in his own body,<sup>2</sup> considers whatever his ears and eyes receive as delusions, discerns all areas of knowledge, and dispossesses the ideas of life and death. He

will one day rise above the mundane world. People would like to come to follow him. Why should he bother to attract people?

## Section 2

Shentu Jia, a one-legged man, and Zheng Zichan were pupils of Beihun Wuren. Zichan said to Shentu Jia, “When I leave first, you wait. When you leave first, I wait.” The next day, they sat on the same mat again. Zichan said to Shentu Jia, “When I leave first, you wait. When you leave first, I wait. Now I will leave. Can you wait for a little while? Or, can’t you? When you see me, you don’t even withdraw from the presence of the prime minister. Do you really think you are a prime minister like me?”

Shentu was his surname and Jia his given name. He was a worthy man of the State of Zheng. Zheng Zichan (*fl.* 500 B.C.) was prime minister of the Zheng State. Beihun Wuren was probably a fictitious Daoist. The ancients sat on a mat spread on the floor of a room. The setting of the story appeared to be unrealistic for a sitting prime minister to go to the house of a tutor for lessons day after day. If true, who was minding the state affairs? Well, this is only a story. The lesson behind it is more important.

Shentu Jia said, “Is there such a prime minister among the pupils of the master? Are you not boasting your office and looking down on others? I have heard people saying, ‘A clean mirror does not have dust. Once it collects dust, it will not be clean. A person often in the company of worthy men will not make mistakes.’ Today you come here to see your teacher and hope to learn great knowledge. But you talk this way. Are you not overdoing it?”

Zichan retorted, “You are already in this shape and still want to compete with Yao. You estimate your own character. Is it not enough for you to reflect upon yourself?”

Apparently, “in this shape” implying being one-legged is a derogatory comment. As has been referenced before, King Yao was a cultural hero of high antiquity.

Shentu Jia said, “Those who argue about their faults so as not to lose their legs are many. Those who do not argue about their faults so as to keep their legs are few. Accepting the inevitable calmly, only a person with virtue can find peace in destiny. As one wanders within the archery range of Yi,<sup>3</sup> the center is also the bull’s eye. Only by a slim chance of destiny, would the wanderer escape being shot. Many people teased me because of my deformity. It made me angry. Since I came here to be with my teacher, I have not been angry, not realizing that his kindness has washed me clean. I have been his pupil for nineteen years. He has never felt that I am mutilated. Now you and I are friends within the formal appearance, but you are searching for me outside of the formal appearance. Aren’t you going too far?”

Zichan felt regretful, changed his countenance and tone, and said, “Please say no more!”

“Outside of the formal appearances” refers to the physical looks of a person. On the contrary, “within the formal appearances” refers to the inner beauty and strength independent of the outward look. Superficially, the insertion of the Yi story would seem to be irrelevant. However, if we take the political and social situations at that time into consideration (see the Introduction), we would realize that it was easy for an innocent person to get trapped and persecuted like wandering into the center of an archery range. There was a corporal punishment of cutting off one foot of the convicted. (See the story in the following section.) We do not know whether Shentu Jia lost his foot this way.

### Section 3

A toeless man named Shushan Wuzhi from the State of Lu walked on his heel to come to see Zhongni. Zhongni said to him, “You were not circumspect. You have been punished in such a way. Even you come here now, it is too late.”

Shushan was his given name. Wuzhi, meaning having no toes, was probably his nickname. This person is fictitious and the story is not real. Zhongni, Qiu,

and Kong Qiu are names Confucius used under various circumstances. (See note 38.)

Wu-zhi replied, "Because I was unacquainted with the affairs of this life and did not take good care of myself, I lost my toes. When I come here, I believe there exists something more precious than toes and I want to preserve it. Heaven covers everything, earth carries everything. I have considered you, Master, as heaven and earth. How would I know that you are only so-so!"

Confucius said, "Qiu is superficial and shallow. Why don't you, my master, come in? Please tell me what you have learned." As Wu-zhi left, Confucius said, "My pupils, exert yourselves! Wuzhi is a maimed man. He still works in earnest in making good his past faults, let alone well-formed men."

Apparently, Wu-zhi was disappointed in his meeting with Confucius. Then he went to see Lao Zi.

Wu-zhi said to Lao Dan,<sup>4</sup> "Has Kong Qiu attained the status of a superior man?<sup>5</sup> Why is he constantly seeking advice from you? He hopes to spread his wonderful fame all over the world, not knowing that a superior man would consider fame to be a self-imposed shackle."

Lao Dan said, "Why can't you simply make him realize that life and death are equal and yes and no are sequential, and free him from his shackle?"

Wuzhi answered, "Nature has shaped him. How can he be free?"

Of course, the whole dialogue in this section was a Zhuangian creation. If we would like to find a single sentence that can represent the spirit of this chapter, it could very well be the sentence, "I believe there exists something more precious than toes and I want to preserve it." What can be more precious? The invisible fortitude and determination. The last sentence means that Confucius was born this way and it was beyond human power "to free him from his shackle." A very pathetic comment.

### Section 4

Duke Ai of Lu said to Zhongni, “There lived in the State of Wei an ugly man named Aitai Ta. When men had been with him, they thought highly of him and did not want to leave. When women saw him, more than ten of them begged their parents by saying, ‘I would rather be a concubine of this man than a wife of another man.’ He had not been heard to propose ideas, but only to support those of others. He did not have the authority of a king to save the lives of others, nor did he have adequate wealth to fill the stomachs of many. His ugliness frightened everyone. He supported but did not propose new ideas; his knowledge did not reach beyond the mundane world. Above all, he attracted both men and women gathering around him. Hence, there must be something unique about him. I ordered him to appear before me. Truly, his ugliness could frighten everyone. In less than a month since he came here, I found him to be a little different from others. In less than a year, I found him trustworthy. Then the premiership became vacant and I asked him to take it. His indifferent attitude wavered between acceptance and declination. I felt embarrassed, but finally let him take the office. Not long after that, he left. I felt melancholic and at a loss, as if there were no one in the state to share my happiness. What kind of person really was he?”

At the time Duke Ai was head of the state, Confucius was over sixty-years-old. They certainly met and talked several times, but Confucius did not serve in his court. Their dialogue about a fictitious man named Aitai Ta can only be fictitious, too.

Zhongni answered, “Once Qiu journeyed to the State of Chu and happened to see a litter of piglets sucking milk from their just-expired mother. Moments later, they were frightened and ran away. They did not feel differently about themselves, but they did feel differently about their mother. Obviously, they loved their mother not because of her form, but because of what vitalized

the form. Those who died in the battlefield were buried without a coffin décor [because there was none]. A footless person would not hanker for shoes. Simply, the reason for having them no longer existed. Royal concubines do not manicure or pierce their ears and married men staying away from home may not be asked to render service again.<sup>6</sup> Well-formed persons still go to great lengths to keep themselves this way, let alone those hoping to perfect their virtuous character. Aitai Ta was trusted without saying a word and respected without showing merits. He made a prince offer him premiership and wonder if he would decline it. He must be a man having his natural endowments intact and his virtues hidden.”

Duke Ai asked, “What is meant by having his natural endowments intact?”

Zhongni said, “Life and death, rise and fall, success and failure, poverty and wealth, the worthy and the degenerate, disgrace and honor, hunger and thirst, winter and summer are the changes of things and progressions of destiny. Like day and night alternating before our eyes, we cannot perceive their beginnings. But we could keep them from disturbing harmony in our nature or entering into the command post of our spirit, such that harmony and ease would join in joy, and day and night would proceed endlessly with all things in happiness. Thus, we would receive people with a kind heart and be ready to make changes with time. This is called having the natural endowments intact.”

“What is meant by having his virtues hidden?”

“Leveling is the supreme nature of still water. It can be used as a model for our endeavors. It keeps the inward calm and the outward from rippling. What the virtuous character does is the nurture of complete harmony. Having his virtues hidden means that, with complete harmony, adherence of people to him is natural. “

Some days later, Duke Ai said to Min Ziqian, “Formerly, when I ruled as head of the state, upheld justice, and was concerned with the lives of my people, I thought I had done my best. After I heard the words of the superior man,<sup>7</sup> I am afraid I do not have solid achievements and I have spent my life lightly so as to

endanger my state. I and Kong Qiu are not prince and subject, but are friends in virtue.

Min Ziqian was a pupil of Confucius. This story about an ugly man named Aitai Ta is another example of how the virtue of a man supersedes his appearance.

### Section 5

A man with bent legs, a hunched back, and a harelip gave counsel to Duke Ling of Wei. The Duke was pleased. When he looked at well-formed men later, he felt their necks, on the contrary, appeared too small. A man growing a huge goiter like a jar under his chin gave counsel to Duke Huan of Qi. The Duke was pleased. When he looked at well-formed men later, he felt their necks, on the contrary, appeared too small.

Therefore, with excellent character, the appearance of a man can be ignored. People do not ignore what should be ignored and ignore what should not be ignored. This is called true ignorance.

Therefore, the sainted man<sup>8</sup> wanders about freely and considers craftiness the root of misfortune, an agreement a glue, doing favors a means to connect to people, and skills a way to make trades. The sainted man does not scheme and has no use for craftiness; he does not breach promises and has no use for glue; he does not lose people and has no use for favors; he does not want profits and has no use for trade. These four qualifications are supported by nature. Those who are supported by nature are nourished by it. Since they are nourished by nature, they have no need for human support. Thus, they have human form, but not human passions. Because they have human form, they group with other humans. Because they do not have human passions, they do not have the same right and wrong feelings like many of them. How small are they in being a part of human beings! How great are they in being a part of nature!

Zhuang Zi elaborated on the distinction between sainted men and ordinary men. The distinction is not based on the outward form, because they all are human beings; it is based on an inward quality of passions. They are small in number, but they are great! How did Zhuang Zi explain passions? See the following section, which may be considered an extension of this paragraph.

### Section 6

Hui Zi asked Zhuang Zi, “Do human beings not have passions?”

Zhuang Zi said, “Human beings do not have passions.”

Hui Zi, “How can a human being having no passions be called a human being?”

Zhuang Zi, “Dao endows him the appearance. Nature endows him the form. How can he not be called a human being?”

Hui Zi, “Since he is called a human being, how can he have no passions?”

Zhuang Zi, “This is not what I call passions. What I mean by no passions is that he does not allow likes and dislikes to harm his character, but always follows natural ways by not making extraneous additions to life.”

What is meant by “not making extraneous additions to life”? Apparently, in Zhuang Zi’s vocabulary, it means fame, wealth, and the like.

Hui Zi, “By not making extraneous additions to life, how does he care for his body?”

Either Hui Zi did not get it or he pretended not to, so he could continue to argue. Having been a prime minister once, he considered fame, wealth, and authority to be desirables in life, which Zhuang Zi despised. On this matter, the two men were diametrically opposed.

Zhuang Zi, “Dao endows his appearance. Nature endows his form. He does not allow likes and dislikes to harm his character.



Now you distance your spirit and waste your energy, leaning on a tree to sing or on a *wu*<sup>9</sup> to nap. Nature has endowed you a form, but you are singing your own praises of the ‘hard and white’ arguments.”

Zhuang Zi took a gibe at his friend’s superficial, naïve view of life. Besides, Zhuang Zi was totally uninterested in his friend’s work as a logician for making nothing out of something. The complete work of Hui Zi will be presented in Chapter 33. I wish to clarify one point here first. The popular “hard and white” arguments were originally suggested by Mo Di and later elaborated by another logician Gongsun Long, not by Hui Zi. Of course, Zhuang Zi knew that. He mentioned them here simply as a representative of sophistry that all logicians enjoyed.

## Notes

1. The heart (mind) can distinguish things, such as foot from mud. The constant heart (constant mind) does not distinguish things, foot from mud. Hence, “all things are one.”
2. Originally, the “six skeletons” meaning the head, trunk, and four limbs.
3. Also known as King Yi, a legendary sharp archer in the Xia dynasty.
4. A name for Lao Zi. Note the Daoists are more casual in using personal names than the Confucianists.
5. See Chapter 1:1 for the Daoist description of this term.
6. The true meaning of this sentence is obscure. If we would compel ourselves to interpret, we might say that having nails clipped and ears pierced could be considered forms of deformity. The second half of the sentence is even harder to interpret. There was an ancient practice for a man servant to marry a maid. “To render service again” could have been based on a certain custom prevailing then, the true meaning of which was certainly lost in history.
7. For Zhuang Zi’s description of this term, see Chapter 1:1.
8. See explanation of this term in Chapter 1:1.
9. See note 12 in Chapter 2.



## 6

# The Grand Tutor

Man and nature do not win over each other. We should honor the great Dao to be our teacher and follow the true men as a model for our self-cultivation.

### Section 1

He who knows what is natural and what is artificial is a man of supreme intelligence. Knowledge of what is natural comes from nature. Knowledge of what is artificial comes from knowledge based on one's intelligence in searching for what one's intelligence does not know, such that he can enjoy his life span in full without being cut short prematurely. This is the premium of knowledge. Even so, there are faults. Knowledge is conditioned on verification, but verification cannot be readily determined. How would anyone know what I call natural is really not artificial and what I call artificial is really not natural?

This opening paragraph spells out a distinction between intelligence and knowledge. Intelligence is inborn and so it is natural, and knowledge is acquired and so it is artificial. It is easier to know what is natural, because intelligence can show so, which comes naturally. It is harder to know what is artificial, because it requires knowledge, which comes through a process of searching with intelligence. Daoist writings use *tian* all the time, hereby translated into "nature." The way nature does things is through non-action, meaning doing nothing *willfully*, but not doing nothing at all. Not willfully means naturally. Hence, non-action is a key concept in Daoism. Certain earlier translators like H. A.

Giles (7) translated *tian* as used here into “God.” The translation is not truthful to the spirit of the Daoist text, unless they equated God to nature.

There must be true men and then true knowledge. What is a true man? The true men of old did not conjecture the odds, flaunt success, or make scheming plans. In this way, they did not regret if they missed an opportunity or boast if they made it. Thus, they were not frightened in scaling heights, worried about getting wet in water or heat in fire. This is what it is like when knowledge can attend to Dao.

From this paragraph to the end of this section, Zhuang Zi explained to us the various aspects of a true man. A true man is the highest attainment of a Daoist. Zhuang Zi was bestowed this honor by a royal decree in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (see the Introduction). He would have declined it emphatically in his lifetime. There are four paragraphs including this one, each beginning with “The true men of old” and describing certain characteristics of the true men.

The true men of old did not dream while sleeping or have anxiety while awaking. They ate and drank without preferences and they breathed deeply. The true men took deep breaths reaching the whole body; ordinary men breathed only through the throat. When a person loses his argument, he talks as if his throat was obstructed. A person whose lustful desires are deep has shallow natural endowments.

Here are some comparisons of the true men with the ordinary men.

The true men of old did not know how to love life or how to hate death. They did not enjoy birth or refuse death. When it’s time to go, they went freely; when it’s time to come, they came freely. They did not forget where they came, nor did they seek where they went. They gladly accepted whatever came naturally; they were indifferent to life and death and let them return to nature. This means not permitting human intelligence to interfere with Dao or not permitting human efforts to assist nature. This is what a true man is. Therefore, his heart is forgetful, his disposition quiet, his

mind<sup>1</sup> open, his coolness like autumn, his warmness like spring, his joy and anger like the change of seasons. Everyone finds it easy to be with him, but no one understands his limit.

In various editions of the *Zhuang Zi*, a paragraph at this point begins with: “Therefore, the sages undertook military actions that conquered a kingdom without losing the hearts of the people...” It continues with sentences containing phrases that appear elsewhere in the Outer Series of this work. Many modern scholars like Chen Guying (2-*a*) and Wen Yiduo (42) are convinced that this paragraph of text is a typographical error, mainly because (a) its content has nothing to do with “the true man,” and (b) its insertion at this point effectively interrupts the flow of thought on this topic under consideration. Henceforth, this paragraph of text is herein deleted.

The true men of old had a high spirit and prominent attitude. They acted as if they lacked something and received nothing. They showed a spirit of independence without remaining resolute. They expanded their inner emptiness<sup>2</sup> without being frivolous. They smiled when pleased. They responded only if they had to. They had profound thought and an air of gentleness. They possessed generosity that attracted people. They appeared to have comprehensive knowledge of the world. They felt satisfied and free from any constraint. They were quiet and wordless. They were not mindful or forgetful of what to say.

Following the last sentence of text ending with “forgetful of what to say,” the next sentence begins with: “They affirmed corporal punishment to be the core of the penal code and the rites to be its supportive provisions...” We are certain that Zhuang Zi would never have agreed to corporal punishment and rites as a way of life. Hence, this sentence and a few that follow are considered typographical errors and were deleted. We are now back to the concluding paragraph of the “true man” essay.

Therefore, regardless of whether people like it or not, nature and man are always united into one. Regardless of whether people consider them to be united into one or not to be united into one, they are always united into one. Those who believe that nature

and man are united into one belong to the same class as nature. Those who believe that nature and man are not united into one belong to the same class as man. He who understands that nature and man do not win over each other is called a true man.

The union of nature and man into one is a central thought of Zhuang Zi. Since they are united into one, it follows that neither one should be trying to win over the other. Particularly, no man should be trying to win over nature. A true man understands this limitation. An ordinary man does not. The more he tries to overcome nature, the farther he will be away from it.

## Section 2

Life and death are determined by destiny. The regularity of day and night follows the rule of nature. These are things beyond the control of human power; they are facts of life. People would consider nature like their father and love him all their life, let alone the surpassing Dao. People would consider the kingship overpowering and be willing to die for it, let alone the truthful Dao.

When spring water runs dry, fish are left on the ground. They moisten and dampen one another with breath and spittle. The situation is no comparison to having left them in the lakes and rivers. Rather than praising Yao and condemning Jie,<sup>3</sup> it would be better to forgo the praise and contempt and to merge them into Dao.

Zhuang Zi reiterated his philosophy that we should not interfere with nature. We do not have control over many things. We often mess things up when we try our ways (such as the dying fish). Oftentimes, we just voice our likes and dislikes (prejudices in general) without tangible results. We would do better to follow Dao and forget the nonsense.

Following this last sentence of text, there are two sentences beginning with "Nature gives me the form..." These two sentences appear correctly in Section 5 later. They have been repeated here by error and are deleted.

Hiding a boat in a gully and a fishing basket in a marsh may be considered safe. But at night, a strong man may come and haul the boat away without the knowledge of the undiscerning owner. Hiding a small thing inside a big thing is logical, but possible losses cannot be avoided. However, trusting the world to the world will have no loss at all. This is a widely held truth. People would be overjoyed with the form they have gotten. Since human forms are undergoing endless changes, that means their joys would be repeated innumerable times, too. Therefore, the sainted men would live with Dao and avoid losses. If people can feel comfortable with premature death, old age, a good beginning and a good ending, how can they not feel comfortable with the origin of all creatures and the cause of all changes?

An explanation may be desirable for the first sentence of the above paragraph of text. Formerly, the sentence read like this, “Hiding a boat in a gully and a mountain in a marsh...” The expression of hiding a mountain in a marsh appears unrealistic. Yü Yue (55) suggests that the character *shan* meaning mountain is the wrong character and the character *shan* (with the water root added to the left) meaning fishing basket is the correct character. His suggestion makes sense and is adopted in the present translation.

“The origin of all creatures and the cause of all changes” framed in the last question of text refer to Dao.

### Section 3

Dao is real and verifiable. It takes non-action and assumes no form. It can be transmitted [by heart], but cannot be taught [in words]. It can be apprehended, but cannot be seen. Dao has its own origin and its own roots. Before there were heaven and earth, it had existed eons ago. Dao created spirits and gods, the heavens and earth. It came above the Tai Ji and it could go even higher; it came below the universe and it could go even lower. Having existed before heaven and earth is not a long time ago. Having been before the highest antiquity is not an old age.



This relatively short paragraph summarizes the essence of Dao as Zhuang Zi perceived it. The first few sentences describe the characteristics of Dao, what it is, what it can do, and what it has done. Apparently, it is not synonymous with Tai Ji, because “it came above the Tai Ji...” Both time and space (the eons, the universe) are relative in the deliberations. Let us review first the position of Dao as proposed by Lao Zi. He wrote: “Man models earth. Earth models heaven. Heaven models Dao. Dao is Nature.”<sup>4</sup> It is worthy of note that Dao is at the end of this sequence and it is the same as Nature. We may say Nature is the visible existence of Dao. We may also say whatever Dao does is always natural. Hence, Dao and Nature are synonymous in Daoism. Lao Zi went on to explain the position of Dao in cosmology when he wrote, “Dao gives rise to One. One gives rise to Two. Two gives rise to Three. Three gives rise to myriads of things.”<sup>5</sup> Dao is unpaired. Hence, it is One. Two consists of yin and yang elements. Three consists of Two plus the combined form of Two. Myriads of things, of course, include human beings. This sequence bears good resemblances to that described in the *Yi Jing*, which reads, “Therefore, in the *Yi* there is the Tai Ji. The Tai Ji produced the two symbols. The two symbols produced the four emblems. The four emblems produced the eight trigrams.”<sup>6</sup> If we compare Dao (in the *Dao De Jing*) to Tai Ji (in the *Yi Jing*), the two are fairly comparable. But be aware that they are not the same.

Added to the end of the paragraph of text cited above, are several lines of text beginning with: “Xi Wei obtained it to assist the world...” and ending with: “to compare to the stars.” Modern scholars do not think they are Zhuangian essays at all, not so much because they are mythical, but because the ideas behind them have no depth. Hence, this portion of text is deleted from translation.

#### Section 4

Nanbo Zikui asked Nü Yü, “You are an old man, but your complexion looks like that of a child. How do you do that?”

“I have learned Dao,” came the answer.

Nanbo Zikui asked, “Can Dao be learned?”

“No, not so. You are not that kind of person. Bo Liangyi has the talents of a sainted man, but does not have the foundation of a sainted man. I have the foundation of a sainted man, but do not have the talents of a sainted man. I would like to teach him,

so that he might become a sainted man. Even if he cannot be, it would still be easy for a man with the foundation of a sainted man to tell it to a man with the talents of a sainted man. So I told him and observed him. After three days, he was able to be indifferent to worldly affairs. After that, I continued to observe him. After seven days, he was able to be free from anxiety about things. After that, I continued to observe him. After nine days, he was able to be indifferent to life. After that, he was able to attain a state of spiritual clarity like the morning sun. After that, he was able to apprehend the absoluteness of Dao. After that, he was able to erase the distinction between the present and the past. After that, he was able to enter the realm where no life or death exists and where losing life is not dying and gaining life is not living. As to all things, none is not giving and none is not receiving; none is not perishing and none is not forming. This is called maintaining tranquility in chaos. What it means is there is completion in confusion.

The three persons, Nanbo Zikui, Nü Yü and Bo Liangyi, named in the story were fictitious. Nanbo Zikui, meaning “Zikui, the elder of the city south,” is probably the same Daoist as Nanguo Ziqi in Chapter 2:1. This is really unimportant, since they are all fictitious names. In the middle of the long paragraph, we read about the absoluteness of Dao. It can have one or both of the meanings: Dao is oneness and Dao is independent of all others. Finally, the absence of distinction between present and past, life and death, losing life and gaining life, giving and receiving, and failing and succeeding is the manifestation of Dao at work. There seem to be chaos and confusion on the one hand, and at the same time, tranquility and completion on the other. Hence, tranquility in chaos. Zhuang Zi was an expert in coining terms with words of seemingly uncompromising meanings. Now we are ready for the last dialogue between these two Daoists.

“Where did you learn of Dao?” asked Nanbo Zikui.

Nü Yü answered, “I learned it from the son of words, the son of words from the grandson of recitation, the grandson of recitation from inspection, inspection from hearsay, hearsay from practice, practice from singing and sighing, singing and sighing

from quietude, quietude from the great void, and the great void from the infinite beginning.

Zhuang Zi used “son and grandson” simply to indicate a time element in the history of transmission of knowledge, from the most recent “words” to the most ancient “the infinite beginning”. Thus, the older the generation, the more ancient the means of transmission should be; the younger the generation, the more recent the means of transmission should be. In other words, the text would be interpreted to mean that our present knowledge is the son of words, the grandson of recitation, the great grandson of inspection, etc. For instance, in the Foreword to the work of Guo Qingfan (9) on the *Zhuang Zi*, Wang Xianqian referred to Guo’s work as “the son of words” and its numerous would-be readers as “the grandsons of recitation.”

### Section 5

Four men Zi Si, Zi Yü, Zi Li, and Zi Lai talking among themselves said, “Whoever can use Nothing as the head, Life as the spine, and Death as the tail bone, and whoever can consider life and death as one, I would like to be his friend.” The four men looked at one another and smiled. They had tacit agreement in their hearts and thus became friends.

The four personal names are fictitious. When we put Nothing, Life, and Death together, we know the meaning is not “no life and death,” but “no distinction between life and death.” This explains “life and death as one” that follows.

Soon afterwards, Zi Yü fell ill and Zi Si went to see him. Zi Yü said, “How great is the creator, who makes me into such a crooked shape.” His waist was bent forward and his back looked like that of a camel. His viscera turned around and his mouth was under his navel. His shoulders were higher than his head and his combed hair knot faced the sky. Yin and yang were disharmonious within him, but he was at ease as if nothing had happened. He waddled to a nearby well and looked in at himself and exclaimed, “Ah, the creator has again made me into such a crooked shape!”

The physical deformities of Zi Yü as described here are similar to those of Zhi-li Su in Chapter 4:6. As explained earlier, the creator in Daoism is Dao itself.

“Do you hate it?” asked Zi Si.

Zi Yü answered, “No, why should I! If my left arm were turned into a rooster, I could have crowed at dawn. If my right arm were turned into pellets, I could have gotten quails. If my tail bone were turned into a wheel and my spirit into a horse, I could have ridden in a built-in chariot and needed to drive nothing else. What determines life is timeliness. What determines death is in accord with nature. Neither sorrow nor happiness has anything to do with it. This has been known for ages as relief from hanging upside down. Those who cannot relieve themselves are bound by other things. That man cannot win over nature is an eternal truth. Why should I hate anything?”

This last sentence explains the first sentence of the paragraph. The reasoning comes in between them. Since time and nature determine everything, we encounter sorrow or happiness partly by our own doing, because we “are bound by other things.”

Soon after that, Zi Lai fell ill. He was near death because of difficulties in breathing. His wife and children were weeping at his bedside. Zi Li went to see him and called out to his family, “Go away. Don’t frighten the person undergoing changes.” He talked to Zi Lai by the door into his room, “How great is the creator! What will it do to you? Where will you go? Will you change into a rat liver or a leg of an insect?”

We do not know how much of this is the Zhuangian fantasy and how much is Daoist belief at that time. The concluding remarks sound more like transmigration in Buddhist teaching. But Buddhism did not enter China until a few hundred years after Zhuang Zi’s time.

Zi Lai answered, “Like a son to his parents, wherever they want him to go— east, west, south or north, he goes. A man to yin

and yang is like a son to his parents. If I do not follow their instructions at dying, I will be rude and they cannot be blamed. Moreover, nature gave me this form, and toiled me when I was strong. Now it comforts me when I am old, and rests me at death. Therefore, what is good in my life is also good in my death. Suppose the melting metal in a smelting pot were to say, 'Make me into a Moxie.'<sup>7</sup> The caster would consider the metal with an evil omen and reject it. Now here is an image of an unworthy man and he yells, 'Make me into a man, a man.' The creator would consider him with an evil omen, too. Now consider the universe as a smelting pot and the creator as a caster. Wherever I go will be all right." With that, Zi Lai fell soundly asleep and woke up feeling just fine.

Here are two stories with two players each. In the first story, the deformed player has a deeper apprehension of Dao than his friend. In the second story, the supposedly dying player has a superior understanding of Dao to his friend. Starting with the four men having seemingly similar recognition of Dao, Zhuang Zi demonstrated in his allegories that it takes a tragic incident for a person to realize how deeply Dao can penetrate into one's life.

### Section 6

Three men, Zi Sanghu, Meng Zifan, and Zi Chinchang, talking among themselves said, "Whoever can befriend others naturally without doing so formally, whoever can help others naturally without doing so formally, and whoever can ascend the sky, roam through the clouds, jump and dance in the Wu Ji,<sup>8</sup> and forget life altogether to the eternity, I would like to be his friend." The three men looked at one another and smiled. They had tacit agreement in their hearts and thus became friends.

The syntax of this paragraph is quite close to that of the opening paragraph of the preceding section. As we shall see below, the theme is similar except Zhuang Zi elicited the participation of Confucius in this one.

Soon afterwards, Zi Sanghu died, not being buried yet. Confucius heard about it and sent his disciple Zigong to help make funeral arrangements. [Zigong saw] one man was composing a song and the other was beating a drum. Together they sang, "Oh, Sanghu! Oh, Sanghu! You have returned to nature, but we are still living in this mundane world!" Zigong hurried in and inquired, "May I ask, is it ritual to sing beside a corpse?" The two men looking and smiling at each other said, "He does not understand the true meaning of rites."

Upon returning, Zigong reported to Confucius and said, "What kind of persons are they? They disregarded rituals, disrespected the deceased, sang beside the body, and expressed no sympathy. I don't know how to call them. What kind of persons are they?"

Confucius said, "They are living outside of the rules of propriety. And Qiu<sup>9</sup> is living inside of the rules. The inside and the outside are not related. I asked you to go to mourn for a friend. I was naïve. They are having a company with the creator and wandering about heaven and earth. They consider life a wen and death a ruptured ulcer. Since this is the case, how would they know the distinction between life and death and between the first and the last? By assembling sorts of things into one form, forgetting the liver and gall, eyes and ears, circling repeatedly from start to finish without a clue, they feel absent-mindedly to have roamed beyond the mundane world and wandered in a space of non-action. How would they bother to show people with the delicacy of rituals?"

Zigong asked, "Then which way would my Master subscribe?"

Confucius answered, "Qiu is like a criminal of nature. Even so, you and I should subscribe to the other way."

"May I ask for directions?" asked Zigong.

"Fishes find comfort in water. Men find comfort in Dao. For those comfortable in water, we would dig a pond to feed them. For those comfortable in Dao, we would be satisfied with non-action.

Hence, it is said that fishes are free from worries in rivers and lakes and men are free from worries in Dao.”

“May I ask about those weird fellows?”

Confucius said, “They are those whose behaviors are different from ordinary people, but are in conformity with nature. Hence, it is said that a little man by nature’s standard is a *junzi*<sup>10</sup> by man’s standard and a *junzi* by nature’s standard is a little man by man’s standard.”

This is a fine example of how Zhuang Zi used Confucius to say what he wanted to say himself. In this way, he made the reader think even the founder of Confucianism would speak like a Daoist, sometimes. To make his story more convincing, he included Confucianist terms, such as *junzi* and little man, which the Daoists do not use otherwise. The concluding remarks also emphasize the sharp contrasts in the outlook in life between these two schools of philosophy.

### Section 7

Yan Hui asked Zhongni, “Mengsun Cai’s mother died. He wept without tears. He felt no distress. He mourned without grief. Lacking all three, he is popular for his way of mourning in all the State of Lu. Is there such a thing as enjoying fame without a fact? Hui finds it incomprehensible.”

Zhongni said, “Mengsun did all he could. He knew more than most people. He has simplified the customary practice, but not all of it. Mengsun does not know why there is life or why there is death. He does not know which comes first and which comes next. He observes natural changes in anticipating unknown changes. However, if certain changes would seem to take place, how could we know that no change would ever take place? Likewise, if certain changes would not seem to take place, how could we know that changes would have already taken place? You and I have not awoken from our dreams. Mengsun considers we can have changes in form without harming conscience and we can have transformation of body without consuming spirit. Mengsun felt weeping when others were weeping. That is why he behaved

the way he did. Further, people say to one another, it is I. Who knows what I consider to be I is really not I? It is like you dream yourself a bird flying high in the sky or a fish swimming deep in the water. You are not sure the one who is talking now is awaking or dreaming. As we feel like coming to a serene place with such perfect comfort, we forget how to laugh. Then we laugh naturally from the heart without prescience and let nature arrange everything for us in this peaceful place far, far away.”

This is another story purported to be between Confucius and his most favorite pupil, Yan Hui. Mengsun Cai was a native of the State of Lu; so was Confucius. Here Confucius was talking like a Daoist and explaining to Yan Hui why Mengsun did what he did while mourning his mother. His conversation turned to dream, a favorite topic of Zhuang Zi, who exploited it earlier (in Chapter 2:6 and 2:7). Finally, the serene, peaceful place is Dao. It is so wonderful, awesome, idyllic, and totally unexpected that people don't even know how to laugh for it.

### Section 8

Yi Erzi went to see Xu You. Xu You asked, “What did Yao teach you?”

Yi Erzi is a fictitious name. King Yao and Xu You of high antiquity have been mentioned in previous chapters.

Yi Erzi said, “Yao told me, ‘You must practice *ren* and justice and discriminate right and wrong.’”

*Ren* is a transliterated word for the noblest form of love used by Confucius. It has no English equivalent and has been translated into warm-heartedness, benevolence, *etc.*, but none is satisfactory. Mencius elaborated on justice. So *ren* and justice have become a leading concept in Confucianism since Mencius. Zhuang Zi was a contemporary of Mencius, but the two men did not mention each other by name in their writings. How Zhuang Zi came to know the linking of *ren* and justice together is a little puzzling to this translator.

Xu You said, “Then what do you come here for? Yao has already “carved” *ren* and justice on your forehead and right and wrong



on your nose. How could you ever wander on a road to freedom and changes?”

Yi Erzi, “Even so, I would like to wander around it.”

Xu You said, “Not so easy. A blind man cannot appreciate what pleases the eyes, nor can he admire the beauty of colorful dresses.”

Yi Erzi, “Wu Zhuang forgot about her beauty. Jü Liang forgot about his strength. King Huang<sup>11</sup> forgot about his wisdom. They were able to do so because they had been molded and fashioned this way. How could anyone of us know that the creator would not redress the engravings on my forehead and nose, so that I would be in a better shape to follow you?”

Presumably, Wu Zhuang was a beauty and Jü Liang was a hercules. Their names are not found in history and possibly are fictitious. Yi Erzi reasoned that if other people could overlook their attributes, such as beauty, strength, and wisdom, I could do the same with *ren* and justice. Throughout this book, “the creator” refers to Dao.

Xu You concluded, “Ah, it cannot be known for sure. I can tell you a general idea. My grand tutor! My grand tutor! It is not cruel in leaving all things alone. It is not willful to be benevolent in leaving behind work benefiting ten thousand generations. It is not old in being older than the highest antiquity. It is not crafty in covering heaven, carrying earth, and carving out all shapes of things. This is where my spirit will wander.”

In his writings, Zhuang Zi gave us his version of Dao from different angles. Through the person of an ancient recluse, he described what the state of Dao might be like. “My grand tutor” refers to Dao and the following “It”, too.

## Section 9

Yan Hui said, “Hui is making progress.”

Zhongni asked, “What do you mean?”

“Hui has forgotten about rites and music.”

Zhongni said, “Fine. Not there yet.”

Some days later, Yan Hui came again and said, "Hui is making progress."

Zhongni asked, "What do you mean?"

"Hui has forgotten about *ren* and justice," came the answer.

Zhongni, "Fine. Not there yet."

Some days later, Yan Hui came again and said, "Hui is making progress."

Zhongni asked, "What do you mean?"

"Hui has forgotten while sitting."

Respectfully, Zhongni asked, "What is meant by forgetting while sitting?"

Yan Hui said, "As a person forgets the body, ignores intelligence, disowns the form, and abolishes knowledge, so that he will unite with Dao as one. This is called sitting to forget."

Zhongni said, "Uniting assures absence of bias. Changing guarantees freedom from prejudice. You are truly a worthy man. Qiu will follow you from behind."

In this artificial dialogue between Confucius and his pupil, Yan Hui, Zhuang Zi called Confucius by his courtesy name, Zhongni, as on several previous occasions and on many upcoming occasions. In Section C of the Introduction, this translator has commented on this seemingly small issue as it might reveal a hitherto unnoticed relationship between Zhuang Zi and Confucius. Of course, when a translator translates all the formal, courtesy, and honorary names of the sage into "Confucius," the delicate discrimination among them is lost, and no research of this kind could ever be conceived.

Here in this essay, the pupil had a slight edge over the tutor in reaching the goal of unifying with Dao. In accordance with the suggestions of modern scholars, the order of the dialogue with rites and music and with *ren* and justice has been reversed from older versions to make it more logical. The dialogue is concerned with the significance of forgetfulness (in the broader sense of the word). Forgetting about what? Externally, they are things we can feel with our senses, such as body and forms, rites and music, etc. Internally, they are things we cannot feel readily with our senses, such as intelligence and knowledge, *ren* and justice, etc. Normally, the external things are easier to forget, disown, disregard, etc., and the internal things are harder to do so. In forgetting while sitting, both external and internal things are forgotten altogether. Then and

only then, according to Zhuang Zi, can we unite with Dao. Review the state of *zuo wang*, or roughly “sitting to forget” in the annotations to Chapter 2:1.

### Section 10

Ziyü and Zisang were friends. It had rained continuously for ten days. Ziyü said to himself, “Zisang could be sick.” So he went to see him with some cooked rice. When he came to Zisang’s front door, he heard lamenting and singing with a *qin*, “O, father! O, mother! O, heaven! O, men!” The music was melancholic and the words were depressive.

Ziyü entered and asked, “Why do you sing like that?”

Zisang said, “I cannot get an answer to why I am in my present situation. Do my parents wish me poverty? Heaven covers everything without partiality. Earth supports everything without prejudice. Do heaven and earth wish me poverty? I have searched for the instigator and failed. It must be my destiny that I get down to this extreme!”

The narrative of this fiction is quite plain and without a theme. A man of severe poverty wanted to know why he was so unfortunate and failed to find an answer. A Daoist will not be bothered by poverty, let alone be bothered with the inquiry. We do not see a Daoist message here. Zhuang Zi considers destiny or fate, like life or death, as part of nature. If poverty is destined, why be bothered by it? This translator does not think Zhuang Zi would complain about it. Hence, there are reasons to suspect that this section is not from Zhuang Zi’s pen, even though it is in the Inner Series.

## Notes

1. Literally, forehead. Since Zhuang Zi was never interested in physical appearance, it can only mean mind.
2. See notes 7 and 8 in Chapter 4.
3. Yao was a cultural hero of high antiquity; Jie was the last and wanton king of the Xia dynasty.
4. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: Chapter 25.
5. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: Chapter 42.
6. Cf. Wu (43): *The Essentials of the Yi Jing*, p. 30.
7. A famous sword named after the wife of the caster in the State of Wu.
8. Same as Tai Ji, a state before the “Big Bang.”
9. See earlier notes on use of personal names. Confucius was polite in calling himself by his formal name instead of the pronoun “I.” By the same token, it would be very rude to address him or any person you respect by his formal name. All is a matter of courtesy.
10. *Junzi*, a term describing a person who has the highest moral attainments irrespective of his birth, office, wealth, or social standing. It has no English equivalent. Past translators like James Legge, Richard Wilhelm, and many others have translated it into “superior man.” This translator agrees with Joseph Needham (27) that the term is better left untranslated. The exact opposite of *junzi* is little man, a corrupt, sinister, crafty, good-for-nothing character.
11. See note 21 in Chapter 2.



## 7

# Governance by Non-Action

The best government is one with a policy of non-action, that is, actions taken naturally without resorting to artificiality, craftiness, or selfishness. Of course, it is easier said than done. We will see how Zhuang Zi described it.

### Section 1

Nie Que asked Wang Ni four questions and got from him, “I wouldn’t know,” four times. Nie Que was overjoyed and went to tell Puyi Zi.

For the four questions and answers between Nie Que and Wang Ni, see Chapter 2:6. Puyi Zi is a fictitious name and the story is an allegory.

Puyi Zi said, “Do you know now that You Yü was inferior to Tai in their ways of governing the land? You Yü still tried to use *ren* to attract people. Although he got fine people, he had not gone beyond the need for people. Tai was peaceful in sleep and content while awaking. He was indifferent if he was called a horse or an ox. His intention was sincere and his virtue truthful. He had not found the need for people.”

You Yü and Tai are supposed to be ancient rulers. The theme of this chapter is governance based on what comes naturally. Daoists consider non-action to be actions taken without regard to formality (rites and music in Confucianism) or didactic teachings (such as *ren*, justice, filial piety in Confucianism) and actions free from craftiness, conspiracy, finesse, trickery, etc. Even though You

Yü was a good ruler, he still depended on finding good people to do the work. Tai was superior, because he saw no need for *ren* and justice.

## Section 2

Jian Wu came to see the recluse Jieyü. Jieyü asked, “What did Ri Zhongshi tell you?”

Jian Wu said, “He told me that rulers wrote their own laws and orders and the people dared not disobey them, but did as told.” Recluse Jieyü said, “This is a fallacy. They make governing a nation like digging a river in a sea or expecting a mosquito to haul a mountain. When a sainted man governs a nation, would he start from enforcing laws and orders? He would rectify himself and then lead the people, making sure they contribute what they can. This will be all. A bird would fly high to avoid being shot by an arrow; a mouse would build a deep burrow under an altar to avoid being dug out. Can we not do better than these two creatures?”

The name Jieyü as a recluse appeared in Chapter 4:7. Here Zhuang Zi wrote Kuang Jieyü making the character *kuang*, meaning recluse, sound like a surname. This translator prefers translating *kuang* into “recluse” to transliterating it as a surname. In any case, the story is a fable. The name Jian Wu has also appeared before.

The preference for non-action is shown here in two ways. One is that law and order do not achieve anything; they are as impossible as digging a river in a sea or expecting a mosquito to haul a mountain. The other is that creatures have the instinct of doing the right things. Why should we need law and order?

## Section 3

Tian Gen, wandering in Yinyang and coming upon the River Liao, happened to meet Wuming Ren and asked, “May I ask how to govern the nation?”

Wuming Ren said, “Go away! You are a mean person. Why do you ask such a distasteful question? I am about to accompany the creator to go wandering. If I feel tired, I just rest in an atmosphere of emptiness,<sup>1</sup> then go beyond the six limits,<sup>2</sup> meander in

a region of nothingness, and stay in a borderless wilderness. Why do you use the governance of a nation to disturb my thought?”

Tian Gen insisted on asking.

Wuming Ren said, “Keep your thought simple, your spirit clear. Do what comes naturally without selfishness. The world will be in peace.”

All the personal names and the geographical locations are fictitious. What Zhuang Zi wanted to impress on us is in the last few sentences.

#### Section 4

Yang Ziju went to see Lao Dan and said, “There is a man here, who is daring and determined, discerning and intelligent, and also tireless and diligent in learning the Dao. Is he comparable to a perspicacious king?”

Yang Ziju is not a historical personal name, even though Zhuang Zi used it a few times in his book. As has been shown before, Lao Dan is the formal name of Lao Zi. Zhuang Zi followed his own propensity in calling Lao Zi by his formal name and calling Confucius by his courtesy name Zhongni. Any significance? Read Section C of the Introduction.

Lao Dan said, “From the standpoint of a sage, government officers are tied down by protocols that fatigue their bodies and confuse their minds. Moreover, beautiful fur patterns of tigers and leopards invite being hunted; swift movements of monkeys result in being caged. In this way, how can they be compared to a perspicacious king?”

Yang Ziju felt regretful and said, “May I ask what a perspicacious king’s rule is like?”

Lao Dan said, “Under a perspicacious king’s rule, his achievements spread over the whole nation and they seem to be unrelated to him. His benefaction reaches to all the people and they do not know their dependence on him. His merits cannot be called by name, but he makes everyone satisfied. His whereabouts is unpredictable, but he wanders in a world of no-action.



From the *Dao De Jing*, we learn that Lao Zi proposed non-action as the only viable way to do things from as private as personal affairs to as public as governance of a nation. There is only one principle for all. He gave little details. Here Zhuang Zi elaborated on its effects. A sage administrator takes actions so naturally without fanfare that his people are hardly aware of his accomplishments and they benefit from his service without knowing to whom indebtedness is due. From a practical point of view, these conditions seem to be non-existing in a real world.

### Section 5

In the State of Zheng, there lived a spirited wizard named Ji Xian. He foreknew like a god the death and birth, misfortune and fortune, dying young or living old of a person, accurate to the day, month, and year. When the people of Zheng saw him, they ran away from him. Lie Zi met him and was fascinated. When he returned, he told Hu Zi about it and said, “Earlier, I thought, my master, your Dao was supreme. Now I realize there is greater supremacy.”

A similar story is told in the *Book of Lie Zi*, a collection of essays by Lie Yukou (see Chapter 32). Hu Zi’s personal name was Hu Lin mentioned many times in Lie Zi’s essays. Both Hu Zi and Lie Zi were from the State of Zheng. They lived in the fifth century, B.C. It would be interesting to find out how a Daoist dealt with a physiognomist.

Hu Zi said, “I have taught you the appearance of Dao and not yet the substance of it. Do you really think you have learned everything? How can any number of female birds lay eggs without a male? You try to extend your superficial knowledge to engage in complicated situations. In doing so, you allow yourself to be examined by a physiognomist. Try to come with him and let him examine me.”

The following day, Lie Zi came with Ji Xian to see Hu Zi. When Ji Xian was leaving, he told Lie Zi, “Ah! Your teacher is dying. He cannot live longer than ten days. I saw his face strange like moist ashes.”

Lie Zi came in with tears rolling down wetting his garment and told Hu Zi what he heard. Hu Zi said, "What I have just shown him was like a piece of motionless mud. He must have seen me lifeless. Try to come with him again."

The next day, Lie Zi came with Ji Xian to see Hu Zi again. When he was leaving, he told Lie Zi, "Fortunately, your teacher met me and he will survive. I saw slight movements in his blocked vitality."

Lie Zi came in and told Hu Zi what he heard. Hu Zi said, "What I have just shown him was like the vitality of heaven and earth unaffected by the appearance or the substance. The energy moved up from my heels. He must have seen these movements in me. Try to come with him again."

The following day, Lie Zi came with Ji Xian to see Hu Zi again. When he was leaving, he told Lie Zi, "Your teacher was confused. I could not examine him. Wait until he is clearheaded and I will examine him again."

Lie Zi came in and told Hu Zi what he heard. Hu Zi said, "What I have just shown him was like the Great Void without incipience. He must have seen the balanced attitude in me. Where whales play is a deep abyss. Where water remains still is a deep abyss. Where water swirls is a deep abyss. There are nine kinds of deep abyss. I showed him three kinds only. Try to come with him again."

The next day, Lie Zi came with Ji Xian to see Hu Zi again. Before Ji Xian stood still, he felt lost, turned around, and ran away. Hu Zi called out, "Chase him." Lie Zi chased but lost him. Coming back, he told Hu Zi, "He disappeared. I lost him, I could not get him."

Hu Zi said, "What I have just shown him was not my Dao. I pretended to be carefree like a blade of grass or flowing water, so that he would not know what happened to me. Therefore, he ran away."

Since then Lie Zi realized that he had not learned much and returned home. For three years, he did not go out. He helped his wife cook and feed pigs like feeding people. He was not prejudiced in dealing with things. He abolished décor and returned to

simplicity. He stood tall and alone. In a world of confusion and tumult, he kept being truthful and simple to the very end.

The entire section deals with a single subject of physiognomy. It does not seem to have anything to do with governance. The first paragraph describes how the inexperienced Lie Zi was fascinated by the practice and concluded that there was something more supreme than Dao. Through successive encounters with the wizard, Hu Zi showed that he could manipulate what the physiognomist observed, thereby confirming that Dao was supreme and absolute. Then Lie Zi was left with the choice of staying with Hu Zi or going his own way. He decided the latter. The last paragraph shows that Lie Zi became a different person. He was closer to a true Daoist than he had ever been. Hence, Dao can be learned and practiced through self-discipline without a teacher.

There is a point worthy of note here. The story clearly demonstrates that a Daoist is capable of manipulating and thereby defeating a physiognomist. In other words, Daoism can be made as practicable as physiognomy. How about occultism? This translator doubts very much that Zhuang Zi would lower his Daoism to this level. True, the story had been selected from the *Book of Lie Zi*, but most likely not by Zhuang Zi.

### Section 6

Don't go after fame. Don't go after strategies. Don't go after arbitrary decisions. Don't go after craftiness. Understand the limitless Dao and wander in the serene expanse. Receive endowments from nature, but do not vaunt about it for its mere abstraction. The intention of a superior man<sup>3</sup> is like a mirror. He neither welcomes nor speeds others. He responds but does not hide. Therefore, he can win over others without being hurt.

The central thought of this paragraph is doing things naturally, such as the four "don'ts." Zhuang Zi used "wander" often to mean spiritual or mental wandering rather than physical wandering. A mirror reflects everything incidental upon it, no more and no less. In this sense, the mirror has no prejudice either for or against the incidence. By the same token, a person can be so natural that he would neither welcome nor speed another person for want of preference. He

is truthful in responding like a mirror in reflecting, but does not add or delete because either one implies prejudice. This is the spirit of non-action.

The king of the South Sea was called Shu. The king of the North Sea was named Hu. The king at the center was known as Hun Dun. Shu and Hu often met at Hun Dun's residence. Hun Dun treated them very well. Shu and Hu were considering a way to recompense his kindness and said, "Each one of us has seven openings<sup>4</sup> for seeing, hearing, eating, and breathing, only this man has none. Let us cut openings on him." They cut one opening a day. In seven days, Hun Dun died.

It is probably not coincidental that Zhuang Zi opened this Inner Series with the story of a bird flying from the North Sea to the South Sea and closed it with another story about the North Sea and the South Sea. Of course, Zhuang Zi knew there was no sea to the north of China and gave the reader an illusion of the first story. The story described here is also an illusion. It appears to have combined the ideas propounded in the chapter On Equality with the Daoist fundamental belief that all things model after Nature. Hun Dun died because Shu and Hu violated both cardinal principles that (a) there is equality in all things in nature and efforts (prejudices) to make them "equal" end with inequality, and (b) what is natural is supreme and the outcome of "improving" nature is unpredictable and sometimes catastrophic.

### Notes

1. Cf. Chapter 4:1.
2. The six limits of the universe: the four sides and the above and below.
3. See the concluding paragraph in Chapter 1:1.
4. The seven openings are mouth, two nostrils, two ears, and two eyes.

## II

# The Outer Series



## 8

# Webbed Toes

What we do naturally is mostly in accord with nature. When we add our concerns about *ren* and justice to what we do, we really mess up things.

### Section 1

Are webbed toes and extra fingers a design of nature? They are superfluous to what is normal. Are goiters and tumors a design of form? They are superfluous to what is natural. Do repeated applications of *ren* and justice make them a part of the five organs?<sup>1</sup> They are not the true nature of virtue. Therefore, what joins the toes is a useless tissue. What branches out from the hand is a useless finger. The tautology in expressing sentiments within us results from the overuse of *ren* and justice, and the constant exercise of cleverness.

Zhuang Zi started with some natural, physical abnormalities like webbed toes, extra fingers, and goiters. Then he introduced some man-made mental abnormalities, such as *ren*, justice, and cleverness. In what follows he developed his theme: the more we add extraneous elements to our thought, the farther away we are from our good nature.

Therefore, those who have been gifted in extraordinary eyesight profusely use the five colors<sup>2</sup> and indulge in beauty and elegance. Are they not like colorful garments in attracting attention of others? Li Zhu was one of them. Those who have been endowed superbly with hearing lavishly play the five notes<sup>3</sup> and



give rein to the six *lǚ*.<sup>4</sup> Are they not like the sounds of metal, stone, string, bamboo, *huang zhong*, and *da lǚ*? Shi Kuang was one of them. Those who have extolled *ren* to promote virtue and obstruct instinct enjoy worldly fame. Are they not like inciting the people to observe a moral code beyond their ability to do so? Zeng Shen and Shi You were among them. Those who have been skillful in sophistry play with words like piling roof tiles and making rope knots, and wander their thought between the arguments of hardness and whiteness and of similarities and differences.<sup>5</sup> Are they not like trading useless words for a temporary popularity? Yang Zhu and Mo Di were among them. Hence, all of them walked on the paths of superfluity of webbed toes and extra fingers. They were not on the orthodox path of the world.

Before we analyze the thought going through this paragraph, let us identify the several personal names referred to by the author. Li Zhu was apparently the same person mentioned in the *Book of Mencius* as Li Lou. He was described as having extraordinary eyesight and being able of seeing a fine down one hundred strides away. Shi Kuang, a leading musician in the court of Duke Ping of Jin, has been mentioned in Chapter 2:4. Zeng Shen, a great disciple of Confucius, wrote the *Great Learning*. Shi Yü (same as Shi You) was a minister in the court of Duke Ling of Wei. Yang Zhu lived in the early Warring States period. His writings have been completely lost. The essence of his teaching seems to be selfishness. The *Book of Lie Zi* briefly describes his belief as “he would not pull out one single hair if it could benefit the world.” This is diametrically the opposite of the altruism of Mo Di, who has been mentioned in the Introduction of this work and will again be in Chapter 33:2.

Webbed toes and extra fingers are the key words underlying the theme of this section, not in their literal senses, of course. Zhuang Zi used them to mean superfluity in general. He sprinkled these two key words repeatedly throughout the preceding paragraph with the meanings of giving way to, extoling, and indulging, always with an undertone of excessiveness. The syntax and vocabulary are truly Zhuangian. The literary style is unique and mixed with paired expressions in the same number of characters. Of course, most of it cannot be reproduced in translation. It is very difficult for an imitation even by his disciples to come so close. Some scholars may not agree with this translator's comments. The common impression that authentic writings of Zhuang Zi can

be found only in the Inner Series seems simplistic. Furthermore, this translator has raised reasonable doubts about the authenticity of some sections in the Inner Series being his writings.

Zhuang Zi wrote a critical essay here about the overemphasis on extraneous ingredients added to the search for truth by various intelligent, gifted people. In his view, they all traveled on heterodox paths. Of course, what he did not bring up for criticism is the Daoist way. The last sentence of his essay seems to have provided no answer to the question of who were on the orthodox path. And yet, as we admire his literary acumen, we realize that he had already provided an answer, as we shall see in what follows.

Those who walk on the orthodox path do not lose sight of their natural endowments. Therefore, what joins is not superfluous and what branches is not extraneous. What is long is not surplus and what is short is not deficient. Although a duck's leg is short, lengthening it causes disaster; although a crane's leg is long, shortening it causes calamity. Thus, what is long by nature should not be shortened and what is short by nature should not be lengthened. There is nothing to be anxious about. Ah, are *ren* and justice not part of our natural disposition! Why should warmhearted men be anxious about them?

Most of what is discussed here is an extension of the thesis propounded in Chapter 2: On Equality. The central tenet of this essay is really about *ren* and justice. Zhuang Zi used webbed toes and extra fingers as a means of getting there. He considers the natural endowments in every one of us are good. If we want to call them "*ren* and justice," it would be fine. To this extent, both Zhuang Zi and Mencius agreed on the good nature of man. Zhuang Zi theorized that what nature provided was good and optimal and there was no need for us to add more of it. On the other hand, Mencius proposed that we should enrich what was endowed in us to ensure a useful and successful life. This is where the two men differed. I might add once more that they were contemporaries, but they lived and worked in different parts of China and probably did not know of each other's existence.

Moreover, those with webbed toes will weep if the toes are separated. Those with an extra finger will cry if the finger is bitten

off. In both cases, the number is either too few or too many, but they have the same anxiety. At the present time, warmhearted men are deeply worried about misfortune and crisis in our society; sinister men betray their natural endowments in exchange for wealth and fame. Hence, it is said that *ren* and justice are not part of our natural disposition! Ever since the three dynasties,<sup>6</sup> why the world has become so chaotic!

There are *ren* and justice in every one of us and there is no need to add more of them. The question is how to use it wisely and judiciously. Sinister men misuse it in searching for wealth and fame. More of it is not going to change anything. The three dynasties totaling less than two thousand years were all the recorded history of China in Zhuang Zi's time. There had been sporadic periods of tyranny and tumults. Zhuang Zi used these crises as a powerful argument for the futility of emphasizing *ren* and justice.

## Section 2

Furthermore, those who depend on the hook, string, compass, and square to get the exact forms alter the character of things. Those who depend on the cord, rope, glue, and varnish for binding and sealing violate the nature of things. Those who wander in rites and music and enthuse in *ren* and justice to give comfort to the people misunderstand the true nature of things. Everything in the world has its true nature. What true nature means is that a hook<sup>7</sup> is not needed to make a thing curvy; a plumb line is not needed to make a thing straight; a compass is not needed to make a thing round; a carpenter's square is not needed to make a thing square; glue or varnish is not needed for sealing, and cord or rope is not needed for tying. Therefore, all things grow beautifully without knowing how they grow; they all find suitable places without knowing how they find them. What was true in the past is also true in the present; nothing should be arbitrarily altered. Then why should *ren* and justice like the cord, rope, glue, and varnish, be persistently allowed to mingle with morality? This is a delusion to all of us!

Continuing his attack on the superfluity of *ren* and justice, Zhuang Zi argued that nature used no tools of calibration and yet produced things of all shapes and forms and that by the same token, why couldn't people live in morality without *ren* and justice? Let's read on.

Moreover, small delusion causes confusion of directions; big delusion results in modification of characters. How do we know this is the case? Youyü<sup>8</sup> extolled *ren* and justice and caused great uneasiness in the land. No one in the land would not risk his life for the sake of *ren* and justice. Did these people not change their natural characters because of *ren* and justice? Let us try to explain. Ever since the three dynasties, there has not been a single person whose character is not changed by something else. A little man sacrifices his life for profits. A scholar sacrifices his life for honor. A minister sacrifices his life for the family. A sage sacrifices his life for the world. These men have different careers and different titles, but they are the same in violating their characters and in sacrificing their lives. Once a *zang*<sup>9</sup> and a servant-boy were both sent to tend sheep. They both ended up losing their sheep. When the *zang* was asked what he had been doing, he replied that he had been reading a book. When the servant-boy was asked what he had been doing, he replied that he had been playing with dice. They did different things, but they lost sheep just the same. Baiyi died for honor in the Shaoyang Mountain. Zhi the Brigand<sup>10</sup> died for profits in the East Hill. These two men died for different reasons, but they betrayed their lives and violated their nature just the same. Why must we consider Baiyi to be right and Zhi the Brigand to be wrong? People are always dying for something. If they die for *ren* and justice, they are commonly called *junzi*.<sup>11</sup> If they die for money and property, they are commonly called little men. The sacrifice is the same, but there are *junzi* and little men. From the standpoint of betrayal and violation, Zhi the Brigand was also Baiyi. Why should we distinguish *junzi* from little men?

Obviously, Zhuang Zi was critical of the Confucianists, although he did not call them by name. *Ren* and justice are the central teaching in Confucianism.

He sidetracked them as superfluous. Baiyi was a sage in Confucianism. Considering Baiyi in the same class as Zhi the Brigand would amount to “blasphemy” to the Confucianists. If the distinction between *junzi* and little man is lost, where will morality be? All these issues are so fundamental to the Confucianists, but Zhuang Zi dismissed them as peripheral, like having four toes or six fingers.

If one could adjust his nature to conform *ren* and justice to the perfection of Zeng Shen and Shi Yü, this would not be what I call excellence. If one could adjust his nature to conform the five flavors to the perfection of Yü Er,<sup>12</sup> this would not be what I call excellence. If one could adjust his nature to conform the five notes to the perfection of Shi Kuang, this would not be what I call superb hearing. If one could adjust his nature to conform the five colors to the perfection of Li Zhu, this would not be what I call superb eyesight. What I call excellence is not in *ren* and justice, but excellence in self-contentment. What I call excellence is not in so-called *ren* and justice, but in letting one’s nature and sentiments go as they may. What I call superb hearing is not hearing what is from outside, but what is from inside. What I call superb eyesight is not seeing what is from outside, but what is from inside. Therefore, if one does not see what is from inside but only sees what is from outside, or if one is not content with what is from inside but is only content with what is from outside, then he is content with someone’s contentment, but is not content with his own contentment, or he is comfortable in someone’s comfort, but is not comfortable in his own comfort. When a person is comfortable in someone’s comfort, but is not comfortable in his own comfort, even Baiyi and Zhi the Brigand walked on the same heterodox path. I am ashamed of myself on morality so that I dare not claim integrity in *ren* and justice on the one hand or take a heretical path on the other.

Zhuang Zi made a distinction between contentment that comes naturally from within and contentment that comes from adapting one’s true nature to certain standards from without. He deliberated his arguments from the standpoint of tasting, hearing, and seeing, but his focal point is against *ren* and justice. He

concluded that contentment from adapting one's true nature to that of someone else is not true contentment. As usual, he saved the topic sentence to the very last. He considered himself to be observing centrality.

### Notes

1. Here the literal meaning of the five internal organs of the body is not used. The concept of essentials within is adopted, from which it extends to things mental and spiritual. The term is used here to mean belief, thought, or idea.
2. Red, yellow, blue, white, and black are taken as the five primary colors.
3. Gong, shang, jue, zhi, and yü are the five ancient musical notes corresponding to *do, re, mi, sol, and la*, respectively.
4. Huang zhong, tai zu, gu xian, rui bin, yi ze, and wu yi are the names of the six pitch pipes in the yang *lü*. They were used as standards in tuning musical instruments.
5. A discussion of these arguments by Gongsun Long and Hui Si is presented in Chapter 33:8.
6. They are, in order of decreasing antiquity, the Xia, Shang (Yin), and Zhou dynasties. Zhuang Zi lived near the end of the Zhou dynasty.
7. It is used here to mean a tool with curvature for making curved objects. There could be a set of them, each with a different curvature.
8. The name of a legendary ruler, probably King Shun, of high antiquity.
9. In ancient northern China, a man servant having married a maid was called a *zang*.
10. Zhi the Brigand was the notorious leader of a gang of several thousand outlaws in the Spring-Autumn period. For more information about him see Chapter 29 in the Miscellaneous Series. His name has appeared in the *Book of Mencius*, the *Book of Xun Zi*, and *Lu's Spring and Autumn Annals*, but we know very little about him except that he was a brigand.
11. See note 10 in Chapter 6.
12. The name of an ancient discriminating taster.

## 9

# Horses' Hoofs

Zhuang Zi assails the ills of specious political devices that circumscribe freedom of the people. They betray the true nature of men. Only by dismantling the bondage can people again live in freedom.

### Section 1

A horse's hoofs can trample on hoarfrost and ice; its fur can protect it from wind and cold. It eats grass and drinks water, and it kicks its legs and jumps. These are the true nature of a horse. Even if there were tall buildings and big halls, they would have been useless to a horse. Then came a man named Baile<sup>1</sup> and said, "I am good at training horses." He burned and shaved their hair and shaped their hoofs and branded them. He harnessed them, tied their legs in training them to amble, and assigned them to live in a manger. Two to three out of every ten of his horses died. He deprived them of food and water and made them gait and run, and move and stop in good order. There was the burden of wearing the bit and bands in the front. There was the threat of getting whipped at the back. Then more than half of his horses died. A bricklayer would say, "I am good at working with clay. The round will agree with the compass; the square will agree with the carpenter's square." A carpenter would say, "I am good at working with wood. The curved will agree with the hook; the straight will agree with the plumb line." Does the nature of clay and wood wish to conform to the compass, the carpenter's square, the hook, and the plumb line? And yet, it has been said



for generations, “Baile was good at training horses. Bricklayers and carpenters are good at working with clay and wood, respectively.” This is also the fault of the rulers of the nation.

It is superfluous for us to try to improve nature. We may look at the other way when horses suffer at training. When rulers apply similar techniques to harness the people with eloquent excuses, what do we say then? Zhuang Zi was a lover of freedom. We need not accept his demonstrations literally, but we can readily appreciate the spirit behind his arguments.

I mean this is not the way for those who are good in governing the nation. People have true characters. They weave for what they wear; they plow fields for what they eat. This is called common instinct. They find themselves united without prejudice in what is known as natural *laissez faire*. Therefore, in an era of great virtue, people were free and easy-going. At that time, mountains had no paths or tunnels, lakes had no boats or bridges. All living things lived by one another. Plants and animals proliferated. Hence, it was possible to take an animal on a leash for a walk or to climb up a tree to peep at a bird’s nest.

In an era of great virtue, people lived with birds and beasts and all living beings were together. Who would know the distinction between *junzi* and little men. Everyone knew nothing about craftiness and would not wander away from his true nature. Everyone desired no desires and would remain plain and simple. Being plain and simple, people preserved their true nature. Then came the sages, who extolled *ren* and indulged in justice. The world began to become deluded. Merriment was the essence of music, protocol the basis of rites. The world began to become divided. Therefore, if a piece of natural wood is not sculptured, there will be no wine cups. If a piece of white jade stone is not cut and polished, there will be no jade ornaments. If morality is not ruined, there will be no use for *ren* and justice. If nature and temperament are not separated, there will be no use for music and rites. If the five colors are not commingled, there will not be patterns. If the five notes are not interplayed, there will not be the six *lü*. Hence, making a piece of plain wood into a vessel is

the guilt of a technician; destroying morality in favor of *ren* and justice is the fault of the sages.

The term “the era of great virtue” needs some notations. The Daoist considers “virtue” as a natural endowment in every one of us, like a piece of natural wood before it is carved into a wine cup or a piece of jade stone before it is polished into a jewel. Then came the Confucianist who wanted to polish the natural “virtue” with *ren* and justice. That really messed up everything. Zhuang Zi did not define the term. From the conditions he used to describe this era, it must be in a prehistoric period when men and beasts and birds lived together in a peaceful environment. It is against this background that Zhuang Zi based his theme of the true nature or true character of man. From true nature comes “morality.” He supported morality when it was a product of true nature, but not when it was formulated by artificial efforts, such as through *ren* and justice. “The sages” as used by Zhuang Zi here obviously refer to the Confucianist sages who made such efforts.

## Section 2

Horses live on land, eat grass and drink water. When they are happy, they rub necks with each other. When they are upset, they turn around and kick at each other. This is all what horses know. By the time they are harnessed with a yoke and decorated with a mirror on the forehead, they have learned how to break the crossbar of a carriage pole, free themselves from a collar, damage the carriage umbrella, loosen the bit, and resist the reins. Therefore, what makes horses learn the tricks against men is the fault of Baile.

At the time of Hexü,<sup>2</sup> people lived without knowing what to do and they walked without knowing where to go. They were joyous with foods in mouth and they wandered leisurely with full stomach. This was all what the people knew about how to enjoy life. Then came the sages, who applied rites and music to reshape the characters of the people and extolled *ren* and justice to comfort the minds of the people, such that people began to compete endlessly in craftiness for advantages. This is also the fault of the sages.

Once more, we should not read Zhuang Zi's expositions literally from A to Z. For example, the first few sentences of the preceding paragraph would have painted a picture of people doing and knowing nothing except eating. Granted, even in a very primitive environment, knowing nothing except eating is not conducive to survival. The conditions Zhuang Zi described here are far more primitive than what Lao Zi described for his utopia.<sup>3</sup> Apparently, Zhuang Zi tried too hard to line up men with horses—in eating and drinking. This seems a little forced. What he wanted to show is the obvious contrast in the thinking of men before and after the sages intervened. In this score, he succeeded.

## Notes

1. His formal name was Sun Yang. Baile was his courtesy name. He was a contemporary of Duke Mu of Qin in the Spring-Autumn period.
2. A presumably fictitious ruler of high antiquity.
3. See the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 80.



## 10

# Stealing Trunks

People often take precautions to prevent accidents from happening. In doing so, they may unintentionally allow their precautions to become a tool in facilitating the occurrence of accidents. In the end, whosoever has the craftiness to utilize the tool wins.

### Section 1

In preventing thieves from opening a trunk and stuffing valuables into a bag, people would tie the trunk around with ropes and lock it securely. This is commonly called cleverness. However, should a strong thief come, he simply picks up the trunk and hauls it on his back and walks away with it. His only concern would be that the ropes are not strong enough and the lock is not secure enough. Hence, isn't it true that what was previously considered clever has made the acquisition easy for the big thief?

This opening paragraph sets the theme that people often unknowingly do things and get exactly the opposite results from what they want.

Let us try to elaborate on this point. Has there ever been the so-called cleverness that does not help a big thief accumulate [what he has taken]? Has there ever been the so-called sage-ness that does not help a big thief keep [what he has taken]? How do we know that? In times past, the State of Qi was a land of over two thousand square *li*, where people of neighboring cities could see each other, they could hear each other's dogs

barking and roosters crowing, and fishing and farming activities spread throughout their land. Within the borders on four sides, they built ancestral temples and altars for land and grain gods, and administered various large and small political units.<sup>1</sup> All of these were done in accordance with the codes set by the sages. Then Tian Chengzi<sup>2</sup> murdered the head of the state and stole the state for himself. He stole not only the state, but the codes set by the sages as well. Therefore, although Tian Chengzi was labeled a bandit, he enjoyed the personal security accorded to Yao and Shun.<sup>3</sup> Small states dared not challenge him; large states dared not bring him to justice by force. He became the sole ruler of Qi.<sup>4</sup> Did he not only steal the Qi State, but also the codes set by the sages as well, so as to camouflage his banditry image?

Unfortunately, the example Zhuang Zi cited here was but one of numerous instances of usurpation during the Spring-Autumn period and even more so often in the Warring States period. A general review of the conditions prevailing in these periods has been presented in the Introduction. Zhuang Zi blamed the tragedies solely on the codes set by the sages, but he made no distinction between ethical and political considerations. There could be a combination of factors that precipitated these tragedies. Zhuang Zi pressed on the theme further in his deliberations.

Let us try to elaborate further. Has there ever been the so-called supreme cleverness that does not help a big thief accumulate [what he has taken]? Has there ever been the so-called supreme sageness that does not help a big thief keep [what he has taken]? How do we know that? In times past, Longfeng<sup>5</sup> was executed, Bi Gan<sup>6</sup> dissected, Changhong<sup>7</sup> torn apart, and Zixu<sup>8</sup> allowed to get rotten in a river. These four worthy men could not help having themselves sacrificed. Therefore, when a follower of Zhi the Brigand asked him, "Does banditry also have disciplines?" he answered, "How can it be without disciplines! To vision what is stored in the room is sagacity. To dare to enter first is courage. To leave last is righteousness. To judge to do it or not is wisdom. To distribute the loots equally is *ren*. Without fulfilling all these five requirements, no one is capable of becoming a big bandit in

the world.” From this point of view, a good man cannot establish himself without acquiring the doctrines of the sages and a big bandit like Zhi cannot carry out his plans without acquiring the doctrines of the sages either. Since there are fewer good men than bad men in the world, it follows that the sages benefit the world less than they endanger it. It has been said that when the lips are gone, the teeth feel cold; when the wine from [the State of] Lu is poor, [the City of] Handan is besieged;<sup>9</sup> when sages are living, big bandits rise. Down with the sages and set all bandits free. Then the world will be in peace. When valleys are empty, rivers will be dried. When hills are flattened, abysses will be filled. When sages are dead, big bandits will not rise and the world will be peaceful without tumult.

Zhuang Zi quoted a number of historical instances to support his arguments that indulgence in the teachings of the sages was the common denominator in causing all these men to accept death as a worthwhile price to pay for completing *ren* and justice. Moreover, cruel and covetous rulers and big bandits depended on the same teachings to justify their hideous actions against innocent people. The sages were the culprits of them all. Hence, comes the inevitable conclusion: “When sages have died, big bandits will not rise.”

When sages are not dead, big bandits cannot be stopped. Although we favor the sages in ruling the nation, we actually also favor bandits like Zhi the Brigand in accumulating what they have taken. We made the *dou* and *hu*<sup>10</sup> to standardize volume measurements, and they stole them as well. We designed the beam and weight of a steelyard to standardize weight measurements, and they stole them, likewise. We adopted tallies and seals to formalize credentials, and they stole them, too. We promoted *ren* and justice to correct irregularities, and they stole them, also. How do we know that? He who steals a belt buckle<sup>11</sup> will be executed; he who steals a state becomes a prince! Alas, *ren* and justice are kept behind the gates of the princes. Is this not a theft of *ren* and justice and the wisdom of the sages? Therefore, those who follow big bandits, admire the princes, steal *ren* and justice, and *dou*, *hu*, beam, weight, tallies and seals for their



advantages will not be moved by the attraction of official cap and chariot, nor will they be dissuaded by the threat of execution. Thus, it is the fault of the sages that this emphasis on gains by the likes of Zhi the Brigand cannot be overridden.

Zhuang Zi wrote two sentences in the preceding paragraph of text that have become oft-quoted striking aphorisms in Chinese literature. One is, "When sages are not dead, big bandits cannot be stopped." The other is, "He who steals a belt buckle will be beheaded; he who steals a state becomes a prince." Both are satirical. In the first sentence, the actual meaning is: when the teachings of the sages are not abolished, high banditry cannot be eliminated, because big bandits apply the teachings of the sages to justify their activities. Most readers may not accept this Zhuangian cause-effect relationship as eternal truth, but rather consider his sarcastic expression refreshing and arousing. The second sentence has a different connotation. On the one hand, a petty thief may be condemned to die, because the accused is powerless. On the other hand, an ambitious instigator may succeed in taking over a government, and installing himself as its head, because no one dares to challenge his legitimacy or morality. Given the tumultuous period he lived in, Zhuang Zi painfully recognized: Might makes right.

It has been written, "Fish may not leave an abyss. A government may not use its preemptory orders and rigorous exactions to awe the people."<sup>12</sup> The [codes set by the] sages like the preemptory orders and rigorous exactions should not be used to awe the people. Therefore, if sagacity is cut off and craftiness abandoned, big bandits will disappear. If jade is thrown away and pearls destroyed, small bandits will not rise. If tallies are burned and seals discarded, people will live simply and sincerely. If the *dou* is smashed and the steelyard broken, people will not quarrel. If the sacred codes are abolished, people will feel free to participate in public deliberations. If the six *lü* are messed up, the *yü* and *se*<sup>13</sup> torched, and the ears of Shi Kuang plugged, then people will begin to appreciate their ability to hear what is within. If patterns are blotted out, the five colors dispersed, and the eyes of Li Zhu glued, then people will begin to appreciate their ability to see what is within. If the hook and plumb line are abolished,

the compass and carpenter square destroyed, and the fingers of Gong Chui<sup>14</sup> cut off, then people will begin to appreciate their ability to articulate what is within. If the deeds of Zeng Shen and Shi Yü are cast away, the mouths of Yang Zhu and Mo Di sealed, and *ren* and justice abandoned, then the goodness of the world will begin to arrive at a state of profound equality. When everyone can contain his brightness, the world will be free from enchantment. When everyone can contain his intelligence, the world will be free from worries. When everyone can contain his cleverness, the world will be free from temptations. When everyone can contain his virtue, the world will be free from heterodoxy. People like Zeng Shen, Shi Yü, Yang Zhu, Mo Di, Shi Kuang, Gong Chui, and Li Zhu have exhibited their innate endowments to cause great confusion in the world. This is not the orthodox way.

As an extension of Lao Zi's idea that a show of weakness is stronger than a show of strength, Zhuang Zi elaborated further that, since the codes set by the sages were like "peremptory orders and rigorous exactions," they should not be displayed as a show of power. Along the same line of reasoning, he mentioned a number of historical figures who had shown great accomplishments through a display of their respective talents. (With the exception of Gong Chui noted here, all others have been mentioned in earlier chapters.) Because of their display of innate endowments being so overwhelmingly awesome, these gifted men had intimidated ordinary people in trying out their own endowments in the same way that a pronouncement of "peremptory orders and rigorous exactions" would inhibit people from "participating in public deliberations." Of course, we could argue that a similar show of such orders and exactions would result in the opposite effect of stimulating people to debate in public. Perhaps, Zhuang Zi's interpretation is conditioned by the reality of the time period he lived in.

## Section 2

Do you not know the era of abundant virtue? During the reigns of Rong Cheng, Da Ting, Bo Huang, Zhong Yang, Su Lu, Li Xu, Suan Yuan, He Xu, Zun Lu, Zhu Rong, Fu Xi, and Shen

Nong,<sup>15</sup> people used to tie strings into knots [for record keeping]. “They enjoyed delicious foods, beautiful clothing, peaceful abodes, and pleasurable custom. Between neighboring states, people could see each other, hear the dogs barking and cocks crowing. They did not visit one another in their lifetime.”<sup>16</sup> At this time the world was in complete peace. Now, people would long to hear the news, saying, “There lives a worthy man.” Then they would hurry to see him by preparing provisions, leaving their families behind, and neglecting their official duties, such that their footprints cover several states and their carriage wheel tracks crisscross thousands of *li* away. This is the fault of the superiors in the government who promote ingenuity and tactfulness.

This paragraph makes a sharp distinction between how people lived in complete peace and happiness in high antiquity when life was simple and truthful and how they lived in bewilderment and confusion when the superiors encouraged them with *ren* and justice.

When the superiors in the government blindly promote ingenuity and tactfulness, the world will be in tumult. How do we know that? When treacherous bows and arrows and bird nets are used, the [orderly life of] birds above will be disturbed. When tricky baits and baskets are used, the [orderly life of] fish in water will be perturbed. When camouflaged traps are used, the [orderly life of] beasts in the lowland will be upset. When variations in fraudulence, treachery, pretense, and distortion, and [arguments of] hardness vs. whiteness, and of similarities vs. differences<sup>17</sup> are many, ordinary people will be deluded. Therefore, the world is often involved in great commotions and the guilt can be traced to love of ingenuity and tactfulness. When everyone knows how to seek the unknown and does not know how to seek the known and when everyone knows how to wrong the bad and does not know how to wrong the good, the world will be full of serious tumults. Therefore, they obliterate the brightness of the sun and the moon above; they destroy the souls of mountains and rivers below; and they interfere with

the seasonal changes in between. Even small creeping worms and tiny flying insects cannot keep their nature intact. How devastating is the effect of love of ingenuity and tactfulness on the peaceful world. Ever since the three dynasties, the world has forsaken the honest people in preference to the insinuating and forsaken the simple people in preference to the eloquent. Eloquence has already caused turmoil in the world.

In the Daoist thinking, the world as it came to us naturally was already perfect. We could not really improve it. When we tried, such as by adding *ren* and justice, we always ended up with a far less desirable world than the one we got originally. Perhaps, the clock cannot be turned back. As Zhuang Zi sighed at the reality (since the three dynasties), people had been destined to live in a world of imperfection.

## Notes

1. There is a specific name in Chinese for each of the several units based on the size of the population. These unit names are not translated.
2. His formal name was Chen Heng, a minister in the court of Duke Jian of Qi. The usurpation occurred in 480 B.C.
3. Two cultural kings of high antiquity as noted before.
4. The text of this sentence has been in dispute for over a thousand years. Because of errors in hand copying, different editions ended up with different meanings. Modern scholars like Chen Guying (2-*a*) and Yan Lingfeng (49) have concurred on a historically correct version, which is translated here.
5. Full name Guan Longfeng, a loyal minister in the court of the wanton King Jie (r. 1818–1766 B.C.) of the Xia dynasty. He was executed when the king ridiculed his wise counsel as magic spells.
6. An uncle of the cruel King Zhou (r. 1154–1123 B.C.) of the Shang (Yin) dynasty. Annoyed by his uncle's steadfast admonishment for three days, the king ordered to have his heart dissected so that he could see how a kind man's heart would look.
7. A minister in the court of King Jing (r. 519–ca. 479 B.C.) of the Zhou dynasty. He secretly participated in an insurrection in the Jin State. When the insurrection failed, he was exposed and returned to his king's court where he was sentenced to die.
8. Full name Wu Zixū, a brilliant strategist of the Wu State, who counseled his prince not to accept a peace treaty with the defeated Yue State, but to occupy the land for good. His counsel was not only rejected, but cost him his life in ca. 481 B.C. In 472 B.C. the reconstructed Yue conquered the once victorious Wu.
9. A simpler version of the events that form the basis of this aphorism is as follows: The prince of the Chu State invited the princes of the Lu and Zhao States to a banquet. Both of them presented the host with wine. The Lu wine was mediocre and the Zhao wine was excellent. The chef mistook (either purposefully or accidentally) the Lu wine for the Zhao wine and vice versa. The prince of the Chu State was infuriated at the poor quality of wine from the Zhao State and sent his troops to beset Handan, the capital city of Zhao. The caveat: Calamities could befall you, even though you have done nothing wrong.
10. They are units of volume measurements. One *hu* equals five *dou*, or about seven tenths of a bushel.
11. It is used here to mean something trivial.

12. *Dao De Jing*: chapter 36. The text uses literally “sharp edged tools” to imply “peremptory orders and rigorous exactions” or the like.
13. *Yü* is a portable musical wind instrument containing thirty-six reed pipes; *se*, a large horizontal instrument containing twenty-five or fifty strings.
14. Gong Chui was a legendary skilled workman in high antiquity.
15. The names of only three of these twelve legendary prehistorical cultural heroes have appeared in ancient literature and the others have not. As they are used in the present context, it is not important if they were real or fictitious.
16. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 80.
17. “Hardness vs. whiteness” is an argument of sophistry used by Gongsun Long that a thing cannot be hard and white at the same time. “Similarities vs. differences” is an argument of sophistry used by Hui Shi. Zhuang Zi despised sophistry in general.



# 11

## On Being Content and Comfortable

This chapter elaborates a theme that loving Nature is human nature. Ever since the ancient rulers favored a rule by propriety and ritual, the world has not been in peace. If we can pay attention to our mental and physical well-being, we may come close to attaining true peace.

### Section 1

I have heard of making the people content and comfortable, but I have not heard of ruling the people. What makes the people content is the concern that their nature might otherwise be violated. What makes the people comfortable is the concern that their character might otherwise be compromised. When their nature is not violated and their character is not compromised, what is ruling the people for? In times past when Yao<sup>1</sup> ruled the land, the people enjoyed their nature with dancing and hopping, and there was no tranquility. When Jie<sup>2</sup> ruled the land, the people toiled their nature with suffering, and there was no happiness. Either no tranquility or no happiness is against the people's character. The world has not seen anything being against the people's character and lasting at the same time.

The two key words in this first paragraph are nature and character. Nature refers to the innate nature and character refers to the constant character, both present in every one of us. They have been discussed in Chapter 9:1. The Daoist values natural ways of doing things. To “rule” is not favored, because it implies too many human efforts. “Enjoyed with dancing and hopping” is overjoyed.



Being overjoyed is not natural, because it impedes tranquility. This translator does not think that Zhuang Zi would consider dancing and hopping not part of human nature. Hence, the master would seem to have nothing to do with writing this section.

When people are pleased beyond expectation, it will be bad for the yang within; when people are in a great rage, it will be bad for the yin within. When both yang and yin are mistreated, when the four seasons do not come on schedule, and when the harmony of summer and winter is impaired, the people will get hurt in the end as well. When the joy and anger of the people are misplaced, their actions and reactions are illogical, their thoughts are wavering, and the execution of their goals is inconsistent. The world will be full of contradictions and confrontations and then the influences of Zhi the Brigand, Zeng Shen, and Shi Yü will prevail. As a result, all the resources of the nation will not be enough to reward those with good deeds or to punish those with bad deeds. In short, the enormous resources of the nation are deemed inadequate to do either all the rewards or all the punishments. Since the three dynasties, rulers have clamored at rewards and punishments. How could they find time to care for the temperament of the people?

This is a stern denunciation of using rewards and punishments to regulate the subjective standards of praise and contempt. Under the grand pronouncement, “When sages are not dead, big bandits cannot be stopped,” Zhuang Zi already defined the cause and effect between sages and big bandits. So what difference will it make with Zhi the Brigand on one side and Zeng Shen and Shi Yü on the other! Rulers should take good care of the temperament of the people instead of preoccupying themselves with meaningless rewards and punishments.

Moreover, people are fond of eyesight, though it confuses colors. People are fond of hearing, though it confuses sounds. People are fond of *ren*, though it interferes with character. People are fond of justice, though it ignores principles. People are fond of ritual, though it aids in technicality. People are fond of music, though it aids in licentiousness. People are fond of sagacity, though it

aids in craftiness. People are fond of cleverness, though it aids in “fishing” for blemishes. If a nation will take care of the temperament of the people, these eight “favorites” may be let stay or go. If a nation will not take care of the temperament of the people, these eight “favorites” will begin with entanglement and end with confusion in the nation. And yet the people would respect and prize them. How deluded can the nation ever become! These people not merely give the favorites one try and then forget about them. They speak about them with reverence, profess them with formality, and worship them with songs and dances. How can I be of help to them!

When a *junzi* cannot help become the head of a nation, there is nothing better for him to do than doing as nature does. Doing as nature does is the way to take care of the temperament of the people. It is said: “When a person respects his fellow men as he respects himself, he may be entrusted with the affairs of the state. When a person loves his fellow men as he loves himself, he may be entrusted with the affairs of the state.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, when a *junzi* can do without giving rein to his affections and without flaunting his intelligence, he can live in quietude and yet show graceful countenance, say no words and yet be felt deeply, move his spirit in accord with nature, and leisurely follow the course of nature to let all things produce profusely. How can I find time to rule a nation?

The head of a nation can do one of two things to the people, but not both. One is to take care of the temperament of the people and the other is to rule them. From the deliberations of the preceding two paragraphs of text, the Daoist’s choice was obvious. We may note the literary style of this section is somewhat distinct from the preceding sections. Formerly, Zhuang Zi spoke from the third person. Here he used the first person. The significance is unclear. Of course, he used the first person before, but that was in a dialogue. Another point of note may be that he used the term *junzi*. This is a Confucianist term, rarely touched by the Daoist unless in a detractive tone. Moreover, in the last paragraph, *junzi* and pronoun I come close to meaning the same person. For these reasons, this translator suspects this section or this chapter is not the work from Zhuang Zi’s pen.

## Section 2

Cui Qū asked Lao Dan, “When a nation is not ruled properly, how can the sentiment of the people become peaceful?”

Lao Dan replied, “Be careful not to disturb the sentiment of the people. The sentiment of the people can easily be cooled down and heated up. The ups and downs act against each other. The softhearted overcomes the strong-willed. A person having lived through ordeals and tribulations changes his temper from hot as fire to cold as ice in less time than a nodding of the head and as far reaching as from one corner of the earth to the other. He is calm in quietude, but excited under agitation. His haughty manner is uncontrollable. This is how people show their sentiment.

“In times past, King Huang started using *ren* and justice to arouse the sentiment of the people. Thus, Kings Yao and Shun labored physically for the welfare of the people so that their legs became skinny and their calves hairless. They made great efforts with their internal strength in executing *ren* and justice. They earnestly resolved in their will to write laws and regulations. But these endeavors were not always successful. Therefore, Yao banished Huan Dou to Mount Chong, moved San Miao to Sanwei, and exiled Gong Gong to Youdu. But the world was not improved. Then there came the three dynasties and the world was shocked. There were King Jie and Zhi the Brigand below and Zeng Shen and Shi Yū above, and the ceaseless arguments between the Confucianist and the Mohist. Consequently, the overjoyed and the raged were suspicious of each other; the foolish and the clever cheated each other; the good and the bad accused each other; and the crooked and the trustworthy ridiculed each other. The prosperity of the nation declined. The great De was broken down and life became miserable. The whole nation was fond of craftiness and the people were perplexed. Henceforth, the authority applied laws and regulations for restraint, and various instruments for corporal and capital punishments. The nation was involved in severe turmoil. The guilt came from the disturbance of sentiment of the people. Consequently, the worthy hid

themselves in the mountains and cliffs and the kings trembled with fear in the palace halls.

Here are notes on a few personal names mentioned in the above paragraph of text. Cui Qū was a fictitious name for a person concerned with ruling a nation. He posed a question to Lao Zi. Huan Dou was an opponent of King Yao. San Miao was the name of a tribe or its chief. Gong Gong was the title of an office on water control headed by Qong Chi. Here King Yao removed the officer, not the office. These personal names came down from prehistoric times, long before *ren* and justice were conceived. How could *ren* and justice have anything to do with them? The expression that “their legs became skinny and their calves hairless” has been used to describe the tireless Great Yü in his determination to control the floods in China. Here the author of this essay, definitely not Zhuang Zi, mistook the description for Kings Yao and Shun. Furthermore, in this prehistoric period, the idea of *ren* and justice had not been born. How could any association with this idea have been made?

“In the present generation, corpses from various punishments form piles, those wearing cangues and shackles push against one another, and those sentenced to be executed look at each other in despair. Finally, the Confucianist and the Mohist sense the urgency of the situation and cry out for those held in fetters and handcuffs, “Alas, this has gone too far!” How could they be so conscienceless and shameless! I have not known that teachings of the sages are not the wooden pieces that assemble into cangues and shackles, *ren* and justice are not the round and square openings of fetters and handcuffs. How would I know that Zeng Shen and Shi Yü were not the forerunners of King Jie and Zhi the Brigand? Therefore, if sagacity is abolished and craftiness abandoned, the world will be in complete peace.”

Of course, the purported dialogue between Cui Qū and Lao Zi did not occur. There is no record to show that Lao Zi ever said it except for a few words, such as “if sagacity is cut off and craftiness abandoned” (in Chapter 19 of the *Dao De Jing*). The deliberation is utterly critical of the Confucianist and the Mohist for they appeared to have “drawn back their hands inside the sleeves,” an expression

used by Han Yü (762–824) to mean doing nothing now, but reserving an option to comment later. We may ask, “What did the Daoist do at the same time?” Above all, there is a historical inconsistency in next to the last sentence of the text above. Let us list the approximate time in which these four persons lived as follows: Zeng Shen, a disciple of Confucius, lived in mid sixth century B.C. Shi Yü, a minister under Duke Ling of Wei, a contemporary of Confucius. So he was a contemporary of Zeng Shen as well. King Jie’s reign ended in 1776 B.C. In Chapter 29 on Zhi the Brigand in this book, it tells a fictitious story of Confucius going to see the brigand. The brigand could be a contemporary of Confucius. We have no way to prove or disprove it. Now here is this question purportedly posed by Lao Zi: “How would I know Zeng Shen and Shi Yü were not the forerunners of King Jie and Zhi the Brigand?” We would like to ask one question: How could Zeng Shen and Shi Yü become forerunners of King Jie, who lived more than one thousand years before them? We believe Zhuang Zi could not have made this kind of historical blunder. Someone did.

### Section 3

Nineteen years after King Huang took the throne, his command prevailed through the kingdom. He heard about Guangchen Zi in Mount Kongtong and went to see him. The king said to him, “I heard that you, my master, had attained the supreme Dao. May I ask you about the essence of the supreme Dao? I would like to take the essence of heaven and earth to supplement the five grains to nourish my people. I also would like to regulate the yin and yang to nurture all living beings. How could I do that?”

Guangchen Zi answered, “What you would like to ask is the substance of things. What you would like to regulate is the residue of things. Since you ruled the land, the cloud vapor has become rain without waiting to coalesce, twigs and leaves have dropped without waiting to turn yellow, and the brightness of the sun and the moon has faded even more. The thought of an eloquent person like you is shallow. How could you be qualified to talk about the supreme Dao?”

King Huang bowed and left. He withdrew from national affairs, built a special room laid with white reed, and stayed in there to meditate for three months. Then he went to see the recluse again.

Guangchen Zi facing south was reclining. King Huang crawled forth on hands and knees from below, kowtowed and asked, "I heard that you, my master, had attained the supreme Dao. May I ask how can cultivating one's body be lasting? Guangchen Zi suddenly got up and said, "How excellent your question is! Come, let me tell you about the supreme Dao. The essence of the supreme Dao is minute and obscure; the limit of the supreme Dao is far and unfathomable. Pay no attention to what can be seen and heard. Keep your spirit serene and your body will repose. Observe tranquility and purity. Do not toil your body or waste your spirit. Then you will attain longevity. The eyes do not see what need not be seen, the ears do not hear what need not be heard, and the heart does not know what need not be known. Then your spirit will stay with your body and your body will live a long life. Protect tranquility inside and shut off disturbances outside. Craftiness leads to failure. I will help you reach above the great light to arrive at the origin of the supreme yang;<sup>4</sup> I will help you reach the gate to the obscure and the unfathomable to arrive at the origin of the supreme yin. Heaven and earth fulfill their respective duties. Yin and yang stay in their respective courses. Take care of your body and things will prosper by themselves. I observe the oneness of the supreme Dao and stay with its harmony. Hence, I have cultivated my body for one thousand and two hundred years and my look has not been feeble."

King Huang kowtowed and said, "Guangchen Zi may be said to have united with nature."

Guangchen Zi continued, "Come, let me tell you: Dao is infinite, but people think it has ends. Dao is unfathomable, but people think it has limits. He who acquires my Dao can become the supreme ruler of the heavens above or the king of a nation below. He who loses my Dao can only look at the sun and the moon above and the earth below. Since all things grow from earth and die and return to earth, I shall leave you and enter the gate of infinity and wander in the limitless wilderness. I shall share the brightness with the sun and the moon, and unite with the heaven and earth. Come to me; you will be united. Leave me; you will be confused. All men will face death, but only I shall live!"

The authenticity of certain chapters, certain sections within a chapter, and certain parts of a section of this book has been questioned for different reasons by various scholars both past and present. This translator has found this section to have an authenticity problem. King Huang is considered a pre-historical cultural hero who lived in about 2697 B.C. The fact that the story told herein is fictitious is not a problem at all. The problem lies in the characterization of Guangchen Zi, the recluse and what he said. A recluse is supposed to be humble and disinterested in whatever goes on in the mundane world. Ancient protocol required that when a king granted an audience, he always faced south. The story begins with Guangchen Zi facing south when the king went to see him, suggesting the sovereign-subject relationship has been reversed. He called the king an eloquent person without realizing his own arrogance. He bragged about having lived one thousand and two hundred years. Did he die, or is he still living?! Above all, he called his apprehension of Dao “my Dao.” Dao is universal and cannot be personalized. There is no my Dao or your Dao. These literary “glitches” make it almost certain that Zhuang Zi did not have a hand in writing the story.

This translator uses this story and the preceding one about Lao Zi to illustrate how scholars painstakingly read between the lines to feel if authenticity is a problem. We look hard at the rhetoric, the choice of words, and the thought behind it all. In what follows certain passages will be marked for deletion for serious literary authenticity problems. The reader will be informed of the deletion. For the sake of simplicity, however, no detailed analysis for the rejection will be presented.

#### Section 4

Yun Jiang journeyed to the east, passed by branches of a divine tree called *fuyao*, and by chance saw Hong Meng. Hong Meng was having fun tapping his thigh and hopping around like a sparrow. On seeing him, Yun Jiang stopped walking and asked, “Who are you, my venerable elder? Why are you doing that?”

Hong Meng kept on tapping and hopping and said to Yun Jiang, “Having fun.”

Yun Jiang said, “I wish to seek your advice.”

Hong Meng turned and looked at Yun Jiang saying, “Oh!”

Yun Jiang said, “The *qi* from heaven above are not harmonious. The *qi* from earth below congeal. The six *qi* are not concerted and the four seasons do not come on time. Now I would like to combine the essence of the six *qi* to nurture all living beings. How should I do it?”

Hong Meng kept on tapping and hopping. He turned his head and said to Yun Jiang, “I don’t know. I don’t know.”

Both Yun Jiang, an administrator, and Hong Meng, a recluse, are trumped-up characters. From what Yun Jiang was asking, “Who are you, my venerable elder?” in the story, the two men appeared to have met by chance for the first time. However, we are left wondering how Yun Jiang knew the elder was Hong Meng by name.

*Qi* is a favorite topic of the Daoist and has been mentioned a few times earlier. (See, for example, Chapters 1:1 and 4:1.)

Yun Jiang got no answers. Three years later, he again journeyed to the east, passed by the wilderness of the Song State, and saw Hong Meng. Yun Jiang was overjoyed, went over to see him and said, “Do you forget about me? Do you forget about me?” He kowtowed and begged to hear from Hong Meng.

Hong Meng said, “Roaming freely but knowing not where to go, being reckless but knowing not what to wish,<sup>5</sup> and wandering about a myriad of things in learning their true nature, I have known nothing!”

Yun Jiang said, “I consider myself reckless, but people follow me where I go. I cannot help come in contact with people, but they imitate me. I beg to hear your advice.”

Hong Meng said, “As the normal course of nature is disturbed and the sentiment of things is violated, the original conditions of nature cannot be preserved. Consequently, animals do not flock, birds crow at night. Calamities spread to plants and insects. Ah, this is the fault of ruling people.”

Yun Jiang asked, “What should I do?”

Hong Meng said, “You have mistreated your people. Please go home.”



Yun Jiang said, "I have found this rare chance of seeing you. I hope to hear your advice."

Hong Meng said, "Ah, cultivate your heart! When you do things naturally, they will undergo changes by themselves. Forget about your physical presence and smother your intelligence. Commingle with things exterior and harmonize with the *qi* from nature. Free your spirit and shut off your craftiness. All things come in numerous ways and return to their origins by themselves, for they can do so without knowing how. If they use no clever schemes, they can return to their roots. If they use clever schemes, they will lose their way to return to their roots. Ask not their names and inquire not their circumstances, for things do flourish by themselves."

Yun Jiang replied, "Heaven bestows grace on me and reveals serenity to me. I have searched Dao diligently in person and now I have gotten it." He kowtowed and bade farewell.

Apparently, the last words uttered by Hong Meng are considered a condensed prescription for ruling the mass. The key sentence is "Ah, cultivate your heart!" Here heart is synonymous with mind or spirit. What follows in this paragraph is how to let things and people go and do naturally. The more an administrator tries to put things in order, the more disorderly and confusing they become. Obviously, the Daoist pays great attention to cultivating mind and body. It is not surprising that the Confucianist makes the same emphasis in general. What distinguishes one from the other is what specifics are important and how to get there. For instance, *ren* and justice are considered indispensable in Confucianism, but disposable in Daoism.

## Section 5

Vulgar people like those who agree with them, but do not like those who disagree with them. The reason that they like consenters and do not like dissenters is based on a desire to be ahead of all others. However, having a desire to be ahead of all others does not mean being ahead of all others. Moreover, if you feel good because many people agree with you, it may be realistic to think that these people are simply crafty. Similarly, those who wish

to rule a state look only at the advantages of the Three Kings,<sup>6</sup> but overlook their shortcomings. They are taking chances with ruling a state. How minuscule their chances of not losing a state would be! The chances of saving a state are less than one in ten thousand; the chances of losing a state are every one of the ten thousand. It is a pity that rulers do not understand it.

He who rules a state possesses a huge mass of things.<sup>7</sup> He who possesses such a huge mass should not be overcome by it. Being able to overcome and not be overcome is being able to leave all things to nature. It is important to know that what can be left to nature is not just things, because it goes beyond ruling a state and its people. His spirit wanders in and out of the six limits,<sup>8</sup> and travels through the Nine Regions.<sup>9</sup> Alone it comes and goes. This is called “self-possession.” He who possesses it will be superbly respected.

This paragraph indicates even a ruler could be a Daoist if he would leave everything to nature without arbitrary interferences from human efforts. It goes without saying that no ruler can fit into the description. The closing sentences about the wanderings of one’s free spirit come close to the Daoist ideal.

The teaching of the superior man is like an object to its shadow and a sound to its echo. There is an answer to every question. His teaching responds to all in the best possible way. His presence is quiet and his movements have no set direction. He leads all kinds of people, wanders in limitless space, comes and goes freely, and renews himself daily. His countenance conforms to nature. Being part of nature, he is selfless. Being selfless, how would he see only the *you*? Those who see only the *you* are *junzi* of the past; those who see the *wu* are friends of nature.

The *you* and *wu* are taken from Lao Zi’s *Dao De Jing*. Let us do a little notation here. *You* literally means having or there is (are). *Wu* literally means not having or none. So the *literal* meaning of one is the exact opposite of the other. But Lao Zi gave them *specific* meanings that have nothing to do with their literal meanings. Lao Zi wrote: “*Wu* is the origin of heaven and earth; *you* is the mother of all things.”<sup>10</sup> He also wrote: “All things in the world are created

from *you*, and *you* from *wu*.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, both *you* and *wu* are states of Dao. Their relationships are sequential and can be shown as follows: Dao → *Wu* → *You*. The theme of this section continues to attack the fault of ruling, which always results in losing the support of the people.

The text of this section continues with a lengthy discussion (with some 250 Chinese characters) of *ren* and justice, and other non-Daoist ideas. Past and present scholars have determined that this appendix is the work of forgery and should be excluded. It is so done here.

## Notes

1. A legendary prehistoric benevolent ruler, as has been noted before.
2. The last and wanton ruler of the Xia dynasty. Yao and Jie are mentioned here as a contrast between good and evil.
3. Quoted from the *Dao De Jing*, chapter 13.
4. The sun is also called *tai yang* in Chinese, which means literally supreme yang. In the same sentence, the great light refers to the sun, too. Likewise, the moon is also known as *tai yin* in Chinese meaning supreme yin.
5. These two participial phrases, which appear originally in the text as “Roaming freely but knowing not what to wish, being reckless but knowing not where to go” have been rearranged in the present order. It seems “roaming” is “to go,” as “being reckless” is “to wish.”
6. The term refers to Kings Huang, Yao, and Shun of the prehistoric period. The Confucianist considers this period to be the golden period in China’s history, but the Daoist does not accept the claim.
7. The expression “a huge mass of things” refers to the land and people.
8. The universe. See Chapter 2:5.
9. Anciently, China was divided into nine administrative regions: Ji, Yü, Xu, Qiong, Yung, Yan, Qing, Yang, and Liang. Hence, the term “Nine Regions” is used synonymously with China proper.
10. The *Dao De Jing*: chapter 1.
11. The *Dao De Jing*: chapter 40.



## 12

# Heaven and Earth

This chapter consists of fourteen sections, none of which is related to anyone else. It describes how people often apprehend Truth without purposefully searching for it. Several stories, though fictitious, challenge the so-called peaceful era in high antiquity.

### Section 1

Heaven and earth are immense, but changes proceed with evenness. Things are numerous, but they obey one principle. People are many, but their master is the ruler. The ruler comes forth from virtue and succeeds in following nature. Therefore, it is said that eons ago, rulers governed by doing what came naturally, that is, following a kind of natural codes of conduct.

If we examine words from the standpoint of Dao, all names under heaven are rectified. If we examine distinctions from the standpoint of Dao, the roles of the ruler and subjects are obvious. If we examine the ability from the standpoint of Dao, all officers under heaven are doing their duties. If we examine overall conditions from the standpoint of Dao, all things have taken their proper positions. Hence, that which communicates with heaven is Dao; that which accords with earth is De; that which permeates in all things is justice; that which rules people is duty; that which underlies handicraft is skill. Skill goes with duty, duty goes with justice, justice goes with De, De goes with Dao, and Dao goes with heaven. Therefore in times past, those who cared for the world instigated no desires and the world

was content; they did nothing arbitrarily and all things were affected; and they kept calm and the people were settled.<sup>1</sup> It has been recorded: “Understand the One and a myriad of things are accomplished. Apprehend it without efforts and the *gui shen* will admire with respect.”<sup>2</sup>

This section elaborates on the nature of Dao and De and how the world will benefit if they are allowed to prevail among us. Of course, the natural codes of conduct are not meant to be a written piece of document, but rather a conviction through apprehension of Dao. The last sentence reveals the likelihood that we could have apprehended Dao without our ever knowing it.

## Section 2

The master said, “Dao is what covers and supports all things. How magnanimous it is! The *junzi* cannot but abandon prejudice in searching for it. Doing things without prejudice is called Dao. Saying things without prejudice is called De. Loving people and benefiting things is called *ren*. Unifying the differences is called magnificence. Behaving without weirdness is called kindness. Embracing all things is called wealth. Observing De is called discipline. Succeeding with De is called accomplishment. Following Dao is called preparedness. Damping not one’s ardor for things’ sake is called perfection. A *junzi* who understands these ten conditions will broaden his goal in life and enrich it to accommodate all things. If so, let there be people burying gold in the mountain, sinking pearls in the abyss, seeking no wealth, staying away from nobility, craving not for longevity, pitying not an untimely death, feeling no glory for affluence, feeling no shame for poverty, taking not the profits of the world for private possession, taking not a peaceful world for personal distinction. Displaying distinction is manifesting prominence. All things are one; life and death are the same.”

Who was the master in “The master said”? Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi, and Confucius have all been suggested, because we can find sentences or parts of a sentence that contain thought close to each one of them. For instance,

the use of Confucianist *ren* and *junzi* is mixed with Lao Zi's Dao and De. Most modern annotators, however, tend to accept the commentary of Sima Biao (31), who considered the master to be Zhuang Zi. Indeed, the flow of thought and rhetorical construction, especially in the second half of the paragraph, look like the work of his followers.

What covers all things is heaven and what supports all things is earth. This idea is close to what is described in the *Yi Jing*.<sup>3</sup> Dao is both heaven and earth and more. People are willing to bury gold in the mountain and sink pearls into the abyss, because they have no use for them or let natural things return to where they belong. In what follows is a long list of things a Daoist would pay no attention to in his life.

The master said, "Dao is deep and clear. Musical instruments lacking Dao do not make sounds. Therefore, they make sounds only when played, i.e. making no sounds without being played. Who can be certain how myriads of things will respond to induction?"

"A man with abundant virtue acts in simplicity and spares of his participation in vulgarity. He establishes himself in the beginning and his wisdom surpasses human comprehension. His virtue is far-reaching and his thought responds to the induction of things without. A form cannot be living without Dao. A life cannot be manifested without De.<sup>4</sup> How can a person who preserves the form and fulfills the life and who promotes the De and apprehends the Dao not be one with abundant virtue! Great is he who appears suddenly and moves swiftly and is followed by everything. This is the man with abundant virtue.

"When we look, Dao is profound. When we listen, it is soundless. In profundity, we see its image. In silence, we hear its call. In its profound depth, it reveals its substance. In its profound mystery, it reveals its strength.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, when Dao receives all things, its emptiness supplies their needs and its swiftness provides their rest."

A musical instrument does not make sounds until played. Sounds are made in response to induction (playing). Hence, sounds result from manifestations in response to induction. Likewise, life can only be sustained with Dao and



manifested with De. A man with abundant virtue is one who apprehends the Dao and promotes the De. Despite its profundity, Dao reveals to our senses if we are prepared for it. In its emptiness, its riches fulfill our needs. In its swiftness, its profundity prepares for our rest.

In some editions, this paragraph ends with six more characters, “Big and small, long and short, near and far.” They have been determined to be “a typographic error” and are thus deleted.

### Section 3

King Huang journeyed to the north of the Red River and ascended to the peak of Mount Kunlun and looked south. On returning he lost his black pearl. He fetched Zhi to find it. It was not found. He fetched Li Zhu to find it. It was not found. He fetched Chi Gou to find it. It was not found. He then fetched Xiang Wan to find it. Xiang Wan found it. King Huang said, “Strange! Why only Xiang Wan could find it?”

The story is simple and fictitious. King Huang was a pre-historical cultural hero even before Kings Yao and Shun mentioned elsewhere. Mount Kunlun is in western China. There is no river called the Red River. Red is used here probably in contrast to black in the black pearl. Black pearl stands for something serene or even Dao. Zhi means wisdom. Li Zhu is the name of an officer with extraordinary eyesight serving in the court of King Huang. His name has been mentioned earlier. Chi Gou means argument. Xiang Wan or Wan Xiang in some editions means absent-mindedness. Simply, here is the message: A person might lose Dao. It cannot be recovered by wisdom, perception, or argument. Yet it might be regained effortlessly at the least guarded moment.

### Section 4

King Yao’s teacher was Xu You. Xu You’s teacher was Nie Que. Nie Que’s teacher was Wang Ni. Wang Ni’s teacher was Bei Yi. King Yao asked Xu You, “Is Nie Que worthy of a kingship? I have requested Wang Ni to invite him.”

Xu You answered, “Perilous indeed! The world will be in danger. As a person, Nie Que is intelligent and wise, alert and

earnest. He has superior disposition and knows how to adjust human affairs to timely requirements. He is keen in avoiding mistakes, but is ignorant of their origin. Let him be a king? He would do what is humanly possible without regard to what is natural. He would use himself as model to judge all others. He would respect knowledge and favor rapid applications. He would pay attention to details. He would maintain close contact with all others. He would react to events without consistent principles. He would do well as an officer of people, but not as the king of a nation. Rule by him will be the cause of turmoil. It will be the root of misfortune for the people and the root of disgrace for a king.”

The credentials of the fabled Nie Que would seem to be highly qualified for a king in any period of human history, but the candidate would run afoul of the Daoist ideal of no-action, that is, doing nothing unnatural. The resume suggests that Nie Que could and probably would rule. This is what scared the Daoist as shown in the closing remarks.

## Section 5

King Yao was touring the District of Hua. A frontiersman of Hua came to say, “Hello, my saint, may I congratulate my saint and wish my saint a long life!”

Yao replied, “Please don’t.”

“Wishing my saint wealth!”

Yao replied, “Please don’t.”

“Wishing my saint many sons!”

Yao replied, “Please don’t.”

The frontiersman said, “Longevity, wealth, and many sons are what every man wishes. And you don’t wish any of them. Why?”

Yao replied, “Many sons entail many worries. Wealth entails many incidents. Longevity entails many hardships. These three are not good for cultivating virtue. So I am sorry.”

The frontiersman said, “At first, I thought you were a saint. Now I realize that you are a *junzi*. There are myriads of people

and each has a job to do. When you have many sons and give each a job, what is to be worried about? When you are wealthy, you can ask people to distribute your wealth. There is nothing more to do. As for saints, they find peace everywhere like newly hatched birds being fed without searching for food or flying birds roosting anywhere without a destination. When the world is peaceful, they enjoy life with everyone else. When the world is tumultuous, they cultivate virtue leisurely. If after one thousand years, they are tired of living here, they can ride on clouds and ascend to the heavens. The three things that concern you will never happen. You will never encounter calamities. What is there to be apprehensive about?"

After that, the frontiersman started to walk away. Yao followed him and said, "I wish to talk to you." The frontiersman replied, "Go away."

"The three things that concern you . . ." can have two inferences. This translator interprets them to mean longevity, wealth, and many sons. Chen Guying (2-a) reads them to mean old age, sickness, and death. The former is specifically mentioned in this essay; the latter is a general reference as cited in Buddhism. The reader can have a choice.

## Section 6

When King Yao ruled the nation, he conferred to Baichen Zigao as one of the princes. Later, Yao abdicated in favor of Shun. Still later, King Shun abdicated in favor of Yü. Baichen Zigao resigned the principality in favor of farming. King Yü went to see him as he was working in the field. The king walked respectfully toward him and while still standing, asked, "Formerly, King Yao ruled the land and you were conferred a prince. Yao abdicated in favor of Shun and King Shun abdicated in favor of me. Then you, my master, resigned the principality in favor of farming. May I ask the reason of your resignation?"

Zigao answered, "Formerly, when King Yao ruled the land, he used no rewards and the people turned to virtue and he used no punishments and the people turned away from evil. Now

you are using both rewards and punishments and the people do not feel warmhearted toward one another. Thus, virtue declines and punishments rise. This sets the beginning of the turmoil of future generations. Why don't you, my master, leave? And waste not my time!" He turned his head and kept on farming.

Baichen Zigao is not known in history and is most likely fictitious. The succession of the three prehistoric kings is a Confucianist ideology. In several essays in the Inner Series, Zhuang Zi mentioned these three kings. Apparently, he accepted their historical status as did the Confucianist at his time. Moreover, at the time of Kings Yao and Shun, there was no evidence of a feudal system in which the king appointed a number of princes with principalities to help him rule the land, as alluded to in the story. Again, this historical glitch seems to help make the story non-Zhuangian.

## Section 7

In the very beginning, there was *wu*. There was neither *you* nor name. This was when there was the One. The One was formless. Things depended on it to come into being; this coming into being is called De. Things that were formless were distinguishable and yet they remained commingled. This commingling condition for being is called destiny. The stationary and the moving states interacted to produce things. Things came with their individual characteristics. This is called form. The form protects the spirit, each with its own rules of deportment. This is called nature. Cultivation of nature may return to De. De reproduces the conditions of the very beginning, which are inscrutable and therefore great. Like a bird chirping with its beak closed, [a person has said nothing and] has united himself with heaven and earth. The union is seamless in simplicity and obscurity. This is called the Inscrutable De<sup>6</sup> or the Great Accord.<sup>7</sup>

The theme propounded in the preceding text states that all things come from Dao and may eventually reunite with Dao. In the opening sentences, *wu* and the One describe different states of Dao. Later, both the stationary and the moving states refer also to Dao, the stationary state being the creative state.

Note that De is not *de*, as used elsewhere in this book, and at the end of the text, it becomes the Inscrutable De. Both the Inscrutable De and the Great Accord refer to different states of Dao. Dao is Nature.

The middle portion of the text introduces the idea of yin and yang (not by name) in “Things that were formless were distinguishable and yet they remained commingled.” It means that yin and yang are not separable. There is yang in yin and vice versa as shown in a diagram of the Tai Ji.

A bird chirping with its beak closed is like a person talking with his mouth shut. In fact, he has not said anything, even though he may look like talking, i.e., a wordless speech. Both Daoism and the *Chan* sect of Buddhism value highly the wordless indoctrination.

### Section 8

The master asked Lao Dan, “Some people study Dao with adversity. They approve what should be disapproved and accept what should be rejected. Sophists would say, ‘The distinction between hardness and whiteness is as clear-cut as something hanging from the sky.’ If so, would they be called sages?”

Lao Dan answered, “This is like government officers being tied down by protocols that fatigue their bodies and confuse their minds. Moreover, dogs are being kept because they can hunt down foxes; monkeys are being caged because they can move swiftly.<sup>8</sup> Qiu, let me tell you what you cannot hear or what you cannot say. Many ordinary people do not know or hear anything. What is real [like people] and what is formless [like Dao] do not coexist. The rationale behind motion and repose, life and death, and rise and fall is unknown to us. Human affairs are traceable. He who is not concerned with things or with nature is not concerned with himself. Such a person is united with nature into one.”

This is a spurious dialogue between Confucius and Lao Zi. Qiu is Confucius’ formal given name. That Lao Zi addressed him by his formal name Qiu instead of his courtesy name Zhongni suggests that Lao Zi considers himself to be senior to Confucius in age or official rank or both.

### Section 9

Jianglü Mian went to see Ji Che and said, “The Duke of Lu said to Mian, ‘I beg for your advice.’ I first declined, but he insisted. I later advised him. But now I wonder if I said the right thing. Let me reiterate it to you. I said to the Duke, ‘You must be respectful and frugal, and promote those who are loyal and just without prejudice. Then no people dare not live in peace.’ ”

Ji Che smiled with a giggle and said, “The effect of what you have just said on the administration of a ruler is certainly nil, like that of a mantis trying to use its feelers to stop an advancing chariot.<sup>9</sup> Should your idea prevail, you could expose yourself in a dangerous position. The ducal court would be crowded, as many would come to participate in its affairs.

Jianglü Mian was deeply worried and said, “Mian is completely lost in what you have just said. Even so, I beg you to explain briefly.”

Ji Che explained, “When the great sages ruled the land, they let people think and do as they pleased, so that people would try new ideas and change old custom, demolish evil thoughts and promote individual wishes. They did not understand why they did it, as if it were part of their nature. If this is true, why is it necessary to imitate the way Kings Yao and Shun taught the people and to blindly follow them? The sages wanted people to attain the same genuineness as nature and live in peace.”

Disciples of Zhuang Zi did not give us a uniform evaluation of the accomplishments or the lack of them by the few prehistoric kings. For this simple reason, we really cannot come up with a meaningful analysis of their comments in various sections of this work.

### Section 10

Zigong journeyed south to the State of Chu. On his return through the State of Jin, he passed by Hanyin and met an elder man, who was working on an orchard. He had dug a narrow pass

down to reach inside of a well. Each time he fetched an earthenware-full of water and carried it up to irrigate his orchard, he made a lot of sounds with water filling and pouring. It seemed his much effort produced little results. Zigong said to him, "There is a tool here. It can irrigate one hundred *xi*<sup>10</sup> a day. A little effort produces big results. Do you not want to use it?"

The gardener looked up and asked, "How?" Zigong said, "Shape wood to make a machine, its rear being heavier than the front. It draws water up like a pump, easily and quickly." The man showed impatience and said matter-of-factly, "I learned from my teacher. He who designs a machine shall also make cunning dealings. He who makes cunning dealings shall also use tactfulness. He who keeps tactfulness in his heart cannot preserve purity and brightness. His mind and spirit waver. When his mind and spirit waver, he cannot keep Dao. I do not use a machine, not because I am ignorant of it, but because I feel ashamed in using it."

Zigong was regretful, bowed his head and said nothing.

A little later, the gardener asked, "What have you been doing?"

"A disciple of Kong Qiu."<sup>11</sup>

The gardener said, "Are you not using your extensive learning to compare yourself to the sages and boasting your ability to pride yourself above others and playing sorrowful tones only to make your name known to the world? You think if you can mind not your manner and your body, you will come close to Dao. Now you can't even put your own body in order, how can you put the world in order? Please go! Don't interrupt what I am doing."

Zigong was shaken and looked distressed. After walking thirty *li*, he felt better.

His pupil asked him, "Who was that man? Why did you look distressed for one whole day?"

Zigong said, "I have thought there is only one person [like my teacher] in the world. Now I realize there is another person. I have heard from my teacher. In performing duties you judge what is doable; in establishing a career you seek what can be successful.

Using little efforts in making great achievements is the way of the sages. Now I realize this is not so. He who clings onto Dao will have his virtue well prepared. He who well prepares his virtue will keep his body healthy. He who has a healthy body will enjoy a cheerful spirit. He who enjoys a cheerful spirit will fulfill the way of the sages. He lives in this world like taking a transcendental journey and knows not where to go. He is carefree and simple. He distances himself from ambition and tactfulness. A person like him will not seek or do what is against his will or wishes. Even if the whole world praises him by agreeing to what he says, he will not feel proud. Even if the whole world criticizes him by disagreeing to what he says, he will not feel humiliated. Praise and humiliation of the world will not make him feel he is gaining or losing anything. He is a man with complete virtue and I am a man bobbing on the water.”

When Zigong returned to the State of Lu, he reported the incident to Confucius. Confucius said, “The gardener practices the teachings of Hundun.<sup>12</sup> He knows one thing, but not the other, for he attends to what is inside, but neglects what is outside. Of course, you were surprised at meeting a man whose inner self is so clear and pure, natural and truthful and who chooses to wander freely in the mundane world. But how can I and you recognize the teachings of Hundun?”

There is no historical record to substantiate that Confucius and Zigong ever discussed the incident. So the story can only be treated as a Daoist creation. It is hard to determine how much of it came from Zhuang Zi. It is interesting to note that the remarks by Confucius (from the pen of a Daoist) about the Daoist emphasis on the inner purity and disregard for appearance are a fair statement of one distinction between the Daoist and the Confucianist.

## Section 11

Zhun Mang is going east to the seashore and happens to see Yuan Feng at the eastern seaboard. Yuan Feng asked, “Where are you going?”

“Going to the sea.”



“What for?”

“The sea is one thing that will never be full with all the water running into it and will never be empty with all the water taken away from it. I would like to be there.”

Yuan Feng asked, “Are you not interested in people? I would like to hear about the benevolent rule.”

Zhun Mang said, “The benevolent rule? Administration without impropriety, appointments without compromising qualifications, and decisions made after thorough consideration will transform the world naturally by words and deeds, so that people from all four corners of the earth will come with their hands waving and eyes wide-open. This is called the benevolent rule.”

The conditions set in this paragraph read more like a Confucianist essay than a Daoist idea. Probably, Zhuang Zi himself had nothing to do with it. Similar incidents have been noted often elsewhere in the Outer and Miscellaneous Series, indicating some of Zhuang Zi’s pupils were taking a somewhat compromising stand toward the Confucianist.

“May I hear about the man of virtue?”

Zhun Mang said, “The man of virtue is one who does not contemplate at home and is free from anxiety away from home, and does not have preconceived ideas of right and wrong and of likes and dislikes. He is happy when everyone in the world receives benefits equally; he is comforted when everyone gives fairly. When upset, he is like a baby losing the mother. When absent-minded, he is like a traveler losing his direction. If there is a leftover from expenditure, he does not know how it happened. If there is an adequate supply of food, he does not know where it came from. This is the attitude of the man of virtue.”

“May I hear about the spirited man?”

Zhun Mang said, “The spirited man rides on light and is invisible. This is called the luminous expanse. He makes a thorough search into life and does the best possible, such that joy fills the world where all worries disappear and all things regain their true nature. This is known as the union in the luminous expanse.”

Again in the opinion of this translator, this last paragraph of text has gone beyond the limits of the ideals of Daoism as a philosophy. There is no savior in Daoism. Each one of us must do his or her own part. No matter what the spirited man can do for and by himself, there is no doctrinaire basis to suggest that he can transform “all things” and bring them along with him.

## Section 12

Men Wugui and Chizhang Mangji read the war records of King Wu. Chizhang Mangji commented, “[King Wu was] not so brilliant as King Shun. Hence, he encountered such a conflict.

We need to review a little historical background against which the comments were made here. King Shun ascended to the throne in about 2255 B.C. when King Yao abdicated voluntarily in favor of him. The transition was peaceful and uneventful. King Wu launched a bloody revolution against the despotic King Zhou in 1121 B.C. to found a new dynasty. The transition was violent and recorded in history. The theme of this section is based on the distinction between these two kinds of transitions and why history records more of one than the other. The two dialogists are unknown in history and most likely fictitious.

Meng Wugui asked, “Had the nation been in peace when King Shun began his rule? Or was it first in turmoil and later in peace?” Chizhang Mangji answered, “If the nation had been in peace, people would have been satisfied. Why would they need King Shun? The way King Shun treated boils on the scalp, for instance, would be to ask the bald man to wear a wig or to send him to see a doctor. A filial son who prepared herbal medicine for his father appeared haggard from grief. But a sainted man<sup>13</sup> would tease him [for unable in keeping his father from getting sick].

“In an era of abundant virtue, there is no need to praise the worthy or to select the capable. A ruler is like a young shoot at the tip of a tree and the people below are like wild deer. They are formal but do not see it as a duty, considerate of one another but do not see it as kindness, honest but do not see it as loyalty, proper but do not see it as truthfulness. They do things simply in helping one another, but do not see it as a favor. Therefore,

their actions left behind no impressions and their deeds were not recorded.”

Generally, a period of peace and tranquility has few unusual events to record in history and we know little about the details. On the contrary, a period of turmoil and bloodshed supplies voluminous exciting incidents for historians. This is the theme the author tried to explain to us. It is often said, “Prevention is the best medicine.” The author of this section believed “keeping his father from getting sick” is superior to “preparing herbal medicine for his father.” The sentence, “A ruler is like a young shoot at the tip of a tree and the people below are like wild deer,” needs a little notation. A person crowned as king should be as ordinary and natural as a young shoot growing at the tip of a tree. People should be free to do as they wish like wild deer wandering under a tree.

### Section 13

A filial son does not flatter his parents. A loyal minister does not flatter his ruler. This is the best that a son and a minister can do. When a son considers whatever his parents say is affirmative and whatever they do is correct, he is commonly known as an unfilial son. Likewise, when a minister considers whatever his ruler says is affirmative and whatever his ruler does is correct, he is commonly known as a worthless minister. Who knows if this is always true? Ordinary citizens affirm whatever is called affirmative and approve whatever is called correct, but they do not call themselves flatterers! Then is the citizenry more respectable than parents and more authoritative than rulers? When a person is called a flatterer, he will abruptly change countenance or flush with anger. A person who has flattered all his life would play with words to justify his presentation and never admit doing anything wrong. With proper robes, flowery speech, and unassuming manner, he acts like a snob but does not consider himself a flatterer. He sees the same way as the citizenry, but is naive enough not to recognize it. He who understands foolishness is not a big fool; he who understands flattery is not a big flatterer. A big fool never admits he is a fool; a big flatterer never admits he is a flatterer.

There is a group of three wanderers. If one of them loses direction, they will reach their destination because a majority of them know how to get there. If two of them lose direction, they may not reach their destination because a majority of them do not know how to get there. Now most people in the world are lost. Even though I know the right direction, I am no help to them. What a pity!

People with unpolished ears cannot appreciate great musical performances, but they enjoy listening to popular songs like *Breaking the Willow Branches* and cheer with understanding. Therefore, lofty speeches cannot enter the hearts of ordinary listeners. Profound ideals are not revealing and consequently over-shadowed by words of vulgarity. When two travelers lose their way, a journey is disrupted. Now the world is losing its way. Even though I know the right direction, how can I be of help! To compel oneself to do what is known to be unsuccessful is delusion. Hence, it would be better to forget it without further elaborations. Who would care for further elaborations! An ugly woman gave birth to a child in the middle of the night. She nervously asked for light to see if her newborn would look like herself.

The opening two sentences of this section have become a well-known aphorism. Although the subject of this section is flattery, the theme is that the opinion of the majority may not be right. The arguments presented in the lengthy first paragraph are somewhat repetitive. Also, the last few sentences at the end of the second paragraph are essentially the same as the sentences in the third paragraph. The repetition is not for emphasis. Of course, it can be corrected by rearranging the text. This is not done, nevertheless. Finally, the first sentence of the third paragraph reminds us that pop music was more popular than classical music then as it is now. Something has not changed in thousands of years!

#### Section 14

The wood of a one hundred-year-old tree was cut to make into sacrificial wine vessels and decorated with blue and yellow patterns. Chips that came off were thrown into a ditch. Although

comparison of the sacrificial vessels with the chips in the ditch shows a sharp contrast between what is useful and what is useless, they have one thing in common of losing their nature. Although comparison of King Jie and Zhi the Brigand on one hand with Zeng Shen and Shi You<sup>14</sup> on the other shows a sharp contrast between their deeds and justice, they are the same in losing their nature. There are five ways of losing one's nature: First, the five colors confuse the eyes and make them lose sharpness. Second, the five notes confuse the ears and make them lose clarity. Third, the five fragrances becloud the sense of smell and make the nose lose distinction. Fourth, the five flavors numb the mouth and make the tongue lose the sensitivity to taste. Fifth, the judgment of values between right and wrong, good and evil, and others disturbs the mind and makes temperaments fly. These five ways are detrimental to life. Yang Zhu and Mo Di<sup>15</sup> tried new ways with the hope of excelling others and believed they had accomplished it. This is not what I call accomplishments. When a person becomes distressed for gaining something, is he really gaining anything? If so, a caged quail could also feel it was gaining something. When judgments of values, sounds, and colors numb our mind within, when official caps and robes restrain our activities without, we would be like getting tied with ropes and put into a pen and yet we would feel satisfied. Alas! The condemned with their hands tied to the back and the tigers and leopards kept in cages would also feel satisfied.

Many of us lose our most valuable legacy—freedom, in exchange for dubious honor and conveniences. Not only ignorant of what we compromise inside, but also tolerant to our restrained activities outside, we often feel conceited. The author cautioned us to be vigilant and critical of our surroundings. The prose is not Zhuangian, but the ideas behind it, though somewhat repetitive, sound like his.

## Notes

1. This sentence compares favorably with Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing*, chapter 57, though it is not a direct quote.
2. We do not know where it was recorded.
3. See Wu, C.: *The Essentials of the Yi Jing*, Chapter 1 (43).
4. These two sentences compare favorably with "Dao produces them. De nourishes them." in the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 51.
5. We read a similar passage in the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 21.
6. See the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 51.
7. See the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 65.
8. These two sentences have appeared in essence in Chapter 7:4.
9. This well-known aphorism has appeared once before in Chapter 4:3.
10. A unit of farming area, about fifty *mu*. A *mu* is about 6,000 square feet.
11. Confucius' formal personal name, which is not used in Confucianist writings for the sake of respect.
12. A term meaning unknown and chaotic, and referring to an initial stage in the formation of the universe. It is used here as a personal name of a fictitious Daoist sage.
13. For a description of this term, see Chapter 1:1.
14. A description of these two men has appeared in an annotation in Chapter 8:1.
15. As has been described before in an annotation in Chapter 8:1. These two men were polemic in the outlook of life. Yang Zhu would not pluck out one hair to benefit the world. Mo Di propounded love without distinction and would use all his strength to avert human sufferings.



## 13

# The Way of Heaven

Like the preceding chapter, this chapter also consists of several sections unrelated to each other, although they mainly discuss the principles in nature. Section 1 elaborates on emptiness and quietude. Section 2 explains the heavenly and worldly joys. Section 3 presents a dialogue on perfect governance. Section 4 contrasts the different views on *ren* and justice between Lao Zi and Confucius. Section 5 is an essay on a bewildered man. Section 6 discusses the qualifications of a superior man. Sections 7 and 8 emphasize the invisibility of Dao.

### Section 1

When the way of heaven moves without ceasing, all things are completed. When the way of kingship moves without ceasing, the nation submits to authority. When the way of sageness moves without ceasing, the world pays homage. Being able to understand heaven, connect to sageness, and communicate with kingship at all times and in all places<sup>1</sup> is to leave all things alone, such that they will be in quietude. A sage enjoys quietude, not because quietude is necessarily good, but because nothing in quietude is capable of disturbing his mind. Motionless water is like a mirror capable of reflecting beards and eyebrows and its ever-level surface is a reference for craftsmen. Motionless water is clear, let alone undisturbed spirit. The undisturbed mind of a sage is a reflection of heaven and earth and a mirror of all things. Being empty and quiet, peaceful and simple, soundless and formless,



and doing nothing unnatural<sup>2</sup> are the foundation of heaven and earth and the supremacy of virtue. Therefore, kings and sages have come to rest in this state. A restful spirit lends to a sense of emptiness. Emptiness lends to a feeling of fullness. Fullness lends to completeness. Emptiness also lends to quietude. Quietude lends to motion. Motion brings success. Quietude also lends to doing nothing unnatural. Doing nothing unnatural lends responsibility to the doer. Doing nothing unnatural lends to easy-going. Easy-going lends to freedom from worries and anxieties, which lends to longevity. Being empty and quiet, peaceful and simple, soundless and formless, and doing nothing unnatural are the foundation of all things. Knowing this truth and applying it to the kingship, Yao became a king. Knowing this truth and applying it to the premiership, Shun became a prime minister. Applying this truth to the supreme position of a nation becomes the virtue of a king. Applying this truth to a lesser position becomes the principle of an inscrutable sage or a crownless king.<sup>3</sup> Applying this truth to seclusion and wanderings, recluses in mountains and travelers by rivers will follow. Applying this truth to bring peace to the world will make great accomplishments and famous names in unifying a nation. Quietude lends to sageness. Actions lend to kingship. Doing nothing unnatural, he enjoys respect from all things. Being simple and plain, he has no equal in the world.

This is a section with one single rather long paragraph. It is one of few chapters in this book in which the ideals of Daoism are applied to form an ideal government for the people. A good portion of the deliberations centers on the essentials of emptiness. Zhuang Zi elaborated on it once in Chapter 4:1. Emptiness is translated from the original *kong* or *xū* and is not a perfect translation, because it cannot bring about the abstract portion of the concept. A room full of people or decorations might be considered *kong* if the seer could dismiss everything physical in that room, or even the room itself, as non-existing. So it is a subjective perception, almost impossible to be transmitted from one person to another. Coincidentally, this idea of *kong* is considered to be a sublime state in Buddhism as well.

## Section 2

Understanding the principles of heaven and earth, which recognize the foundation and origin, is to be harmonious with nature. Managing the affairs of the world is to be harmonious with people. Being in harmony with people is called the worldly joy. Being in harmony with nature is called the heavenly joy.

Zhuang Zi said, “My grand tutor! My grand tutor! It is not sinful to overlook all things. It is not benevolent to leave work benefiting ten thousand generations. It is not ancient to be older than the highest antiquity. It is not ingenious to cover like heaven, carry like earth, and carve out all shapes of things.’ This is known as the heavenly joy.”

In the preceding paragraph of text, there is a quotation within a quotation. What is within the single quotation has appeared in Chapter 6:8 as what Xü You said. Here the same quotation reads like what Zhuang Zi said. This has led many Chinese scholars to voice a controversy in attributing one single passage to be the sayings of two speakers. Since in ancient Chinese texts, no punctuation marks were ever used, the controversy was unnoticeable. This annotator has provided the two sets of quotation marks in the text as shown above. We can explain away that what Zhuang Zi said, as recorded by one of his pupils, contains a saying of Xü You. We should also remember that Xü You was probably a fictitious, prehistoric character created by Zhuang Zi in his story. Simply, what Xü You said could actually be what Zhuang Zi said. The following paragraph is a continuation of what Zhuang Zi said. Please note also that the two “Thus it is said” quotations in the following paragraph are what Zhuang Zi quoted the sayings of some one else.

“Thus it is said: ‘He who knows the heavenly joy lives by the way of nature and becomes harmonious with all things upon death. In quietude, he shares yin’s characteristics; in motion, he shares yang’s activities.’ Therefore, he who knows the heavenly joy does not murmur against heaven, bear a grudge against people, get entangled in vulgar affairs, or get punished by *gui shen*.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is said: ‘Moving like heaven and staying like earth, one person with

all the heart can help keep heaven and earth in their proper places. When the body is free from illness, when the spirit is free from exhaustion, one person with all the heart can bring all things to submission with good grace.’ What is said here is that one person can extend emptiness and quietude to heaven and earth and to all things in the world. This is called the heavenly joy. That which is the heavenly joy is to let the hearts of sages nourish the world.”

The essay on the heavenly joy ends with the preceding paragraph of text. However, the text of older editions does not end here. It continues with a lengthy discourse (nearly 750 Chinese characters) on ethics of governance. Many famed scholars of the past and the present believe that Zhuang Zi had nothing to do with the appendix. Since then this portion of text has been deleted from most modern editions. This deletion is accepted in the present work. See commentaries of Chen Guying (2-a).

### Section 3

Once upon a time, Shun asked King Yao, “What does a king give attention to?”

Yao answered, “I am not rude to the helpless, do not abandon the poor, have pity on the dead, am fond of children and sympathetic to women. These are all I have been giving attention to.”

Shun said, “Beautiful is what you have just said, but not great yet!”

Yao asked, “Then what?”

Shun said, “Heaven completes and earth is at peace. The sun and the moon shine and the four seasons rotate in order as day follows night and rains follow clouds.”

Yao said, “The world is full of comings and goings. You give attention to nature, and I give attention to worldly affairs.”

Heaven and earth are the greatest in the minds of the ancients and also the admiration shared by Kings Huang, Yao, and Shun. Therefore, what did the ancient kings do to achieve the perfect reign? Following the rules of heaven and earth is all to it.

The last paragraph is a summation of the preceding dialogue between the two kings with the addition of King Huang. They were all prehistoric model kings in Confucianist text books. Daoists found it convenient in borrowing them to further their cause. It is fair to say that the purported dialogue is neutral enough that the Confucianists would not have reasons to complain about the contents. Zhuang Zi would have been much more critical about the Confucianists, though not so much as to Confucius personally. On this basis, it would seem that he did not write this section.

#### Section 4

Confucius wished to have his writings moved westwards to the Zhou dynastic archives for safekeeping. Zilu offered a plan: "I learn that the officer in charge of literature collections is a man by the name of Lao Dan who has recently retired at home. If you, my master, wish to store your manuscripts there, he may be able to help."

Confucius said, "Excellent!"

Confucius' home state was Lu on the eastern seaboard. The capital of the Zhou dynasty was at Luoyang near the central part of China. Therefore, moving from Lu to the capital was a westward move. Zilo was a disciple of Confucius. Lao Dan was the personal name of Lao Zi. Every person in the story is real and historical, but the story itself is not.

He went to see Lao Dan. Lao Dan first declined his request. He then elaborated on the Six Classics to make himself persuasive.

Lao Dan interrupted him, "Too much detail. Please be concise."

Confucius said, "The essence is *ren* and justice."

Lao Dan: "Excuse me. Are *ren* and justice a nature of man?"

Confucius: "Yes. A *junzi* cannot succeed without *ren* or live without justice. *Ren* and justice are the nature of a true man.<sup>5</sup> Any other instruction?"

Lao Dan: "Excuse me. What are *ren* and justice?"

Confucius: “Keeping your mind in the central course, being harmonious and happy, loving without distinction, and being altruistic are the expressions of *ren* and justice.”

Lao Dan: “Ah! How dangerous is the latter of what you said. Love without distinction is perverted in itself. The very idea of altruism is prejudiced in itself.

Both love without distinction and altruism are two central teachings in Mohism. Apparently, either the writer, whoever he might be, mistook Confucius for Mo Zi or he purposefully put Mo Zi’s words into Confucius’ mouth.

“Do you, my master, wish everyone in the world without losing his opportunity to be cared for? Heaven and earth will always exist, the sun and the moon will always shine, stars and galaxies will always take their proper positions in the sky, birds and beasts will always group, and shrubs and trees will always grow. You, my master, can also do according to De and proceed according to Dao. This will be the best of all. Why should you be eager to distinguish *ren* and justice like striking a gong and beating a drum in searching for a lost child? You, my master, disturb the nature in every one of us!”

This purported dialogue between the two great masters centers on their polemic views on *ren* and justice. The Confucianist considers them to be essential for daily living, so they must be cultivated and nourished. The Daoist assumes they are innate in our nature, as natural as “birds and beasts will always group.” To single them out for distinction is superfluous. Superfluity leads to pretense and prejudice, which will eventually smother the Dao within us. This basic difference in tenets has been discussed in earlier chapters.

## Section 5

Shi Chengqi went to see Lao Zi and said, “I heard that you, my master, were a sage. I dared not excuse myself for not coming to see you, even in walking such a long distance without rest until my heel skin calloused. As I look at you now, you are not a sage. There is plenty of grain in rat holes. Squandering away is

inconsiderate. Fresh and prepared foods spread over your front. There is no end to amassing more of them.”

This opening paragraph describes how extravagant and wasteful Lao Zi was. There is a character (with the feminine root) in this paragraph, which normally means “younger sister.” But according to Cheng Xuanying (3), Lin Xiyi (20), and others, it is used here for a synonymous character (with the sun root) meaning “squandering away or not being careful of things.” It is so translated here. Perhaps, unaware of this age-long usage, many translators, such as Legge (19), Giles (8), Watson (37) and others still translated the character into “younger sister.” Obviously, the translation is meaningless and has nothing to do with the argumentative point of this paragraph. If we could pause to think for a moment, it should seem odd that Lao Zi would chase his younger sister out of doors. We know practically nothing about the personal life of Lao Zi. Suddenly, we give him a younger sister to be chased out of doors! There is nothing new in correctly interpreting this passage of text; it has been in Chinese literature for more than a thousand years.

Lao Zi was indifferent and said nothing.

The following day, Shi Chengqi came again and said, “Yesterday I ridiculed you. Today I realize my failings. Why?”

Lao Zi replied, “A tactful, holy person I believe I am not. Yesterday you called me an ox and I was called an ox, you called me a horse and I was called a horse. If it were true, I would have made a double jeopardy by refusing to accept the label given to me. I accept because of what is natural for me to do so, not because of what is purposeful for me to do so.”

Shi Chengqi became greatly humbled and walked up stealthily and asked, “How to cultivate oneself?”

Lao Zi replied, “Your attitude is arrogant. Your eyes look fierce. Your forehead is high and [your mind] determined. Your tongue speaks with exaggerations. Your expression is lofty. Like a tied-up horse, you make awkward moves, but try to control yourself. You also move swiftly like an arrow. You examine and investigate a matter carefully. You are tactful and appear satisfied. All these are not part of true nature. At the border, such people are called stealthy.”

In the story, Lao Zi did not directly answer Shi Chengqi's question. He merely lectured Shi Chengqi on what kind of a person he was. He did not offer a prescription to lead a lost sheep back to the flock. Perhaps, by letting his visitor realize his shortcomings, Lao Zi had done all he could at this time. Could this not be a form of wordless indoctrination?

### Section 6

The master said, "Dao will not be inadequate to cover big things and will not lose sight of small things. Therefore, it is present in all things. It is so vast that it will contain everything; it is so deep that it cannot be fathomed. Punishments and rewards, *ren* and justice are the residues of our spirit. Besides the superior man, who can judge them?

"When the superior man ruled the land, he had awesome responsibilities, but people did not bother him. When the world was involved in contending for mastery, he did not join the contention. He inquired into the situation and did not let circumstances dictate his action. He studied the true nature of things and observed the basic tenets, such that he could leave the world and disown everything without ever feeling distressed. By understanding Dao, conforming to *de*, distancing *ren* and justice, and abandoning rites and music, the superior man will have kept his spirit in peace."

"The master" refers to Zhuang Zi, as in Chapter 12:2, because the writer of this section is believed to be one of his disciples. This section is an elaboration on the qualifications for the superior man in Daoism.

### Section 7

The Dao that people treasure is recorded in books. Books are no more than language. Language is valuable. What makes language valuable is its meanings. Meanings can be implicit. The implication cannot be transmitted precisely in words. Hence, people transmitted books for the sake of treasuring words. Even

though people treasure words, I do not find them worth treasuring, because people treasure not the true treasure. Therefore, what the eyes can see is forms and colors, and what the ears can hear is fame and sounds. It is a pity that people are satisfied with forms, colors, fame, and sounds, and think they have attained the truth. Certainly, [knowing] forms, colors, fame, and sounds does not mean attainment of the truth. Therefore, “he who knows does not speak and he who speaks does not know.”<sup>6</sup> Do people understand that?

Both Buddhism and Daoism treasure the “wordless indoctrination” as the highest form of teaching. No words spoken or written can convey precisely the ultimate truth. It must be apprehended in the heart through enlightenment (in Buddhism) and through nature (in Daoism).

### Section 8

Duke Huan was reading in a hall. A wheelwright named Bian was building a wheel outside the hall. He laid down his tools, walked up the steps, and asked the Duke, “Excuse me. May I ask what Your Highness is reading?”

The Duke said, “The sayings of sages.”

“Are the sages living?”

The Duke said, “They were dead.”

“Then Your Highness is reading only the wine dregs of the ancients.”

The Duke said, “I am reading a book. How dare you criticize me! If you can say a good reason, I will let you go. If not, you will die.”

“I can only say from my point of view. If the hub is too loose, it will not stay tight on the axle; if it is too tight, it will not fit well into the axle. Making it not too loose or not too tight depends on how the hands and the mind cooperate. I cannot say it in words, but there is experience in my doing it right. I cannot teach my son how to do it, nor can he learn it from me. Hence, I am seventy years of age and still building wheels. The ancients and all that



cannot be transmitted have passed away. That is why what Your Highness is reading is only the wine dregs of the ancients!”

This section is a reaffirmation of the central idea of the preceding section that certain aspects of knowledge can pass from one person to another only by mental conception, but not by word transmission.

Duke Huan of Qi was a pre-Confucian, powerful political figure who called by way of persuasion a series of nine conferences of feudal princes to pledge allegiance to the throne of the Zhou dynasty in about 685 B.C. and thereafter.

## Notes

1. The text here reads literally “in six directions and four seasons.” The six directions of space are east, west, south, north, above, and below.
2. “Doing nothing unnatural” is a translation from *wu wei*, a fundamental concept in Daoism.
3. This term, the crownless king, as introduced here for the first time in Chinese literature, is translated from *su wang* and has been adopted later by Confucianists as a synonym for Confucius.
4. See note No. 10 in Chapter 4.
5. True man is a Daoist term. See Chapter 6:1. Confucius could not have uttered it!
6. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 56.



## 14

# Heavenly Revolutions

The first section of this chapter writes about movements and changes and their causes and effects in the heavens. From this comes the chapter title, as is often the case in many other chapter titles. The remaining sections describe dialogues between a Daoist or a person leaning toward Daoism and a Confucianist or Confucius himself on various subjects unrelated to the first. None of these stories is historical.

### Section 1

“Does heaven revolve and does earth remain stationary? Do the sun and the moon compete for their appearances? Who decides on this? Who carries this out? Who lives leisurely in promoting this? Or, are the heavenly bodies started by a mechanism with no alternative? Or, are their motions not subject to stopping? Do clouds come because of rain? Does rain come because of clouds? Who causes clouds and rain to be formed? Who lives leisurely and seeks extravagant pleasures and promote them? Wind starts in the north, one going east and the other west, turning around and around. Who is huffing and puffing it? Who lives leisurely and wants to huff and puff it. And why?”

The preceding paragraph contains a series of questions on the changing phenomena in the heavens. The speaker is not identified. Perhaps, it is not important, as the answer would have been the same.

Wu Xian Zhao said, "Come, let me tell you. The world has six directions and five elements. Kings who rule in accordance with these principles will have peace; those who rule against them will end in turmoil. Therefore, the affairs of the Nine Regions<sup>1</sup> have succeeded with virtue, shone on every corner of the kingdom, and received the support of all the people. This is called the Supreme Rule."

Wu Xian Zhao was a fictitious figure. The five elements refer to metal, wood, water, fire, and earth in the theory of the Five Elements developed in ancient times. According to the theory, the five elements can generate each other in one cyclic sequence and can annihilate each other in another cyclic sequence. The theory is embraced more by the Daoist than by the Confucianist. A brief description has been given under the Naturalists in the Introduction.

## Section 2

Prime Minister Dang of the State of Shang<sup>2</sup> asked Zhuang Zi about warm-heartedness. Zhuang Zi said, "Tigers and wolves are warm-hearted."

"What do you mean?"

Zhuang Zi said, "Father and son form a relation of each other. Why are they not warm-hearted?"

"What is supreme warm-heartedness?"

Zhuang Zi said, "Supreme warm-heartedness does not take relation into consideration."

Dang asked, "Dang has heard that without relation there is no love. Without love, there is no filial piety. May we say that supreme warm-heartedness means no filial piety?"

Zhuang Zi said, "No, sir. Supreme warm-heartedness is the finest state. Filial piety is far below it. What you say does not exceed filial piety, but lags behind filial piety. A person going south to Ying and then looking north cannot see Mount Ming. Why? He is farther away from it. Therefore, it is easy to be filial with respect, but it is hard to be filial with love. It is easy to be filial with love, but it is hard to make parents satisfied. It is easy to make parents satisfied, but it is hard to make

parents not worrying about me. It is easy to make parents not worrying about me, but it is hard to make them not worrying about the world as well. It is easy to make them not worrying about the world as well, but it is hard to make the world not worrying about me as well. To despise Kings Yao and Shun is not sufficient to be virtuous. To extend goodness to numerous generations is not known to the world. Do you still want to boast warm-heartedness and filial piety? Filial piety, brotherly manners, warm-heartedness, justice, loyalty, trustworthiness, perseverance, and purity are self-exertions against one's own nature. They should not be favored. Therefore, what is considered the noblest may not be the rank of a noble; what is considered the wealthiest may not be the wealth of a nation; what is considered the most honorable may not be fame and reputation. Only Dao remains ever changeless."

Within the context of this section, "warm-heartedness" is analogous with *ren* in Confucianism. This translator chooses not to translate it into *ren*, because it does not mean exactly *ren*. The notion that supreme warm-heartedness supersedes human relations has been reiterated a few times in Daoist writings. Lao Zi said, "The doctrine of heaven denies human relations."<sup>3</sup> Zhuang Zi wrote: "Great warm-heartedness is without partiality." (Chapter 2:5). The theme of this section is summarized in the concluding sentences of the last paragraph. What is considered precious by vulgarity has no lasting value. Only the ever-changeless Dao is worth searching.

### Section 3

Beimen Chen asked King Huang, "Your Majesty played the music of *Xian Chi*<sup>4</sup> in a remote wilderness. When I listened to it, first I had a feeling of fright, then a feeling of relaxation, and finally a feeling of confusion. My mind became blurred and seemed unable to take hold of myself."

Beimen (surname) Chen is known to be an officer of King Huang who reigned in *ca.* 2698 B.C., but there is no record of this dialogue or what follows. Most likely, it is a fiction dreamed up by Zhuang Zi or one of his

disciples. Authenticity aside, this section is the only one in this work deals specifically with the roles of music in Daoism as seen from a Daoist, whoever he might be. Lao Zi said very little about music. For instance, he wrote: “The five notes<sup>5</sup> make people lose the sense of sound.”<sup>6</sup> Actually, Zhuang Zi had been critical about music, too, as we read about his comments on the musician Shi Kuang (Chapter 8:1). We can see how this section written a few hundred years after Lao Zi, probably not by Zhuang Zi, compares with Lao Zi’s perception.

The king explained, “You are probably right about it. I played [the music] in accord with human relations. I performed in accord with natural ways. I conducted in accord with rites and righteousness. I concluded in accord with the great Dao. The four seasons came in order and all things depended on them for renewal. One flourished and the other degenerated. Birth and death occurred in sequence. One pitch was high and the other low. Yin and yang were harmonious. Thunder followed lightning and hibernating creatures began waking up. I aroused them with [music like] thunder and rain. It began with no apparent beginning and it ended with no apparent ending. It suddenly died down and it suddenly rose up. It suddenly fell down and it suddenly stood up. Its directions were unlimited and none could be expected. This is why you were frightened.

Beimen Chen spoke of having three different feelings when he listened to King Huang’s performance. The king explained to him why he had the first feeling of fright. The king explained further why his listener had the other two feelings and why he played the way he did.

“I then played it in accord with the harmony of yin and yang and brightened it with the radiance of the sun and the moon. Its sound could be sharp or flat, soft or hard. Its changes followed certain rules, but evolved new ideas. The music filled hills and valleys. It blocked temptations, conserved strength, and followed nature. Its sound was soft and loud, and its rhythm clear and distinctive. Thus, *gui* and *shen*<sup>7</sup> would live in seclusion and the sun and moon and stars would stay in orbit. When I stopped playing, the echo would last for a long, long time. If you would want to

think about it, it could not be understood. If you would want to look at it, it could not be seen. If you would want to chase it, it could not be reached. You would find yourself on a broad path where there was limitless space in all directions while leaning on a couch and reciting.<sup>8</sup> You would have exhausted your mind for what you wanted to understand, your eyes for what you wanted to see, and your strength for what you wanted to reach. Alas, I could not be reached. As your body gained strength and your mind rejuvenated in the bright emptiness, you became capable of accepting what came naturally and facing changes with ease. This is why you felt relaxed.

“I then played the music without relaxation, but harmonized it with natural rhythm. Therefore, the notes sounded like chasing one another and sprouting everywhere. It was a great joy for all, but no one knew where the notes came from. The sound spread far without legato and it became contemplative beyond being heard. It seemed to be moving about or dwelling in seclusion. It might signal death or life. It could be reality or vanity. It varied its themes and none was repeated over and again. People of vulgarity were perplexed and they consulted the sainted men. What “sainted” means is being thorough in common sense and willing to be led by Dao. Without invoking the mystery of nature, people with complete faculty of senses utter no words and enjoy music within. This is called the music from heaven. Hence, You Yan<sup>9</sup> praised it by saying, ‘You listen and hear no sound, you look and see no form. It fills heaven and earth and it contains the universe.’ You wanted to listen, but you heard nothing. This is why you were confused.

“The music began with a sense of surprise. Surprise led to a sense of worries. Next I presented it with a sense of relaxation. Relaxation gave rise to a sense of escape [from reality]. Finally, I played it with a sense of confusion. Confusion erased distinction in knowledge. A peaceful mind without distinction was harmonious with Dao. Thus, you can commingle and dwell in Dao.”

A key point in the preceding deliberations is that one role of music is to forget self, a prerequisite to the outright absence of self. If music can help bring



you closer to Dao by erasing your prejudices in what you know, it would be beneficial. This view poses a significant deviation from Lao Zi's denial of any usefulness of music in Daoism. It also forms a diametrical conflict with the teachings of Mo Di, who despised music. (See Chapter 33:2.)

#### Section 4

Confucius journeyed westward to the State of Wei. Yan Yuan asked Tutor Jin, "What do you think of my master's way of doing things?"

The State of Lu was Confucius' home state. Tutor Jin was the Grand Tutor of the State of Lu, Jin being his surname. Yan Yuan was the most favorite disciple of Confucius. There is no information to suggest that the dialogue between Yan and Jin took place.

Tutor Jin answered, "I am sorry. Your master is not going to succeed."

Yan Yuan: "Why?"

Tutor Jin elaborated, "Before a dog-shaped straw is offered in ceremonial sacrifice, it is wrapped in colorful towels and kept in a bamboo box. The priest having been in a state of abstinence handles the straw in the most formal way. At the end of the offerings, it is cast out to the street. Pedestrians tramp on it. A woodcutter would pick it up for fuel. If someone again wraps it in towels, puts it into a bamboo box, and keeps it close by day and night, he would have not only dreams, but also nightmares. Now your master also takes the discarded straw dogs from the late kings and gathers pupils around them. Thus, in the State of Song, the premier ordered the big tree, under which Confucius and his disciples were having discourses, cut down. In the State of Wei, they came to a town named Kuang and were surrounded by a hostile crowd for five days. Though there was a misunderstanding, nevertheless on leaving, Confucius was reminded by local authority not to come back again. In the old capital of Yin and in the new capital of Zhou, his teachings were not well received. Were these not his dreams? Later, between the States of Chen and Cai, he and his pupils were surrounded, not

only living without hot meals for seven days, but also putting their lives at great risk. Was this not his nightmare?

The four incidents cited by Tutor Jin are factual, as they have been mentioned in *The Analects*. Historically, great teachers like Socrates and Shakyamuni were not recognized in their lifetime. So it is not surprising that Confucius was not received properly. The implication of Tutor Jin's comments as such can be taken only with reservation at this point. But read on.

“For going places by water, nothing is better than a boat. For going places on land, nothing is better than a carriage. Since a boat can be used only in water, if we assume a boat can also be used on land, then we can only go a short distance in our lifetime. Is the difference between the past and the present not the same as that between the water and the land? Is the difference between Zhou the dynasty and Lu the State not the same as that between the boat and the carriage? Now hoping to apply Zhou to Lu is the same as trying to push a boat on land. This is labor without merit and the doer will face disappointments. He has not come to understand that there should always be constant and countless modifications.

His point is simply that changes must be made constantly of the past so that it can be applied to the present. What is considered golden rules at one time should not be followed blindly and applied to a later time.

“Do you not see a water-drawing machine? You pull on the rope, it moves upward. You release the rope, it moves downward. People pull the machine; the machine does not pull people. Therefore, no matter how it moves, up or down, it does not offend people. For this very reason, the moral requisites and legal rules adopted by the Three Rulers and Five Kings<sup>10</sup> have been admired, not because they were emulated from the past, but because they brought peace to the land. Hence, the moral requisites and legal rules adopted by the Three Rulers and Five Kings are like pears, tangerines, and pomelos. They taste different, but they all have good flavors.

“Therefore, the moral requisites and legal rules must undergo changes with time. If we now take monkeys and chimpanzees and put on them the clothes of the Duke of Zhou<sup>11</sup>, they must chew on them and tear them apart until they are satisfied that they are naked. When we look at the difference between the past and present, that difference is the same as that between monkeys and the Duke of Zhou. Therefore, Sishi<sup>12</sup> showed her frown in public for having chronic melancholy. An ugly woman in the village found Sishi’s frown beautiful. She came home and determined to imitate her frown. Wealthy men in the village saw her and stayed in behind their gates. Poor men in the village saw her and ran away with their wives. She knew frown could be made beautiful, but did not know why frown was beautiful. I am sorry. Your master is not going to succeed.”

Tutor Jin believed that Confucius would not succeed because he followed the ancients too closely and refused to make changes, did not want to change, or did not know how to change. Tutor Jin’s “frown story” centers on the closing remark. Confucius would not succeed because he only knew that ancient moral requisites and legal rules had worked, but he did not know why they worked.

### Section 5

Confucius was fifty-one-years-old and had not sought Dao. He went south to a city named Pei to see Lao Dan.

Lao Dan said, “You have really come! I have heard of you, a worthy man from the north. Have you found Dao?”

Confucius answered, “Not yet.”

Lao Zi: “How did you seek Dao?”

Confucius: “I sought it in etiquette and names for five years. I have not gotten it.”

Lao Zi: “What else did you try?”

Confucius: “I sought it in changes in yin and yang for twelve years. I have not gotten it.”

Lao Zi: “True. If Dao could be made for offering, everyone would offer it up to his king. If Dao could be made for presenting, everyone would present it to his loved ones. If Dao could be made

for informing, everyone would tell it to his brothers. If Dao could be made for donating, everyone would donate it to his children. The reason that it cannot be done is nothing more than that Dao will not stay if the inside is not prepared for it and it will not pass on if the outside does not reconfirm it. When apprehension comes from within, but is not acceptable without, the sainted men<sup>13</sup> will not reveal it. When knowledge comes from without, but is not acceptable within, the sainted men will not keep it. Fame is a tool for everyone; it should not be a monopoly. *Ren* and justice were the lodgings of deceased kings. They may be suitable for staying overnight, but not for long, because prominence brings blames.

He was critical of Confucius being insistent on holding onto ancient teachings closely and lastingly, inasmuch as Dao was neither instructional nor transferable. This comes close to Tutor Jin's comments on the failings of Confucius in the preceding section. Perhaps, this is not surprising, as the same author could have written these sections, or two authors could have the same perspectives.

“In ancient times, the superior men took advantages of *ren* and justice and wandered in the transcendental wilderness, lived on foods from raw fields, and enjoyed produce from unattended gardens. What is transcendental is living effortlessly, what is raw is easy to care for, what is unattended is free. The ancients called it a journey of collecting the truth of things.

“He who considers wealth a goal will not share profits with others. He who considers prominence a goal will not share fame with others. He who considers power a goal will not share authority with others. When some of them gain power, they become trembling with fear, for knowing not how to use it. When they lose power, they become worried and sad. These men, lacking conviction in reflecting on what they have been seeking all along, are just born sufferers. To be resentful or graceful, to give or take, to admonish or advise, and to let live or die are the eight means for rectification. Only those who can follow changes in nature and resist vulgar desires can apply them. Therefore, it is said he who can rectify himself can rectify others. If his heart is not prepared for rectification, his senses will not respond to it.”

Simply, Lao Zi believed that Confucius had not been prepared to seek Dao, because his attitude and approaches were all wrong. We know very little about Lao Zi's life. He had been an officer charged with keeping archives of the Zhou dynasty in its capital city. Once Confucius came to the capital to see Lao Zi and consulted with him about rites, a favorite topic of Confucius. There is no record at all that they talked about Dao. The several dialogues on Dao between these two men described in this chapter can only be viewed as fictions. Read on.

### Section 6

Confucius went to see Lao Dan to talk about *ren* and justice. Lao Dan said, "When chaffs from winnowing blind the eyes, the four directions of the earth are lost. When mosquitoes bite on the skin, there is no sleep the whole night. When *ren* and justice mercilessly poison our minds, untold disturbances ensue. My master, if you want the world to preserve its truthfulness and simplicity, you can accomplish that by working quietly through custom with virtue. Why is it necessary in creating such disturbances with *ren* and justice like beating a drum while searching for a lost son? A crane need not take a bath everyday to keep it white; a crow need not dye everyday to keep it black. We need not argue the substances of white and black. We need not exaggerate the titles of fame and honor. 'When spring water runs dry, fish are left on the ground. They moisten and dampen one another with breath and spittle. The situation is no comparison to having left them in lakes and rivers.'"<sup>14</sup>

Like leaving fish in lakes and rivers, leave people where they are. There is no need to burden them with *ren* and justice, lest one day they may be in a dire situation. The last three sentences of text set off in single quotation marks here are taken from a chapter in the Inner Series of this work. They could not have been written or spoken by Lao Zi. This translator suspects that they were inserted here by error. The paragraph ends well without the quotation.

Confucius returned home after meeting with Lao Dan. For three days, he did not speak. A pupil asked, "Master, you have seen Lao Dan. What instructions did you give him?"

Confucius answered, "I have seen a dragon. A dragon forms a body when all parts are combined, and he forms an elegant pattern when all parts are separated. He rides on clouds and vapors, and lives on yin and yang. My mouth was wide open and could not be closed. How could I have instructed Lao Dan!"

Zigong<sup>15</sup> said, "Then is there a man who really lives in quietude and yet shows graceful countenance, says no words and yet is felt deeply, and moves about like heaven and earth? May Si have the honor of meeting him?" Therefore, with the recommendation of Confucius, Zigong went to see Lao Dan.

Lao Dan was sitting in the hall and said with a low tone, "I am an old man. What do you advise me?"

Zigong said, "The Three Supreme Rulers and the Five Kings ruled the land in different ways, but they had one thing in common, that is, to be recognized with fame and reputation. Only you, my master, do not consider them to be sages. Why?"

Lao Dan: "Young man, come up here. Why do you say they were different?"

Zigong replied, "Yao abdicated in favor of Shun. Shun abdicated in favor of Yü. Yü worked hard and Tang used force. King Wen obeyed Zhou and dared not rebel. King Wu opposed Zhou and was unwilling to obey. That is why they were different."

Lao Dan said, "Young man, come closer. Let me tell you how the Three Supreme Rulers and the Five Kings ruled. King Huang ruled the land by making people's sentiment pure and uniform, such that people would not criticize those who showed no sorrow for loss of a loved one. King Yao ruled the land by making people's sentiment affectionate, such that people would not criticize those who did not stand on etiquette toward their intimate friends and relatives. King Shun ruled the land by making people's sentiment competitive, such that pregnant women gave birth in ten months, five-month old babies could talk, children under one year old knew how to ask names of strangers, and children began to die young. King Yü ruled the land by making people's sentiment opting for changes, such that people used craftiness and force as a matter of course, like killing bandits not the same as killing human beings and making themselves "supermen" of the land. Therefore, the

world was shaken, and Confucianists and Mohists rose to the occasion. In the very beginning, there were some kinds of order in place. But now it is a mess. What can you say? Let me tell you. Although the rules of the Three Supreme Rulers and the Five Kings have been considered peaceful, actually the turmoil was tremendous. The cleverness of the Three Supreme Rulers shielded the brightness of the sun and the moon from above, estranged the spirits of the mountains and rivers from below, and interfered with the normal changes of the four seasons in the middle. Their cleverness was like the venom of a scorpion. Even tiny creatures could not live a peaceful life. And yet they considered themselves sages. Wasn't that shameful?"

Zigong was alarmed and stood with uneasiness.

Of course, this is a total denunciation of these prehistoric, legendary rulers whom Confucianists considered to be their role models in building a peaceful and joyful world. Obviously, some of the statements cannot be factual, such as "five-month old babies could talk, children under one year old knew how to ask names of strangers." Certainly, the author merely put his words in Lao Zi's mouth. We do not know exactly what Lao Zi thought of Confucianism.

### Section 7

Confucius said to Lao Dan, "Qiu<sup>16</sup> has been studying the six canons<sup>17</sup>—poetry, history, rites, music, the *Yi*, and *The Spring and Autumn*—for a long time and knows the literature quite well. I have met seventy-two<sup>18</sup> heads of state and discoursed on the doctrines of the deceased kings so as to understand the contributions of Dukes Zhou and Shou.<sup>19</sup> None of the heads of state took my advices seriously. What a great disappointment! Is it because it is hard to convince people or to make ideas clear?"

Lao Zi replied, "It was indeed fortunate that you did not succeed in convincing a single head of state! The six canons were the old tracks of the deceased kings, but not the origin of their tracks. What you are talking now are the tracks only. Tracks come from shoes and tracks are not shoes. Fabulous male and female white fish-hawks looking steadfastly at each other will

reproduce chicks. For certain insects, when the male calls from above and the female answers from below, they will reproduce. Still another kind of fabulous animals called *lei* having both male and female organs in the same body.<sup>20</sup> They reproduce by themselves. Disposition cannot be changed. Destiny cannot be altered. Time cannot be stopped. Dao cannot be obstructed. If you have learned Dao, nothing is impossible. If you have not learned Dao, nothing is possible.”

Confucius did not walk out his gate for three months. Then he went to see Lao Zi again and said, “Qiu has understood Dao. Birds are born after hatching. Fish are born after exchanging spittle. Bees are born after metamorphosing. When a younger brother is born, the older brother will cry because of losing attention. I have not been a student of creation for a long time. Not being a student of creation, how can I influence people’s hearts?”

Lao Zi replied, “Excellent! Qiu, you have understood Dao.”

We need not try to determine whether the few biological statements made in this section are scientifically correct. The essence of the message may be like this: Confucius paid too much attention to artifacts (such as the five canons), but neglected in understanding natural phenomena that go on constantly around him. How his failure to convert the hearts of politicians may be explained on this theme is not readily apparent.



## Notes

1. Synonymous with China. See note 9 in Chapter 11.
2. The prince who headed the Song State created in 1122 B.C. had been a prince of the preceding Shang (Yin) dynasty. Hence, Song is also known as Shang in this specific reference. Zhuang Zi was a native of the Song State. Later, Song was assimilated to become a part of the Chu State. The capital of the Chu State was Ying. Mount Ming was to the north of Ying. Hence, “A person going south to Ying and then looking north cannot see Mount Ming.” Actually, the mountain is fictitious. There is no mountain by that name, which means the home of the dead.
3. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 79.
4. The title of an ancient musical work.
5. See note 3 in Chapter 8.
6. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*: chapter 12
7. See note 10 in Chapter 4.
8. Similar expressions have appeared in Chapters 2:4 and 5:6.
9. The same as Shen Nong, one of the Five Rulers of the prehistorical times.
10. These terms refer to a golden period of the legendary rulers in a prehistoric age conceived by the Confucianists. The Daoists might not subscribe to the same belief, but it was brought up here to assert that even if it was true, Confucius still erred in what he was doing.
11. A younger brother of the founding king of the Zhou dynasty, who played a pivotal role in strengthening the rule of the new dynasty.
12. The name of a historical beauty in the fifth century, B.C.
13. The terms “sainted man” here and “superior man” below have been described first in Chapter 1:1.
14. Quoted from Chapter 6:2.
15. A pupil of Confucius excelled in diplomacy. Zigong was his courtesy name; his formal given name was Si, which he used in place of the pronoun “I” in the following sentence for the sake of courtesy.
16. He used his formal name here instead of the pronoun I for the sake of courtesy.
17. There is an error here. Although these six books have been called the Six Canons after Confucius, it is impossible for Confucius to have called them by that name, because Confucius himself wrote the *Spring and Autumn*. It is also

unlikely that Zhuang Zi could have made this error. For these reasons, this translator believes that Zhuang Zi did not write this section of text.

18. This is a typographical error. At the time of Confucius, there had not been 72 states to visit.
19. Both dukes were younger brothers of the founding king of the Zhou dynasty.
20. As told in the *Shan Hai Jing*, an ancient classic on geographical and ethnological records.



## 15

# Sharpening the Will

This relatively short chapter starts with the description of five kinds of people. It questions the inadequacy of the ways they seek their goals. This is followed by an exposition on the superiority of the Daoist approach and accomplishments of the true man (*zhen ren*).

### Section 1

Those who have sharpened the will, valued refined character, liberated from the bondage of custom, and criticized the imperfection are men of lofty ideals. They are admired by recluses in mountains and valleys, critics of the mundane world, and those of self-imposed sacrifice. Those who have talked about *ren*, justice, loyalty, trustworthiness, respectfulness, and frugality, and have given way to the virtuous and able are men of self-cultivation. They are admired by people at time of peace, teachers, and visiting lecturers. Those who have discoursed on great achievements, enjoyed great fame, established protocols for the rulers and the ruled, and rectified the names of the superiors and the inferiors are men of governance. They are admired by officers of the royal court, supporters of autocracy, and instigators of territorial expansion. Those who have retreated to mountains and rivers and enjoyed fishing and living leisurely are men of nature. They are admired by wanderers of nature, hermits, and men of easy going. Those who have learned the art of inspiration and expiration in exchanging the air inside the body for the fresh air like a bear stretching itself

on a tree branch or a bird stretching its wings and legs in flight are men for longevity. They are admired by people hoping to live as long as Peng Zu.<sup>1</sup>

This section describes five kinds of people, each searching for ways to fulfill their goals. There are five sets of analogous sentence structures, each beginning with “Those who have. . .” and ending with “They are admired. . .” They are idealists, educators, politicians, hermits, and health enthusiasts. They have their audience and admirers, but their ways of reaching their goals are complex. The Daoist proposes an unailing path as follows.

Therefore, when there is loftiness without sharpening will, when there is self-cultivation without *ren* and justice, when there is peaceful governance without great achievements and fame, when there is leisure without mountains and rivers, and when there is longevity without the art of respiration, nothing cannot be forgotten and nothing cannot be had. Everything is placid and tranquil and all goodness follows. This is the way of heaven and earth and the virtue of sainted men.

Both the thought and the rhetoric of this section show the spirit and style of Zhuang Zi. The essay does not end here, since the following two sections are a continuation of the same theme. It is one of the outstanding essays in this Series comparable to The Autumn Rain (Chapter 17:1), which we shall read soon.

## Section 2

It is said that peacefulness, solitude, emptiness, and *wu wei* are the foundation of heaven and earth and the supremacy of virtue, upon which sainted men rest their minds. Having rested their minds leads to easiness. Easiness leads to peacefulness. With easiness and peacefulness, anxiety and sadness cannot enter their minds, nor can evil influences. Therefore, their virtue is wholesome and their spirit full.

It is said that sainted men do things naturally in their lifetime and integrate with things at death. In solitude, they

keep the same virtues like yin; in action, they follow the same movements like yang. They do not plan on fortune, nor do they cause misfortune. They respond if they feel affected; they act if they are demanded, and they arouse if they have to. They rid themselves of cleverness and craftiness and follow natural reasoning.

It is said that [they face] no natural calamities, no worldly worries, no complaints from men, and no punishments from spirits. [They] do not devise nor plot. [They] shine without glittering. [They are] trustworthy beyond expectation. [They] do not dream while sleeping; [they] do not worry while wakening. In life, they are floating; in death, they are resting. Their spirits are pure, their souls inexhaustible. Peacefulness and emptiness are in perfect accord with the virtue of nature.

It is said that sorrow and joy are the deviations of virtue. Happiness and anger are the misplacements of Dao. Likes and dislikes are the errors of mind. Hence, when the heart does not feel sorrow and joy, this is the supreme of virtue. When oneness remains unchanged, this is the supreme of quietude. When nothing is in conflict with another, this is the supreme of emptiness. When contacts with the outside world are non-existent, this is the supreme of peacefulness. When there are no contradictions, this is the supreme of purity.

The four preceding paragraphs in this section each beginning with “It is said that...” are a summary statement of what constitutes a Daoist sainted man. As has been alluded to earlier elsewhere, a sainted man in Daoism commands as much respect and admiration as a sage in Confucianism. In fact, the two terms are identical in Chinese (*sheng ren*), but carry totally uncompromising implications. Therefore, this translator has chosen different translations for them for the sake of distinction.

Many of the writings credited to Zhuang Zi, such as those in the Inner Series, have become oft-quoted aphorisms in Chinese literature. Li Bai (701–762), the most eminent romantic poet of the Tang dynasty extracted from the third paragraph two sentences, “they do not dream while sleeping” and “in life they are floating,” to become “the floating life is like a dream.”

### Section 3

It is said that when the body is put to work endlessly, it will become fatigued; when the mind is put to work continually, it will become exhausted. The property of water is such that it is clear if not contaminated and it is level if not disturbed. If it is plugged from flowing, it will not be clear. This is a natural phenomenon. Therefore, it is said that purity without contamination, calmness without disturbances, solitude with *wu wei*, and actions in accord with nature are the ways to take care of one's spirit. The owner of a Ganyue sword<sup>2</sup> would keep it in a safe and dares not use it lightly, because it is extremely valuable. Spirits flow in all directions and reach at all corners. They are up as high as the sky and down as low as the depth of earth. They support all things without a trace. Their name means equality with heaven and earth.

The way to pure simplicity is to observe the spirit. Observing without losing the spirit leads to union with it. Understanding the union thoroughly is to be in accord with the logic of nature. A proverb says: "Ordinary people put emphasis on profits. Honest men put emphasis on names. Worthy men put emphasis on wills. Sainted men put emphasis on spirits." Therefore, what is simplicity is said to have not been contaminated with extraneous thoughts; what is purity is said to have not impaired the spirits. He who can embody purity and simplicity is called a true man.

True man is the most honorable title that can be used to describe a Daoist. Neither Lao Zi nor Zhuang Zi was bestowed the title in their lifetime. As referred to in the Introduction, they were so honored in the Tang dynasty by royal decrees. But by that time, some Daoist teachings had already branched into a religion and the term "true man" had implications never conceived in Zhuang Zi's time.

## **Notes**

1. See note 6 in Chapter 1.
2. A sword cast with iron mined in the regions of Gan (or Wu) and Yue, well known for casting famous swords.





## Polishing the Natural Disposition

A clear distinction is made between what is inside, such as joy, happiness, Dao, and what is outside, such as holding a high office. Although both may give us satisfaction, the former will be with us always and the latter comes and goes beyond our ability to control. Yet most of us opt for the latter and end up turning ourselves upside down.

### Section 1

Those who use vulgar teachings to polish natural disposition with the hope of returning to [the state at] the beginning of time and those who use vulgar thought to delude sentiments with the hope of gaining intelligence are narrow-minded people.

Who were these narrow-minded people? In the opinion of the Daoist, they were Confucianists and Mohists.

The ancients studied Dao by cultivating intelligence in quietude. With intelligence gained, they did not take advantage of using it, but instead cultivated quietude with it. Inasmuch as intelligence and quietude cultivated each other, peace and harmony would sprout naturally within. Each person would rectify by hiding his own virtue. Without flaunting his virtue, he thus kept his virtue.

If we would go back in history long before the time of Confucius and Mo Zi, we would find that people then sought Dao without fanfare. Once they got it,

they kept it quietly, lest they would lose it by flaunting. Of course, this is the Daoist author's viewpoint.

Between the sentence, "Inasmuch as intelligence...peace and harmony would sprout naturally within," and the following sentence, "Each person would rectify by hiding his own virtue," there have been three more sentences containing over fifty Chinese characters on *ren*, justice, loyalty, rites, and music. Many commentators, such as Lin Xiyi (20) and Qian Mo (26), believe the insertion is specious and has nothing to do with Zhuang Zi's philosophy, even remotely. The insertion is thus deleted for translation.

## Section 2

In a primitive, unintelligible world, the ancients lived in peacefulness without asking each other for anything. At that time, yin and yang were in harmony; *gui* and *shen* did not bother people; the four seasons were in order; everything was unharmed, and no living beings died young. Although people had knowledge, they had no way of using it. This was a state of pure unity. At this time, there was nothing to do [willfully] as everything was done naturally.

The description of the primitive state as the perfect state of human society has appeared in Chapter 80 of Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing* and in a few sections elsewhere in this work. The perfect state did not and could not last very long as soon as people learned how to work with one another, as we shall see how the author described the circumstances as follows.

As virtue was being gradually corrupted when Sui Ren and Fu Xi<sup>1</sup> became chiefs of the land, there was acquiescence with the wishes of the people, but no return to the perfect unity. As virtue was being corrupted further when Shen Nong and Huang Di<sup>2</sup> became chiefs of the land, there was peace, but no acquiescence. As virtue was being corrupted even further when Yao and Shun<sup>3</sup> became kings, a great effort was made in civil reformation by de-emphasizing honesty and dismantling simplicity. People departed from Dao in living and endangered virtue in meeting others. Then they abandoned nature and embraced craftiness.

People used their craftiness in watching each other and there was no longer peace in the world. Still later, they added elegance and scholarship. Elegance spoiled simplicity. Scholarship inundated one's soul. Finally, people became deluded and were not able to return to peacefulness, let alone the original state of nature.

This appears to be a historical analysis of the demise of Dao and the degradation of virtue among the people through the ages. True, in the primitive state, living was in its simplest form and human relationship was also the simplest. This happened to be the utopia of Daoist society. Human intelligence is endowed with the ability to make life richer through progress. Progress requires doing things in new ways, which, according to Daoism in theory at least, leads us further away from "the original state of nature."

From this point of view, either the world has lost Dao or Dao has lost the world. The world and Dao alternate losing each other. How could people in Dao cause the world to rise or how could the world cause Dao to rise! Dao could not rise in the world. The world could not cause Dao to rise. Even if sainted men did not retreat to the mountains and forests, their virtues had already been hidden.

Therefore, to hide is not to hide oneself. He who was called a recluse in ancient times did not hide himself from being seen by others, shut his mouth without saying a word, or keep his knowledge in secret from making it known, because his time and destiny did not fit. If one day his time and destiny would fit, he could return to the state of perfect unity without effort. If his time and destiny continued to be ill-fitting, he was prepared to wait out his turn quietly. This is a way of preserving one's life.

The advice given in the last few sentences could be interpreted as an exercise of craftiness or a defensive strategy— a strategy nonetheless.

### **Section 3**

In ancient times, those who chose to preserve their lives did not use arguments to flaunt their knowledge, use knowledge

to challenge the world, or use knowledge to challenge virtue. Each of them tried to return to nature from his position. There was nothing more to do. Although Dao does not care about little deeds and virtue does not care about little knowledge, little knowledge hurts virtue and little deeds hurt Dao. Therefore, rectifying oneself is all to it. Enjoying what has been completed is called fulfillment.

In ancient times, what was called fulfillment did not mean holding a high office. It meant only that no greater joy could be had. What is called fulfillment now means only holding a high office. Holding a high office is not part of your life. What comes occasionally is like a trust. When a trust is offered, it cannot be refused; when it is withdrawn, it cannot be stopped. Therefore, we should not feel fulfillment because of holding a high office, nor should we join vulgarity because of having a difficult time. The joy of the two is the same. So we should not be worried in either case. Nowadays, people are unhappy when the trust is gone. In this way, even when there has been happiness, there always exists a kind of spiritual deficiency. Therefore, those who lose selves because of things external or those who lose inner nature because of vulgarity are men of upside down.

From the “narrow-minded people” in the opening paragraph of this chapter to the “men of upside down” in its last sentence, the author expounded the ills of depending on vulgar knowledge in understanding the natural disposition in every one of us. He solicited ancient history to support his theme. The names of the Three Supreme Rulers and the Five Kings of high antiquity are in the history book. We know nothing factual about them. We could interpret any way we want. The author of this chapter in about 300 B.C. could not have known more either. Hence, the stories told in Section 2 can only be understood as conjectural.

## Notes

1. According to traditional records, Fu Xi (fl. 2953 B.C.) was credited with drawing the eight trigrams. Sui-Ren of an earlier time was credited with making fire by striking wood with sharp stones.
2. Shen Nong (fl. 2838 B.C.) was credited with the discovery of herbal medicine. Huang Di or King Huang (fl. 2698 B.C.) was credited with unifying the nation and changing a tribal into a national rule.
3. Yao (fl. 2357 B.C.) and Shun (fl. 2255 B.C.) were considered model kings by the Confucianists.



## The Autumn Rain

The theme of this essay centers on the relativity of value judgment. The elaboration is based on a series of seven dialogues between a river god and a sea god. The complete essay is contained in Section 1. Chinese scholars of the last more than one thousand years have believed that only Zhuang Zi could have written this essay in both its scope and its rhetorical delivery, its inclusion in the Outer Series nonetheless. The remaining six sections of this chapter contain miscellaneous topics unrelated to The Autumn Rain.

### Section 1

The autumn rain has come in time. Hundreds of tributaries flow into the [Yellow] River. The huge flood of water extends the width of the river between the two shores so much that it is hard to tell horses from cattle across the river. The River God is content with pride and thereby takes it to mean that he is in possession of all the beautiful things in the world. He rides with the stream flowing eastward until he comes to the North Sea. As he looks east, he sees no boundaries. He begins feeling ashamed of his earlier contentment. He looks at the ocean toward the Sea God and says with a sigh, "A proverb says, 'A person listens to lectures on Dao many, many times and thinks no one knows more than he does.' I am that person. I have heard that some people disparage the experience of Confucius and slight the righteousness of Baiyi.<sup>1</sup> At first, I did not believe in them. Now I see that you are so magnificent. If I do not come to seek



your advice, I would have been the dregs and would forever be ridiculed by those versed in Dao.”

The Sea God said, “A well frog cannot understand what a sea is like because of its location. A summer insect cannot understand what ice is like because of its season. A narrow-minded teacher cannot understand what Dao is like because of his education. Now you come from a riverbank, suddenly see an endless sea, and recognize your shortcomings. You are ready to be told about a great truth. There is not a body of water greater than a sea. Countless tributaries flow into it without ever stopping and yet it never overflows. It flows out from Weilü<sup>2</sup> without ever stopping and yet its volume is never decreased. Neither spring nor autumn makes a change in it. It knows no flood or drought. Its flow capacity, exceeding that of rivers, cannot be expressed in numbers. Yet I have never felt conceited as I got my capacity and form from heaven and earth and my vitality from yin and yang. I am like a small rock or tree in a big mountain. I only think how small I am, how can I ever feel conceited? If we compare the four seas with the space of heaven and earth, don't they look like a tiny depression in a big lake? If we compare China with the landmass within the four seas, doesn't she look like tares in a granary? There are over ten thousand names for all things, mankind is but one of them. People live in the Nine Regions, where grains grow and where boats and carriages are used, and mankind is only one of them. Is mankind among all other things not like fine hair on a horse's body? What the Five Kings planned, the Three Supreme Rulers fought for, the warm-hearted men worried, and the able men labored all ended here. Baiyi elaborated it for the sake of fame; Confucius talked about it for the sake of scholarship. They were conceited just as you were previously for your water.”

This is the first argument on the relativity of value judgment. The River God was proud of the enormous volume of water he possessed before he saw a sea. The Sea God gave him a lecture on relativity. He was never conceited, because there were many things even bigger than a sea. At the end the author leaves the topic of the physical largeness and wanders into the domain of moral

greatness. He chides Confucianists and their sages for having been trying hard to achieve for their own sake.

The River God said, "Then I consider heaven and earth as big and fine hair as small. Right?"

The Sea God answered, "No. Of all things, the capabilities are infinite. Time sequence of events will not come to an end. Coming and going of gains and losses have no regularities. Beginning and ending are not predictable. Therefore, men of great wisdom look at what is far and near, realizing what is small is not necessarily few and what is big is not necessarily many, because capabilities of things are infinite. They understand the present and the past, thereby not feeling perplexed for getting what is far away, nor seeking eagerly for what is close by, because time will not come to an end. They observe the nature of fullness and emptiness, such that gaining does not mean joy and losing does not mean disappointment, because coming and going have no regularities. They vision that life and death are like walking on a broad and level road. There is no special joy in living or special displeasure in dying, because beginning and ending are not predictable. Adding up what a person knows is always less than what he does not know. The time he lives in this mundane world is always less than the time he does not live in it. When we try to use the littlest knowledge to search the limitless universe, we are deemed perplexed and despaired. Therefore, how can we know down is the smallest limit of all or heaven and earth is the largest domain of all?"

This is the second argument on relativity the Sea God gave to the River God. What could be the smallest and what could be the largest would never be known. He cautioned the River God about the futility of applying his petty knowledge to gauge the magnificence of nature.

Later in Section 7 of the last chapter of this work, the reader will read the concept of maximum and minimum from a prominent logician.

The River God asked, "All well-known sophists have said, 'The smallest has no form; the largest cannot be encircled.' Is it true?"

The Sea God said, "When the small looks at the big, the observation cannot be thorough. When the big looks at the small, the observation cannot be discerning. Hence, each has the advantage of being different. This is a matter of course. *Jing* means tiny and *fu* means huge. What is *jing* or *fu* is limited to things with a form. Things without a form cannot be quantified. Things that cannot be encircled cannot be qualified. What can be conveyed in words is a thing gross in appearance. What can be conveyed only in thought is a thing delicate in appearance. What cannot be conveyed in words or in thought is neither gross nor delicate.

This is the third argument on relativity. Perhaps, it is easier to transpose the argument from a hypothetical situation to a realistic one. For instance, when we, as human beings, look at things much bigger than ourselves, "the observation cannot be thorough." When we look at things much smaller than ourselves, "the observation cannot be discerning." (Remember these statements were made in the B.C. period when telescopes and microscopes had not been invented.) Because of these paradoxes, our observation can be relative only. In addition, we cannot quantify the smallest or qualify the biggest. Our ability to understand has a limited range. Everything is relative.

At the end of this text, there is another paragraph, the content of which, though Daoist in viewpoint, has no connection whatsoever to the subject matter of this section. Likely, it has been misplaced here. No one knows where it might have been. In accordance with the conclusion of most scholars, this paragraph is now deleted.

The River God asked, "Then from the exterior and the interior of all things, how is it possible to distinguish the noble from the lowly and the small from the big?"

The Sea God said, "From the standpoint of Dao, things cannot be distinguished between the noble and the lowly. From the standpoint of things, they consider their own kind noble and all others lowly. From the standpoint of vulgarity, the noble and the lowly are not inherent. From the standpoint of differences, if one looks at all things from the large aspect and consider them to be large, then all things will be large; if one looks at all things

from their small aspect and consider them to be small, then all things will be small. If we understand that heaven and earth is like a grain of tare and that a down is like a hill, we can readily appreciate the degree of differences among all things. From the standpoint of functions, if we look at all things from the positive aspect of having and consider them to be positive, then all things will be positive. Likewise, if we look at all things from the negative aspect of having-not and consider them to be negative, then all things will be negative. As east and west are opposite to each other and neither can exist without the other, then it is easy to determine the function and dependency of one on the other. From the standpoint of preference, if we look at all things from the favored aspect and consider them to be correct, then all things will be correct. Likewise, if we look at all things from the disfavored aspect and consider them to be incorrect, then all things will be incorrect. As Kings Yao and Jie<sup>3</sup> each considered himself to be correct and each other to be incorrect, then it is easy to see what to accept and what to reject.

“In times past, Yao and Shun<sup>4</sup> each became king because of abdication; both Ceng<sup>5</sup> and Zhi perished because of abdication. Tang and Wu each launched a revolution and became king; Duke Bai rebelled and was executed. Therefore, the practice of abdication or revolution and the administration of Yao and Jie have their successes and failures and cannot be considered as a rule. A beam may be used to knock down a city gate, but is useless in sealing a cave, because different implements are needed. A steed can cover one thousand *li* a day, but is inferior to a fox in catching mice, because different abilities are required. An owl can catch fleas or see a down at night, but does not see hills with its eyes wide open in the day, because different faculties are employed. People are used to say, why not adopt the right and abandon the wrong, and adopt peace and abandon turmoil, for they do not understand the rationale of heaven and earth and the sentiments of all things. It is like adopting heaven and abandoning earth, adopting yin and abandoning yang. Obviously, this cannot be done. But these people say it over and over again. They are either fools or liars. Ancient kings abdicated

under different conditions. The three dynasties succeeded under various circumstances. Those who did at the wrong time and against the prevailing wind were called usurpers. Those who did at the right time and going with the wind were called righteous men. Relax, my Elder of the River! How could you know the roads to fame and to shame and the distinction between small and big?”

This is the fourth argument on relativity. The Sea God illustrated his points with a series of historical successes and failures in the political arena. Various factors contributed to making these men heroes or usurpers. A Chinese proverb says: “Success makes a king. Failure makes a rebel.”

This concludes the essay on relativity. In the following three question-and-answer subsections, the author outlines what a Daoist should do under the circumstances.

The River God asked, “Then what should I do or what should I not do? With respect to accepting or declining, taking or leaving, what should I do?”

The Sea God answered, “From the standpoint of Dao, there is no noble or lowly, as one is the reversal of the other. Be sure not to restrain your will so as to deviate from Dao. What is much and what is little are mutually changeable. Do not insist on going one way, so as to disagree with Dao. Be strict like the head of a state without prejudice in dispensing favors. Be aloft like the master of ceremonies in a sacrificial offering without praying for personal privileges. Be broad-minded like the limitless span in the four directions of the universe. With generosity you will gain the trust of all things. Who will need help? This is known as freedom from deviation. All things are equal. Which is longer or shorter? Dao has no beginning or end, but things have life and death. Do not consider temporary success to be dependable. Things go from a state of fullness to a state of emptiness without any fixed form. Age cannot stay still; time cannot be stopped. Whether there is an increase or a decrease, full or empty, there will always be an end following a beginning. This is the way to talk about the great Dao and principles governing

all things. When things are growing, incidents are sudden and swift. Movements always make changes; time always elapses. What one should do? What one should not do? The world will go on with changes naturally.”

Change is the law of nature. Everything in the world undergoes constant changes. What we should do at one time may be what we should not do at another time. The two questions posed by the River God are not answerable without knowing first the time involved. Therefore, it is wise to follow Dao and do as Dao reveals.

The River God asked, “Then why is Dao valuable?”

The Sea God answered, “Those who understand Dao must be thorough in reasoning. Those who are thorough in reasoning must be well prepared to manage crises. Those who are well prepared to manage crises do not allow things to hurt them. Those who have attained the highest virtue cannot be burnt by fire, drown by water, troubled by summer heat and winter cold, or hurt by birds and beasts. This does not mean that they will not be hurt if they come close to these adversities. What it means is that they will not be hurt because they evaluate first the situations of safety versus danger, of fortune versus misfortune, and of going away versus coming close. Therefore, it is said that the appointments of heaven are inside of us and the affairs of man are outside of us. The supreme cultivation of self is to be in accord with nature. As what people do is in accord with nature and positioning themselves for self satisfaction, they will first hesitate going back and forth and finally return to the core of Dao and discourse on the depth of truth.”

This is the sixth dialogue, an essay on the qualifications of a Daoist.

The River God asked, “What is heaven? What is man?”

The Sea God answered, “Oxen and horses that have four legs are heaven-endowed. Mounting a bridle on a horse’s head and piercing a ring through an ox’s nose are man-made. Therefore, it

has been said, “Do not ruin the heaven-endowed with the man-made. Do not ruin life with artifice. Do not ruin good name with avarice. Carefully keeping [the heaven-endowed] without losing it is called returning to its pure simplicity.”

This is the concluding seventh dialogue. The Sea God pointed out the sharp contrast between the natural and the artificial. We should endeavor to keep the way nature gives us and refrain from modifying it in our way. As pointed out earlier, this concludes the essay on The Autumn Rain. The following sections are miscellaneous and bear no relation to the chapter title.

## Section 2

The *kwei*<sup>6</sup> envies the millipede, the millipede envies the snake, the snake envies the wind, the wind envies the eye, and the eye envies the heart.

The *Kwei* says to the millipede, “I use one leg to hop ahead. No one is more efficient than I. Now you use countless legs, how do you move about?”

The millipede says, “You are wrong. Don’t you ever see a person spit? Some of the spittles are as big as pearls or as fine as fog and others are numerous combinations of them. Now I follow what comes naturally and cannot explain how I do it.”

The millipede says to the snake, “I walk with my numerous legs and I do not do so well as you do without any leg. Why?”

The snake answers, “When movements are done naturally, how can they be changed? I never have legs to use.”

The snake says to the wind, “I move my spine to go about. I still have a visible form. Now you blow and bang from the North Sea to the South Sea as if you had nothing. Why?”

The wind answers, “True. I blow and bang from the North Sea to the South Sea, but a finger can stop me and a kick can also stop me. Of course, only I can uproot big trees or level big houses. Therefore, I do not win in small measures, but win in big incidents. Only the sainted men can win big.”

The text ends here. Although the last sentence is the punch line, it would seem the deliberations are incomplete. Nothing has been said about the eye and the heart yet. Could it be that the last portion of text had been lost?

### Section 3

Confucius was taking a journey through Kuang. The Wei people surrounded his lodgings in several rounds. He continued to play a stringed instrument and sing. Zilu entered his room and inquired, "How could you, my master, be so relaxed?"

The story is by and large truthful as the incident was mentioned briefly in *The Analects*, although certain Daoist points of view have been added. Kuang was a city in the State of Wei. Confucius was staying in the home of Zilu's brother-in-law. Zilu, a pupil of Confucius, was well known for his straightforwardness in taking actions. At one time, a strong man named Yang Hu had mistreated the people of Kuang; they hated him. Coincidentally, Confucius looked a little bit like Yang Hu. The people mistook Confucius for Yang Hu and surrounded his lodgings.

Confucius said, "Come, let me tell you. I have shunned talking about the obstruction of my teachings for a long time and that it cannot be avoided is a matter of destiny. I have sought pervasion of my teachings for a long time and that nothing has been gained is a matter of circumstances. At the time of Kings Yao and Shun, there was no obstruction, not because people had great intelligence. At the time of Kings Jie and Zhou, there was no pervasion, not because people had poor intelligence. Circumstances determined the outcome. Fearing not dragons while crossing a waterway shows the courage of a fisherman. Fearing not buffalos or tigers while going through mountains shows the courage of a hunter. With naked swords crossed at the front and yet looking at death like life shows the courage of a patriot. Knowing that obstruction is by destiny, knowing that pervasion is by circumstances, and fearing not to face a grave danger show the courage of a sage. You,<sup>7</sup> take it easy. My destiny has been under strains."



Not long afterwards, a uniformed officer came in and apologized, “You were mistaken for Yang Hu and surrounded. Now we know you are not. The crowds have withdrawn.”

#### Section 4

Gongsun Long asked Wei Mou, “As a young man, Long studied the teachings of former kings. Later, I understood the practice of *ren* and justice, the combination of the like and the unlike, the separation of the hard and the white, the change of the affirmative into the negative or vice versa, and the change of the permissive into the prohibitive or vice versa. I covered the knowledge in all schools of thought and defeated the tongues of all debaters. I considered myself the most brilliant scholar of all. Now I hear the words of Zhuang Zi. I am fascinated and surprised. I do not know whether my arguments are inferior to his or my knowledge is inferior to his. Now I dare not open my mouth. May I request your advice?”

Gongsun Long (Gongsun being his surname) was a contemporary of Zhuang Zi. Like Hui Shi, he was also a logician. Only a few of his arguments have survived. The two most famous arguments are (a) on the white horse, the argument is: a white horse is not a horse; and (b) on the hard and the white, the argument is: hardness (from touch) and whiteness (from sight) cannot co-exist in an object. Wei Mou was a prince of the Wei State. From the lecture he gave in the following, he was a Daoist.

Prince Mou, leaning on a couch, made a deep sigh, looked up at the sky, laughed and said, “Have you not heard of the toad in a shallow well? The toad tells the turtle of the East Sea, ‘How happy I am! Going outside, I jump over the railing of the well; coming inside I rest on broken bricks. In water, I use my forelegs to keep my mouth up; in mud, I bury my ankles over my feet. Looking at crabs and tadpoles, I find they cannot enjoy life like me. Moreover, I occupy the whole well and monopolize the use of water. This is great! Why don’t you come in any time and take a look?’ Before the East Sea turtle puts in its left foot, its right

knee already gets stuck. It has to back out slowly and then tells the toad about the sea, saying, 'A distance of one thousand *li* is not enough to describe its width and a height of one thousand *ren*<sup>8</sup> is not enough to describe its depth. During the time of King Yü, there were nine floods in ten years and the water volume in the sea was not increased. During the time of King Tang, there were seven draughts in nine years and the water level was not lowered. Not to be affected by changes lasting a short or a long period of time or by variations in more or less amount of water is a great joy of living in the East Sea.' On hearing the description, the toad of the shallow well is dumbfounded.

"Your intelligence is inadequate to distinguish the right from the wrong, and you still want to comment the words of Zhuang Zi. This is like asking a mosquito to haul a mountain or a worm to swim across a river. They are equally impossible assignments. Furthermore, your intelligence is inadequate to choose artful words to make a one time gain for yourself. Are these efforts not like the toad of the shallow well? Still, Zhuang Zi with his feet on the lowest ground of earth reaches high into the heavens. His views not separated by the south and the north spread without limits to an unfathomable depth. His ideas not partial to the east and the west begin with an earnest and solemn origin and return to a thoroughfare leading to endless possibilities. You even try to get to his thought piece by piece with discrimination and sophism. This is simply like using a small pipe to look through at the sky and using the tip of an awl to measure the earth. Are they not really too tiny for the job? You may go now! Moreover, have you not heard of the youths of Shouling going to Handan to learn their ways of walking?<sup>9</sup> They not only did not learn the new ways of walking, but also forgot their own ways of walking. And they had to crawl back home. If you don't go now, you will forget what you have got and lose what you have learned."

Gongsun Long could not close his mouth, and with his tongue tied, he slipped out.

The Daoist does not get along well with sophists. Here we see how the Daoist in the person of a prince really gave Gongsun Long a hard time. We have read

before that Zhuang Zi and Hui Zi were good friends, but they often teased each other for their shortcomings. We shall see more of them dueling soon.

### Section 5

Zhuang Zi was fishing by the Pu River. The prince of Chu dispatched two ministers to see him with a message saying, "I wish to burden you with the affairs of the state."

Zhuang Zi, holding a fishing pole and without turning his head said, "I have heard that Chu has a spirited tortoise dead three thousand years ago. The prince wrapped it in cloth and placed it in a box high above the temple hall. Do you think this tortoise would rather have died with its shell saved and worshipped or have lived with its tail wagging in the mud?"

The two ministers answered, "Rather have lived with its tail wagging in the mud."

Zhuang Zi said, "Please go. I would wag tail in the mud."

This story shows one facet of Zhuang Zi's philosophy of life.

### Section 6

Hui Zi became prime minister of the State of Liang.<sup>10</sup> Zhuang Zi went to see him. Someone said to Hui Zi, "Zhuang Zi is coming, because he would take your place as prime minister." Hui Zi was worried. He ordered to find Zhuang Zi in the state for three days and nights.

Zhuang Zi came to see him and said, "There is a bird in the south, its name is phoenix. Did you hear about it? It flies from the South Sea to the North Sea. It will not alight on a tree unless it is a *wutong*,<sup>11</sup> it will not feed on anything unless it is the fruit of bamboo; it will not drink from any spring unless it tastes like sweet wine. Now accidentally, an owl finds a rotten mouse. The phoenix flies over. The owl looks up and cries, 'Xia!' Now do you want to scare me with your position in the Liang State?"

It is arrogant for a man to identify himself with a phoenix and this does not appear to fit into Zhuang Zi's personality. The essay also pictures Hui Zi as a neurotic, which he was not. Hence, the description of both men is grossly overdone. For these reasons, it seems unlikely that Zhuang Zi himself penned this section. It is appropriate to assume that one of his pupils wrote this section.

### Section 7

Zhuang Zi and Hui Zi rambled on a bridge over the Hao River.<sup>12</sup> Zhuang Zi said, "The white fish are swimming leisurely. How happy are they!"

Hui Zi asked, "You are not fish. How would you know the happiness of fish?"

Zhuang: "You are not I. How would you know that I don't know the happiness of fish?"

Hui: "I am not you. Of course, I don't know whether you know it or not. You are not fish. So you would not know the happiness of fish. This completes the argument."

Zhuang Zi: "Please let me trace from the beginning. You said, 'How would you know the happiness of fish?' You already knew that I had known it and still asked me. I knew it when I came to the bridge."

Human feelings are contagious. When we see sufferings of others, we feel sympathetic. When we see happiness of others, we feel good. Both Daoism and Confucianism go one step further by proposing that human feelings can be communicated beyond mankind to other animals as well. In the *Yi Jing*, the communication of human feelings to animals has been implicated.<sup>13</sup> Here Zhuang Zi used the same man-to-fish communication to conclude his argument against Hui Zi's. What he meant in the last sentence is simply this: When I came to the bridge, I was happy. So I knew then the fish under the bridge were also happy, because my happiness had been communicated to the fish.

## Notes

1. A model righteous man in Confucianism. He lived during the transition period between the Yin and Zhou dynasties. He and his brother chose to live on wild produce in a mountain rather than on crop grown under the authority of the new Zhou dynasty, because it was founded by force.
2. The name of a legendary location where sea water outflows.
3. King Yao was a benevolent king and King Jie a wanton king.
4. King Huang abdicated in favor of Yao in 2357 B.C. King Yao abdicated in favor of Shun in 2255 B.C.
5. Prince Ceng of the Yan State abdicated in favor of Prime Minister Zi Zhi in 316 B.C. The abdication turned into an internal turmoil. Both Prince Ceng and Zi Zhi met death.
6. A legendary one-legged animal like the ox, but hornless and living in mountains.
7. “You” as used here is not a pronoun. It was Zilu’s formal given name. It was correct in protocol to address a person junior to the speaker by his formal name. This was how Confucius addressed Zilu.
8. *Ren* is an ancient unit of length roughly equals eight feet. It is not the same as the *ren* in the expression, “*ren* and justice.”
9. Handan was the capital city of the Zhao State, and Shouling was a city of the neighboring Yan State in the Warring States period. Although “crawling back home” is an exaggeration, the story as told here for the first time has become a popular aphorism in Chinese writings for abandoning one’s customary ways of doing certain things in favor of the vogue and ending with an awkward surprise.
10. The same as the State of Wei.
11. *Sterculia platanifolia*, a beautiful big tree.
12. Located near the city Fengyang in Anhui Province.
13. See Wu: *The Essentials of the Yi Jing*, p. 471 (43).

# 18

## Extravagance

The several sections of this chapter deal with two kinds of happiness of man. One is organic, aiming at satisfying our senses; the other is spiritual, seeking a higher and lasting level of satisfaction. Each section tells a different story, real or fictitious, but the theme is the same.

### Section 1

Is there the utmost happiness in the world? Is there one that can sustain life? If so, what should we do or follow? What should we avoid or adopt? What should we take or leave? What should we like or dislike?

What the people of the world respect are wealth, nobility, longevity, and prestige. What they enjoy are personal comfort, delicious foods, fine clothing, pretty sights, and beautiful sounds. What they despise are poverty, lowliness, death at young age, and disgrace. What they worry about is that they will not be comfortable, they will not wear fine clothing, the mouth will not taste delicious foods, the eyes will not see pretty sights, and the ears will not hear beautiful sounds. If they do not get them, they are deeply worried. It is foolish to treat the body this way.

Wealthy people work hard. They accumulate more money than they can ever spend. It is contrary to nature to treat the body this way. Noble men are deeply concerned with their privileges day and night. It is remiss to treat the body this way. When people are born, they are born with worries. Those having lived a long life become confused and wonder why they haven't died. What

a pity! It is too far off to treat the body this way. Martyrs are praised for their righteousness, but cannot save their own lives. I do not know if the righteousness is true righteousness or not. If it is righteous, it cannot save their own lives; if it is not righteous, it saves others' lives. It is said: "If a loyal counsel is not accepted, do not insist, just withdraw." Therefore, when Zixu insisted, he was executed. If he had not insisted, he would not have been well known. Is there truly righteousness or not?

Following the essay on the four wrong ways to treat the body—the foolish, the contrary to nature, the remiss, and the far off ways—the deliberation turns to righteousness, an important concept in Confucianism and a motive behind many Mohist beliefs, such as anti-war. This is one of the reasons that the Daoist often writes about the Confucianist-Mohist axis. The Daoist viewpoint on righteousness as implied herein is ambiguous, for instance, "Is there truly righteousness or not?" On the contrary, the Confucianist is absolute about it. Mencius lectured, "Life is what I want. Righteousness is also what I want. When the two cannot be had at the same time, I abandon life and choose righteousness."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, what Zixu chose is a clear must for the Confucianist, but a dubious decision for the Daoist.

I really don't know if what vulgar people do and enjoy is truly happiness or not. I observe what they enjoy is chasing the vogue they opt for in earnest. They call it happiness, and I am not sure it is happiness or not happiness. Are they really having happiness or not? I believe going with *wu wei* gives me real happiness, but this is what vulgar people consider to be a big disappointment. Hence, it may be said, "The utmost happiness is without happiness; the utmost fame is without fame."

It may be interesting to note that "chasing the vogue" was as popular in the B.C. period as it is today. In the last sentence, "without happiness" and "without fame" means "happiness that comes with *wu wei* (naturally without efforts)" and "fame that comes with *wu wei* (naturally without efforts)", respectively.

The right and wrong in the world really cannot be conclusive. But, *wu wei* can make the right and wrong conclusive. Ultimate

happiness can keep the body and spirit active, but only *wu wei* can sustain life. Let me explain. Heaven following *wu wei* attains purity and earth following *wu wei* attains peacefulness. The union of the two from *wu wei* produces a myriad of things. In an obscure way, they came. In an obscured way, they left without traces. A myriad of things were produced from *wu wei*. Hence, heaven and earth follow *wu wei* and there is nothing they cannot do. How can man ever acquire *wu wei*!

This last paragraph explores the implications of *wu wei*. It may be considered as a footnote to a saying of Lao Zi, “Dao always does *wu wei* and nothing is not done.”<sup>2</sup> Hence, the thought going into it here seems not original enough to be called Zhuangian. In any way, the essay seems to be penned by his pupil.

## Section 2

Zhuang Zi’s wife died. Hui Zi went to mourn, while Zhuang Zi was squatting, beating a pan and singing.

Hui Zi said, “She lived with you and gave birth to children. She got old and died. If you don’t weep, that is enough. But you beat pan and sing. Do you not overdo it?”

Zhuang Zi said, “No. When she just died, how could I not have saddened! Then I realize that at the beginning she had no life. Not only did she have no life, she had no form. Not only did she have no form, she had no energy. Commingled in the obscured state, she acquired her energy. Energy changed into form. Form changed into life. Now life changed into death. This is like the rotation of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. She was resting peacefully somewhere between heaven and earth, and I wailed?! I found myself naïve about destiny. So I stopped wailing.

We know very little about Zhuang Zi’s life. Here we learn he had children and his wife died before him and at an old age. Lao Zi said nothing about life and death relationship. Here Zhuang Zi likened it to the rotation of the seasons. If so, it has some similarity with the Buddhist teaching of transmigration, the turning of the wheel between life and death and vice versa. We remember that



Buddhism entered China several centuries after Zhuang Zi. So the writer of this essay could not have been aware of Buddhism.

### Section 3

Elder Zhili and Elder Gujie were wandering in the hills of Mingbai, the wilderness of Kunlun, and once the resting place of King Huang. Suddenly, a tumor was growing in the left elbow of Elder Gujie. He was visibly worried and seemed to dislike it.

Elder Zhili asked, "Do you dislike it?"

Elder Gujie said, "No. Why should I? Life is a combination of external elements. The life that external elements combine in forming is transient. Life and death are like day and night. Both you and I are watching objectively the ongoing changes. Only the changes are taking place in me. I have no reason to dislike it."

Both personal names Zili and Gujie and the location Mingbai were fictitious. Zili means forgetting one's presence and Gujie, forgetting one's intelligence, and Mingbai, the elder of the underworld. The idea underpinning the story seems shallow. It was probably the work of a pupil of Zhuang Zi.

### Section 4

Zhuang Zi went to the State of Chu and saw an exposed human skull, still recognizable from its shape. He used a riding whip to tap the skull lightly and soliloquized, "My master, had your death been caused by your clinging to life and acting in defiance of reason? Or, had your death been caused by being killed in a battlefield during a military campaign? Or, had your death been caused by your guilty feeling of inflicting shame from your misdeeds on your parents and wife? Or, had your death been caused by severe poverty? Or, had your death been caused by old age?"

When he finished, Zhuang Zi took the skull home and used it as a pillow in his bed. At midnight, the skull appeared in his dream and said, "From the way you talked, you seem to be a

sophist. What you said are all burdens of life. In death, all are gone. Do you want to hear how dead people enjoy?”

Zhuang Zi answered, “Of course.”

The skull said, “In death, there are no rulers above or subjects below. There are also no specific things to do for each of the four seasons. Being free and leisurely, we let joys last as long as heaven and earth. Even the joy of being a king cannot match ours.”

Not believing what he heard, Zhuang Zi said, “If I could petition the god of destinies to revive your form with your bones, muscles, texture, and skin, and return you to your parents, wife, children, and friends of your home town, would you want it?”

On hearing these words, the skull looked morose and said: “How would I want to abandon the joy of a king and relive the chores in a mundane world?”

## Section 5

Yan Yuan went east to the State of Qi. Confucius appeared worried. Zigong left his seat, walked forward and asked, “May your little pupil ask, Hui goes east to Qi and, my master, you are worried. Why?”

Yan Yuan and Yan Hui were the names of the same person, Yuan being his courtesy name and Hui being his formal name. For the antique use of the courtesy and formal names, see note 1 in Chapter 4. Both Yan Yuan and Zigong were pupils of Confucius. The whole section purports a conversation between Confucius and his disciple Zigong. There is no independent source of literature to support the conversation. There is also no evidence that Yan Yuan ever went to the State of Qi. So this story is only a story.

Confucius said, “How excellent that you ask. I admire greatly what Guan Zi said some time ago. He said, ‘A small bag cannot contain large things. A short rope cannot draw water from deep wells.’ What it means is that life has its reasons for being and form has its conditions for functioning. None can be altered. I am afraid that Hui will lecture the Marquis of Qi on the

doctrines of Kings Yao, Shun, and Huang and emphasize the teachings of Chieftains Sui Ren and Shen Nong. The Marquis will turn inwards to search for answers and fail. Failure will lead to bewilderment. When a man becomes bewildered, he will die.

Guan Zhong, also known respectfully as Guan Zi (ca. 720–645 B.C.), was a brilliant prime minister of the State of Qi. Confucius (551–479 B.C.) admired and lauded his administration. Ancient Kings Yao, Shun, and Huang, and Chieftains Sui Ren and Shen Nong, all prehistoric, have already been mentioned elsewhere in this work.

“Further, have you not heard? There was once a sea bird perching on the countryside of the State of Lu. The Marquis of Lu welcomed the bird to the royal temple by toasting it with wine, playing the *Nine Shao*<sup>3</sup> for it to enjoy, and offering the sacrificial ox as its meal. The bird was bewildered and worried and it dared not eat a piece of meat or take a drink of wine. After three days, the bird died. The Marquis cared for the bird with what he used to care for himself, not with what the bird should be cared for. In fact, what birds should be cared for is to let them perch in the forest, play in the beach, float on the river and lake, feed on small fish, join other birds in a group to roost, and have a free and leisurely life. Birds are often frightened by human noises. What good could this hubbub do to this bird! If the *Xian Chi* and *Nine Shao* were to be played in the wilderness, birds would fly away on hearing them, beasts would run away on hearing them, fish would swim down on hearing them, but people would gather around to listen and enjoy the music. Fish live in water and men die in water. Fish and men have distinct characteristics. What is good and bad for each of them is also different. Therefore, sages of the past did not expect everyone to have the same ability and did not ask everyone to do the same work. Thus, a name should describe the reality of the responsibility; an assignment should agree with the ability of the assigned. This means constant happiness comes from a reasonable sequence.”

Of course, the bird story is a fable, but it does have a message, that is: “The Marquis cared for the bird with what he used to care for himself, not with what the bird should be cared for.” How often we do things the way we would like to have them done, not the way they should be done naturally! Moreover, the idea contained in the sentence, “life has its reasons for being and form has its conditions for functioning,” reasserts itself again at the end. As usual, in the Zhuangian style, the closing sentences conclude the author’s point.

### Section 6

Lie Zi was having a meal by a roadside. He saw a hundred-year-old skull. He pushed away the underbrush and pointed at the skull and said, “Only you and I know that you have not died and you have not been born. Are you really sad? Am I really happy?”

Lie Zi lived in a period after Lao Zi, but before Zhuang Zi. He is considered a Daoist. His writings have mostly been lost. Additional information about him can be found in some earlier chapters as well as later chapters of this work.

The following paragraph is largely hard to comprehend. It might be said to be the first attempt on writing the “origin of species.” This annotator merely tries to call the reader’s attention to the beginning and the conclusion of the essay. The middle portion of text containing a series of unfamiliar ancient biological names with dubious identification should not be read with any degree of certainty. They are here simply to show how frustrating and helpless it could be in reading some ancient text. Please read on.

All species begin with minute germs. In water they grow into a kind of silky grass. In areas bordering water and soil, they grow into moss. In high ground, they grow into a grass called *juqiancao*.<sup>4</sup> When the *juqiancao* gets to rich soil, it grows into a grass called *wuju*. The roots of the *wuju* grow into baby *jinguichong*. The leaves of the *wuju* grow into butterflies. Butterflies soon metamorphose into insects born under the stove. They look like the exuviae of insects called *juduo*. After one thousand days, the cricket-like insects change into birds named *ganyügu*. The saliva of *ganyügu* changes into *simi*. *Simi* changes into *Shixi*. From

*Shixi* comes *Yilu*. From *jiuyou* comes *huangzhu*. From *fubuan* comes *maorui*. *Yangxi* coupled with *bujiuxunzhu* produces *qingning*. *Qingning* eventually produces leopards. The leopard eventually produces horses. The horse eventually gives rise to human beings. Human beings [upon death] return to minute germs. Hence, all living beings come from germs and return to germs.

Ten transformations from the bird *ganyügu* eventually to the leopard are generally incomprehensible. We are not sure if their meanings given in a modern dictionary are the same as what Zhuang Zi wanted them to be. In fact it is really unimportant whether we know these creatures or not. In reading this essay, we should not be rigid and literal about what goes to what, but we should take a broad view of the ideas behind these changes. A few points are worthy of note. First, the mention of germs (*ji* as used here in Chinese), the smallest imaginable, living particles conceived in this B.C. period has no precedence. Second, the idea that one form of life can arise from another, if conditions are right, is revolutionary. Would this proposition become part of the history of the theories of the evolution of species? It is from this germs-to-germs cyclic theory that the Daoist believes that life does not end with death.

It is difficult to see the rationale of putting this paragraph of text here, since its relation to the preceding paragraph of text is at best obscure. Here is one possible connection. According to the sequence of changes depicted herein, the changes from germs and back to germs are really cyclical, that is, germs become human beings and human beings become germs. In a sense then, human beings are never born or die, so are germs. This is purported to be what Lie Zi meant when he said to the skull, “you have not died and you have not been born,” depending on at which point in the cycle he was looking.

## Notes

1. *The Book of Mencius*: Gao Zi, upper.
2. *The Dao De Jing*: chapter 37.
3. The title of an ancient music. As told in *The Analects*, once Confucius listened to it and became so moved and absorbed that he could not tell the taste of meat for three months.
4. Scientific name: *Plantago major*, L., according to H. A. Giles (8). *Juqiancao* literally means chariot front grass, the following *wuju* means black foot, *jingui* means golden tortoise insect, and *ganyügu* means dried, left-over bone.



## 19

# Understanding Life

This chapter contains twelve relatively short sections. Each section deals with a specific requisite in life. The essays draw lessons from people in all walks of life, from superior men, handicraftsmen, to hobbyists like the cicada catcher, the fighting cock trainer, and even to a swimmer, a ferryman, and a drunken man. There is an aspect in life to be learned from each of them.

### Section 1

He who understands the meaning of life does not do what cannot be done in life. He who understands the meaning of destiny does not pursue what cannot be pursued in destiny. Nourishing the body requires certain things. It is possible to have certain things in excess without the body being nourished. Having life requires no separation from the body. It is possible to lose life without separating the body. When life comes, it cannot be refused. When life leaves, it cannot be stopped. What a pity! The vulgar people assume that nourishing the body is sufficient to keep life. But in reality, nourishing the body is insufficient to keep life. Then what in the world is worth doing! When something is not worth doing and it still has to be done, the doing will be burdensome indeed.

When a person wants to avoid toils for the body, he should withdraw from the mundane world. Withdrawal leads to freedom from wearies. Freedom from wearies leads to peace of mind. Peace of mind leads to ability to renew life with Nature. Being able to renew life with Nature leads to being close to Dao. Is vulgarity worth being abandoned? Are trivialities in life worth



being ignored? Abandoning vulgarity means not to toil the body. Ignoring trivialities in life means not to waste the spirit. When the body is wholesome and the spirit refreshing, a union with Nature is achieved. Heaven and earth are the parents of all things. Together they form all things; separately they initiate new beginnings. When spirit and body are not deficient, they can follow changes with Nature. With full spirit, they are able to reciprocate in supporting Nature.

The first paragraph deals with the distinction between the spiritual entity—life and the physical entity—body. Zhuang Zi presented similar ideas earlier in Chapter 2:1, in which “I” and “Me” refer to different entities and again in Chapter 4:1, in which he talked about running while sitting. In the second paragraph above, discussion is on spirit and body. Trivial things in life simply drain away energy (spirit) in dealing with them and therefore should be avoided, so that a person will be able to devote all his spirit to follow Dao.

## Section 2

Lie Zi asked Guan Yin, “The superior man does not get suffocated while walking under water or burned while walking over fire or frightened while walking at a great height. May I ask how can he do that?”

Scholars do not quite agree on how “Guan Yin” should be understood. Some consider Guan is the man’s surname and Yin his given name. Simple enough. But others consider Yin to be the title of an office that a person named Guan held. Fortunately, it is not really consequential in the present context. He is mentioned again in Chapter 33 of this work. Certainly, Lie Zi considered Guan Yin to be worthy of his consultation. For a description of the superior man, see end of Chapter 1:1.

Guan Yin answered, “It is a conservation of harmonious *qi*, not something of craftiness or bravery. Sit down and let me tell you. Whenever there are appearance, likeness, sound, and color, there are people. Why are some people superior to others? What makes

them superior? There is nothing else but form and color. Hence, those who have come without leaving traces behind and rested on a state of ever presence not only attain to what they have gotten but reach out to their limits. How can't other people stop them? The superior men will situate themselves within certain limits to avoid extravagance, position themselves to participate in cyclical changes, and wander about the origin of all things. They will unify their nature, nourish their spirit, and harmonize their character, such that they will connect to nature. If so, their nature is well prepared and their spirit is well focused. How can anyone hurt them?

“When a man is drunk and falls off a carriage, he will be hurt but not killed. Although his bone joints are the same as those of others, his injury is different from that of others, because his consciousness has been fixed. He does not know when he is riding and he does not know when he is falling. Life, death, surprises, and fears do not enter into his mind. Therefore, he is not frightened when his body hits a foreign object. Anyone who escapes serious injury or death because of wine knows that, let alone one who does so because of Nature. The sainted man is protected by Nature. Hence, nothing can hurt him.”

The central idea of Guan Yin's lecture is expressed in the “conservation of *qi*” at the beginning and the “fixed consciousness” in the wine story. The two requisites are really one, because without conservation first there would be nothing to be fixed later. We need not subscribe to the drunken man's mental advantages, but the author probably used an easily understood behavior to illustrate what he meant by fixed consciousness.

In some editions, this paragraph ends with 72 more Chinese characters in four more sentences, of which the meaning is really not related to the topic of this section. Besides, the *Book of Lie Zi*, regardless of its questionable authenticity, does not have the four disputed sentences either. So they are deleted here.

### Section 3

Confucius journeyed to the State of Chu. As he came out from a wooded area, he saw a hunchback using a stick with a gluey tip to catch cicadas and then picking them up.

Confucius said, “You are very handy. Have you learned Dao?”

The man answered, “I have. After five or six months, I put on the tip of a stick two tiny balls, one on top of another without falling down and I missed almost none. I put on three balls without falling down and I missed one in ten. I put on five balls without falling down and I found it as easy as picking them up. I kept my body as steady as a tree trunk. I kept my arms as steady as dried branches. Despite the vastness of heaven and earth, the numerousness of all things, I concentrated on the cicada wings only. I had no second thought. I won’t accept anything in exchange for the cicada wings. Is there any reason why I cannot get exactly what I want?”

Confucius turned to his disciples and said, “Sharpen your will without deviation and concentrate your consciousness. This is what the hunchback elder has taught us!”

The keywords in these two sections are the same: Fix or concentrate your consciousness and you will succeed.

The sticky tip is used to stick to the cicada’s wings on touch, so it cannot fly away. It needs a steady hand without scaring the cicada away. The same trick is used today by children to catch cicadas for fun in the summer. Most of us do not realize that the trick has a history of more than two thousand years.

#### Section 4

Yan Yuan asked Confucius, “I have ferried across the Shangshen Gulf. The ferryman negotiated the current marvelously. I asked him, ‘Can the steering of a boat be learned?’ He said, ‘Yes. A good swimmer can learn it in no time. A diver can even do it without ever seeing a boat.’ I asked him again, but he would not tell me. May I ask why?”

Confucius said, “A good swimmer can learn it in no time, because he is used to water. A diver can even do it without ever seeing a boat, because he looks at a gulf like a hill and a shipwreck like a cart going backward. When shipwreck, cart going backward, or any other incident comes before him, it cannot

enter his mind and does not affect his calmness in reaching his destination. Using roof tiles for gambling, people are relaxed and clever; using belt buckles for gambling, people are cautious; using gold for gambling, people are nervous and crazy. The gamblers have the same craftiness, but their minds are diverted differently by the value at stake from without. Whenever the externals are in control, the internals are clumsy.”

Of course, the conversation is not real. The last sentence is the topic sentence of this section. Whether the person is a wine drinker, a cicada catcher, a ferryman, or a gambler, the lesson is the same: put your inner self in control.

### Section 5

Tian Kaizhi had an audience with Duke Wei of Zhou. The Duke said, “I heard Zhu Shen has learned the art of nourishing life. You have been his pupil. What have you learned?”

Tian Kaizhi answered, “Kaizhi used to sweep the courtyard. How could I have heard any teaching from my master?”

The Duke said, “Tian Zi, please don’t be ceremonious. I would like to hear from you.”

Kaizhi said, “I heard from my master saying: ‘He who is good at nourishing life is like a shepherd, who whips tardy sheep.’”

The Duke asked, “What does it mean?”

Kaizhi said, “In the State of Lu, there was a man named Shan Bao, who lived on water in a cliff and would not compete for privileges with others. He was seventy-years-old and chubby like a baby. Unfortunately, he encountered a hungry tiger. The tiger devoured him. There was another man named Zhang Yi, who was respectful of others. People from both big and small families appreciated his friendship. At the age of forty, he died of high fever. Bao nourished what was inside and the tiger devoured what was outside. Yi cultivated what was outside and sickness attacked what was inside. These two men met their misfortune for neglecting to remedy what they had been deficient in.”

Confucius commented, “Do not be inward and hidden. Do not be outward and well known. Just stand in the middle without

presumptions. If one can do all three, he will be a superior man. When a road becomes unsafe to travel, one of every ten travelers might be killed. Then fathers and sons, older and younger brothers would caution one another about the danger and they would not travel unless they formed a large group. Isn't this a clever move? What people should be cautious about could be as close as sleeping mats and dining tables. But they do not know how to take precautions here. This is a mistake."

Several personal names are mentioned in this story. Some of these men could not have lived at the same time period. So the story cannot be a real one. For instance, Duke Wei of Zhou died in 402 B.C. and Confucius died in 479 B.C. How could Confucius have commented on events occurring after his death?

Dating aside, the message contained in these paragraphs advises us there are two components in nourishing life, internal and external. Shan Bao and Zhang Yi failed because they only did one and neglected the other. Further, we often pay attention to dangers farther away and overlook those closer by.

### Section 6

An overseer of sacrifices wearing a formal garment came to a pigpen and said to the pig, "Why are you afraid of death? I have to feed you for three months, observe the commandments for ten days, abstain from meat for three days, lay down a white reed mat, and place your shoulders and buttocks on a carved plate. Would you do all that?" From the standpoint of the pig, it would be better to be fed with chaff and dregs and be left in the pigpen. From the standpoint of the overseer, there could be brilliance and honor in life and an elaborately engraved coffin on a richly decorated hearse in death. Hence, for the sake of the pig, he should abandon the coffin and hearse; for the sake of himself, he should take them. What difference is there between the pig and the overseer?

All is relative. The pig wishes to live simply; the overseer wishes to die pompously.

## Section 7

Duke Huan was out to hunt near a marsh. Guan Zhong was the driver. The Duke had the vision of a ghost. He held the hand of Guan Zhong and asked, "My Elder Zhong, what do you see?" Came the answer, "I see nothing."

Duke Huan of the State of Qi assisted by his brilliant prime minister Guan Zhong (ca. 720–645 B.C.) became one of the five most powerful princes in the Spring-Autumn Period. The Duke was so impressed by Guan Zhong's counsel that he respectfully called him, my Elder Zhong.

After returning, the Duke was sick with mumbling and did not leave his chamber for several days. A worthy man named Huangzi Gaoao said, "The Duke's sickness is self-inflicted. How can ghost make the Duke sick? When the pent-up *qi* in a person is not returned after dispersion, a deficiency occurs. If it goes up and does not come down, it makes the person irritable. If it goes down and does not come up enough, but stays in the middle, it precipitates sickness."

The Duke asked, "Then is there ghost?"

Huangzi said, "Yes. There are Li<sup>1</sup> for mud, Ji for stove, Leiting for indoor traffic areas, Bei-a-gui-long for the northeast area, Yiyang for the northwest area, Wangxiang for water, Xin for hills, Kui for mountains, Fanghuang for the wilderness, and Weiyi for marshes."

The Duke asked, "May I ask, how does Weiyi look?"

Huang-zi said, "Weiyi is as big as a carriage and as tall as the pole of a chariot is long. He wears a purple robe and a red hat. This spirit does not like the thunderous sound of the carriage. On hearing, he would put his hands over his ears and stand still. Whoever sees him will become leader of all princes."

The Duke pleasantly laughed and said, "This is what I saw." He adjusted his robe and hat and conversed leisurely with Huangzi. Before the day ended, his sickness had all gone.

The essence of the story can also be found in the *Book of Guan Zi*, a collection of essays by Guan Zhong. Huangzi (a surname) Gaoao (his given name) could be the earliest practicing psychotherapist in human history. He must have heard what the Duke told Guan Zhong and studied the Duke's psychological conditions. He displayed his knowledge about gods and spirits to win the Duke's confidence in him. Nothing was more soothing to the Duke than the observation, "Whoever sees him will become leader of all the princes." How truthful the story may be seems unimportant. Since the story as told in great detail was recorded in the *Book of Guan Zi*, a few hundred years before Zhuang Zi's time, the author, whoever he might be, must have possessed ample knowledge of a psychoanalyst in this B.C. period. Thus, this could be a very significant piece of information in the history of psychoanalysis.

### Section 8

Ji Shengzi was training a fighting cock for a king.

After ten days, the king asked, "Can the cock fight now?" Came the answer, "Not yet. It is just proud and eccentric."

After another ten days, he asked again. Came the answer, "Not yet. It still responds to sounds."

After still another ten days, he asked again. Came the answer, "Not yet. It still looks angry and mad at others."

After still another ten days, he asked again. Came the answer, "It almost got there. Other cocks make noises and motions, but they do not bother this one. It looks like a wooden cock. Its spirit has been concentrated. Other cocks dare not come close; they just run away."

Earlier, in Chapters 12 and 15, we read about keeping the spirit intact and strong in people seeking Dao. Here we read, "Its spirit has been concentrated." Apparently, the same principle applicable to man can be applied equally to cocks.

### Section 9

Confucius was visiting Lüliang, where there was a waterfall of thirty *ren* tall and its turbulent flows rushed forty *li* downstream and where no tortoises and alligators could live. He saw a man

swimming and was concerned whether he wanted to die because of misfortune. He dispatched his disciples to run down along the stream to save the man. Several hundred paces down he came up to shore with his hair disheveled and singing.

From the description of the location, Lüliang was an attractive scenic spot. The waterfalls splashed down from a mountain thirty *ren* (nearly two hundred forty feet) above and formed rapids of forty *li* (roughly sixty thousand feet in length).

Confucius followed him and asked, “For a moment I thought you were a ghost. Now I find you are a man. May I ask, is there a secret in swimming?”

He answered, “No, I don’t have a secret. I started as a kind of nature, I grew up in it as a habit, and I succeeded as a way of destiny. I sank down together with a whirlpool and I floated up together with a rushing torrent. I followed the way of the water, not my own. This is the way I swim.”

Confucius asked, “What do you mean by saying, ‘I started as a kind of nature, I grew up in it as a habit, and I succeeded as a way of destiny’?”

The man said, “I was born in the mountain and have found comfort in the mountain. This is nature. I grew up in water and have found comfort in water. This is habit. I do not know how I have become the way I am. This is destiny.”

We learn here how a Daoist described these terms: nature, habit, and destiny.

## Section 10

Master carpenter Qīng carved wood into a *jū*. Those who had seen it admired his work as miraculous. The Marquis of Lu saw it and inquired, “What kind of ingenuity do you possess in order to accomplish it?”

In the *Zhuan of the Spring and Autumn* by Zuo Qiu-ming (ca. fourth century, B.C.), the name of master carpenter Qīng of Lu was mentioned. So he was a historical figure. *Jū* is the name of a musical instrument.



Master Qing answered, “Your humble subject is only a carpenter. What ingenuity can I have? Though there is one. When I am planning to make a *jü*, I dare not spend my energy and I abstain from meat to clarify my thought. After three days, I do not have the thought of enjoying official emoluments. After five days, I do not have the thought of using craftiness. After seven days, I do not have the thought of having four limbs and a body. At that time, I do not realize the presence of a princely court. With my cleverness focused, distractions from without disappear. Then I go into the forest and observe the shapes of the trees. When I find one with the right form, I would visualize the *jü* before my eyes. Then I start working on it. Otherwise, I simply give it up. Hence, what I do is to find a union between my nature and the tree’s nature. Perhaps, this is the reason that the finished instrument looks like the work of a god.”

### Section 11

Dongye Ji was granted an audience with Duke Zhuang of Lu on account of his expertise in driving a chariot. He demonstrated his skills in driving the chariot forward and backward always in a straight line, and making right and left turns always in a perfect arc. The Duke was deeply impressed that even drawings could not do better. He asked to have it repeated one hundred times.

Yan He happened to see it. He came in to see the Duke and said, “Ji’s horse will be exhausted.” The Duke did not say a word.

Soon afterwards, the horse actually turned out to be so. The Duke asked, “How did you know?”

Yan He answered, “The horse was tired and it was asked to continue to run. So I knew it would be exhausted.”

A similar story is told in the *Book of Xun Zi*. Yan He, a worthy man from the State of Lu, has been mentioned in Chapter 4.

## Section 12

Gong Chui drew circles freehand as good as those drawn by a pair of compasses. His fingers and the thing he held united into one without the efforts of his mind. Hence, his mind could focus without diversion. He forgot his feet, because his shoes were comfortable. He forgot his waist, because his belt was comfortable. He forgot the sense of right and wrong, because his conscience was comfortable. He encountered neither change within nor distraction without, because his surroundings were comfortable. He was comfortable from the beginning and had never been uncomfortable since, because he forgot how comfortable was comfortable.

Gong Chui was a superb technician of prehistoric times. His name has been mentioned in Chapter 10:1. Again, the last sentence is the topic sentence of the whole paragraph. It provides a climactic end to the theme.

Following this section, there is another section (section 13) in most editions. Its contents are mostly paraphrases of paragraphs appearing elsewhere in the book and have nothing to do with the theme of this chapter: *Understanding Life*. This translator agrees with Chen Guying (2-a) to delete it.

**Note**

1. Li is the name of the spirit or god for mud. Each of the following objects named is preceded by a name of the spirit or god associated with the object.

## The Mountain Tree

Many sections in this chapter deal with various, unrelated topics. Some ideas, like the usefulness of uselessness, the association based on natural and artificial considerations, and the mantis and the magpie, could invoke interesting discussion on their merits.

### Section 1

While walking in a mountain, Zhuang Zi saw a huge luxuriant tree. Lumberjacks came by and looked at it, but did not want it. He asked them why not. They said that it was good for nothing. Zhuang Zi said, "Ah, this tree is deemed to live out its life because it is useless."

Out of the mountain, he went to stay overnight in an old friend's home. His old friend was overjoyed and asked a boy to kill a goose for dinner. The boy inquired, "One of them can quack and the other cannot. Which one should I kill?" The master said, "Take the one that cannot quack."

The next day, a pupil asked Zhuang Zi, "Yesterday, the tree in the mountain enjoyed living out its life because it was useless. Then, the goose of your host was killed because it was useless. Where do you, my master, stand?"

Zhuang Zi smiled and said, "Zhou<sup>1</sup> will stand between usefulness and uselessness. Although the position between usefulness and uselessness seems appropriate, it is really not, as it inevitably becomes bothersome. However, it would not be this way if we could live by nature. Then there would be no praise

or censure, a dragon at one time and a serpent at another time. Everything would change with time and place and there would be no fixed point for anything. There would be advance at one time and retreat at another time. As a rule, be harmonious with nature and let your thought wander about the origin of all things. Be a master of things external, but do not let things external become [your] masters. Then nothing will be bothersome. These were the rules of Shen Nong and Huang Di. On the other hand, if we take into consideration the conditions of all things and the traditions of human beings, the situations become quite different. Thus, what is united will be separated, what is completed will be dismantled, and what is gained will be lost. Whoever is honored will be humbled, whoever is successful will be censored, whoever is worthy will be discredited, and whoever is worthless will be insulted. What can ever be certain! What a pity! My pupil, remember to accept what comes naturally!”

The essay begins with a challenging theme that uselessness can have certain great advantages. Then what constitutes uselessness is not only subjective but also difficult to define. Can a goose that does not quack be useful or useless? It depends on the point of view. One person may find it useful because it keeps the place quiet. Another person may find it useless because it cannot do what it should. Apparently, Zhuang Zi did not want to get involved in such an insoluble argument. After a lengthy deliberation, he advised his pupil to take a universal stand, that is, “to accept what comes naturally.” Finally, if we analyze the basis of his deliberation, we see relativity—a theme he propounded earlier in *The Autumn Rain*.

## Section 2

Shinan Yiliao<sup>2</sup> came to see Marquis of Lu. The Marquis appeared worrisome. Shinan Zi said, “Your Highness appears worrisome. Why?”

The Marquis said, “I have learned the teachings of my ancestors and I have cultivated the establishments of my late father and grandfather. I have respected the spirits and honored the worthy.

I have carried it out in person without a moment of relaxation. Still I cannot avoid troubles. That is why I am worried.”

Shinan Zi said, “Your methods of eliminating troubles are superficial. For instance, well-fed foxes and beautifully patterned leopards live in the forest and hide in the cliffs, for the sake of peace. They come out at night and stay in caves in the day, for the sake of precautions. Holding on to thirst and hunger, they walk a long way to find food and water in rivers and lakes, for the sake of livelihood. Even so, they cannot avoid the danger of being trapped. What do they do wrong? Their furs trip them. Now isn’t the state of Lu your fur? I wish that you would cut away your form and rip off your skin, wash clean your heart and get rid of your desires, and then wander alone in the wilderness. Beyond the southern border there is a city called the Land of Jiande.<sup>3</sup> Its people are honest and solitary, rarely self-serving and having little desire. They know how to plow, but do not know how to store. They give freely but do not expect anything in return. They do not know what justice is for; they do not know what rites are about. They appear to be uninhibited and unrestrained, within the realm of Dao. They enjoy living, they bury the dead. I wish you would leave the state behind, throw away the old custom and walk together with Dao.

The Marquis said, “The roads are far and dangerous. In addition, there are mountains and rivers. I do not have boats and carriages. How can I do it?”

Shinan Zi said, “When you are humble and open-minded, they will be your carriages.”

The Marquis said, “The journey will be remote and there will be no one else. Who will be my companion? When I run out of food, I have nothing to eat. How can I get there?”

Shinan Zi said, “When you spend less and desire less, you will be satisfied even without food. As you cross rivers and sail in the sea, you look around and see no shorelines. The farther you go, the less you know where to end. Those who come to see you off leave the shore and go home. Then you are really far, far away.

“He who receives subservience will be worried. He who renders subservience will be troubled. Hence, King Yao did not

receive nor render subservience. I wish to help you get rid of worries and troubles, so that you alone will be able to wander with Dao in a land of great expanse. Suppose there are two boats lashed together sailing in a river and an empty boat bangs into them. Even a hasty-tempered man would not get angry. If there is even one man in that boat, someone in the lashed boats would call out, "Punt, back out!" If the first call gets no response, there is a second call. If there is still no response, the third one will have plenty of cursing and swearing. The reason that there is no anger before and plenty of anger later is that the boat is presumed empty before and manned later. If people can keep themselves empty inside in wandering the world, who could harm them?"

This translator has good reasons to think that Zhuang Zi did not pen this essay. First, the rhetorical construction is plain. It lacks the artful style characteristic of the master. Second, the idea is ordinary and sometimes seems naïve. For instance, Shinan Zi's advice to the Marquis of sailing out to the sea alone in a small boat amounts to a fantasy with no chance of success. How could the Marquis survive the ordeal? The closing story of keeping one's inside empty is relevant, but it does little to remedy the damage done earlier.

### Section 3

Beigong Che appealed to the people for funds to cast a bell and build an altar outside of the city gate for Duke Ling of Wei and completed the two-storied bell tower in three months.

Che was the name of a minister under Duke Ling in the State of Wei. Beigong was where he lived and later became part of his name. The implication is the same as Shinan became part of Yiliao's name in the preceding section. It was quite unusual at that time for the government to appeal to the people for donations to do a special project. Normally, public constructions were financed from the general funds collected as taxes from the people.

Crown Prince Qingji saw it and asked, "What magic did you use?"

Che replied, “Everything was done naturally with no promise or pressure. Che has heard, ‘Having been through the knife and the treadle, things will again return to simplicity.’ I was rather ignorant, unhurried, and carefree. I let people come and go freely. I did not encourage those who would want to contribute nor persuade those who would not want to contribute. Hence, from dawn to dusk people came to make donations as they pleased without jeopardizing their well-being, let alone those with the great Dao.”

Zhuang Zi and his disciples wrote several essays using the duke as one of their favorite characters. The duke has often been described as a sharp, capable, ruthless, and belligerent ruler elsewhere in this book. There is no description of the duke’s personality here, only a construction project to honor him. The enthusiastic responses of his people would suggest that he was popular with his people and enjoyed their support. One point we should keep in mind in reading the stories in this book is that they should not be depended upon for historical accuracy. Zhuang Zi and his disciples often rewrote history to fit into their stories. What puzzles this translator is the closing remarks. How could the officer not only convince the people, but also boast before the crown prince that they were on the side of Dao?

#### Section 4

Confucius was surrounded between the States Chen and Cai. He did not have hot meals for seven days.

The story has been told before in Chapter 14:4, and of course first in *The Analects*.

Dagong Ren went to console him and asked, “Did you almost get killed?”

Confucius answered, “Yes.”

“Do you hate death?”

He answered, “Yes.”

Ren said, “I have talked about the way to immortality. There is a kind of birds in the East Sea by the name of yidai<sup>4</sup>. They



fly slowly as if unable to do otherwise. They fly as a group and they roost by crowding on one another. They dare not lead in the front nor follow behind. They dare not be the first to peck up food, so they always eat what is left over. Hence, they will not be shoved by other birds or harmed by men and they avoid troubles. Trees producing straight limber will be cut first, wells producing fresh water will become dried first. You intend to use your wisdom to surprise the vulgar people and to cultivate your deeds so as to expose the shortcomings of others. Your prominence shines like walking with the sun and the moon in your hands. Hence, you cannot avoid the danger. Earlier, I have heard from the man of great accomplishments<sup>5</sup> saying: "He who boasts in himself will not succeed. He who succeeds will fall; he who makes fame will lose it."<sup>6</sup> Who is willing to return success and fame to the people?! Dao spreads widely, but it has never been self-conceited; De prevails everywhere, but it has never flaunted its name. Being simple and ordinary is like a mad fool. Abandon your position, undo your authority, and seek no fame. Then you will have nothing to ask from others and others will have nothing to ask from you. A superior man is not to be heard. How do you like that?"

Confucius said, "Excellent!" Then he retired from friendship, sent his disciples away, escaped to the wilderness, wore rustic clothes, ate nuts and wild fruits, walked into a herd of beasts without scaring them to run away, and walked into a flock of birds without causing them to fly away. When birds and beasts do not alienate him, let alone other men alienating him.

We do not know if Dagong Ren was a real person, but the story as a whole can only be considered a fable. It is simply untrue that Confucius did those things mentioned in the last paragraph. The rhetorical style makes it also doubtful that Zhuang Zi wrote this essay.

### Section 5

Confucius asked Zisang Fu, "I have been forced to leave the State of Lu for the second time, have encountered the incident

of tree cutting in the State of Song, have been surrounded in the State of Wei, have been unable to profess my teachings in the capital cities of the Shang and Zhou, and have been surrounded between the States of Chen and Cai. Since I encountered these several crises, my close friends have become distant and my disciples have scattered away. Why?”

The crises cited here are a reiteration of what have been presented before in Chapter 14:4.

Zisang Fu said, “Have you not heard of the Yin people fleeing the country? A man named Lin Hui left behind his jade worth one thousand measures of gold and fled with his baby son on his back. Someone asked, “Did he do this for his valuables? The value of a baby son is meager. Or, for his troubles? The troubles of a baby son are many. Abandoning jades worth one thousand measures of gold, he fled with his baby son on his back. Why?” Lin Hui said, “My connection to the jade is based on profits. My connection to the baby is based on nature. When the connection is based on profits, any extreme hardship or crisis will cause the connection to be dissolved. When the connection is based on nature, any extreme hardship or crisis will cause the connection to be preserved. There is a great distinction between what is dissolved and what is preserved. Moreover, the relationship among *junzi* is clear like water; the relationship among mean men is sweet like wine. The clear relationship of *junzi* is lasting; the sweet relationship of mean men can be broken off easily. Those that are associated with no good reasons will be dissociated with no good reasons.”

Confucius said, “I respectfully accept your advice.” He walked home slowly and leisurely. He cut short studying the classics. His pupils need not make a low bow to him, but they respected him more than ever.

The purported dialogue between Zisang Fu and Confucius is completed at this point. Besides a discourse on the distinction in human relationships between what is natural and therefore lasting and what is artificial and therefore

temporary, the last paragraph of the dialogue tries to hint that formality (an expression) such as bowing to an elder may not have much to do with respectfulness (an inward feeling).

On another day, Zisang Fu said, “While King Shun was on his deathbed, he instructed Yu in saying, ‘Be very careful! What is formal is less reliable than what is rational; what is sentimental is less reliable than what is truthful. With rationale there would be no losses; with truth there would be no wearies. Without losses or wearies, there would be no need to use vanity to dress up the form. Without using vanity to dress up the form, there would be no need to depend on things external.’”

This paragraph appears to be an additional elaboration on the principle in the story about the choice between the baby and jade.

### Section 6

Zhuang Zi wore patched clothes of coarse fabric and a pair of broken shoes tied together with twine and went to see the King of Wei. The King asked, “Why do you, my master, look so despairing?”

Zhuang Zi said, “I am poor, not despairing. Scholars who have virtues, but cannot make them prevail, despair. Those who wear patched clothes and broken shoes are poor, not despairing, because they are living in the wrong time. Your Highness, don’t you ever see jumping monkeys? When they find big trees, they jump and climb up and down the branches with such swift speed that even sharp archers like Yi<sup>7</sup> and Peng Meng could not do anything about them. When they get into thorny bushes, they walk slowly and cautiously, not because their joints become less flexible, but because they are in an unfavorable situation and cannot fully display their abilities. At the present time, people are living between rotten heads of states and ambitious prime ministers. It is impossible for them not to despair. This was the reason that Prince Bi Gan’s heart<sup>8</sup> was dissected. The evidence is still there.”

The King of Wei was likely the same king known as King Hui of Liang whom Mencius met as described in the opening chapter of the *Book of Mencius*. Remember Zhuang Zi and Mencius were contemporaries. Despite the free life style of Zhuang Zi, it would seem unlikely that he would put on shabby clothes and a pair of broken shoes to see the king, simply because it was a show of disrespect. Moreover, it would also seem impossible that Zhuang Zi could have uttered words such as, “people are living between rotten heads of states and ambitious prime ministers,” before the king and still came out alive. What Zhuang Zi tried to say is probably like this: Poverty did not make me despair, corrupt governments did. In any case, the story as told cannot be true.

### Section 7

Confucius was besieged between the States of Chen and Cai and had no hot meals for seven days. He knocked on a dead tree trunk with one hand and tapped on dried branches with the other. He sang the songs of Shen Nong with instruments but not by the time of the music, with sounds but not in accord with the five *lü*. Both sounds from knocking on wood and from singing came softly to soothe the hearts of listeners.

Yan Hui stood attentively with his hands folded at the front and turned his eyes to look at his mentor. Confucius was concerned that Yan Hui might make himself famous and then be proud or might make himself pitiful and then feel sorry. So he said to him, “Hui, it is easy not to be affected by discomforts from nature; it is difficult not to be affected by privileges from men. There is not a beginning that is not an end. Men and nature are one. Who is the one singing?”

Yan Hui was the most favorite disciple of Confucius. According to *The Analects*, Yan Hui was not with Confucius during the crisis between Chen and Cai. So the story as told here is fictitious.

Hui asked, “May I ask the meaning of ‘it is easy not to be affected by discomforts from nature’?”

Confucius said, “Hunger and thirst, winter and summer make us uncomfortable. They are parts of the movements of heaven

and earth and the changes of things in the world. Those of us who are subjects dare not refute the commands from above, let alone accept inconveniences from nature.”

“May I ask the meaning of ‘it is difficult not to be affected by privileges from men’?”

Confucius said, “In the beginning, we may find things working just fine. Good appointments and emoluments come one after another. But these privileges are not parts of us, for they come to us by chance. *Junzi* are not bandits and worthy men are not thieves. Why would we want to beg for privileges? Therefore, no birds are more clever than *yidai*.<sup>9</sup> When they see a place unsuitable for them to roost, they don’t give it a second look and fly away, even if this means that they will not fly down there to pick up the food that has been lost from their bills. They do not trust people, but they build nests beneath the eaves of a house.”

“May I ask the meaning of ‘there is not a beginning that is not an end’?”

Confucius answered, “We do not know the sequence of changes for all things. We do not know where it begins and where it ends. We can only observe the natural sequence of changes.”

“May I ask the meaning of ‘men and nature are one’?”

Confucius said, “What is artificial comes from nature. What is natural comes also from nature. What is artificial cannot preserve what is natural, because there is a difference in the endowments of men vs. those of nature. Only a sage in peacefulness can complete the change in full accord with nature.

This is another example that purported conversations between Confucius and his disciples often depict Confucius as a Daoist or talking like one.

## Section 8

Zhuang Zhou was wandering inside the fences in the Diao Hill. He saw an unusual magpie flying in from the south side with its wings spreading to seven feet and its eyes measuring one inch in diameter. It bumped on Zhou’s temple as it came to stop in one of the chestnut trees. Zhuang Zhou remarked, “What kind of a

bird this is, having big wings but unable to fly far and having big eyes but unable to see clearly? He pulled up his robe and walked swiftly toward the bird with a crossbow in hand. He saw a cicada in a nice shady spot, but forgetting its safety. A praying mantis grasped the cicada from behind, but forgetting its safety, too. The magpie caught the mantis from behind, but forgetting its safety as well. Zhuang Zhou was timorous of what he saw and said, "Ah! Living beings are in peril of one another. It takes an attraction between two kinds to destroy one at a time." He threw away his crossbow, turned around and ran out of the chestnut orchard. The orchardman chased him out with bad language.

Zhuang Zi admitted that he made an error in observation, though not in plain words. The magpie bumped into his temple not because it was a clumsy bird, unable to see well even with big eyes, as Zhou was impressed initially, but because it had a purpose of warning a stranger of what not to do in its territory, which he painfully realized later. The story has become an aphorism in Chinese literature, "The mantis is catching the cicada and the magpie is waiting behind." Don't think you are in control; you are doing it at your own peril. Are you a mantis, a magpie, a crossbowman or an orchardman?

Zhuang Zhou came back and looked depressed for three days. Lin Qie asked, "Master, why have you become depressed lately?"

Zhuang Zhou answered, "I kept my body, but overlooked my life, that is, paying attention to the dirty water, but losing sight of the clean abyss. I heard it from my teacher, '[When you enter a strange town,] follow its custom and observe its prohibitions.' When I wandered into the Diao Hill, I forgot my body and the strange magpie bumped my temple. When I wandered into the chestnut orchard, I forgot my life and the orchardman mistook me for a thief. That is why I am depressed."

Lin Qie was the only disciple of Zhuang Zi we can identify in this book. On the other hand, in "I heard it from my teacher," the teacher's name was not identified. Zhuang Zi's teacher remains unknown to us. In the Introduction, this translator has mentioned his teacher's name as quoted by Cheng Xuanying (3). There has been no confirmation from another source.

### Section 9

Yang Zi traveled to the State of Song and checked into an inn for the night. The owner had two concubines, one being beautiful and the other ugly. The ugly one was honorable and the beautiful one was mean. Yang Zi asked why this was so. The bellboy said, “The beautiful one considers herself beautiful. I don’t think she is beautiful. The ugly one considers herself ugly. I don’t think she is ugly.”

Yang Zi turned and said, “My pupils, remember that! Practice good deeds, but do not consider yourselves practicing good deeds. You will always be liked everywhere.”

We do not know who Yang Zi was. Essentially the same story has been told in the *Book of Han Fei Zi*, a collection of writings by Prince Han Fei, who died in 233 B.C.

## Notes

1. Zhou was Zhuang Zi 's formal given name. He used it here instead of pronoun I for the sake of courtesy.
2. This historical person's real name was Xiong Yiliao. Because he lived south of the market, he was nicknamed Shinan Yiliao (Shi-nan meaning literally 'market south'). By the then prevailing etiquette, he could be addressed as Xiong Zi in consonance with Zhuang Zi, Lao Zi, etc. But the text refers to him as Shinan Zi, a very odd hybrid. Nevertheless, it is so transliterated without change.
3. An imaginary land meaning to establish virtues.
4. Also written as *yi-er*. It is a mysterious bird unknown to the ornithologist. Some translators call it a swallow. Swallows are swift flyers; *yi-dai* is said to fly slowly.
5. Here the reference is made to Lao Zi.
6. The first sentence is in the *Dao De Jing*, chapter 24. The second sentence is not seen anywhere else.
7. A legendary archer of prehistoric times. Peng Meng was his apprentice.
8. See note 6 in Chapter 10.
9. See note 4 in Chapter 20.





## 21

### Tian Zifang

This chapter is composed of eleven sections, each being in a dialogue format. The subject matters vary, so the chapter as a whole has no theme to speak of. Most of the dialogists were historical, but Zhuang Zi made them, including Confucius, talk like Daoists.

#### Section 1

Tian Zifang sitting by Marquis Wen of Wei to keep him company praised Qi Gong a few times.

Tian Zifang (surname Tian, formal name Wuze, courtesy name Zifang) was a worthy man in the State of Wei and a friend of the Marquis. Qi Gong was a worthy man in Wei also. The following is a conversation between the Marquis and Tian Zifang. Note that as a matter of courtesy to the Marquis, Zifang referred to himself by his formal name Wuze instead of the personal pronouns “I, my, and me.”

Marquis Wen asked, “Is Qi Gong your teacher?”

Zifang answered, “No. He is Wuze’s [my] fellow-townsmen. His comments often made sense. That is why Wuze [I] praised him.”

Marquis Wen: “Then don’t you have a teacher?”

Zifang: “Yes.”

Marquis Wen: “Who is your teacher?”

Zifang: “Dongguo Shunzi.”

Marquis: “Then why haven’t you praised him?”

Zifang: “He is truthful in the way he conducts himself. He has the face of a man, but the heart of nature. Accepting what comes naturally, he maintains truthfulness. Keeping his thought in emptiness, he contains all things from without. When things deviate from the right path, he makes efforts to arouse them, so that people will correct their ill intentions. How can Wuze [I] be qualified to praise him!”

The first person pronouns, if used, are enclosed in the brackets.

After Zifang left, the Marquis felt at a loss of words for the day. He finally said to his officers in attendance, “How profound is the *junzi* with perfect virtues! I have considered that the words of the sages and the acts of *ren* and justice are perfect. Now I hear about Zifang’s teacher, I feel as if my body was exhausted in moving and my mouth was gagged in talking. What I have learned is as nil as an earthen figurine. The State of Wei is truly an immense burden on me.”

By this time the reader may have noticed that the head of a state would have been referred to as Marquis, Duke, or King. Near the end of the Warring States period, every head of the remaining seven states proclaimed himself first Duke and later King. In this section, the head of the Wei State was still called Marquis. So we know the story is purported to have happened in the early Warring States period.

## Section 2

Wen Bai Xüzi was going to visit the State of Qi. On the way he made a stop in the State of Lu. A man asked to see him. Wen Bai Xüzi said, “I am sorry. I have heard that *junzi* in Lu understand rites and justice, but are naïve in understanding people. I do not want to see him.”

Wen was his surname, Bai his formal given name and Xüzi his courtesy given name. He was a Daoist in the State of Chu.

After he finished his visit in Qi and on his way home he made a stop in Lu again. The man came to request to see him again. Wen Bai Xüzi said, "He wanted to see me last time. He still wants to see me this time. He must have something to inspire me."

He went out to receive the visitor. He came back and sighed. The next day, he saw the visitor again. He came back and sighed again. His servant asked him, "Every time you saw this visitor and you came back and sighed. Why?"

Wen Bai Xüzi said, "I did tell you last time, '*Junzi* in Lu understand rites and justice, but are naïve in understanding people.' He who just came to see me acted in complete conformity with the protocol in both entering and leaving. His countenance was like a dragon at one time and a tiger the next. He admonished me like a son; he advised me like a father. That is why I sighed."

Confucius met him and said not a word. Zilu asked, "My master, you have long wanted to meet Wen Bai Xüzi. When you did, you said not a word. Why?"

Confucius said, "To a man like him, the Dao is conveyed simply by a meeting of the eyes. No voices are ever needed."

Confucius was born, grew up, held state offices as high as the Minister of Justice, taught a large number of pupils, and died, all in the State of Lu. On several occasions, he traveled with a few of his favorite disciples to see the heads of states and try to convince them the need for establishing certain moral and ethical standards in governance. Not only did his preaching fall on deaf ears, but also his own life was at great risk, as we have learned in preceding chapters. Zilu mentioned in this section was one of his disciples. It would seem interesting that Zhuang Zi actually portrayed Confucius as a successful Daoist.

### Section 3

Yan Yuan said to Confucius, "Master, when you walk slowly, I also walk slowly; when you walk fast, I also walk fast; when you run, I also run; when you move like flying, I can only open my eyes wide and look at you from behind."

Confucius said, "Hui,<sup>1</sup> what do you mean?"

Yan Yuan said, “Master, ‘when you walk slowly, I also walk slowly’ means when you speak, I also speak. ‘When you walk fast, I also walk fast’ means when you debate, I also debate. ‘When you run, I also run’ means when you talk Dao, I also talk Dao. ‘When you move like flying, I can only open my eyes wide and look at you from behind’, because you gain confidence from others without saying a word, you prevail yourself without being prejudiced, and you gather people around you without a title of nobility. I just don’t understand how you do it.”

Confucius answered, “Ah! How plain this can be. There is no deeper sorrow than the death of the spirit, and the death of the body comes second. The sun rises from the east and sets in the west. Everything follows the sun. People depend on the sun to succeed. That is, when the sun rises, they work; when the sun sets, they rest. All things do so, too. Some will be dead and some will be born. Once I got my form, I undergo no formal changes and wait for the end to come. In the meantime, I am moved by things day and night and do not know when the end will come. Knowing not what lies before me, I go along with daily changes.

“I have been with you all the time and you still do not understand me. It is a pity! Perhaps, you can only see what I see. What I see has come to an end and you are still looking for it. This is like looking for a horse in an empty marketplace. My thought about you will fade away. Your thought about me will fade away, too. But you have nothing to worry about. Even though you forget the old me, I still have what cannot be forgotten.”

Of course, the story about the conversation is fictitious. In real life, Yan Yuan was the most favorite disciple of Confucius. Unfortunately, he died very young. Confucius wept as if he had lost his own son. In many Zhuangian essays, the topic sentence comes last as in this one. “I still have what cannot be forgotten”—the Dao in me.

#### Section 4

Confucius went to see Lao Dan. Lao Dan just finished bathing and disheveled his hair to dry. He stood motionless like a statue.

Confucius waited for a while and then walked in to see him and said, "Am I dizzy or is it true? Short time ago, I saw you like a dried log, as if you were standing alone apart from all people and things."

Lao Dan said, "My thought was wandering in the beginning of all things."

Confucius asked, "What do you mean?"

Lao Dan said, "When your mind is obstructed, you cannot learn. When your mouth is shut, you cannot talk. Let me tell you the general idea. When yin develops to the extreme, it becomes very cold. When yang develops to the extreme, it becomes very hot. Cold comes from heaven, hot comes from earth. The two intercourse and things are created. They may show the regularity of nature, but we cannot see them. Death and birth, fullness and emptiness, darkness and brightness, daily variations and monthly changes are taking place all the time, but their achievements are hard to assess. Birth has its beginning and death has its ending. The beginning and the ending alternate in cycles and there seems no end to it. If it were not so, who could have been the originator!"

Confucius asked, "May I ask the conditions under which one's thought is wandering this way?"

Lao Dan said, "Once one's thought is wandering, he experiences the supreme beauty and the supreme joy. He who experiences the supreme beauty and wanders in the supreme joy is called a superior man."

Confucius asked, "May I learn the way to do it?"

Lao Dan said, "Herbivorous animals do not mind changing the location of a pasture land. Waterborne creatures do not mind changing the location of a pond. These are peripheral changes without affecting fundamental needs. They do not create sentiments of joy, anger, sorrow, or happiness that may disturb the inner peace. All things in the world have a common denominator. When we find this common denominator and apply it equally to all, then we would feel our limbs and hundred other parts of the body will be like dirt, and life and death will come naturally like day and night and should not be manipulated, let alone the demarcation between gain and loss or fortune and misfortune.

He who throws out the standing in society like throwing out mud, knows that body is more precious than social standing, because what is precious is the person himself without getting lost in changes. There are numerous, endless changes, none of which should be allowed to disturb the inner self. Those who are cultivating Dao understand this.”

Confucius said, “Your virtues are the equal of heaven and earth. You still use kind words to advise others how to cultivate the mind. Even the ancient *junzi* could not overtake you.”

Lao Dan said, “This is not true. Water gushes from its spring naturally without effort. Likewise, a superior man makes no effort to show his virtues and all things are affected. Thus, heaven attains its height, earth attains its mass, and the sun and the moon attain their brightness by themselves naturally without effort.”

Confucius left and later told Yan Yuan, “What I know about Dao is as little as the tiny creatures living in the wine vault are minute. If not for the master’s instruction of my ignorance, I would not have known the perfectness of heaven and earth.”

According to the famed historian Sima Qian (145–86 B.C.), Confucius went to see Lao Zi in Loyang, the capital of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, when he was in his early thirties. Lao Zi was older and was an officer in charge of the archives of Zhou. The purpose of his visit was to consult with Lao Zi on the rites. This was the only meeting between these two men. This section describes a meeting of them talking about Dao, the exact opposite of the rites. The story can only be viewed as a Daoist imagination.

### Section 5

Zhuang Zi went to see Duke Ai of Lu. The Duke said, “Lu has many Confucian scholars, but few practice your teachings.”

Zhuang Zi said, “Lu has few Confucian scholars.”

Duke Ai said, “Every man in Lu wears a Confucian robe. How can you call them a few?”

Zhuang Zi said, “Zhou has heard that Confucian scholars wearing a round cap identify themselves as experts in meteorology, those wearing a pair of square shoes identify themselves as experts

in geography, and those wearing a jade ring tying to a silk belt on the waist identify themselves as being decisive in solving critical problems. Scholars who have a certain expertise may not wear the proper identification. Those who wear a certain identification may not have the proper expertise. Your Highness, if you still are not convinced, why don't you proclaim to the people of the state: "Those who do not have a certain expertise, but wear a certain identification, shall be executed."

Henceforth, five days after the Duke's proclamation, none of the people of Lu dare wear a Confucian robe, except for one wearing such a robe and standing at the entrance to the Duke's office. The Duke called him in and asked him about the state affairs. He offered a solution to every possible scenario."

Zhuang Zi said, "There is only one Confucian scholar in the whole Lu State. Could this be called many?"

Duke Ai of Lu was a contemporary of Confucius. Zhuang Zi lived more than one hundred years after them. It is impossible for Zhuang Zi to have a dialogue with Duke Ai like this one. Falsehood of the dialogue aside, Zhuang Zi in the story did follow the protocol of presenting himself to the Duke as Zhou, his formal given name, instead of the less polite pronoun 'I'.

## Section 6

Baili Xi did not allow nobility and emolument to enter into his mind. So when he fed cows, they grew fat. He made Duke Mu of Qin forget his lowly beginning and appoint him prime minister. Youyü did not allow life and death to enter into his mind. So he moved people.

This very short section mentions two persons who succeeded in history, because one shut out the thought of wealth and fame and the other treated life and death as one. The achievements of both men were considered highly laudable in Daoism. Baili Xi was a market laborer when he caught the eyes of Duke Mu (ca. 5<sup>th</sup> century, B.C.) of the Qin State. Youyü was a farmer and later became King Shun (2255 B.C.) after King Yao abdicated voluntarily in favor of him.



### Section 7

Duke Yuan of the State of Song would like to have a painting done. Many painters came, bowed to the Duke, and stood by. They got brushes and ink ready; another half of them waited outside. One painter came late. He walked in slowly. He bowed to the Duke but did not stand by. He turned and went home. The duke dispatched an attendant to see what he was doing. He found the painter taking off his robe, being half naked and sitting with his legs crossed. The Duke said, "Excellent! He is truly a painter."

He is truly a painter, because he does not care about formality in public and concentrates his thought in painting.

### Section 8

King Wen was visiting the City of Zang. He saw an elder man fishing, but his fishing was really not fishing, because he did not hold his fishing rod for fishing. He simply held it in his hand.

Zang is close to present Si'an, an ancient capital city for several dynasties. The essence of the fishing story seems true, as it has been recorded in several independent ancient writings, but the details may not. The elder fisherman known in history by the name of Lü Shang was selected to be his right-hand man and laid the foundation for the new Zhou dynasty after King Wen died. It is to be noted that the title King Wen was given to him posthumously after his son became king. In his lifetime, King Wen was really the Earl of the West, not even a duke or marquis. Narration of the story, however, takes place when King Wen was an Earl. Hence, His Highness, not His Majesty, is a truthful and appropriate salutation for him in his lifetime. See the following paragraph.

King Wen wanted to make the fisherman the prime minister, but he was concerned that high-ranking officers and public opinion were unfavorable. On the other hand, if he let him go, he was worried that the people would lose a protector. The next morning he called in his ministers and said, "Last night I dreamed that I

saw a fine man, dark-skinned and mustached, riding on a multi-colored horse with half of its hoofs red, commanded me in saying, "Trust your state affairs to the elder man in Zang, so that your people will be free from sufferings."

The ministers respectfully answered, "He was your late father, His Highness."

King Wen said, "Let's divine."

The ministers said, "The command of your father! Your Highness, you have no choice. What's to divine for?"

So King Wen welcomed the elder man from Zang and handed over the administration to him. He made no changes in the existing laws and codes and gave no orders with partiality. After three years, King Wen inspected various regions and found that civil leaders did not form parties, officers did not care for fame, and other standards for measuring grains did not enter the territory. When civil leaders did not form parties, everyone worked for the good of the public without selfishness. When officers did not care for fame, they worked for what is best for the territory. When other standards for measuring grains did not enter the territory, other vassals would have no ambitious designs.

Near the end of the Yin dynasty (ca. 1150 B.C.), a wanton king ruled China. Under him there were many vassals appointed by him. King Wen was the most powerful vassal with the rank of Earl (see the preceding note). Each vassal could establish his standard units for measuring grains, the most important commodity for the wealth of a vassalage. Symbolically at least, when the standards of a neighboring vassalage were being used in your territory, you should begin to worry about the serious consequences.

King Wen then named the elder man from Zang to be the Grand Advisor. He made himself like a subject and inquired, "Can the administration be made to prevail all over the land?" The elder man from Zang kept silent and said not a word. He finished his duties for the day. He disappeared at night and was never heard again.

Here the story differs from the historical facts. Lü Shang never left King Wen. He not only helped King Wen, but also counseled his son how to take the

throne from the wanton king, after King Wen died. The new king, King Wu, rewarded him in 1122 B.C. to be the Duke of a feudal state named Qi in the present Shandong province. Since Lü Shang lived to participate in all these events, he could not have been an old man when King Wen first met him.

Under the Daoist pen of revision of history as shown here, the elder man from Zang left King Wen after he learned of King Wen's ambition "to prevail all over the land," probably because he would not support the bloodshed that invariably accompanied such an operation.

Yan Yuan asked Confucius, "Did King Wen not have the trust of his people? Why did he need the dream?"

Confucius answered, "Be quiet. Don't say a word. King Wen did his best. Why do you have to criticize him? He did what was necessary at that time by appealing to those around him."

This is a clear-cut example that stories told in this book need not be historically accurate as long as they support the theme under discussion.

## Section 9

Lie Yūkou demonstrated archery to Baihun Wuren. He pulled the bow to its limit, placed a cup of water on his elbow, and shot one arrow right after another. As soon as one arrow was shot, the next one was on the bow. During all this time, he was like a wooden figure.

Lie Yūkou is also known as Lie Zi. Baihun Wuren, the name of a fictitious Daoist, has appeared before in Chapter 5:2.

Baihun Wuren commented, "You did the shootings mindfully, but not unmindfully. If you and I climb up a high mountain, stand on a shaky rock, and look at an abyss one hundred *ren* below, can you shoot?"

So Baihun Wuren climbed up a high mountain, stood on a shaky rock, and walked backward to an abyss one hundred *ren* below with two-third of his feet in the air. He motioned Yūkou

to come forward. Yūkou crawled on the ground, sweating all over down to his heels.

Baihun Wuren said, “A superior man would look at the blue sky above and retreat to the depth of earth below. His spirit would wander everywhere in the universe without changing his countenance. Now you are frightened and dazed. Your chances of hitting the mark are slim.”

This story is more like a stunt performance to this translator than anything we have learned about Daoism. Obviously, it has nothing to do with Daoism, let alone from Zhuang Zi’s pen.

### Section 10

Jian Wu asked Sun Shu’ao, “You have been prime minister three times without being splendid and you have lost the office three times without being worried. At first, I did not believe in you, now I look at your care-free countenance, what has been going on in your mind?”

Sun Shu’ao said, “I am not superior to anyone else. I cannot refuse what is coming and I cannot stop what is going away. I consider I have nothing to gain or lose, so I have nothing to worry about. I am not superior to anyone else. I don’t even know whether the splendor belongs to the office of prime minister or to me. If it is the former, I have nothing to do with it. If it is the latter, the office has nothing to do with it. Then I would be completely satisfied and looking around with pride. How can I have time to be bothered with who is noble and who is lowly?”

Confucius heard of it and said, “The true men of old would not be persuaded by crafty speakers, debauched by beautiful women, robbed by bandits, or befriended by Fu Xi or Huang Di. Life and death were serious matters, but could not affect them, let alone nobility and emolument. Thus, their spirits passed through big mountains without hindrance, entered abysses without getting drown, lived in shabby conditions without feeling worrisome,

and filled all heaven and earth. The more they gave to others, the more they had for themselves.”

The name Jian Wu has appeared earlier (in Chapter 1:2). Sun Shu'ao was a worthy man and statesman of the State of Chu in the Spring-Autumn period. The last paragraph is a brief statement of the qualifications of the true man in Daoism. Zhuang Zi used Confucius as his mouthpiece to say what he wanted to say himself. The last sentence, “The more they gave to others, the more they had for themselves,” which is really a quotation from the *Dao De Jing*, chapter 81, embodies the everlasting truth.

### Section 11

The head of the State of Chu and the head of the State of Fan were sitting together and having a talk. A little time later, an attendant of the head of Chu came in to report that the State of Fan had fallen. He did so three times. The head of Fan said, “The fall of Fan does not end my existence. Since the fall of Fan does not end my existence, the existence of Chu does not extend its existence either. In other words, Fan has not fallen and Chu has not existed.”

The narrative at the beginning of this section is so brief and condensed that the following remarks by the head of the Fan State appears to be dangling. A little explanation may help. Chu was a big state and Fan was a tiny state. During that period of the Zhou dynasty, it was not uncommon for a big state to assimilate a smaller state and become bigger. Possibly, at this moment, the Chu army was about to overrun the Fan State. The head of the Fan State, Marquis Xi, hurried to see the head of the Chu State hoping to find a peaceful solution. When the two heads of state were talking, the reports came in that the Fan State had been defeated. It was against this kind of background that the head of the Fan State made his reactions known. Whether we agree with his logic is a different matter.

**Note**

1. Yan Yuan and Yan Hui were the same person. His formal given name was Hui, his courtesy given name was Yuan. It was courteous for others to address him by his courtesy name Yuan; it was correct for his teacher to call him by his formal name Hui. All were etiquette at that time.



## Zhi Wandering North

All eleven sections of this last chapter of the Outer Series are concerned with a single theme that matters most to the Daoist, namely the Dao itself. They discourse on what Dao is and is not, what Dao would do and would not do, and how we learn Dao. Great emphasis is put on the wordless transmission through silent understanding.

### Section 1

Zhi wandered north to the origin of the Xuan River, ascended the Yinfen Mountain, and met Wuwei Wei by accident. Zhi said to Wuwei Wei, “I wish to ask you, how to think and how to ponder in order to understand Dao, how to conduct and how to act in order to be peaceful in Dao, and which route to take and which method to use in order to arrive at Dao?” He asked three times and Wuwei Wei did not answer. It was not that he did not answer, but that he did not know the answers.

All the proper names used in the first two paragraphs of text have Daoist undertones. Zhi means being knowledgeable, Xuan means black or mysterious, Yinfen means now appearing, now disappearing. Wuwei Wei means “doing nothing but naturally.”

Zhi did not get answers to his questions. He returned to the south of the Bai River, ascended the Huqüe Mountain and saw Kuang Qu. Zhi asked Kuang Qu the same questions. Kuang Qu



answered, "Ya, I know the answers and I am about to tell you, but I just forget what I want to say."

Bai means white in contrast to black in the first paragraph above. Huqüe means doubts gone as compared to now appearing, now disappearing above. Kuang Qu means knowing nothing as compared to doing nothing above.

Zhi did not get answers to his questions. He returned to the palace, saw King Huang and asked him. King Huang said, "Without thinking and without pondering, you will understand Dao. Without conducting and without acting, you will be peaceful in Dao. Taking no route and using no method, you will arrive at Dao."

Zhi asked King Huang, "You and I know it. They do not know it. Who are correct?"

King Huang said, "Wuwei Wei is truly correct. Kuang Qu is close. You and I are off. 'Those who know do not talk; those who talk do not know.'<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the sainted men practiced wordless teachings. Dao cannot be caused to come; De cannot be reached. *Ren* can be made to work; justice can be made to compromise. Rites promote mutual pretenses. Therefore, it is said, 'After losing Dao, there is De. After losing De, there is *ren*. After losing *ren*, there is justice. After losing justice, there are rites.'<sup>2</sup> Rites are the vanity of Dao and the beginning of chaos. Therefore, 'He who studies Dao loses some worldly desire everyday. As the loss continues until all the desire is gone, he has achieved the state of *wu wei*, in which nothing cannot be done.'<sup>3</sup> Now after we have perceived Dao as a visible object, we want it to return to its original form. Isn't it difficult? If it is easy, only the great men know how."

"Birth is the forerunner of death. Death is the beginning of birth. Who could understand these delicate rules! The birth of a human being results from the condensation of *qi*. When *qi* condenses, there is life; when *qi* disperses, there is death. If life and death are related, what do I have to worry about? Hence, all things have one in common. What is beautiful is miraculous. What is ugly is rotten. What is miraculous can change into what is rotten and vice versa. Therefore, what is common in everything in the world is *qi*. Sainted men treasure the oneness."

Zhi said to King Huang, “I asked Wuwei Wei. Wuwei Wei did not answer. It was not that he did not answer, but that he did not know the answers. Then I asked Kuang Qu. Kuang Qu wanted to tell me, but he did not. It was not that he would not, but that he forgot what he wanted to say. Finally, I asked you. You knew the answers. Why did you say you were off?”

King Huang said, “Wuwei Wei was truly correct, because he did not know. Kuang Qu was close, because he forgot. You and I were off, because we knew.”

On hearing this, Kuang Qu believed King Huang knew exactly what he said.

Daoists believe in wordless teachings. Truth can only be transmitted through the heart (or mind). Any truth expressed in words becomes an approximation. On this point, Buddhists believe in the same doctrine.

## Section 2

Heaven and earth possess great beauty without boasting. The four seasons operate in exact regularity without commenting. All things have the rationale for existence without explaining. The sainted men seek the origin of the beauty of heaven and earth and search the rationale of all things. Thus the superior men practice *wu wei* and the great sages do not do as they please, because they admire the work of nature.

By combining the awful power of heaven and earth with the numerous changes in which all things have been living or dead, square or round, no one would know where they came from, but they have continued to grow profusely ever since a long time ago. The universe is huge, but is enveloped in Dao. An autumn-grown feather is minute, but is dependent on Dao to mature. Everything in the world is changing; nothing remains ever the same. Yin and yang and the four seasons rotate, each taking its order. Being invisible, Dao might seem to have been lost, though it always exists. Being lively, Dao is spiritual and formless. It nourishes all things without their knowledge. [Understanding] these basic tenets, one would be ready to admire the work of nature.

### Section 3

Nie Qūe asked Bei Yi about Dao. Bei Yi said, “Keep your body upright, render your sight focused, then natural harmony will come to you. Conserve your knowledge, concentrate your thought, then spirit will be with you. De will beautify you, Dao will be your abode. Your pupils will be looking innocent like those of a newborn calf.”

Before he finished talking, Nie Qū already fell asleep. Bei Yi was overjoyed. As he was singing and leaving, he said, “His body is motionless like a dried skeleton. His heart is quiet like lifeless ashes. He truly understands Dao, but does not feel proud for that. Mystically, his mind is free of all craftiness. What kind of person he has become!”

We recall in the opening paragraph of Chapter 2 it reads: “Could the body be like dried wood and the spirit, ashes?” Apparently, it is re-used in the preceding paragraph of text.

### Section 4

King Shun asked Cheng, “Can Dao be possessed?”

[Cheng] answered, “You do not possess your own body. How can you possess Dao?”

Shun asked, “If I do not possess my body, who possesses it?”

[Cheng] answered, “The body is endowed in form by heaven and earth. Birth is not your possession; it is endowed in *qi* by heaven and earth. Life is not your possession; it is endowed in due course by heaven and earth. Your sons and grandsons are not your possession; they are endowed as castoffs by heaven and earth. Hence, when you move about, you don’t know where to go. When you stay, you don’t know what to keep. When you eat, you don’t know how to flavor. All of them are the movements of *qi* in heaven and earth. How can any of them be possessed?”

This section describes the universality of *qi* in the universe. Everything is endowed by nature in one way or another. A person is not entitled to ownership

of his or her own person, for “birth is not your possession.” In the Daoist view, we do not and cannot own anything in the world.

### Section 5

Confucius asked Lao Dan, “Today we have a little time. May I ask what is the supreme Dao?”

Lao Dan said, “You abstain from meat, open up your heart, cleanse your spirit, and throw out your cleverness. Dao is abstruse and difficult to explain. But I would tell you briefly.

“What is obvious comes from what is mysterious, what is distinguishable in appearance comes from what is formless, spirit comes from Dao, forms come originally from spirit, and all things give rise to one another through forms. Hence, those with nine openings are viviparous, those with eight openings<sup>4</sup> are oviparous. They come without traces, they go without limits. There are no gateways, there are no resting places. Only broad roads criss-cross everywhere. He who follows the Dao will find his hands and feet strong, his thought clear, his ears and eyes sharp, his paying attention easy, and his adapting to things unrestricted. Thus, heaven cannot but be high, earth cannot but be broad, the sun and the moon cannot but orbit, and all things cannot but be prosperous. This is Dao.

“Those who are learned need not possess true knowledge. Those who are eloquent need not possess wisdom. Sainted men have already abandoned them. On the other hand, if mores are added and no additions are noticed, or if mores are taken away and no deductions are noticed, this is what sainted men would like to preserve. Dao is deep like a sea and lofty like a mountain. It causes things to orbit ceaselessly without ever being exhausted. But the Dao of *junzi* can only appear outside. All things depend on it to be free from exhaustion. This is Dao.

“There are people in China who are neither yin nor yang. They live between heaven and earth. We may for the time being call them people. Someday, they have to return to where they came. From the viewpoint of origin, what is called life is nothing more than a condensation of *qi*. Some may live to old age and some

may die young. But how much does the difference make? The lifespan lasts only a fleeting moment. It is not long enough to decide the right and wrong between Kings Yao and Jie. Fruits and melons have their rationales for growing. Although human relationships are delicate and complex, we can still find ways to live together. The sainted men do not do things contrary to norms in society or insist on certain ways in conducting themselves among others. Being harmonious and going along is called *De*. Adapting to circumstances is called *Dao*. This is how rulers and kings rose.

“[The time that] a man lives in this world is like a sun shadow passing through a pinhole. It is only a fleeting moment. Everything grows profusely in progression and everything dies quietly in retrogression. It undergoes changes to become alive and it undergoes changes to become dead. Living beings are sad about it and human beings are sorrowful about it. Destroy the natural bow case and break up the natural scabbard.<sup>5</sup> With inevitable changes, the spirit disperses and so does the body. This is the way to return to the grand origin of *Dao*. That the formless changes into a form and a form changes into the formless seems knowledgeable to everyone. This is not what a would-be Daoist should explore, though it is what ordinary people would like to comment on. He who is a Daoist would not comment. He who would comment is not a Daoist. What is obvious may not be what is being sought. To comment is no comparison to keeping quiet. *Dao* may not be heard. To listen is no comparison to plugging one’s ears. This is truly the way to apprehend *Dao*.”

There is no evidence that Confucius and Lao Zi had a conversation of this kind. The rhetorical delivery is not Zhuangian either. Most likely it was written by a disciple of Zhuang Zi. It does give us a chance to look at how Daoism was interpreted shortly after Zhuang Zi. There was no surprise. It did mention hermaphrodites and where they would go after life. It also reiterated the belief that life results from the condensation of *qi* (a form of energy). Thus, death occurs from the dissipation of *qi*.

## Section 6

Dongguo Zi asked Zhuang Zi, “Where is really the so-called Dao?”

Zhuang Zi said, “Everywhere.”

Dongguo Zi: “Please give a specific instance.”

Zhuang Zi: “In ants.”

Dongguo: “How does it come so lowly?”

Zhuang: “In tares.”

Dongguo: “How does it come more so lowly?”

Zhuang: “In tile chips.”

Dongguo: “How does it come even more so lowly?”

Zhuang: “In dung.”

Dongguo Zi asked no more. Zhuang Zi said, “My master, your question does not touch upon the substance, like what the meat inspector Huo asked a pork-butcher about stepping on the hind leg, for the lower [the leg] he steps on the less he learns [about the leg].<sup>6</sup> You don’t specify and Dao does not separate from things. This is true of Dao, this is true of great ideas. The three characters *zhou*, *pian*, and *xian*<sup>7</sup> are different in name, but the same in fact, for they imply a similar meaning.

“Suppose we journey to a land of nothingness, discuss all kinds of subjects, but never come to a conclusion. Suppose we are in a land of *wu wei*. It is a place simple and quiet, vast and clean, peaceful and relaxing. My mind is open. I go out but do not know where to go; I come around, but do not know where to stop. I have already come and gone, but do not know where to finish. Hesitating in this immense space, even men of great wisdom enter into it and know not where it ends. There is no limit between that which controls things and the things being controlled. The things that are limited are known as the limits of things. The limit of the limitless is the limitless within the limited. As to what is full, empty, decaying, and dying, Dao renders fullness and emptiness for things, not for itself; decay and death for things, not for itself; beginning and ending for things, not for itself; accumulation and dispersion for things, not for itself.”

The meaning of the second half of the last paragraph is quite obscure. Let's try this way. We assign to Dao the quality of being limitless and everything else the quality of being limited. "That which controls things" refers to Dao, which is limitless. Since Dao causes things to be formed, that means the limitless controls the limited. Since Dao is present in everything and everywhere, hence "The limit of the limitless is the limitless within the limited." (Translation: The limit of Dao is the Dao within the things.) This was Zhuang Zi's summary explanation to Dongguo Zi why Dao was everywhere.

### Section 7

Ao Hegan and Shen Nong were pupils of Laolong Ji. One mid day, Shen Nong was leaning on a couch with his door closed and taking a nap. Ao Hegan opened the door and hurried in saying, "Laolong has died." Shen Nong got up with the help of his staff and then let his staff go and laughed, saying, "My teacher knew of my rusticity and contemptuousness and died to abandon me. That is it! My teacher died without leaving the most precious words to inspire me."

Yangang Diao heard about it and said, "Those who truly understand Dao would enjoy the admiration of the *junzi* all over the world. Now what Laolong knew about Dao was less than one ten-thousandth of the end of an autumn-grown feather and yet he was still aware of keeping his precious words in death, let alone those who truly understand Dao. Dao is formless to the sight, soundless to the hearing, and completely obscure to be spoken of. Therefore, the Dao that can be spoken of is not the true Dao."

Later, Tai Qing asked Wu Qiong, "Do you know Dao?"

Wu Qiong answered, "I don't know."

He asked Wu Wei. Wu Wei answered, "I know."

Tai Qing asked, "Does the Dao you know have certain characteristics?"

Wu Wei: "Yes."

Tai Qing: "What are they?"

Wu Wei: “The Dao I know can be noble, lowly, aggregating, and segregating. These are the characteristics I know.”

Tai Qing told Wu Shi what he heard from Wu Qiong and Wu Wei, and asked, “Since this is the case, between the “I don’t know” of Wu Qiong and the “I know” of Wu Wei, who is correct and who is not?”

Wu Shi said, “He who says he does not know [Dao] knows very well. He who says he knows [Dao] knows very little. He who does not know is inside the Dao. He who knows is outside of it.”

On hearing that, Tai Qing looked up, sighed and said, “Not knowing is knowing! Knowing is not knowing! Who knows the knowing of not knowing?”

Wu Shi said, “Dao cannot be heard. What can be heard is not Dao. Dao cannot be seen. What can be seen is not Dao. Dao cannot be told. What can be told is not Dao. Remember that the formation of things originated from the formless. Dao should not be called by a name.

“He who is asked about Dao and answers does not know Dao. He who asks about Dao will not be hearing Dao. Dao may not be asked. Even if it is asked, there is no answer. Asking what is not to be asked is an empty asking. Answering what is not to be answered shows a lack of substance. When a lack of substance is waiting for an empty asking, it is like not observing the universe outside or understanding the origin of oneself inside. Such a person cannot reach the height of Mount Kunlun or wander in the Great Void.”

This section is the only section in this work that is devoted exclusively to a discourse on the characteristics of Dao from the standpoint of a Daoist. Certain passages appear to be a little forced, but the general impression about Dao given to the reader is correct. All speakers in the story were fictitious and each had a different view of Dao. The view closest to the truth came from a summary statement of the last speaker Wu Shi. Many of the personal names coined by the author have strong Daoist tones. For instance, Tai Qing means supreme purity; Wu Qiong, infinity; Wu Wei, doing as nature does; and Wu Shi, no beginning.



### Section 8

Guang Yao asked Wu You, “My master, are you having or not having?”

Wu You didn’t answer. Guang Yao got no answer and closely observed that his countenance seems to have an air of emptiness. He looked at him all day, but did not seem to have seen him, listened to him all day, but did not seem to have heard him, and touched him all day, but did not seem to have felt him.

Guang Yao said, “This must be the highest state. Who could possibly reach this state! I can reach the *wu* state, but cannot reach the *wu* in the *wu* state. By the time I got to the *wu* state, it automatically becomes a state of *you*. How could I ever keep it in the *wu*?”

As has been explained elsewhere, the *wu* and *you* are the two states of Dao as first introduced in the first chapter of the *Dao De Jing*. “*Wu* is the beginning of heaven and earth and *you* is the mother of all things.” *Wu* is approximately nothingness and *you* is everything else. In other words, *wu* is invisible and *you* visible.

### Section 9

In the household of the Minister of War, there was a belt-buckle maker. He was eighty years old and his eyes were so sharp that he would not miss a down tip. The Minister asked him, “Do you have tricks or Dao?”

He answered, “I have Dao. When I was twenty-years-old, I liked making belt buckles. I looked at no other things and was not interested in anything but belt buckles. I learned everything about belt buckles, so I was good at it

A Chinese proverb says: “Conversance can lead to ingenuity.” It could have derived from this story.

### Section 10

Ran Qiu asked Confucius, “Can we know what it was like before there was heaven and earth?”

Confucius said, “Yes, the ancient was the same as the present.”

Ran Qiu did not get a direct answer and excused himself. The next day, he came in again and said, “Yesterday, I asked, ‘Can we know what it was like before there was heaven and earth?’ Master said, ‘Yes, the ancient was the same as the present.’ Earlier, I understood. Today, I don’t. May I ask, why?”

Confucius said, “Earlier, you understood, because your mind was receptive. Today, you don’t, because your mind has been impeded in formality and is asking for clarification. There is no ancient or present, no beginning or ending. Having no children and grandchildren and yet having children and grandchildren, is it possible?”

Ran Qiu did not answer. Confucius said, “Fine. No need to answer! Really, not because of birth, there comes death. Not because of death, there stops birth. Are birth and death the opposite of each other? Birth and death are one. Had there been things born before there were heaven and earth? The Dao that created all things is not a thing. All things created by Dao could not have been created before Dao. Only from it came heaven and earth and all things. After having heaven and earth, all things reproduce and prosper. The sages love all the people everlastingly, because they follow the spirit of heaven and earth in reproducing and prospering.”

Although Zhuang Zi put what he wanted to say in Confucius’ mouth, the Daoist and the Confucianist came close on this subject of the origin of the universe. Thus, according to the *Dao De Jing*, Dao→One→Two→Three→All things; according to the *Yi Jing*, Tai Ji→Two→Four→Eight→All things. Although Dao in Daoism corresponds to Tai Ji in Confucianism, we should not put an equal sign between them.

## Section 11

Yan Yuan asked Confucius, “I have heard from you, Master, saying, ‘There would be none to speed or to welcome.’ May I ask how does it come about?”

Confucius said, “The ancients would change their appearances but not their minds. At present, people would change their minds but not their appearances. Those who change [their appearances] with things do not change their minds. Being in peace with or without changes means being ready to go along with the current conditions without making additions to them. [Hence,] the park of King Xi Wei, the garden of King Huang, the palace of King Shun, and the dwellings of Kings Tang and Wu [had become smaller and simpler with the passage of time]. Even those *junzi* who were teachers in the *Ru*<sup>8</sup> and Mohism would engage in debates over what was right or wrong, let alone those of today. The sages cared for things, but did not harm them. Those who do not harm things cannot be harmed by them either. Only those who do not harm others can mutually speed and welcome others. O, forests! O, wilderness! Make me happy and enjoy life. Ah, before happiness ends, sadness begins. I cannot resist the arrival of happiness or sadness, nor can I prevent their departure. It is a pity that we the people are merely a lodging of other things. We know what we encounter, but do not know what we do not encounter. We can do what we can, but cannot do what we can’t. We cannot avoid what we do not know or what we cannot do. Is it not a pity that we long for what we cannot avoid? The greatest words are no words; the greatest doing is no doing. We would be simple-minded to think that everyone knows the same thing.”

Near the beginning of the second paragraph of this section, a statement reads: “Being in peace with or without changes means being ready to go along with the current conditions without making additions to them.” It follows with a sample of supporting “facts” that ancient kings built smaller and simpler palaces with the passage of time. Can the statement be truthful? (1) The first three kings mentioned were prehistoric. How could the author of this essay know they had gardens, let alone their relative sizes? (2) Common sense tells us that royal palaces were getting bigger and more elaborate with time, not the other way around. These glitches convince this translator that Zhuang Zi had nothing to do with writing the last section of this Series.

## Notes

1. Cf. *The Dao De Jing*, chapter 56.
2. Cf. *The Dao De Jing*, chapter 38.
3. Cf. *The Dao De Jing*, chapter 48.
4. Eight openings refer to the birds having two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, one mouth and one excretory opening. Nine openings refer to the mammals having the same eight openings as the birds plus a separate anus. The counting is not necessarily scientific, but that is the way they are counted.
5. Here both terms refer to mental restrictions and reservations.
6. The practice of stepping on a pork hind leg to determine its meat quality might have been done at that time. It could tell nothing the lower the leg is stepped on, because it would be mostly bony anyway. Zhuang Zi used it to show to Dongguo Zi how his question was pointless.
7. *Zhou* (周), *bian* (徧), and *xian* (咸), all can mean the same thing.
8. Before and during the time of Confucius, the ancient teachings elaborated by him were called the *Ru*, meaning literally “scholarly.” Hence, Confucianists are called *Ru Jia* in Chinese.



# III

## The Miscellaneous Series



## Gengsang Chu

This chapter begins with stories of Lao Zi and his pupils. What follows is a series of short essays on various topics, such as the importance of peace of mind, the limit of searching for knowledge, the power of a man's will, and the uncertainty of being right and wrong. It concludes with the qualifications of a Daoist.

### Section 1

Among the disciples of Lao Dan, there was one called Gengsang Chu, who alone had mastered the teachings of Lao Dan. He lived in the north side of Mount Weilei. He dismissed those servants who displayed cleverness and distanced those maids who exhibited kindness. He kept those who were unsophisticated and diligent. Three years after he had lived there, the district of Weilei enjoyed abundant harvest. One native said to another, "When Gengsang Zi first arrived here, I was strangely surprised. Now, if I look at him within a short interval of time, I feel that is not enough [to know him]; if I look at him within a long interval of time, I feel that is plenty [to know him]. He is almost a saint. Why wouldn't we choose him to be our leader and offer him our services?"

In the *Book of Lie Zi*, there was a person named Kancang Zi. Perhaps, Kancang Zi and Gengsang Zi were the same person. But we have no independent evidence that Lao Zi had disciples in the first place.

It is certainly virtuous to be kind, but to "exhibit kindness" is an act of self-conceit by the maids and should not be encouraged.



Gengsang Zi learned that he could become a political leader and was worried. But his disciples found it strange. Gengsang Zi said, "Why would my disciples find it strange about me? In the spring, all plants grow; in the autumn, all fruits ripen. Do spring and autumn do so without reasons? They simply follow the law of nature. I have heard the superior men find it peaceful to live in a tiny room and the vulgar people would like to wander everywhere as they please. Now the people of Weilei wish to have the honor to serve me among the many worthy men and to make me one of the distinguished persons. I feel uneasy with respect to the teachings of Lao Dan."

One disciple said, "I beg to disagree. An ordinary ditch is too small for a big fish to turn around, but is fine for fry to swim. A low hill is too small for a big beast to stay, but is fine for cunning foxes to hide. Furthermore, honoring the worthy and conferring ranks to the capable, giving priority and privileges to the gentle have been done since the time of Kings Yao and Shun, let alone the people of Weilei. I ask you, my master, to reconsider."

Gengsang Zi said, "Come, my child! Beasts that are big enough to contain a carriage dare not leave the mountain alone for the danger of being trapped. Fish that are big enough to swallow a boat dare not swim into shallow water for the fear of being beached and then at the mercy of worms. Therefore, birds and beasts are never satisfied with height; fish and turtles are never satisfied with depth. Likewise, a wholesome person wanting to hide his body is never satisfied with remoteness.

"As for the two gentlemen,<sup>1</sup> they have not been worthy of praise. They put forth certain codes<sup>2</sup> like opening a hole through a city wall to plant some vines. Selecting portions of hair for combing or counting grains of rice for cooking has certainly nothing to do with helping the people. To advance the worthy makes people crush each other. To appoint the clever makes people purloin each other. These methods do not produce honesty. People are overwhelmed with the desire of making gains, resulting in murdering of fathers by sons, slaying of sovereigns by ministers, stealing in daytime, and opening a hole through a wall [for entry to rob] at high noon. Let me tell you the source of

turmoil must have started at the time of Yao and Shun, but the corrupt practices spread for thousands more years later until one day men must destroy one another.”

The thrust of the essay appears to be in the last paragraph, in which the author decried the misdeeds of the legendary Kings Yao and Shun, who happened to be the role models of the Confucianists. This should not be anything surprising in a doctrinaire discourse. However, the concluding sentence paints a gruesome picture for the future of mankind, if Confucianism prevails. Daoism as a philosophy was not known to be exclusive at this time period or any other time since. For this very reason, this translator-annotator believes that Zhuang Zi himself had little to do with this essay.

## Section 2

Nanrong Chü sat straight up and said respectfully, “How could people like me having already reached an old age get proper instructions to succeed in what has been said?”

Gengsang Zi said, “Protect your body, preserve your life, and make not your thoughts worry. In three years, you will come to what has been said.”

Nanrong Chü said, “I do not know the difference in the form of an eye [between one person and another], but a blind man cannot see. I do not know the difference in the form of an ear [between one person and another], but a deaf man cannot hear. I do not know the difference in the form of the mind [between one person and another], but a mad man cannot reason. The forms of one and another may be close, but something may keep them apart, such that they would like to be mutually informed, but cannot do so. Now I am told to ‘protect your body, preserve your life, and make not your thoughts worry.’ I am seeking Dao in earnest, but it gets into as far as my ears and no farther.”

The sentence beginning with, “The forms of one and another may be close...” might lead more apparently to the concluding sentence, which means it gets into as far as my ears, but not my mind, if parentheses are added as follows: “The forms of one (*e.g.* ear) and another (*e.g.* mind) may be close...” We also

note that the sentence next to last of text marked in single quotation marks bears some resemblance in thought to the last sentence of text in Chapter 3:1.

Gengsang Zi said, "There is no more to be said. Small bees cannot metamorphose into caterpillars. A southern hen cannot sit on heron eggs, but a northern hen can. The hens do not differ in their nature. The reason that it can or cannot depends on its capability large or small. Now my capability is small and I cannot convert you. Why don't you go south to see Lao Zi."

Nanrong Chü hauled rations and traveled seven days and nights to reach where Lao Zi was.

Lao Zi asked, "Do you come by the recommendation of Chu?"<sup>3</sup>

Nanrong Chü answered, "Yes."

Lao Zi asked, "Why do you come with so many people?" Nanrong Chü was surprised and turned his head looking back.

Lao Zi said, "Do you not understand what I mean?"

Nanrong Chü looked down with shame and looked up with a sigh and said, "Now I forget my answer because of losing my question."

Lao Zi asked, "What do you mean?"

Nanrong Chü said, "To say I do not understand? People would say I am ignorant. To say I do understand? I put myself at the mercy of others. Being not kind is hurting others. Being kind is putting myself at the mercy of others. Being not righteous is hurting others. Being righteous is putting myself at the mercy of others. How could I escape from these dilemmas? These three are what make me worried. I wish through Chu's recommendation to request your advice."

Lao Zi said, "A moment ago, I looked between your eyebrow and eyelashes, from which I learned of your intention. Now from what you have just said, I confirm it. Vaguely, you feel as if you had lost your parents and were using a stick to look for them in a sea. You are like a vagabond knowing not what to do. You wish to return to your nature and know not where to enter. What a pity!"

Nanrong Chü asked for permission to stay in the house as a pupil with the hope that he could seek his likes and expel his

dislikes. After ten days, he felt disappointed and distressed. He went to see Lao Zi again.

Lao Zi said, "You tried to wash yourself clean. Why are you still distressed with disappointment? Apparently, you still have some of your dislikes remaining. External restrictions should not be held obstinate by complexities; their resolution requires internal examination. Internal difficulties should not be held obstinate by disorderliness; their dissolution requires the clearance of external temptations. A virtuous person whose external and internal inhibitions have been held obstinate cannot uphold himself, let alone a person learning the Dao."

Nanrong Chü said "When a villager becomes sick, his neighbors come to see him. He can tell them about his sickness. Because he recognizes his sickness as sickness, therefore he does not have sickness. Now as I learn the great Dao, I am like taking a medicine that makes me sicker. I just wish to learn the way of protecting my life."

The sentence, "Because he recognizes his sickness as sickness, therefore he does not have sickness," is modeled after the sentence, "Because a sage recognizes fault as fault, therefore he does not have fault."<sup>4</sup> The Chinese character *bing* can mean either physical sickness or spiritual fault. The following clause, "that makes me sicker," really means "that makes me feel having greater fault."

Lao Zi said, "The way of protecting life: Can it achieve a union of spirit and body? Can there be no separation [of them]? Can fortune and misfortune be known without augury or divination? Can it stop at optimum? Can it be done? Can it be independent of others and dependent on oneself? Can it be free from restraint? Can it be ignorant and innocent? Can it be childlike? A child can yell all day long without a hoarse throat, because his constitution is harmonious; he can make a fist all day long without relaxing his hand, because this is his nature; he can stare all day long without moving his pupils, because his inclination is not outward. When you move about, you are free and confident. When you rest, you feel no worry or obstruction. Go along with nature, ride with the waves. This is the principle of protecting life.

Nanrong Chü said, "Is this all for reaching the realm of a superior man?"

[Lao Zi] said, "No! This is only what may be called the melting of an obstructed mind. Can you do it? A superior man lives on earth and enjoys life in heaven. He will not be disturbed by people or things, fortune or misfortune. He does not promote strange happenings, plan clever manipulations, or participate in vulgar undertakings. He goes without regard to formalities; he comes with pure truthfulness. This is called the principle of protecting life."

[Nanrong Chü] said, "If so, is it the highest point?"

[Lao Zi] said, "Not yet. I have asked you, 'Can you be child-like?' A child acts in the absence of knowledge and walks in the absence of direction. His body is like a branch of dried wood and his mind is like burned-out ashes. In this way, misfortune will not happen and fortune will not come. When there is no misfortune or fortune, how could there be human calamity?"

Perhaps, it is astonishing to read a passage in which a child's body is likened to a branch of dried wood and his mind, burned-out ashes. Was the writer a neurotic? The reader can be assured that he was not. In the Daoist terminology, "dried wood" signifies a state of contentment, happiness, and comfort; "burned-out ashes" stands for a state of peace and quietude. According to the Daoist thinking, every one of us was born with them. As we grow older, we gradually lose them and instead learn eloquence, cleverness, ambition, etc. So we need to regain what have been eroded away. We may recall that Zhuang Zi used this aphorism first time in Chapter 2:1, when he applied it to an accomplished Daoist. That is probably the reason it did not attract our attention then.

There is no historical backing that Lao Zi ever had disciples. We know of none. The story told here can only be considered fictitious.

### Section 3

He whose mind is in a state of complete repose remits a natural light from within. He who remits the natural light manifests himself as the person he is. He who can cultivate himself will

be able to cultivate his lasting virtue. He who has lasting virtue will have the support of the people and the help from Nature. He who has the support of the people is a subject of Nature. He who has the help from Nature is a son of Nature.

#### **Section 4**

A learner tries to learn what cannot be learned. A practitioner tries to practice what cannot be practiced. A debater tries to debate what cannot be debated. Knowing to stop at what cannot be known is the limit of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> If a person does not know that, his natural endowment will be compromised.

#### **Section 5**

People prepare things to serve the body, preserve freedom from worries to nourish the mind, and cultivate the inner wisdom to communicate with the world outside. If they still encounter misfortune after having done all of these, then it is natural, not man-made, and it is not capable of disturbing harmony or entering into the mind. The mind insists on its preferences, not realizing that it may not insist on its insistence.

A person not assuring of his sincerity but trying to reach out to others will find his efforts misdirected every time and his inability to ward off external influences, thus losing his true self. He who openly commits serious crimes will be judged by the people. He who secretly commits serious crimes will be judged by the spirits. He who dares face the people and the spirits without shame can walk alone in peace.

He who minds his inner cultivation does not make himself known. He who minds his exterior business expects profits. He who does not live for fame is carefree and splendid. He who works for profits is only a self-contented merchant, but to others he looks like he is walking on his toes. He who is harmonious with things wins their adherence. He who alienates things loses their welcome, let alone [alienating] people. He who cannot accommodate others does not have followers. Without followers,

he will be left alone. No swords are sharper than a man's will; even the Moya<sup>6</sup> is inferior. No injuries are more far-reaching than yin and yang. There is no safe haven between heaven and earth. Yin and yang are not the real instigators; a man's will is.

### Section 6

Dao is omnipresent in all things. They divide, they complete; they complete, they disintegrate. People dislike division so they seek completion, but after having completion they become dissatisfied with completion. They do not replenish the energy they waste and eventually come close to death. If they feel having gained something in return, that is probably death. Trading in spirit for skeleton is what a ghost will do. However, it would be great if people could model the visible body after the invisible Dao.

The first two sentences have been stated in Chapter 2:4. This paragraph is an elaboration of that statement. People tend to consider what they have to be insufficient and they continue to seek more completion after completion. The result is a waste of efforts leading to disintegration of body and spirit.

The origin of birth is unknown as well as the destination of death. There can be reality without a physical presence. There can be growth without a beginning or an end. There can be birth without a destination. Being real without a physical presence is space; having growth without a beginning or an end is time. There are birth and death, exit and entry. The invisible gate for all exits and entries is called the heavenly gate. The heavenly gate is *wu* and *you*. All things come from *wu* and *you*. *You* cannot by itself produce *you*. It comes only from *wu you*, because there is only one *wu you* for all *wu you*. The sainted men wander their spirits here in Dao.

### Section 7

Knowledge of the ancients had a limit. Why was there a limit? At the very beginning when there was not anything, this was the

limit, the end of it, and nothing could be added. Later, people considered things,<sup>7</sup> and began to look at life like wandering and death like homecoming to distinguish them. Still later, they said there was nothing in the beginning. Then there were births, and deaths soon followed. They considered nothing as the head, life as the trunk and death as the buttock. Whoever understands having and not having, life and death all being one would be my friend.<sup>8</sup> Although these three are different, they came from the same source. The Zhao and the Jing families are famous for holding illustrious offices. The Gia family is well known for its noble appointments. They are not one family, but they have the same genealogy.

This paragraph seems to have added no new idea to the statement made earlier in Chapter 2:4. Although the author used an analogy of the three powerful families of the Chu State, it means little in supporting his point that the three stages consisting of nothing, life, and death also came from one source, the Dao. Many scholars consider the third family name Gia should be Qū. The famous poet Qū Yuan (343–ca. 290 B.C.) came from this family.

Life results from the coalescence of *qi*. Obviously, it may be said to be right or wrong. Despite having been said right or wrong, it should not have been said at all. But the reason is not easily understood. In a sacrificial offering, there are certain right-or-wrong ways to display the dissected parts and the main body of the animal. Moreover, sightseeing a palace room used at the same time as a bedroom and a rest room makes calling it whichever it is right or wrong.

Let me explain how it is uncertain in saying right or wrong. For example, take life as the foundation, craftiness as the standard, and create what is right or wrong. If there is really a distinction between a name and a reality, then make yourself the master and others look at you as a model of lofty principles, and finally die for your cause. If so, then it would be clever to be arrogant, foolish to be humble, glorious to be opulent, and shameful to be indigent. Being uncertain about right or wrong is the vulgar people of today, their view being the same as that of cicadas and little quails.



### Section 8

When you accidentally step on the foot of a passer-by, you ask for pardon. When you step on the foot of an elder brother, you say sorry. When you step on the foot of your parent, you need say nothing. Therefore, it is said that the noblest expression of courtesy is the absence of the distinction between any one person and me; the noblest expression of righteousness is the absence of the distinction between any one thing and me; the noblest expression of wisdom is the absence of schemes; the noblest expression of *ren* is the absence of personal relations; the noblest expression of trustworthiness is the absence of evidence.

### Section 9

Resolve the confusion of wills, free the bondage of spirits, lighten the burden of virtues, and open the blockage to the Dao. Glories, wealth, prominence, authority, fame, and privileges are the six ills that confuse one's will. Countenance, behavior, color, rhetoric, temperament, and affection are the six ills that restrain one's spirit. Hatred, love, joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness are the six ills that burden one's virtues. Denial, acceptance, greed, favor, cleverness, and skill are the six ills that block the path to Dao. If we can keep these four categories of six ills each away from disturbing our minds, then there will be peace, with peace then there will be clarity, with clarity then there will be emptiness, with emptiness then there will be *wu wei*, and nothing cannot be done. Dao is what virtues revere. Life is the glory of virtues. Natural endowment is the essence of life.

The application of natural endowment is in doing things. Doing things artificially is a waste. Knowledge connects [the mind with the world outside]. Intelligence lays plans [from inside]. What an intelligent person does not know is [limited by his view] like looking askance. Doing what cannot be helped in doing is called virtue. Doing naturally what is not one's way of doing is called principle. They are called by contradictory names, but in reality they mean the same thing.

### Section 10

Yi was skillful in shooting at a tiny mark, but naive in making people not to praise himself. The sages were skillful in conforming to nature, but naive in understanding human nature. Being able to conform to nature and to benefit people, only a wholesome man could do both. Only birds and beasts can find comfort in being birds and beasts; only birds and beasts can find comfort in nature. How can a wholesome man understand nature? How can he understand human nature? Let alone use his understanding to distinguish nature from human nature.

As noted elsewhere, Yi was a sharp archer of prehistoric times. This short section points to the contrasts between dealing with nature and human nature. The sentence, “Only birds and beasts...find comfort in nature,” has since become a popular aphorism.

### Section 11

Any flying sparrow passed by Yi. Yi could shoot it down, because of his imposing technique. If the world was a cage, no sparrows could escape from being shot. That was why King Tang dispatched a palace banqueting officer to entice Yi Yin and Duke Mu of Qin offered five pieces of lamb fur to free the bondage of Baili Xi. Hence, it is impossible to tempt someone without giving him what he would love to have.

Yi Yin and Baili Xi both became prime ministers. Yi Yin helped Tang lay the foundation of the Shang dynasty (1766–1123 B.C.). Baili Xi assisted his duke in becoming leader of all the feudal princes by force in the seventh century, B.C.

### Section 12

A one-legged man does not observe decorum, for he cares little about reproach. A laborer is not afraid of height, for he ignores life and death. A man has been slandered but chooses not to return the same,<sup>9</sup> for he overcomes the distinction between

other men and himself. Being able to overcome this distinction, he has attained the union of man with nature. Therefore, he will not be happy when he is respected and he will not be angry when he is insulted. Only those who have the natural harmony can do that. When a person shows anger without anger in heart, then his anger comes from no anger. When a person shows doing [*wei*] something without doing [*wu wei*] anything in heart, then his doing [*wei*] comes from no doing [*wu wei*]. If a person wishes to be tranquil, he should have a calm temper. If a person wishes to be spiritual, he should have an affable heart. If a person wishes to do things properly, he should proceed from absence of prejudice. Doing things from absence of prejudice is the way of the sainted men.

Most of the sections in this chapter are elaborations of the ideas presented earlier in the Inner Series. Many sections are short, though they stay within the realm of Daoism. Besides, the rhetorical delivery seems plain. Certainly, they belong to the work of the pupils of the master.

## Notes

1. “The two gentlemen” refers to Kings Yao and Shun.
2. Certain codes refer to “honoring the worthy and conferring ranks to the capable, giving priority and privileges to the gentle,” noted in a preceding paragraph, as meaningless and pitiful devices.
3. Refers to Gengsang Chu or Gengsang Zi.
4. Cf. the *Dao De Jing*, chapter 71.
5. It is interesting to note that there was an almost identical expression of the truth when Guliang Chi (*fl. ca.* third century, B.C.) wrote, “Searching not for knowledge of what cannot be known is wisdom.”
6. The name of a famous ancient sword cast in about 550 B.C. in the State of Wu.
7. The few sentences beginning with “Knowledge of the ancients...” through this point are copied from Chapter 2:4.
8. These two sentences are essentially the same as the ones in Chapter 6:5.
9. This statement is close to a saying by Confucius, “Do not do to others what you do not want others to do unto you.” (*The Analects*, Yan Yuan)



## 24

### Xu Wugui

The first three sections ridicule the past and present (contemporary to the author) rulers, who knew and did nothing like the Marquis of Wei or who were anxiously seeking a “panacea” for governance like King Huang. Two sections on Hui Zi give us additional information on the personal relationship between him and Zhuang Zi. Section 11 gives a rare view of physiognomy from the eyes of a Daoist.

#### Section 1

At the request of Nü Shang, Xu Wugui went to see Marquis Wu of Wei. The Marquis comforted him by saying, “Sir, you must be tired of living in the forest, so you are willing to come to see me.”

Xu Wugui was a scholar living in seclusion in the State of Wei, consisting of the present northern part of Henan and southern part of Shanxi Provinces. Nü Shang was a favorite lieutenant of Marquis Wu. The Marquis was the head of the State of Wei. His son became known as the King Hui of Liang, who invited Mencius for consultation as described in the opening paragraph in the *Book of Mencius*. If this section was penned by Zhuang Zi, he was a contemporary of Mencius and therefore a contemporary of the King and the Marquis as well. A review of the annotation on the Wei State in Chapter 4:1 may be helpful.

Xu Wugui answered, “I come to comfort Your Highness. Your Highness would have nothing to comfort me. Should Your

Highness choose to satiate the sensuality and to heighten the likes and dislikes, you would burden the conditions of your life. Should Your Highness choose to abandon the sensuality and to eliminate the likes and dislikes, you would deprive the joy of your eyes and ears. I could comfort you. You would have nothing to comfort me.” The Marquis was disappointed and said nothing.

After a little while, Xu Wugui said, “Your Highness, let me say this. I am a physiognomist of dogs. Those of the lesser quality only care about having enough to eat, as cats would. Those of the moderate quality would stare at the sun, [because they are visionary]. Those of the superior quality would forget about themselves, [because they have perfect concentration]. My experience with dogs is not so good as my experience with horses. I inspect the horses. If the straight, curved, square, and round parts of the body are just right, they are the champions of the state, but not of the nation. The national horses have talents. They look as if they were lost and they had forgotten about themselves. In this way, they gallop like flying and know not where to stop.” The Marquis was overjoyed and laughed.

There is no greater irony lashing out against the Marquis than the sharp contrast in his reactions to the Daoist’s stories told in the preceding two paragraphs. Each one read separately does not cause a ripple, but when they are read in a close sequence, the author’s intention is unmistakable. It exposes the rotten life style and the childish mentality of the rulers of that era. The Marquis was merely a prototype of these rulers. They were uninterested in topics that mattered most in their responsibilities. Perhaps, these deliberations were too hard for them to contemplate. On the other hand, light, trivial subjects were easier for them to understand and appreciate. The reader is reminded that a fuller discussion of this situation has been presented in the Introduction.

As Xu Wugui was leaving, Nü Shang said to him, “How could only you cheer up His Highness? What we have tried to cheer him up is with either the Books of Odes, History, Rites, and Music<sup>1</sup> or the Golden Edition of The Six Military Strategies.<sup>2</sup> In addition, there are countless meritorious officers tendering

their services in the court. But His Highness has hardly opened his mouth to laugh. Now, how did you cheer him up and make him cheerful like that?”

Xu Wugui said, “I simply told him that I could judge the character and mentality of dogs and horses by observing their bodily features.”

Nü Shang asked, “Is that all?”

Xu Wugui said, “Haven’t you heard of a man banished to a remote region in the south? A few days after leaving home, he would be happy to see something he could recognize. A few months after leaving home, he would be happy to see something he has seen in his hometown. A year after leaving home, he would be happy to see someone looking like one of his townsfolk. Isn’t it true that the longer a man is away from home the more he longs for his townsfolk? He who has chosen to live in a secluded valley where even polecat trails are grown full of weeds would become excited in hearing human voices, let alone the chattering and laughing of brothers and relatives by his side. It must have been quite a while that no one has talked to His Highness with simple and truthful words.”

Would this not be another instance of psychotherapy? We have read one before in Chapter 19:7.

## Section 2

Xu Wugui came to see Marquis Wu. The Marquis said, “Sir, you have lived in the forest, eaten nuts, onions and leeks, and stayed away from me for a long time. Now do you feel old? Would you like to enjoy wine and delicious foods? Would you also consider me having the fortune of my state?”

Xu Wugui replied, “Wugui was born poor. I have not dared to enjoy the wine and delicious foods from Your Highness. I am here to comfort Your Highness.”

The Marquis said, “Why? How to comfort me?”

Xu Wugui said, “To comfort your mind and body.”

The Marquis said, “What do you mean?”



Xu Wugui answered, "All of us were born equal. Those who occupy prominent positions are not necessarily noble; those who take menial jobs are not necessarily lowly. Your Highness is the chief of a state, but gives your people a hard time, so that you can have the joy of your ears, eyes, nose, and mouth, which invariably consumes your spirit. The spirit of a person favors harmony and dislikes disturbance. Disturbance becomes a burden. So I am here to comfort Your Highness. But how did you get this kind of burden?"

The Marquis said, "I have wished to meet you for a long time. I love my people and for the sake of righteousness halt military campaigns. Am I right?"

Xu Wugui answered, "No, sir. Loving people is the beginning of hurting people. Halting military campaigns for reasons of righteousness is the root of all military actions. If Your Highness starts from this point, you are bound to fail. Anything that makes a good name is a tool for evil purposes. Although Your Highness proceeds in the name of *ren* and justice, may I say it is almost a screen of pretenses. Whenever there is a trail, there is a way. Whenever there is success, there is pride. Whenever there is tumult within, there is war from without. Your Highness should also not marshal troops in front of the Liqiao,<sup>3</sup> display the infantry and cavalry before the Zitan,<sup>4</sup> hide unethical means of making gains, use cleverness to outsmart others, design schemes to cheat others, or deploy forces to defeat others. With respect to killing people of another state and annexing their land in order to satisfy one's selfishness and desire, who knows the war has any merit and who knows the victory has any meaning! I beg Your Highness to end them all and cultivate your sincerity within in accord with the mandate of heaven and earth without interferences. When people are not killing one another, Your Highness will have no need for halting military campaigns."

This is a fine, direct, and daring lecture to one head of the powerful Warring States. Did Xu Wugui succeed? Unfortunately, no.

**Section 3**

King Huang was going to Mount Jüci to meet Taiwei. Fang Ming was the charioteer of the royal carriage, Chang Yü sat with the king and the charioteer, Zhang Ruo and Xi Peng rode horses in the front, Kun Hun and Gu Qi followed behind. They came to the wilderness near the City of Xiang. The seven saints lost their way. There was none to ask for direction.

Except for King Huang, the names of the other six “saints” were fictitious. According to some scholars, the mountain and the city are in the present Henan Province. This does not change the fact that the story is not real.

They happened to see a boy tending horses and asked, “Do you know where Mount Jüci is?” He answered, “Yes.” “Do you know where Taiwei is?” He answered, “Yes.”

King Huang said, “Marvelous, you little boy. Not only do you know where Mount Jüci is, but also you know where Taiwei is. May I ask how to govern a nation?”

The little boy said, “Governing a nation is just like this. Why bother anything else! When I was little, I used to wander all over the places by myself. I had a problem of dizziness. An elder man advised me to ride in a carriage and roam in the wilderness by the City of Xiang. Now my dizziness is nearly gone and I wander outside of where I used to go. Governing a nation is just like this. Why I bother about anything else!”

King Huang said, “Of course, governing a nation is not my little boy’s business. May I ask how to govern?” The little boy declined to answer.

King Huang insisted. The little boy said, “What difference does it make between governing a nation and tending horses? It is nothing more than taking out those horses that are unfit to be in the herd.”

King Huang kowtowed to the boy and addressed him as the heavenly tutor and excused himself.

The closing sentence is quite remarkable and abrupt. Apparently, the king suddenly realized the truth in what the boy said. Of course, this is only a story and there is no historical fact in it. Numerous Zhuangian writings have been extracted to become favorite aphorisms in Chinese literature. This is one of them. “A horse unfit to the herd” is often used now figuratively to hint a person unqualified to take on his assignment.

#### Section 4

A clever person is not happy when there is no variation in thought. An argumentative person is not happy when there is no order in presentation. A discriminating person is not happy when there is no mention of details. They all are prisoners of ideas.

Men of arrogance establish themselves in the royal court. Men of mediocrity are qualified for officialdom. Men with physical strength are proud of doing hard work. Men of bravery are roused at time of crisis. Men of combat are prepared to going to battles. Men in seclusion try to preserve their names. Men of laws wish to broaden rule by laws. Men of ceremony respect decorum. Men of *ren* and justice value proper relationships. Farmers are not happy without plowing the field. Merchants are not happy without trading in the market. Ordinary people feel encouraged when they have daily work to do. Technicians are emboldened when they articulate the use of tools. Avaricious people are worried if they have not amassed money. Ambitious people are saddened if their authority has not surpassed others. Those who are subservient to superiors and ruthless to inferiors enjoy periods of instability, wait for chances to be appointed, and cannot remain calm. All these people are opportunists and prisoners of their own world. They labor in vain their minds and bodies, occupy their thought only with material gains, and are never aware of the predicaments in their lifetime. What a pity!

As pointed out elsewhere in this book, the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.) was the most turbulent period in both intensity and duration in China’s history. Most of the views touched upon by the Daoist writer in this essay were factual. The society as a whole was ripe for renewal.

## Section 5

Zhuang Zi said, “When an archer who hits not a pre-determined target is called a good archer, then everyone is a Yi. Is it permissible?”

Hui Zi said, “Yes.”

We recall that Hui Zi was a logician, a sophist. He and Zhuang Zi were good friends, but one did not agree with the viewpoint of the other. They always argued endlessly about whatever subject they happened to be discussing. Here they debated on the topic of the several schools of thought current in their time. Zhuang Zi artfully left out the Daoist school. They started with the topic of archery. Yi was an ancient sharp archer.

Zhuang Zi said, “When there is no common agreement on what is right and everyone says what he considers to be right is right, then everyone is a King Yao. Is it permissible?”

Hui Zi said, “Yes.”

Zhuang Zi said, “Then Confucius, Mo Zi, Yang Zhu, and Gongsun Long forming four schools of thought plus you, my master, make five. Which one is really right? Or, is it like that of Lu Jü?<sup>5</sup> His disciple said, ‘I have learned the doctrine of my teacher. I can fire the cauldron in the winter and make ice in the summer.’ Lu Jü said, ‘This is simply using yang to attract yang, and using yin to attract yin. Let me demonstrate to you what my doctrine is.’ Then he tuned the *se*<sup>6</sup> and placed one in the hall and another in the chamber. When he played the *gong*<sup>7</sup> note from one instrument, the *gong* note of the other instrument resonated. When he did so with the *jue* note, the same thing happened to the other instrument, because each time only one single note was played. When he played a string not tuned to correspond to any one of the five notes, all twenty-five strings of the other instrument resonated. They do not differ in pitch, but principally in sound only. Are you all like that?”

Hui Zi said, “Today followers of Confucius, Mo Zi, Yang Zhu, and Gongsun Long are engaging in debates with me. They attack me with words and they drown me out with voices,

but hardly because I am wrong. How could I be like any one of them?"

Zhuang Zi said, "A man in the Qi State left his son in the Song State and asked him to be a gatekeeper as if he had been maimed.<sup>8</sup> The man found a little bell of his liking and carefully wrapped it up for safekeeping. He tried to find his son without going out of the state. There are similarities here. A man from the Chu State being a houseguest reproved the gatekeeper. In a quiet midnight, a man quarreled with the boatman. Before he got safely ashore, he already made an adversary."

In this closing paragraph, Zhuang Zi used several narrative sentences in hinting that his friend had been naïve, biased, or contradictory in presenting his viewpoint. For instance, as the man left his son in Song, how could he find him in his home State Qi? He knew how to protect a bell. Did he care about his son's welfare? Should a houseguest reprove the gatekeeper of the house? Was it proper for a man to quarrel at midnight? Was it necessary to make an adversary without a compelling cause? Apparently, Zhuang Zi considered that his friend's strategy on debating did not focus on the mark.

### Section 6

Zhuang Zi was attending a funeral. As he was passing by the tomb of Hui Zi, he turned to his followers and said, "Once in Ying there was a man whose nose tip got a splash of white clay looking like the wing of a fly. He asked a stonemason to remove it. The stonemason swung his hammer and chisel rapidly making winds and chiseled away effortlessly all the clay without hurting the nose, while the man from Ying stood there without losing his composure. Duke Yuan of Song heard about it and called in the stonemason and said to him, 'Try to do it for me.' The stonemason said, 'I used to be able to chisel it, but my match died some time ago.' Since my master died, I have had no match and I have none to talk to!"

Of course, the last sentence is the topic sentence of the whole paragraph. Zhuang Zi needed a compatible person to carry on their endless arguments.

Apparently, he missed Hui Zi very much. So he made up the story, which was so impossible that he knew nobody would believe in it, but that did not bother him. He would like to bring up the idea that for doing certain things we cannot do it well alone, we need a match.

### Section 7

Guan Zhong became sick. Duke Huan visited him and said, "My Elder, your sickness is serious. May we not say the inevitable! Should something happen to you, to whom should I trust my state affairs?"

Guan Zhong was the brilliant prime minister of Duke Huan in the Qi State, both historical names having been noted more than once elsewhere. That Guan Zhong died two years before the Duke is also a historical fact. However, the other two persons, Bao Suya and Xi Peng, mentioned in the following dialogue were well known in the Qi State, but not in the ways Zhuang Zi introduced them. The tale narrated in this section can only be considered pseudo-historical, as it was what the Daoist would like it to be.

Guan Zhong asked, "Whom do you have in mind?"

The Duke said, "Bao Suya."

Guan Zhong said, "No. As a person, he is a clean-handed gentleman. He does not want to be associated with those who are not up to his standards. Moreover, once he learns the faults of others, he remembers them all his life. Should he be asked to govern a state, he would be intransigent to his superior above and recalcitrant to his people below. It would not take long for you to feel offended."

The Duke asked, "Then who is qualified?"

Came the reply, "If no one else, Xi Peng is fine. As a person, he is not impressed by his superior, nor is he abandoned by his people. He feels sorry that he is not up to King Huang; he feels pity to those not up to himself. He who dispenses virtues to others is called a saint; he who dispenses wealth to others is called a worthy man. He who boasts his worthiness before people will never win people. He who serves people in spite of his worthiness

will always win people. There are things in the state he does not want to listen; there are things in families he does not want to look. If none else, Xi Peng is fine.”

“He is not impressed by his superior,” because he does not flaunt his accomplishments; “nor is he abandoned by his people,” because he cares about them. “There are events in the state he does not want to listen,” means he will not be interested in trivialities; “there are things in families he does not want to look,” means he does not want to judge personal relationships.

### Section 8

King of the Wu State was having a boat trip on the Long River. He went ashore and ascended a mountain known to have been inhabited by monkeys. Most monkeys were frightened by the royal party and ran away to hide behind dense bushes. There was one monkey jumping from branches of one tree to another, as if showing off its talents to the king. The king shot it with an arrow. The monkey aptly got hold of the flying arrow before it hit. The king then asked his lieutenants to shoot. The monkey was finally killed.

The king turned to his friend, Yan Buyi, and said, “That monkey flaunted its skills and displayed its dexterity to belittle me and so ended in death. Beware! Ah, do not depend on your demeanor to be proud of yourself.” Upon returning home, Yan Buyi became a pupil of Dong Wu. He changed his haughty demeanor, distanced himself from excess in pleasure, and retreated from seeking fame. In three years, he was admired by the people of Wu.

Like many other stories we have read in this book, its truthfulness cannot be known. There is little rationale in that the king chose to sacrifice an innocent monkey in order to give his friend a lesson in reformation. The real reason might still be that the royal feeling had been hurt, because what the monkey did had belittled him (a simple-minded king). Viewed from this angle, there seems no justification for killing the monkey.

## Section 9

Nanbai Ziqi reclined on his couch, looking up at the sky and exhaled a mouthful of air. Yancheng Zi came in and asked, “Master, you are the greatest in the world. Could the body be like dried bones and the spirit, ashes?”

This opening paragraph is similar to the one in Chapter 2:1. Nanbai Ziqi and Nanguo Ziqi were the same person. Yancheng Zi and Yancheng Ziyou were the same person, too.

Nanbai Ziqi answered, “I have lived in a mountain cave. At that time, every time Tian He<sup>9</sup> came to see me, the people of Qi congratulated him thrice. I must have been famous before that time, so he could know me. I must have sold my fame, so he could resell it. If I had not been famous, how could he have known me? If I had not sold my fame, how could he have resold it? Ah! I pity those who have lost themselves. I also pity those who pity others. I also pity the pity of those who pity others. After that, day after day I have gradually moved further away [from the “selling.”]

Here “selling” obviously means making oneself known to many people. This is what we would call “popularity” nowadays. Apparently, it was and may still be a taboo to the Daoist.

## Section 10

Confucius went to the State of Chu. The Duke of Chu honored him with a feast. Sun Su’ao stood holding a wine vessel in his hands and Shinan Yiliao received the wine vessel, turned and bowed to Confucius and said: “The man of antiquity, please say a few words for the occasion.”

We need not pay too much attention to the detail of the welcoming protocol. We know that both Sun Su’ao, a minister, and Shinan Yiliao, a much-decorated



general, lived at a time before Confucius was born. So the story as told herein has no historical value.

Confucius replied: "I have heard unspoken words. I have not talked about them, but I am here to talk about them. Shinan Yiliao kept on juggling with balls and the enmity between the two families was resolved. Sun Su'ao continued napping with a feather fan in hand and the people of Chu were moved to cease military planning. I wish I had a mouth of three feet!"

Without going into the historical details of the circumstances surrounding what the two men did originally, we understand that they said nothing and did nothing. One kept on playing balls and the other kept on taking a nap. Let *wu wei* solve all the problems. Daoists consider that talking results in greater confusion. If so, why would Confucius wish to have a "big mouth"? Of course, not. The last sentence is merely an ironical statement of a paradox.

What those two officers meant is unspoken Dao and what Confucius meant is unspoken deliberations. De summarizes what Dao has unified. When words reach where knowledge does not cover, there is the limit. Each of us does not receive uniformly what Dao unifies. Deliberations cannot cover what knowledge cannot know. Names like Confucianism and Mohism are ill conceived. Therefore, the sea does not refuse water running east into it, because its capacity is immense. [The virtues of] sages envelope heaven and earth and benefit the world; no one knows their names. Therefore, they have no noble titles in life, no posthumous titles after death, no accumulation of wealth, and no possession of honors. They are called the great men. A good dog need not be a barking dog. A worthy man need not be a skillful talker, let alone a great man. When a man is not qualified to be great, how can he be qualified to be virtuous? Nothing is greater than heaven and earth, but they ask for nothing and have everything. In order to have everything, one should not beg, lose, abandon, or trade-in oneself for anything. Introspecting endlessly and going along consistently with Dao without conjecture are the true nature of the great man.

This long paragraph is the author's deliberation of the thoughts contained in the first two short paragraphs. The historical background in the late Warring States period was that there were three prominent schools of philosophical thought, namely Confucianism, Mohism, and Daoism forming the three legs of a cultural caldron. Since this book was written on Daoism by an imminent Daoist and his disciples, it is only natural that from time to time we read about criticism on the other two schools. In the preceding paragraph, we see only mild critical comments, such as "Names like Confucianism and Mohism are ill conceived." Leading from the concept of *wu wei*, the author expounded on the virtue of espousing what is natural by distancing oneself from worldly desires and returning to the simple, peaceful state of living.

### Section 11

Zi Qi had eight sons. He gathered all of them before Jiufang Yin and said to him, "Please observe the physiognomy of my sons. Which one is auspicious?"

Zi Qi is most likely a fictitious person. There is Nanguo Ziqi in Chapter 2:1, Nanbai Ziqi in the preceding section. The author used personal names quite freely. We need not be concerned with their identities.

Jiufang Yin said, "The one named Kun is auspicious."

Zi Qi was overjoyed and asked, "How?"

Jiufang Yin said, "Kun will dine with a head of state in his life time."

Zi Qi suddenly turned to tears and said, "What will my son do to get into such an extreme situation?"

Jiufang Yin said, "The favor of dining with a head of state extends to three families,<sup>10</sup> let alone the parents. You, my master, heard about it and now you weep. The son is auspicious, the father is not."

Zi Qi said, "Yin, how can you understand the implications of Kun being auspicious? When he always has wine and meat before him, how can he know where they come from? I have not been a shepherd and a lamb was born in the southwest corner of the house; I have not been a hunter and a quail was

hatched in the northeast corner of the house. If you don't feel mysterious, how did they happen? My sons and I live between heaven and earth. We enjoy in heaven and make living on earth. I do not find success for them, I do not make plans for them, and I do not identify mysteries for them. I search with them the truth in heaven and earth and make sure nothing will run counter to it. I proceed with them along the course of nature, but do not specify what is appropriate for them. Now there will come a worldly reward. Whenever there is a mysterious sign, there is a mysterious happening. Dangerous! This is not the fault of my son or me. Heaven bestows it to him. That is why I wept."

Not long afterwards, Kun was appointed a position in the Yan State. He happened to encounter a band of brigands in his journey. They figured that it was difficult to sell a wholesome person<sup>11</sup> and it would be easier if he had been maimed. So they cut off his legs and sold him in the Qi State. He ended up as a gatekeeper of Qu Gong,<sup>12</sup> but had wine and meat every meal till he died.

The story is within the realm of possibilities, but most likely it is not real. But from the viewpoint of a Daoist, what inspired the author to write it? Was he trying to promote physiognomy? The final period of Kun's life pretty much fulfilled the prediction of the physiognomist. Although Daoists are not known to be believers in mysterious forces, the deliberations by Zi Qi, presumably a Daoist in the story, indicate that he truly believed in mysterious happenings, though he attributed them to heaven. This leaves the author's intent unexplained. By the way, the Confucianist standpoint on this topic is more clear-cut. *The Analects* reads: "The Master did not talk about mystery, force, perversion, and spirituality."<sup>13</sup>

## Section 12

Nie Que met Xu You and asked, "Where are you going?"

Xu You said, "Running away from Yao."

"What do you mean?"

Xu You said, “Yao diligently promotes *ren*. I am afraid he would become a laughingstock among his people. You don’t mean that after generations people would eat one another! As to people, it is not difficult to gather them together. When you love them, they will remain close. When you do things to benefit them, they will come. When you praise them, they will be encouraged. When you give them things not to their liking, they will go away. Love of making profits comes from *ren* and justice. Few people ignore *ren* and justice. Many people make good use of *ren* and justice. The practice of *ren* and justice results in hypocrisy. They are used as tools for avarice. This is one man’s decision to take advantage of the world. It lasts like a flash. Yao knew how worthy men were beneficial to the world, but he did not know how they were harmful to the world. Only those who stay away from worthy men know it.”

All three persons, Nie Que, Xu You, and King Yao, have been mentioned more than once before. The focal point in this essay is to attack *ren* and justice as the source of all evils, political and societal. A somewhat new one is the sentence, “Love of making profits comes from *ren* and justice.” The sequence from *ren* and justice to hypocrisy is arguable, but that to avarice has no valid basis.

### Section 13

There are those who are frivolous and self-conceited. There are those who are foolish and self-cheating. There are those who are diligent and self-mistreating.

The so-called self-conceit is like learning what a teacher said and feeling proud of his knowledge not realizing that he has known nothing. This is what self-conceit means.

The so-called self-cheating is like lice on a pig. They choose the thin, long hair on the pig’s head as a huge palace and a big garden, the buttocks, the deep folds around nipples and between hind legs as comfortable bed rooms, not knowing that one day when the butcher rolls up his sleeves, sets fire on straws, they

and the pig will all be scorched. Going forwards or backwards is equally impossible. This is what self-cheating means.

The so-called self-mistreatment is like King Shun. Mutton does not like ants; ants like mutton, because mutton smells rank. Shun had a frowzy way of working and people liked him. So after he moved his residence three times, the people following him multiplied to become a city. After he came to the ruins of the Deng City, the population soon swelled to one hundred thousand families. When King Yao learned of the worthiness of Shun, he elevated him from the bare land, hoping that his good influence would reach to later generations. This happened when Shun was already an old man with his intelligence failing and was denied the privilege of retirement. This is what self-mistreatment means.

Therefore, the spirited man dislikes seeing a large group of people. With a large group of people, there will be no harmony. Without harmony, there will be no success. Hence, there will be no distinction between close and distant relationships. Being able to embrace virtue and cultivate harmony in accord with the world is worthy of the true man. He would forgo the knowledge of ants, learn the joy of fish, and abandon the intention of sheep.

The true man would cast out whatever minute knowledge ants might have or whatever dull intention sheep might think. (The Daoist considers sheep to be the most insensitive, unresponsive, stubborn animal.) At the same time, he would learn how to be happy and restful like a fish. The Daoist is particularly fond of fish. (Confer Chapter 17:7.)

Use your eyes to see what your eyes can see. Use your ears to hear what your ears can hear. Use your heart to feel what your heart can feel. If so, everything is straight and level like a string; every change follows the course of nature. Ancient true men depended on nature to guide human affairs and did not allow human affairs to interfere with nature. Ancient true men considered gain as life and loss as death or gain as death and loss as life.

The last sentence actually means that life and death are the same, and gain and loss are also the same. Hence, it does not matter how we say it.

### Section 14

Herbal drugs, such as *shijin*,<sup>14</sup> *jugeng*, *jiyong*, and *shiling*, take turns to become popular and are too numerous to list.

King Goujian deployed an army of three thousand soldiers in Huiji. Only Wen Zhong understood the truth of survival in perils. Only Wen Zhong did not know the peril of his own life. Therefore, it is said that the big eyes of the horned owl and the long legs of the crane serve a good purpose for each of them. It would be a pity to change them.

In 472 B.C. of the Warring States period, Goujian, the king of the Yue State, adopted the strategy of his able ministers Fan Li and Wen Zhong to defeat his arch rival Fuchai, the king of the Wu State once for all. When the dust settled, Fan Li requested and was granted retirement from the king and went to the State of Qi. On leaving, he left a message to his friend Wen Zhong, saying in essence, “The personality of the king is such that it is all right to be with him at time of crisis, but not at time of prosperity. Why don’t you leave?” Wen Zhong pretended to be sick and absented himself from the royal court. This aroused the suspicion of the king. The king presented him with a sword. He committed suicide. This historical fact is the basis of the sentences: “Only Wen Zhong understood the truth of survival in perils. Only Wen Zhong did not know the peril of his own life.” This is a good example to show that the author used a great deal of history to illustrate his point of view. Without having been explained the historical background of the message, the reader will get very little out of the narrative.

Therefore, it is said when wind blows over a river, some water is lost. When the sun shines on a river, some water is lost. When both wind blows and the sun shines on a river and no water is lost, this depends on a continuous supply of water from a source. Therefore, when water stays with earth, they remain mixed; when a shadow stays with a person, they remain together; when one thing stays with another, they remain commingled.

Hence, when eyes are over used in looking, it becomes perilous. When ears are over used in listening, it becomes perilous. When mind is over used in searching [for wealth or fame], it becomes perilous. When cleverness is stored in heart, it becomes perilous. Once there is peril, it cannot be resolved. Calamity multiplies in many ways. Its reversal requires introspection. Any success will take a long time. People would cherish their faculties of seeing, hearing, and contemplating. It is a pity. Therefore, incidents of losing a state and killing innocent people happen all the time. All of them result from not knowing how to ask the right questions.

The sorrowful concluding remarks reflect the tragedy that seemingly endless military campaigns had brought to bear on countless innocent people throughout the nation for such a prolonged period of time!

### Section 15

What the feet step on the ground may be short. Though short, it can be depended on in making what is not stepped a longer distance covered. What a man knows is little. Though little, it can be depended on in making what he does not know a broader knowledge of nature. Know the great one, know the great yin, know the great vision, know the great balance, know the great unlimited, know the great truth, know the great stability, the greatest of all. The great one penetrates, the great yin relieves, the great vision inspects, the great balance acquiesces, the great unlimited apprehends, the great truth examines, and the great stability persists.

At the extreme there is nature. In adherence there is enlightenment. In contemplation there is a pivot. At the very beginning, there is an end. Hence, apprehension gained without efforts seems no apprehension at all and knowledge acquired without effort seems no knowledge at all, for not knowing precedes knowing. Any inquiry may not be restricted or unlimited. In the countless phenomena going on in the universe, there is truth in every one of them. The past and the present cannot be

displaced, each fulfilling its obligations. There is no greater revelation of the delicate truth. Instead of having doubts about it, why do you not search this delicate truth? To search doubt based on absence of doubt and then return to absence of doubt is truly a great absence of doubt.

This section begins with a clever analogy. The little impression of our two feet made on the ground while walking is much less than a stride they make. Likewise, the little knowledge of what we have is much less than the inspiration it gives us to seek greater knowledge of nature. Then the author listed a series of qualifications and conditions for those who try to seek truth. He ended with the encouragement, "To search doubt based on absence of doubt and then return to absence of doubt is truly a great absence of doubt."

This translator believes that Zhuang Zi played a role in writing this section. Both the underlying idea and the way of delivery bear some of his characteristics shown earlier in this work. The opening sentences and the concluding remarks are very much Zhuangian in style.



## Notes

1. These four books edited by Confucius were considered essential for civil administration and hence the “must read” for administrators.
2. Legend has it that this book on military strategies was written by Lü Shang, who assisted King Wu in founding the Zhou dynasty, a dynasty of feudal states. The original had been kept in the Archives in the dynastic capital Luoyang and hence got its name “The Golden Edition.” Lao Zi once worked there as an archivist.
3. The name of a tall tower in the Wei State capital.
4. The name of a palace in the Wei State capital.
5. A learned man of the early Zhou dynasty, several hundred years before Lao Zi and Confucius.
6. A stringed musical instrument, having 25 or 40 strings.
7. There were five ancient standard musical notes at one time. The *gong* and the following *jue* were two of the notes corresponding to modern *do* and *mi*, respectively.
8. For the story of a maimed gatekeeper, see the following Section 11.
9. Tian He (fl. ca. 400 B.C.), a minister of the Qi State. Later, his son usurped the throne.
10. The three families are those of the father, the mother, and the wife.
11. A wholesome person could escape on foot.
12. The name of a prominent or wealthy person in the Qi State.
13. *The Analects*, Shu Er.
14. *Shijin* (tubers of aconite), *jugeng* (roots of a grass), *jiyong* (a fungus growing on maple tree), and *shiling* (fruits of a water plant).

## 25

# Zeyang

Most of the sections are relatively short and unrelated to one another. The last two sections are in a dialogue format between two men. The first of them is concerned with the formation of public opinion, a rather new concept at that time; the second deals with how the Daoists view the coming into being of living things. We may recall in an earlier chapter (18:6 ) the changes from germs into higher forms of life have been discussed.

### Section 1

Zeyang was visiting the State of Chu. Yi Jie reported the news to the king. The king did not see Zeyang. Yi Jie went home.

Zeyang's surname was Pan, his formal given name was Yang, and Zeyang was his courtesy name. Therefore, he was also known formally as Pan Yang (see below). Yi Jie was the formal name of a minister of the royal court. The text refers to the head of the Chu State as king, because at that time of the Warring States period, many heads of state called themselves kings.

Pan Yang saw Wang Guo and said, "Why would you, my master, not mention my name to the king?"

Wang Guo was a worthy man in Chu. The following Gong Yuexiu was a recluse.

Wang Guo said, "I am not so effective as Gong Yuexiu."  
Pan Yang asked, "What is Gong Yuexiu doing?"

Wang Guo said, "In the winter, he catches turtles in the river; in the summer, he rests by a hillside. If some one asks him, he would say, 'This is where I live.' Yi Zie could not do it, let alone me. Moreover, I am not so effective as Yi Jie. As a person, Yi Jie has no real virtues, but uses cleverness; he is over-confident of himself and articulate in his relation with others. He has been infatuated in the world of prominence and wealth. Not only he does nothing for virtue, but he ruins it. He is vain like a shivery person wishing to borrow clothing from the spring or a sun struck person wishing to get winds from the winter. As a person, the king of Chu displays a demeanor of majesty and sternness. To those who do him wrong, he shows no mercy like a tiger. Except for a flatterer or a sainted man, who could convince him?"

"Therefore, when a sainted man is poor, he makes his family forget about hardship. When he is prominent, he makes noblemen forget about their ranks and become humble. He lives in harmony with nature. He enjoys communication with people and keeps his own identity. He may not speak, but makes people feel friendly. He stands among people and makes them moved. He makes the relation between father and son harmonious at home, and makes them treat others with peace and purity. His thought is so far apart from the worldly thought of all others. Hence, I say waiting for Gong Yuexiu."

This section describes the sharp contrast in mentality between the pursuit of official emolument and the pursuit of peace and purity. Trying to persuade a ruthless ruler without being harmed is a delicate assignment. A flatterer can do it with cleverness and a sainted man can do it with sheer influence of grace. Wang Guo concluded that he was neither.

## Section 2

A sainted man would resolve knotty problems and make them into one coherent solution. He does not know why, because it is his nature. His actions follow his experiences in nature and people call him sainted man accordingly. If people are concerned

with having insufficient cleverness and take actions inconsistently or half-heartedly, how can anything ever get done!

A woman born beautiful does not know she is beautiful until she is given a mirror and is told she is more beautiful than others. Whether she knows it or not, whether she hears it or not, what makes her happy is lasting and what makes others fond of her is also lasting, because it is human nature. A sainted man loves people and does not know he loves people until people tell him so. Whether he knows it or not, whether he hears it or not, what makes him love people is lasting and what makes people feel comfortable with him is also lasting, because it is human nature.

This section gives examples of what human nature truly is, that is doing things effortlessly and simply. Cleverness, schemes, craftiness, etc. are artificial and accomplish nothing.

### Section 3

It is joyous to visit the fatherland and the ancient capital. Even though nine tenths of them have changed into wilderness, it would still be joyous to visit, let alone to see and hear about the real scenery of the past, as if a ten-*ren*<sup>1</sup>-tall tower had been suspended among the visitors.

This paragraph could be read simply as an imagination of the author on what nature in every one of us is about. The fatherland and the ancient capital are symbolic of our nature. We often wander far away from it. When we return to it, we may not recognize all of it, but we are certainly glad that we have returned.

Ran Xiang<sup>2</sup> attained a state of emptiness and succeeded in following the course of nature without regard to beginning and end or past and present. When a person constantly follows the course of nature, he always keeps his mind in quietude without deviation. When a person tries eagerly to model himself after nature, he always competes with other things. How do his efforts turn out? A sainted man does not think of nature, human affairs,

beginnings, or ends, but he goes along with the world without stopping and he completes his work without interruption. How well do his purposeless efforts agree with the Dao?

This paragraph emphasizes the importance of *wu wei*. King Ran Xiang and sainted men succeeded because they let themselves do it *naturally*. Ordinary people fail because they try to do it *purposefully*.

This paragraph of text does not end here. It continues with three more sentences beginning with “King Tang found...” There may be errors or omissions of many characters. Thus, the remaining text is hard to interpret. It is deleted here.

#### Section 4

Ying of Wei and Marquis Mou of Tian signed a treaty. Marquis Mou of Tian caused a breach of the treaty. Ying of Wei was furious and would like to have him assassinated.

In the Warring States period, not only was there an unprecedented turmoil in the political and military arenas between states, but also there was an almost predictable usurpation of the head of state by a powerful, ambitious minister within the state. The former resulted in a gradual and inevitable decrease in the number of states. The latter caused an abrupt change in the family that ruled the state. Now we may ask who the two characters mentioned in the opening paragraph were. A little history will help. (1) The opening sentence of the Book of Mencius reads as follows: “Mencius went to see King Hui of Liang.” Who was King Hui of Liang? He was Marquis Ying of the State of Wei with its capital in the city of Da Liang. He usurped for himself the title of King. He was conferred posthumously the name of Hui. Hence, “King Hui of Liang” and “Ying of Wei” refer to the same usurper. (2) There was actually no Marquis Mou of Tian. A usurious minister named Tian He (Tian being his surname) in the State of Qi installed himself as the head of the state. Historians have used a term Tian Qi to distinguish it from the original Qi. Marquis Mou is not known in history and could be a fictitious name. Obviously, the author of this section, be he Zhuang Zi or his pupil, despised usurpation and used contemptuous terms in referring to these two characters. This annotation may also help the reader understand the meaning of “Liang” in the following dialogue.

A general named Gongsun Yan heard of it and was shamed of it and said, “Your Highness is the king of a state and only takes revenge like an ordinary man. I would request to lead an army of two hundred thousand men to invade that state for Your Highness. I would capture its people, round up its horses and cattle, cause its king to feel anguish, and then occupy the state. Its general Tian Ji would be defeated, beaten, and broken.”

Ji Zi heard of it and was shamed of it and said, “First we built a ten-*ren*-tall city wall. Then we have a ten-*ren*-tall city wall. Now we want to tear it down. This is what bothers us workers. We do not have war for seven years. This is the foundation of kingship. Yan is a rascal and he should not be heard.”

*Ren* is an ancient unit of length of about eight feet (see note 8 in Chapter 17).

Hua Zi heard of it and was shamed of it and said, “He who favors going to war against Qi is a rascal. He who favors not going to war against Qi is also a rascal. He who says that favoring going and favoring not going to war are rascals is himself a rascal.”

The king said, “Then what is to be done?”

Hua Zi said, “You search the Dao. That is all.”

Hui Zi heard of it and came with Dai Jinren to see the king.

Hui Zi was the famous logician, a friend of Zhuang Zi. Some time later he almost lost his life while serving as prime minister of this king. Dai Jinren was a native worthy man.

Dai Jinren asked, “There is a creature called snail. Do you know it?”

The king said, “Yes.”

Dai said, “There is a country called Chu at the left antenna of the snail. There is another country called Man at the right antenna of the snail. They are often at war with each other for territorial gains and end up with tens of thousands of corpses. It takes fifteen days to chase the enemy away before coming home.”

King said, “Ah, just a fancy!”

Dai answered, "Your humble subject would make it real. Do you think there is a limit of space in the four directions and the above and below?"

King: "No limit."

Dai: "Knowing that your thought has been wandering in the limitless and then returning to a real world, would you feel your existence may be real or unreal?"

King: "Yes."

Dai: "In the real world, there is Wei; in Wei, there is Liang; in Liang, there is king. Any distinction between king and Man?"

King: "No distinction."

The visitor left. The king felt at a loss.

Hui Zi entered. The king said, "The visitor is a great man. Even a sage cannot match him."

Hui Zi said, "He who blows a flute makes good sounds. He who blows through a small opening in a sword handle makes weak sounds only. People praise Kings Yao and Shun. Talking about Yao and Shun before Dai Jinren is like making weak sounds only."

The issues of assassination and invasion evaporated because of childish motivations. Nothing was to be done, once the Daoist was able to re-direct the king's mind, the fantasy of his story notwithstanding.

## Section 5

Confucius journeyed to the State of Chu and stayed with a family selling drinks near the Yi Hill. In the house next door, there lived husband and wife and servants. The servants got up to the top of the house. Zilu said, "What are so many people doing up there?"

Confucius said, "They are servants of a sage. He hides himself among the people; he conceals himself in the countryside. His name has gone unnoticed, but his will has turned firm. He may speak out loud, but his mind is calm and wordless. He would rather disagree with everything in the world than compromise any of them. He is a recluse. Is he not Shinan Yiliao?"

“His mind is calm and wordless,” because he does not remember what he has said and he is without prejudice. Zilu, a disciple of Confucius and Shinan Yiliao, a Daoist have been noted earlier.

Zilu asked for permission to invite him.

Confucius said, “Forget it. He knows that I understand him. He knows that I come to Chu and I will ask the king of Chu to invite him to serve. He even thinks I am a flatterer. Since this is the case, he would feel ashamed to hear the words from a flatterer, let alone seeing him in person! What makes you think he is still there?”

Zilu went to see him. The house was empty.

## Section 6

A border patrol at Changwu said to Zilao, “An administrator should not be rude in politics and should not be mean to the people. Formerly in growing crops, when I plowed the field poorly, my crops also rewarded me poorly; when I weeded the field sloppily, my crops also rewarded me sloppily. Later, I changed my methods. I plowed carefully and weeded diligently. My crops grew so abundantly that I had plenty to eat all the year around.”

Zilao was a disciple of Confucius.

Upon hearing about it, Zhuang Zi said, “Nowadays, the way people take care of their bodies and minds is similar to what the border patrol said. They run away from nature, ignore their characteristics, betray their sentiments, purge their spirits, and do what everyone else is doing. Therefore, the damages of the likes and dislikes to those gradually abandoning their own nature, are similar to the obstruction by the rushes. In the beginning people depend on these desires to satiate their bodies. Slowly, they allow them to control their nature and squander their spirits. In the end, they grow abscesses and carbuncles on the outside and get fever and involuntary emissions from the inside.”



## Section 7

Bai Jū studied under Lao Dan and suggested, “Please take a tour of the country.”

Lao Dan said, “Don’t mention it. The country is only so-so.”

He suggested it again.

Lao Dan said, “Where would you start?”

He said, “Start from the State of Qi.”

[Lao Dan] arrived at Qi and saw the display of the corpse of an executed criminal [in the marketplace].<sup>3</sup> He pushed the corpse gently to make it lie down, took off his formal garment to cover it, looked up the sky and cried out loud, “My son, my son! The world has been in crisis and you got it first. [There is a common saying:] ‘Don’t be a brigand. Don’t kill people.’ When honor and shame are defined, then we see the shortcomings. When goods and wealth are accumulated, then we see the conflicts. Now the shortcomings are manifest, and the conflicts are multiplied. People are worn out with no end in sight. How impossible it is not to be in such quagmire!

“In ancient times, a ruler would credit the people when things turned out right and blame himself when things went wrong; he would consider the people to be right and himself to be wrong. Therefore, even when only one person lost his life, he would resign in reproving himself. Now things are different. The government withholds information from the people and then blames them for being ignorant; it orders people to carry out impossible assignments and then ridicules them for not daring to do their jobs; it increases workloads for the people and then punishes them for not finishing them; it increases the distance in delivery of documents and then executes people for not being able to make it on time. Having exhausted their mental and physical strength, people begin to deal with reality in pretense. As [the government] often makes dishonest pronouncements, how can the people not feel betrayed? When ability is not enough, there is dishonesty. When knowledge is not enough, there is deception. When wealth is not enough, there is robbery. Who is truly responsible for theft and robbery?”

This is a daring indictment of the government as the source of all problems from the viewpoint of the author. The ruling class only knew how to demand services from the people without giving anything in return. When they were pushed beyond their limits of tolerance, something snapped. Then they were punished severely. There is a satirical proverb describing this tragic situation: “He who steals a hook is beheaded; he who steals a nation becomes a king.”

### Section 8

When Jü Baiyü was sixty-years-old, he had changed with time in those sixty years. Never at one time did he not feel right [about a certain thing] in the beginning, but wrong at the end. Neither did he know what was right at sixty years old had not been wrong at fifty-nine. Everything comes into being, but no one has seen its roots; everything takes a leave, but no one has seen its exit. Every one of us respects what his wisdom knows, but does not know that he depends on what his wisdom does not know for what he knows. Is this not a big doubt? Well, well, there is no way to escape! Is this correct? Is this truly correct?

Jü Baiyü was a worthy minister of the State of Wei. He has been mentioned in Chapter 4:3. He raised the preposition that right or wrong was relative, at least with respect to time. He always found what he had believed to be right at one time became wrong at a later time. He left without comment whether what he had considered wrong at one time could become right later.

### Section 9

Confucius asked the three official archivists, Tai Tao, Bai Changqian, and Xi Wei, “Duke Ling of Wei enjoyed the pleasures of wine and women, paid no attention to state affairs, liked hunting and netting, and did not participate in conferences of the vassals. Why was he Duke Ling?”

Please note that the Wei in Duke Ling of Wei here and the Wei in Ying of Wei in Section 4 are two different *wei* characters referring to two different

states in two different regions at two different time periods in China's history. Transliteration erases their differences. The character *ling* as used here has multiple meanings of being spiritual, efficacious, intelligent, ingenious, exquisite, etc.

Tai Tao said, "These were the reasons."

Bai Changqian said, "Duke Ling had three wives. They often bathed together in the same pool. One day, Shi You<sup>4</sup> received a royal call for audience and entered the inner chamber. The Duke had an attendant take documents from Shi You's hand and help him walk around. The royal lifestyle was so romantic and unpredictable on the one hand, and he was so respectful in meeting a worthy man on the other hand. These were the reasons that he was called Duke Ling."

Xi Wei said, "At the time Duke Ling died, [geomancy deemed] his burial at the ancestral site to be inauspicious, but his burial at Shaqiu<sup>5</sup> to be auspicious. On digging several *ren* down, they found a stone coffin. After washing and cleaning, they saw words carved on it, saying, 'Not to be in accord with his son,<sup>6</sup> Duke Ling chose to stay here.' Duke Ling had died a long time ago. These two men are not qualified to know him."

Some historical background may be needed to understand the contents and reliability of the dialogue. From *The Analects*, we learn that Duke Ling of Wei and Confucius were contemporaries. These two men had met and talked. Apparently, Confucius did not like the Duke's attitude at all. After all, the Duke was a well-known erratic, unkind, militant ruler. In earlier chapters, Zhuang Zi used his pen to describe the unpredictable character of the Duke. So the Confucianist and the Daoist had a similar impression of this man. The story as told here is only a story. There is no reason to think that Confucius would be interested in knowing more about the Duke.

Chinese scholars do not interpret the dialogue uniformly. For instance, some consider the bathing scene and the aging minister's audience to be at different times and at different locations in the palace. If so, the question would be why Zhuang Zi or his disciple put the bathing scene in there. Another question: if "Duke Ling had died a long time ago," how could Confucius have lived to ask the question in the first place?

## Section 10

Shao Zhi asked Taigong Tiao, “What is public opinion?”

Both personal names are coined to show the characteristics of the speakers, none real. *Shao zhi* means knowing a little about something, *tai gong tiao* means having broad knowledge of justice and harmony.

Taigong Tiao said, “Public opinion is what combines ten families and hundred names to form a custom by combining differences into the same one and separating the same one into differences. Now if we point to every one of a hundred parts of a horse, we don’t have a horse. A horse comes into being only when all these different parts are combined into the same one. Hence, a high mountain comes into being only after numerous low hills are combined into the same one; a big river comes into being only after numerous small creeks are combined into the same one. A great man combines opinions from all people so as to be just. What enters our minds from without will not be prejudiced in spite of our preconceived ideas; what goes out from our minds, even though correct, will not preclude other ideas. The climates of the four seasons are different, but they complete the year, because nature is not selfish. The duties of the five ministries are different, but the nation is at peace, because the king is not prejudiced. The functions of civil and military services are different, but the missions are integrated, because the great man is not prejudiced. The reasons for existence of numerous things are different, but no names are given, because Dao is impartial. No names mean no artificial efforts. No artificial efforts mean nothing incapable of doing. Time has its beginnings and ends; space has its changes and transformations. Fortunes and misfortunes come and go, sometimes beneficial, sometimes malicious. Each of us searches for his own favorites here and there with hit or miss. It is like a wetland where hundreds of plants flourish or a big mountain where rocks and plant roots twine. These are what we call public opinion.”

Shao Zhi asked, “May we call it Dao?”

Taigong Tiao said, “No. The largest number we use in counting things is larger than ten thousand. When we say ten thousand things, we are using the largest number unit to express it. Therefore, heaven and earth are the biggest things in form, yin and yang are the biggest things in vapor. Dao is inclusive of all things. Because of its largeness, we call it by a name. This is permissible. But if we use it for comparison with others, this cannot and should not be done. Trying to make a distinction of this kind is like comparing a dog to a horse. The oddity is obvious.”

Taking into consideration the oppressive circumstances of the Warring States period, we find it noteworthy that a writer then would dare to discuss openly the subject of public opinion. We cannot but feel that human hope for freedom cannot be subdued or destroyed even under the most iniquitous conditions. This spirit will eventually spread like a fire blazing through the plains, as the history shows it did.

The last paragraph of text is essentially a restatement of a saying by Lao Zi: “The Dao that can be told is not the eternal Dao.”<sup>7</sup> A little explanation may be helpful since the author used the terminology of *wan* as a unit in Chinese counting. *Wan* means ten thousand and was the largest unit for numbers in the author’s time. Any number larger than *wan* must be expressed as multiples of *wan*, for instance, one million becomes one hundred *wan*. The expressions, *wan wu* and *wan min*, meaning literally “ten thousand things” and “ten thousand people,” respectively, are generally rendered into “all things” and “all people.”

## Section 11

Shao Zhi asked, “Where did all things in the world and the universe come from?”

Taigong Tiao said, “Yin and yang mutually respond, control, and assist each other. The four seasons sequentially displace, generate, and diminish one another. Thus, loving or hating, leaving or staying comes to pass in quick sequence; separating and uniting of male and female take place often. Peace and crisis interchange, misfortune and fortune alternate, ease and urgency displace each other, coming together and going separately succeed in the end. These are the specific facts that can be recorded

and the fine details that can be remembered. Both the regularity of sequence and the impromptu of changes follow the rule that an extreme leads to a reversion or an end leads to a beginning. These are the intrinsic property of things. The end of words and the limit of knowledge can only go as far as the matter itself. A person seeking Dao does not follow to its end or search for its beginning. This is where discussion stops.”

Shao Zhi said, “Ji Zhen proposed absence of any doing. Zie Zi proposed presence of some efforts. Of these two ideas, which one is correct in its sentiment, which one is partial in its reasoning?”

We do not know who Ji Zhen was. What he proposed is that everything comes into being naturally in the absence of any effort. Zie Zi appeared to be a member of the Ji Xia Academy of the Qi State and flourished in about 300 B.C. If so, he would be a contemporary of Zhuang Zi. What he proposed is that there ought to be something to cause everything to come into being. Hence, these two men held opposite views of how every living being or every one of us came into being. The following is Taigong Tiao’s comments on the proposals of these two men.

Tai-gong Tiao said, “Roosters crow, dogs bark. This is what people know. Even a man of great wisdom cannot use words to express why they are capable of crowing or barking, nor can he use reasoning to guess what they will be doing next. To analyze further from this point, we may get fine details down to infinitesimal or a gross picture up to infinity. Both ‘the presence of some efforts’ and ‘the absence of any doing’ cannot avoid stating what the thing is about, but in the end we may have exceeded the limits. The idea of the presence of some efforts sounds too obstinate, while that of the absence of any doing appears too abstract. Having names and facts is within the limits of things. Having no names or facts is beyond the limits of things. That which can be said and understood is made more ambiguous with words. Those yet to be born cannot be prohibited from being born. Those already dead cannot be prevented from being dead. Birth and death are not far apart, but the rationales are not readily understood. The presence of some

efforts and the absence of any doing are based on an assumption of doubts. When I look at their origins, their past is infinite; when I search for their finishes, their future is endless. Expressing what is infinite and endless in words is as incapable of doing as expressing the rationale of things in words. The presence of some efforts and the absence of any doing are the basis of the elaboration, having the same end and beginning as the rationale of things. Dao may not restrict itself to having a form or not having a form. That Dao is called Dao is merely a convenient way of calling it.<sup>8</sup> The presence of some efforts and the absence of any doing may only be considered a small part of things. How can they ever match the great Dao? If words were adequate, then we would have talked about Dao all day. If words were not adequate, then we would have talked about things all day. Either talking or remaining quiet is not enough to express Dao or things at their limits. Neither talking nor remaining quiet is the supreme art of elaboration.”

These two men engaged in another dialogue on how living things came into being. In answering to the opening question of Shao Zhi, Taigong Tiao explained that there was a limit as how far he could go, because “The end of words and the limit of knowledge can only go as far as the matter itself. . . . This is where discussion stops.” Then Shao Zhi asked Taigong Tiao to comment on the validity of the two opposing views on the way living things came into being. He did not give a direct answer to the question, but implied that he could talk about Dao only to a certain extent, which sets the limit. Apparently, beyond this limit, each one of us has to sense Dao in his or her own way. At last, remaining quiet as used here means the exact opposite of talking, but it does not exclude, of course, other mental activities, such as thinking.

## Notes

1. *Ren* is a unit of length about eight feet. It is not the same as the *ren* in the expression, “*ren* and justice.”
2. The name of a prehistoric benevolent king.
3. It was a practice at that time to display the body of an executed criminal in the marketplace so as to warn the citizenry the price to be paid for committing a serious offence. The marketplace was a choice spot, because it could be seen by the largest number of people.
4. Also written elsewhere as Shi Yü, a senior minister.
5. The name of a place, literally the sand hill.
6. Traditionally, when a man died, his eldest son has the prerogative to bury him at the ancestral site, unless wishes have been left to do otherwise.
7. The opening sentence of the *Dao De Jing*.
8. We recall what Lao Zi wrote: “I do not know its name, but arbitrarily call it Dao.” (*Dao De Jing*, chapter 25.)





## 26

# Things External

Although the various sections are not connected with a theme, each one seems to present a challenging lesson. For instance, section 1 shows the disengagement of loyalty and trust and of piety and love with tragic consequences. Section 2 demonstrates the essence of timing in doing everything. Section 3 uses an absurd fishing story of a prince as a reminder to those seeking responsible positions not to pay attention to hearsay, but to have a doable grand plan of the future. At last, section 13 concludes with a popular aphorism: getting the idea and forgetting the words.

### Section 1

Things external may not come with expected consequences. Therefore, Longfeng was beheaded, Bi Gan<sup>1</sup> was dissected, Viscount Qi<sup>2</sup> pretended to be insane, Wu Lai<sup>3</sup> was killed, and Kings Jie and Zhou lost their dynasties. Every king wishes his ministers to be loyal to him, but loyalty may not get trust in return. Hence, Wu Yuan's body was left floating on the river; Chang Hong<sup>4</sup> was eviscerated in Sichuan and his blood after being kept for three years changed into a jade. Every parent wishes his sons to be filial to him, but piety may not get love in return. Hence, a son of King Gaozong died of grief for his stepmother who had mistreated him; Zeng Shen<sup>5</sup> became melancholic because he was deprived of his parents' love. Rubbing wood against wood<sup>6</sup> makes sparks. Metals flow while heated in fire. When yin and yang are out of order, heaven and earth are shaken, thereby thunder rolls with rain and lightning that

set big *huai* trees on fire. Some people are overly worried and find themselves caught in between the prospects of gain or loss. They are apprehensive of failure, grieved and depressed, as if their hearts were hanging in the air. The conflict between success and failure makes minds vexed and harassed. These men allow the ongoing struggles to consume their inner harmony. Clarity gives way to vexation. In the end, the spirit wanes and the reasoning abates.

The opening sentence says clearly the central idea of the paragraph. What are the things external? Fame, wealth, power, loyalty, piety, *ren*, justice, and many others. The Daoist considers them to be external (extraneous), in contrast to trust, love, desire to learn, harmony, and many others believed to be innate. The acquisition of an external one need not be accompanied by recognition of the innate one in return. The author used several historical events to support his theme of irrelevance between the two. Since this was the case as illustrated, he went on to say what he really wanted to say. That is, most people were so worried about the prospect of disadvantages and losses that they allow these thoughts to jeopardize their mental well-being.

## Section 2

Zhuang Zhou's family was poor. So he went to see a river inspector to borrow some rice. The river inspector said, "Of course. I shall receive some tax revenue and shall lend you three hundred coins. All right?"

Zhuang Zhou could not but be wrathful and said, "When I came, I heard some one calling me in the street. As I looked around, I saw a perch in a rut. I asked, 'Perch, what are you doing here?' Came the answer, 'I am a water officer of the East Sea. Do you happen to have a bucket of water to keep me alive?' I said, 'Of course. I shall travel south to the lands of Wu and Yue and I shall lead water from the West River to welcome you here. All right?' The perch could not but be wrathful and said, 'I have lost my constant companion. I have no place to live. I would live

if I could get a bucket of water. The way you said it, why don't you find me sooner in the dead fish market?"

Time is everything in case of emergency. Zhuang Zi was artful in telling stories, each to the point under a set of specific conditions. He might have told the story to his disciples if he did not pen it himself. "My constant companion" referred to by the perch is obviously water.

### Section 3

A prince of the state of Ren had a huge fishhook and a big long black rope made into fishing gears and used fifty castrated oxen as bait. He positioned himself on Mount Kuaiji and cast his line into the East Sea. He fished every day, but did not catch any fish for a year. Finally, a huge fish came to bite and dragged the hook up and down. It fought back with its tall fins, making high waves like mountains. The sea roared like the work of *gui* and *shen* and its sound could be heard thousands of *li* away. Prince Ren had the fish cleaned and smoked. Everyone living east of the Zhe River and north of the Cangwu Mountain had a good serving of this fish. Years later, the narrow-minded found it fun to pass on whatever the hearsay there remained. Yet when one goes to a brook with a fine line and looks after small fish, his chances of catching a big fish are nil. Likewise, adorning small ideas in seeking a demanding appointment is also far away from having a grand vision of the future. Hence, for a person who has not heard about the arrogant style of Prince Ren, his ability to manage the state affairs would also be far off the mark.

What makes this essay somewhat unusual is that it makes direct comments at the end on the qualifications for seeking a high office. Normally, the Daoist does not bother to comment on worldly affairs because they have nothing to do with them. Based on the unrealistic fishing story, the author in his concluding remarks touched on practical matters in running a government. For

this very reason, it is unlikely that Zhuang Zi himself had much, if any, to do with the perception of the story, let alone writing it.

#### Section 4

Two literate robbers opened a tomb. The senior one asked the junior one, “The eastern sky is getting bright. How are things coming?”

The junior said, “The clothing has not been removed, but there is a pearl in the mouth.”

The senior said, “A poem reads like this: ‘Green are the millets; On the hill slopes they grow. Being not charitable in life, Why would you need a pearl after death?’ Grab his hair, press down his beard, use a hammer tapping on his chin, and slowly loosen his jaw. Don’t damage the pearl in his mouth!”

It is not clear what the author intended to tell us. Besides the sarcastic question, “why would you need a pearl after death?”, did the author consider robbing a tomb less serious than “being not charitable in life”? Or, did he simply make fun of the literati who could recite a poem and rob a tomb at the same time?

#### Section 5

A disciple of Lao Lai Zi was out to collect firewood and saw Confucius. When he came back, he said, “I saw a man with his upper body longer than his lower body, his back slightly hunched, his ears folding back, and his eyes searching in all directions. I do not know who he is.”

According to the *Historical Records* by Sima Qian (29-*b*), Lao Lai Zi and Lao Zi were two persons. Lao Lai Zi was a worthy recluse of the Chu State, and Lao Zi was a native of Zhou. Although Lao Lai Zi and Confucius were contemporaries, there is no historical record that they ever met. The following dialogue can only be considered conjectural.

Lao Lai Zi said, “He is Qiu. Ask him to come.”

Qiu was Confucius' formal given name. According to protocol mentioned briefly earlier, it was impolite or arrogant to call a person by his formal given name, unless that person was junior to the caller. Apparently, from the way Lao Lai Zi said it, he was either arrogant or regarded Confucius to be his junior.

Confucius came. [Lao Lai Zi] said, "Qiu, out go your arrogance and cleverness, and you could be a *junzi*."

Confucius saluted by raising his folded hands and backing one step. He felt sorry, changed his demeanor, and asked, "Could I make progress in my scholarship?"

Lao Lai Zi said, "When one cannot bear the sufferings of one generation, he might have overlooked the calamities inflicting all future generations. Is it because of intransigence or inferior intelligence? If a person feels proud for making someone happy because of having done him a favor, it is a shame of a lifetime. But this is only what ordinary people would do. They praise the names of one another; they join one another for selfish purposes. Instead of glorifying King Yao and condemning King Jie, we would do better to forget both of them and stop glorifying and condemning. Doing anything against nature is injurious; disturbing the quietude of spirit is heterodox. The sainted men would take time in launching a plan to assure success. Why are you always so sure of yourself?"

This was purported by the author to be Lao Lai Zi's impression of Confucius. Since Lao Lai Zi might not have met Confucius, it would seem unlikely that he could have made these kinds of terse comments based on his own over self-confidence.

## Section 6

One night Duke Yuan of the State of Song dreamed of a person with disheveled hair peeping through a side gate and saying, "I came from the water at Zailu. I am an emissary of the Qing River to the River God [of the Yellow River]. A fisherman named Yu Qie caught me.

Duke Yuan of the State of Song has been mentioned in Chapter 21:7. The River God is presumably the same as the one described in Chapter 17:1.

The duke woke and called in a seer for an interpretation. [The seer] said, "It was a supernatural tortoise.

The duke asked, "Is there a fisherman by the name of Yu Qie?"

An attendant said, "Yes."

The duke said: "Order Yu Qie to come to the court."

The next day, Yu Qie came to the court. The duke asked, "What did you catch?"

Came the answer, "Qie's net caught a white tortoise with a circumference of five feet."

The duke said, "Present me your tortoise."

The tortoise was presented. The duke was indecisive whether to let it live or to sacrifice it. He could not make up his mind, so he let augury resolve the dilemma. The judgment read: "Kill the tortoise to foretell. Auspicious!" So the tortoise was dissected repeatedly to foretell the future seventy-two times without erring a single prediction.

Confucius commented, "The spiritual tortoise could appear in the dream of Duke Yuan, but it could not avoid being trapped in the net of Yu Qie. Its intelligence could foretell accurately the future seventy-two times, but could not escape the catastrophe of repeated eviscerations. Therefore, intelligence has its handicaps and spirituality has its limits. Even with superior intelligence, it takes all means and all efforts from all people to succeed. Fish are not afraid of nets, but are fearful of pelicans. If people could abandon petty cleverness, great wisdom would blossom. If people could discard self-praised goodness, genuine goodness would manifest itself. A baby learns to talk without the instruction of a great scholar, because he is in the company of talkers."

The purported comments by Confucius contain a few key sentences. "Intelligence has its handicaps and spirituality has its limits. . . . If people could abandon petty cleverness, great wisdom would blossom. . . . A baby learns to talk without the instruction. . . . because he is in the company of talkers."

## Section 7

Hui Zi said to Zhuang Zi, “Your words are useless.”

Zhuang Zi retorted, “Knowing what is useless, he can then be talked to about usefulness. The world is enormous and big. What a person needs is no more than the space to support the two feet. Then if all the space other than this space were dug away down and down to the Yellow Springs,<sup>7</sup> would this space where a person stood still be useful?”

Hui Zi said, “Useless.”

Zhuang Zi concluded, “Then the usefulness of uselessness is obvious.”

These two men had argued about the concepts of “useful” and “useless” more than once before, for example, in Chapter 1:3. It seems that Hui Zi was talking about the absolute value and Zhuang Zi was talking about the relative value. That is, a thing has no definite value unless the conditions under which it is used are specified. Within this realm of reasoning, usefulness and uselessness are interchangeable. Every time Hui Zi was unguarded against Zhuang Zi’s argument, he appeared to have lost the debate.

## Section 8

Zhuang Zi said, “When a person can have his mind wander about freely, who would not want to do so? When a person cannot have his mind wander about freely, who would want to do so? Ah, neither the wish of having endless wandering nor the act of rendering obstinate behavior is what a man of great wisdom and abundant virtue would ever do! Those being forever entangled in worldly affairs or rushing into them without due considerations might find their positions interchangeable between the ruler and the ruled as a matter of time. No one remains lowly with changing times. Therefore, it is said that the superior man will not be impeded by circumstances.

“Praising the ancient and despising the present are the favorites of scholars. In applying Xi Wei’s idea to evaluate the present, who can avoid prejudice? Only the superior man can wander the



world without prejudice and go along with others without compromising his own convictions. Do not learn what scholars do. Understand their ideas, but do not be one of them.”

In the last paragraph, the term “scholars” apparently refers to Confucianists, who favor the application of the ideas of ancient sages to the present political and social systems. The name of Xi Wei as an archivist has mentioned in Chapter 25:9. The Daoists as well as the legalists ridiculed the model as outdated and impractical. The last two sentences say it all.

### Section 9

When the eyes are pervious, they see discriminately. When the ears are pervious, they hear discriminately. When the nose is pervious, it smells discriminately. When the tongue is pervious, it tastes discriminately. When the mind is pervious, it renders knowledge. When knowledge is pervious, it renders virtue. Dao may not be hindered. Hindrance leads to obstruction. Obstruction, if not corrected, leads to perversion. Perversion leads to abuses. All living things depend on respiration. When respiration is impaired, the fault is not nature. Nature tries to keep all passages open day and night, but men obstruct them. Under the skin, the human body is enveloped in a layer of membrane. There are hollow spaces where spirit wanders naturally. Likewise, when a room has no empty space, then the wife and her mother-in-law will end up looking at each other with averted eyes. When your spirit cannot wander freely with nature, then the six openings<sup>8</sup> will begin to complain. This is the reason that forests and mountains make people feel at ease and peace.

The middle of the paragraph touches on human physiology, particularly, the concept of hollow space where spirit wanders. Since this was written in about 300 B.C., we cannot be too critical about the soundness of the explanation from the scientific basis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, A.D. However, the concluding remarks seem still valid. Moreover, observations, such as “the wife and her mother-in-law will end up looking at each other with averted eyes,” seem to be candid then as well as now.

### Section 10

Virtue overflows because of fame. Fame overflows because of exaggeration. Strategy results from emergency. Cleverness results from competition. Obstruction rises from obsession. Official business is decided on what is good for many people. When spring rain comes on time, all plants luxuriate. Then people begin to use implements, but cannot understand why more than half of the turnover plants continue to grow.

### Section 11

Tranquility of mind can temper sickness. Massage can delay old age. Equanimity can alleviate recklessness. Even though this is true, it concerns only a man of toil, but not a man of ease, who would not be bothered. What a sainted man does to surprise the world is what a spirited man has not asked. What a worthy man does to surprise the nation is what a sainted man has not asked. What a *junzi* does to surprise the state is what a worthy man has not asked. What a little man does as an opportunist is what a *junzi* has not asked.

### Section 12

There near the city gate of Yan was a man whose parents had died. He was bestowed a title of Official Tutor, because he was good at mourning and self-disfigurement. Half of his followers had died of the practice. King Yao abdicated the throne in favor of Xu Yu; Xu Yu ran away from it. King Tang did the same to Wu Guang; Wu Guang was full of rage. Ji Ta heard of it and led his disciples to dwell in seclusion by the River Kuan. Princes came to comfort him. Three years later, Shentu Di drowned himself in the river.

Besides the strange custom, it is unclear what the author tried to tell us about the story. Except for Kings Yao and Tang, all other personal names appear to be fictitious.

### Section 13

A bamboo basket is for catching fish; after getting fish, [the fisherman] forgets the basket. A net is for trapping rabbits; after getting rabbits, [the hunter] forgets the net. Words are for transmitting ideas; after getting ideas, [the listener] forgets the words. Where can I find a man who will forget the words and speak to him?

This is a short essay, but the idea is superb. The rhetorical construction is simple without a single extraneous word. Despite its inclusion in this series, it could still be the work of the master himself. The first two sentences have been condensed to form a popular aphorism in reminding us that we should not slight the means for reaching our goals. More importantly, the *Chan* set of Buddhism in China promotes the teaching of “getting the idea and forgetting the words.” Perhaps, it took the concept from this section, or it was a coincidence.

## Notes

1. For Longfeng and Bi Gan, see the respective notes in Chapter 4:1.
2. Viscount Qi was an uncle of King Zhou. He could not stand what the wanton king was doing. He pretended to be insane to preserve his sanity.
3. The right-hand man of the cruel King Zhou. He was executed when the dynasty fell.
4. For Chang Hong and the preceding Wu Yuan also known as Wu Zixu, see the respective notes in Chapter 10:1.
5. A favorite pupil of Confucius, Zeng Shen was well known for his filial piety to his parents.
6. Legend has it that wood from a tree named *huai* (presumably, *Sophoria japonica*) will flash on rubbing against each other. What the following sentence says refers to this plant also.
7. The Chinese term for the home of the dead, somewhat equivalent to Hades of the Greek origin.
8. The six openings are two eyes, two ears, one nose and one mouth. Elsewhere, the seven openings are used when the two nostrils of the nose are counted as two.



## The Allegories

The first section of this chapter is a summary of the three literary styles used in writing this book. It gives us a good idea how it was written. The reader will be surprised at how little of it is factual and how much of it is allegoric. The remaining sections are not related to the chapter title *per se*.

### Section 1

Allegories count about ninety percent [of the content of this work]. Quotations count about seventy percent. Inadvertent sayings come up one after another in full conformity with natural course.

This is a general description of the composition of the book, which consists of three distinct material sources. The first two sentences are not mutually exclusive numerically, because many of the sections may be counted as both allegories and quotations. Each of the following three paragraphs is devoted to the elaboration of one kind of material source.

Allegories counting about ninety percent are mostly borrowed from outside sources. A father does not want to be a matchmaker of his son. His praise of his son is less convincing than the praise coming from someone else. This is not my fault; it is the fault of many others. Whatever is the same as one's own is accepted; whatever is not the same as one's own is rejected. Whatever is the same as one's own is correct; whatever is not the same as one's own is wrong.

This explains why the author used allegories mostly from outside sources, because people had the propensity to disbelieve allegories that the author made up himself, just as a father is not in a credible situation to praise his own son.

Quotations counting about seventy percent are meant to settle arguments, as they have been the words of elders. However, if they are merely older, but do not possess foresight, then they are not superior to others. If a person has nothing superior to others, he does not have principles in life. A person who does not have principles in life is behind in time.

Throughout the book, Zhuang Zi and his pupils often used quotations, mostly for challenging the timeliness of the ideas therein. They ridiculed other ideas (mostly Confucianist) as outdated and unsuitable for current situations. In many instances, they intensified the disagreements, but did not settle the arguments.

Inadvertent sayings come up one after another in full conformity with natural courses, causing them to spread freely through one's lifetime. When we do not express our opinions, [the principles governing] all things are equal. When we inject our opinions into the otherwise equal [principles], all things become unequal. Therefore, we should speak without subjective opinions. When we speak without subjective opinions, it is like we have never spoken, even though we have spoken all the time; it is like we have spoken all the time, even though we have never spoken. Apparently, what is permitted has its reasons to be permitted and what is not permitted also has its reasons to be not permitted; what is right has its reasons to be right and what is not right also has its reasons to be not right. How is it right? It has reasons to be right. How is it not right? It has reasons to be not right. How is it permitted? It has reasons to be permitted. How is it not permitted? It has reasons to be not permitted. If inadvertent sayings come up one after another not in full conformity with natural courses, how can they sustain for such a long time! All things belong to species. They are transmitted through various forms in cycles, of which there are no clues. This is known as the equality of nature or the limit of nature.

Most of the elaboration used in this paragraph has been discussed earlier in Chapter 2:6, especially its last few paragraphs. Near the end of the paragraph above, it reads: “all things belong to species. They are transmitted through various forms in cycles.” We are reminded of what has been written in Chapter 18:6.

## Section 2

Zhuang Zi said to Hui Zi, “When Confucius was sixty-years-old, he had changed with time in those sixty years. What he considered to be right earlier was finally determined to be wrong later. He did not know what he considered to be right at sixty was not what he would consider to be wrong at fifty nine.”

We have read a nearly identical description about Jü Baiyü in Chapter 25:8.

Hui Zi said, “Confucius was determined to use his wisdom.”

Zhuang Zi said, “Confucius had abandoned his wisdom and said very little. Confucius said, ‘We receive our abilities from the great Dao. We were born with latent spirituality. We sing in tune with pitch pipes<sup>1</sup> and we speak in conformity with rules. When we are confronted with a choice of privileges or righteousness, the distinction between good and evil or right and wrong is a mere camouflage for winning the public opinion. We should strive to win the hearts of the people, such that they are eager to support and uphold the law of the land, and establish a lasting peace in the world.’ That will do. I do not even come close to him!”

Of course, this is one example of Zhuang Zi putting what he wanted to say in Confucius’ mouth. In general, nothing is critical here. He showed considerable modesty in the last sentence. His delicate relationship to Confucius has been discussed in Section C of the Introduction.

## Section 3

Zeng Zi entered into an official career for a second time and he felt differently from the first time and said, “I entered into



an official career earlier when my parents were living. I received three *fu*<sup>2</sup> of grains and I was happy. Later, I entered into an official career again when my parents were no longer living. I received three thousand *zhong* and I was sad.”

A disciple asked Confucius, “For a person like Zeng Shen, may we say that he has freed himself from the webbing [of official emoluments]?”

[Confucius] said, “His mind is still tied [to official emoluments]. If there was no tie, how could he have the feeling of sadness? Those whose minds are not at all tied would have looked at three *fu* or three thousand *zhong* like watching sparrows or mosquitoes flying by.”

Zeng Shen or, respectfully, Zeng Zi was a favorite disciple of Confucius. He was well known for his filial piety, of which a glimpse of reference has been cited in Chapter 26:1. The first paragraph of text is not a factual statement, because Zeng Zi did not accept any official appointment. But the last paragraph of text pretending to be an answer by Confucius completely ignores the historical fact. Instead, the simplest and most truthful explanation of why Zeng Zi was happy with his parents while earning three *fu* and was sad without his parents while earning three thousand *zhong* is the difference between his parents living and dead on account of his filial piety to his parents, which had nothing to do with how much he earned (even accepting the deception that Zeng Zi had had official appointments). Apparently, the author of this section overlooked what had been written in Chapter 26:1. When one author does not agree with a co-author on a specific issue in a book, the readership should be aware of it.

#### Section 4

Yanchen Ziyou said to Dongguo Ziqi, “Since I listened to what you said, in one year I became simple and plain, in two years I became easy-going, in three years I became thorough in understanding, in four years I became assimilated to things, in five years I became attractive to things and people, in six years I became a sojourn of spirits, in seven years I became conforming to nature,

in eight years I became free from differentiating life and death, and in nine years I became apprehensive of the great Dao.”

In Chapter 2:1, there were Yanchen Ziyou and Nanguo Ziqi. We do not know if they were the same as these two men in this story. This seems to be a progress card for a person searching the great Dao. “Assimilated to things” implies going along with things for changes. “Attractive to things and people” means they would come for adherence.

### Section 5

If you are unseemly in life, you are walking toward death. Let me remind you, death has its reasons, but birth coming from yang has no other reasons. Is it really this way? Where is the comfortable place? Where is not the comfortable place? In heaven there are seasons, on earth there are man-made cities and states. Where do we look for what we want? If we do not know where life ends, how do we know there is no destiny? If we do not know where life begins, how do we know there is destiny? If all things are responsive to one another, how do we know there are no spirits? If all things are not responsive to one another, how do we know there are spirits?

### Section 6

The penumbra asked the umbra, “A little while ago you looked down and now you look up. A little while ago you combed your hair and now you dishevel it. A little while ago you sat down and now you stand up. A little while ago you walked and now you stop. Why?”

The umbra said, “It is a mere trifle. Why you bother asking? I did without knowing why. I am like the exuvia of a cicada or the slough of a snake, looking alike but not the real thing. Near fire and day, I show up; in shade and night, I fade away. These are what I have to depend on, let alone those not to be depended on. When they come, I come with them. When they go, I go with

them. When they move about, I move about, too. Only movements, what is worth asking?”

A similar story on penumbra and umbra has been told in Chapter 2:7.

### Section 7

Yang Zijü traveled south to Pei. Lao Dan traveled west to Qin. They agreed to meet in the countryside. He arrived at Liang and met Lao Zi. Lao Zi came halfway close, looked up the sky and sighed, “Earlier I thought you were worth teaching, but now I think not.”

Yang Zijü did not answer. After they came to an inn, he washed his face, combed his hair, left his shoes outside the door, crawled forward and said, “A little while ago, I wished to talk to you. You were traveling and I dared not bother you. Now you have a little time, may I ask about my faults.”

Lao Zi said, “You showed an air of arrogance and pride. Who would like to be close to you? The purest may look like having a dark spot. A man with abundant virtues may look deficient in something.”

Yang Zijü shamefully changed his demeanor and apologized, “I respectfully accept your instructions.”

When he arrived at the inn, the bellboy welcomed him, the owner reserved a seat for him, the matron held towels and combs for him, other guests stayed away from him. The chef was afraid that his cooking might not be to his liking. By the time he left, he was merely a guest like every one else.

Apparently, he had changed his demeanor a great deal in a short time without his knowledge. Great accomplishments!

## Notes

1. Used here to stand for musical notes.
2. Both *fu* and the following *zhong* are units of measuring volume of grains. One *zhong* is slightly more than five *fu*. In ancient times before there were coins, official emoluments were paid in grains.



## Abdication

The central thought of this chapter is the meaning of life. What does the title of this chapter have anything to do with life? Yes, when one is willing to give up a throne, let alone everything else, in favor of life, it is a great undertaking. Many scholars since the Song dynasty (A.D. 960) have expressed doubts that Zhuang Zi had a hand in writing this chapter because of its rhetorical style. (Of course, this does not preclude the likelihood that some sections in preceding chapters may have been similarly suspected.) Nevertheless, the idea that life is precious is consistent with Zhuang Zi's philosophy. In each of the fifteen sections of this chapter, there are proper names of persons and places. Each section tells a story, which may be historical or fictitious or half and half.

### Section 1

King Yao would like to abdicate in favor of Xu You. Xu You declined the offer. The king offered the throne to Zi Zhou Jifu. Zi Zhou Jifu said, "If you want me to be king, I could accept it. However, I am having a serious melancholic disorder and have begun a therapy. I have no time to rule the nation." Well, ruling a nation is an awesome responsibility. And yet it is not allowed to jeopardize life, let alone any other responsibility. Hence, only a person who does not use ruling a nation for his own advantages can be trusted with a nation.

King Yao and Xu You and the following King Shun have been mentioned many times. Zi Zhou Jifu was a Daoist recluse. Zi was his family name, Zhou his formal given name, and Jifu his courtesy given name. Jifu gave the reason

of health for his declination in the quotation. The rest is the author's elaboration of Jifu's reason.

King Shun would like to abdicate in favor of Zi Zhou Jibai. Zi Zhou Jibai said, "I am having a serious melancholic disorder and have begun a therapy. I have no time to rule the nation." Well, a nation is a huge institution. And yet it is not exchangeable with life. This is the difference between a Daoist and a vulgar person.

Zi Zhou Jibai seems to be the same person as Zi Zhou Jifu.

Shun would like to abdicate in favor of Shan Juan. Shan Juan said, "I stand in the middle of the universe. In the winter I wear animal hide or fur. In the summer I wear clothes made of coarse or fine fibers. In the spring I plow and sow with good exercises. In the autumn I harvest with enough to eat. When the sun rises I work, when the sun sets I rest. I wander about freely in the world. I am happy and satisfied. What do I need a throne for? I am sorry, you don't understand me." That was the reason he did not want to accept. He left for the mountain. No one ever knew where he was.

Shan Juan was a recluse.

Shun would like to abdicate in favor of his farmer friend in Shihu. The farmer in Shihu said, "The king is a man of toil and he is wearied." Well, he meant the king was not virtuous enough. So the husband and wife and children sailed to an island in the sea and never returned.

These men declined kingship because they valued life more precious than anything else. These prehistoric stories can only be considered fictitious.

## Section 2

The great forebear, Danfu, [and his people] settled in Bin, which was often attacked by the wild tribes from the north. They refused

to accept animal hide and silk in exchange for peace. They refused to accept dogs and horses in exchange for peace. They refused to accept pearls and jades in exchange for peace. What the wild tribes wanted was land. Danfu said [to his people], “I cannot bear the thought of giving the older brother a place to live and letting the younger brother be killed or giving the father a place to live and letting the son be killed. You have tried hard to live. What difference does it make if you are subjects of me or of the tribes? Moreover, I have heard that a man should not allow [the land] that supports [people] to harm the [people] supported [by the land].” Then he walked away with a staff. A huge cohort of his people followed him with hand-pushed carts. They settled at the foot of the Qi Mountain to form a state. The great forebear, Danfu, may be said to be capable of respecting life. A person capable of respecting life would not allow indulgence to harm his body in time of prosperity or profits to burden his body in time of poverty. Nowadays, people in high offices with glittering titles are mindful of getting rid of indulgence and profits. But when they see wealth and fame, they throw away their own life. Isn’t it perplexing?

The story is largely based on history. Danfu (*fl. ca.1200 B.C.*) was well known because his grandson was known as King Wen whom Confucius considered to be a sage and his great grandson was King Wu, the founding king of the Zhou dynasty, in which Zhuang Zi lived. There is one sentence in the text, which may need a little notation. Thus, “I cannot bear the thought of giving the older brother a place to live and letting the younger brother be killed...” This sentence implies that if we chose to go to battle against the wild tribes, every family could have some members killed in order for some other members to live. Moreover, his closing remarks to his people were very emphatic indeed.

### Section 3

People of Yue killed three generations of their kings. Prince Sou was fearful for his life and hid himself in a mountain cave. The country was without a king. The people sought the prince to no avail, but were able to trace him to the cave. The prince refused



to come out. They smoked the cave with hay and helped the prince to a royal carriage. As he ascended the carriage, he looked up the sky and cried out, "My lord, my lord, why not let me go!?" Prince Sou was not afraid of being a king; he was afraid of the danger of being a king. Prince Sou may be said to having not allowed kingship to harm his life. This was exactly why the Yue people would like him to be their king.

In ancient China, Yue referred to the southern-most territories, where the cultural, political, and social influences of China proper might not have been fully assimilated. From the way the story is concluded, it would seem that the Yue people killed their three kings because they were covetous of the kingship and did nothing good for the people.

#### Section 4

The States of Han and Wei were having conflicting claims on certain territory. Zi Hua Zi came to see Marquis Zhao of Han. The Marquis appeared to have worries. Zi Hua Zi said, "If you had entered a written oath with the world, which reads: 'If you could grasp it with your left hand, your right hand would be cut off. If you could grasp it with your right hand, your left hand would be cut off. Whoever had grasped it must have the world.' Would you want to grasp it?"

Marquis Zhao said: "I would not."

Zi Hua Zi said, "Excellent! Therefore, the two arms are more precious than the world. The body is more precious than the two arms. The State of Han is far less precious than the world. What is in dispute now is even less precious than the State of Han. Your Highness still shows deep worries about not getting it."

The Marquis said, "Good! Many have advised me, but I have not heard anything like this." Zi Hua Zi may be said to be a man of discretion.

Zi Hua Zi was a worthy man in Wei. His name was mentioned several times in *Lu's Spring and Autumn* completed in ca. 230 B.C. Both "Zi" added to his name are a show of great respect by the speaker or writer.

## Section 5

The head of the Lu State heard of Yan He being a man knowledgeable of Dao. He dispatched a messenger with gifts to see him first.<sup>1</sup> Yan He was living in a shabby alley, wearing clothes of hemp fibers, and feeding a cow. He personally received the messenger. The messenger asked, "Is this the home of Yan He?" Yan He answered, "This is the home of Yan He." The messenger presented the gifts. Yan He said, "I am afraid that you the messenger may have heard it wrong and you may be blamed. Why not check it over." The messenger returned and checked it over. When he came back again to see him, Yan He was gone. A person like Yan He truly has a distaste for wealth and fame.

Therefore, it has been said that the core of Dao is for the body, the remainder is for the nation, and the residues are for the world. From this point of view, the merits of kings are the trivial of sainted men and the non-essentials for keeping a perfect body and a well-nourished life. Many of the vulgar *junzi* endanger their bodies and risk their lives for the sake of gain and fame. What a pity!

From the opening sentence, it is obvious that Dao is concerned with individuals, not with national or global issues. Any effect on the latter must be taken through the former. This is easy to say but difficult to apply. In the long history of China since Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi preached Daoism, emperors identifying themselves with Confucianism (obviously, some of them merely in lip service) were in overwhelming majority and those with Daoism could be counted with fingers in one hand. What is stated here underlies the reason.

Every time before a sainted man takes an action, he must examine his purpose and the means of doing it. Imagine here is a man who would use the pearl of Marquis Sui to shoot a sparrow one thousand *ren* away. Everyone would laugh at him. Why? The reason is that he would use a precious thing to get a worthless thing. Then, that which is life is so much more precious than the pearl of Marquis Sui!

The pearl of Marquis Sui is a legendary national treasure. It has been mentioned in the literature for thousands of years. But nobody has ever described how it looked.

### Section 6

Zi Lie Zi was poor and looked malnourished. A certain friend informed Zheng Ziyang by saying, “Lie Yūkou is a man of principles. He is living in your state and poor. Are you not one who does not like gentlemen?” On hearing this, Zheng Ziyang immediately dispatched an officer to present him rice. Zi Lie Zi received the officer and thanked the government deeply, but declined the rice.

After the officer departed, Zi Lie Zi came in. His wife was grumbling and said, “I have heard that the wife of a man of principles will live an easy life, but now she looks malnourished. The prime minister dispatched an officer to give you rice and you declined. Is this destiny?”

Zi Lie Zi smiled and said, “The prime minister himself did not know me. He sent me rice because some one told him so. Someday he might fault me because someone tells him so. This is why I declined.”

Some time later, there was indeed a riot and Ziyang was killed.

Zi Lie Zi, Lie Zi, and Lie Yūkou all three are names of one person. Lie Yukou is his formal name, in which Lie is his family name, Yukou his formal given name. For the sake of respect to a man who has founded an independent school of thought, he is respectfully called Lie Zi. We may say this is an honorary name. When a writer has a special personal respect to a man of literature, he may add another “Zi” to the man’s honorary name to become, for example, Zi Lie Zi. For the same reason, we have read about Zi Hua Zi in the preceding Section 4.

### Section 7

King Zhou of the Chu State was ousted from his capital. A sheep-butcher named Yue closed his shop and followed King Zhou.

Later, King Zhou returned to his capital and began to reward those who followed him. When it came to the sheep-butcher Yue, the sheep-butcher Yue said: “When the king lost territories, Yue lost the butchery. Now the king regains the territories, Yue reopens the butchery. This subject has already received his rewards. What other rewards are there?”

The king said [to his lieutenants], “Persuade him.”

The sheep-butcher Yue said, “When the king lost territories, it was not my fault and I did not find justification for killing myself. When the king regains his territories, it is not my merit and I am not worthy to be rewarded.”

The king said, “I would like to see him.”

The sheep-butcher Yue said, “According to the law of the Chu State, only those worthy of important rewards and great merits are qualified to see the king. Now this subject did not have the wisdom to save the state or the bravery to annihilate the enemy. When the Wu armies entered the capital Ying, Yue ran away from the enemy because I was afraid of getting into danger, not just following the king. Now the king wants to breach the law to see me. This is not what I want the world to know.”

The king said to Sima Ziqi, “The sheep-butcher Yue comes from a base, lowly environment and yet his deliberations are lofty. You invite him for me to be one of the three ministers.”

The sheep-butcher Yue said, “Certainly, I understand the appointment to one of the three ministers is very much more illustrious than the management of a butchery; the emolument of ten thousand *zhong* is very much richer than the profits of a butcher. But how could I be greedy about the appointment and emolument and make my king into a man of unseemly behavior. Yue is not worthy and wishes to return to the butchery.” And so he declined.

The background of the story is based on a military conflict between the States of Chu and Wu, in which Chu was first defeated (*ca.* 544 B.C.). Later, the Chu armies under General Sima Ziqi counter-attacked and finally won the war. There is no independent source to verify if the sheep-butcher ever existed.

### Section 8

Yuan Xian was living in the State of Lu, in a thatched hut of only ten feet square with incompletely woven bamboo as a door, mulberry wood as a shaft, broken earthenware as windows, and coarse cloth to divide the hut into two rooms. The roof allowed rainwater to drip down and the ground was moist. Yet he sat in a formal manner and sang while playing a stringed instrument.

There was a disciple of Confucius by the name of Yuan Xian. If the writer of this section simply picked a name and it happened to be the namesake of a disciple of Confucius, it would be entirely his discretion. If he intended the person to be the disciple of Confucius, it was completely off, for nowhere in *The Analects* do we find anything remotely similar to the description for this Yuan Xian.

Zigong, wearing elegant bright-colored clothing, rode on a horse to see Yuan Xian, for his big horse-drawn carriage was too wide for the narrow alley. Yuan Xian, wearing a much-worn hat and a pair of straw slippers and with a staff in hand, came to answer the door.

Zigong was a disciple of Confucius known for his excellence in diplomacy.

Zigong said, "Ai! What ails you, sir?"

Yuan Xian answered, "Xian has heard that having no wealth is called poor and having learned the doctrines, but being unable to practice them is called sick. Now, Xian is poor, but not sick."

Zigong felt abashed.

Yuan Xian said with a smile, "If a person does things as everyone else does, joins a clique to make friends, studies for the sake of flaunting before others, speaks with the purpose of distinguishing oneself, commits immorality against *ren* and justice, and enjoys the elegance of wealth and fame, I am not willing to do any of them."

## Section 9

When Zeng Zi was living in the Wei State, he wore a ragged garment. His face appeared swollen. He had calluses on his hands and feet. Often there was no cooking for three days and no new clothes for ten years. He wore an official hat, but the chin-band holding the hat was broken. Pulling the sleeve exposed his elbow; putting on the shoes left out his heels. Wearing a pair of slippers, he sang the *Odes of the Shang* and his voice filled the space as if coming from musical instruments. Kings could not get him to be a minister; princes could not get him to be a friend. Therefore, he who cultivates his will forgoes his appearance; he who cultivates his appearance forgoes his privileges; he who seeks Dao forgoes his cleverness.

Zeng Zi or Zeng Shen was one of Confucius' favorite pupils. He is known to have lived a very frugal, filial, and highly disciplined life. We do not know how much this section has overstated his severe characteristics. Many Zhuangian short sentences, such as pulling the sleeve exposes the elbow, have since become idiomatic usage describing certain peculiar situations.

The *Odes of the Shang* was a collection of songs written by descendants of King Tang praising his great achievements in founding the Shang dynasty in 1766 B.C. The collection was made presumably in the early Zhou dynasty in *ca.* 1000 B.C. Later, it was edited by Confucius. This last edition was apparently what Zeng Zi was reciting in the story.

It is worthy of note that in Chapter 27:3, Zeng Shen or Zeng Zi was described as having an official appointment and receiving good emoluments. This translator has indicated the information contained therein was false. Here we read about the poverty-stricken life of the same disciple of Confucius. Apparently, he was described as a successful Daoist! We cannot but wonder how many personalities of Zeng Shen have been described in various chapters.

## Section 10

Confucius said to Yan Hui, "Hui, let me say to you. Your family is poor and your house is shabby. Why do you not want to be in civil service?"

Yan Hui answered, “I don’t want to be. Hui has a country farm of fifty *mu*,<sup>2</sup> producing enough rice for cooking gruel and a city farm of ten *mu*, producing enough silk and hemp for weaving cloth. Besides, I can play *qin*<sup>3</sup> to amuse myself and can review what I have learned from you to enjoy myself. Hui does not want to be in civil service.”

Confucius changed his demeanor and said, “Excellent is your answer. I have heard: ‘He who knows satisfaction will not allow himself to be burdened by gain. He who finds self-satisfaction will not be worried by loss. He who cultivates inner peace will not be ashamed by having no prominent position.’ I have recited it for a long time. Now I see it in the person of Hui. It is my gain.”

### Section 11

Prince Mo of Zhongshan said to Zhan Zi, “When the body is on the river and sea, but the heart is in the Wei palace, what can be done about it?”

Prince Mo of Zhongshan, Wei Mo, and Prince Mo of Wei in Chapter 17:4 were titles of the same person. Here he meant he was physically in the country, but was still mentally attracted to prominence.

Zhan Zi said, “Put emphasis on life. If so, you will be indifferent to gains.”

Prince Mo of Zhongshan said, “Even though I know it, I cannot control myself.”

Zhan Zi said, “If you cannot control yourself, let it go. In this way, at least your spirit is not in duress. If you cannot control yourself in not doing it and you force yourself to do it, this means your hurt yourself twice. When you do that, you will not live long.”

Wei Mo was a son of a king. He chose to live in a cave. This was already harder for him than for an ordinary man. Even though he had not apprehended Dao, he had shown his wishes.

## Section 12

Confucius was besieged between the States of Chen and Cai and had no hot meals for seven days, except vegetable soup without rice. He appeared awfully tired, but he continued to play music and sing in his room. While his disciple, Yan Hui, went to pick vegetables outside, Zilu and Zigong said to each other, "The master has been forced to leave the State of Lu for the second time, has been surrounded in the State of Wei, has encountered the incident of tree cutting in the State of Song, has been unable to profess his teachings in the capital cities of the Shang and Zhou, and is now being surrounded between the States of Chen and Cai.<sup>4</sup> Anyone who wants to kill him is innocent. Anyone who wants to insult him is not prohibited. He has played music and sung without stopping. Could the impudence of a *junzi* go this far?"

Yan Hui had nothing to say and he went in to tell Confucius. Confucius pushed away the music, sighed deeply and said, "They are little men. Call them in and I shall talk to them."

Zilu and Zigong entered the room. Zilu said, "Our present situation may be called hardship."

Confucius said, "What kind of talk is this! A *junzi* well versed in Dao is called thorough, but one ignorant of Dao is called impoverished. Now I embrace the doctrine of *ren* and justice, but encounter the misfortune of a troubled world. What hardship is there? Therefore, in my heart I do not feel sorry in withholding my doctrine and in time of crisis I do not compromise my virtue. When the frigid winter has come and when frost and snow have fallen, I know to admire the beauty of pines and junipers. May the crisis of Chen and Cai bring me good luck!"

Confucius calmly picked up his music and sang. Zilu, holding a spear, danced joyfully. Zigong said, "I don't care how high the sky is or how deep the earth is."

In ancient times those apprehensive of Dao enjoyed life in time of hardship as well as prosperity, not because they enjoyed



hardship and prosperity, but because they had Dao with them. Hardship and prosperity came in order like winter and summer or winds and rain. This is the reason that Xu You could amuse himself by the river in Yingyang and Earl Gong could entertain himself on the Qiushou Hill.

In the story here, Confucius and his disciples accepted what came naturally and enjoyed life as Daoists would.

### Section 13

King Shun would like to abdicate in favor of his friend, a northerner named Wu Jie. Northerner Wu Jie said, "Strange is the king as a person. Once he lived on a field, but he went in and out of King Yao's gate. Not only that, he now wishes to play a dirty trick on me. I am ashamed to see him." So he drowned himself in a clear, deep abyss.

In Section 1 of this chapter, we read about King Shun offering his crown to Shan Juan. Here he offered it to Wu Jie. The two stories sound similar, why are they set so far apart? There is a point of difference. Besides abdication, the first part of this chapter emphasizes the importance of life; this part shows a disregard for life. Almost everyone committed suicide at the end!

### Section 14

Tang was planning military campaigns against King Jie and asked Bian Sui for advice. Bian Sui said, "Not my business."

History shows that Tang was successful in taking over the throne and installed himself as the first king of the Shang dynasty in 1766 B.C. Bian Sui and the following Wu Guang were recluses.

Tang asked, "Who is qualified?"

Came the answer, "I don't know."

Tang then asked Wu Guang for advice. Wu Guang said, "Not my business."

Tang asked, "Who is qualified?"

Came the answer, "I don't know."

Tang asked, "How about Yi Yin?"

Wu Guang said, "[He is] resolute and [can] bear blame. The rest I don't know."

So Tang and Yi Yin laid plans to dethrone King Jie and succeeded. Tang asked Bian Sui to accept the crown. Bian Sui declined and said: "Earlier, the king had consulted me about taking the throne from King Jie and he must have considered me to be a tricky person. Now he offers the crown to me, he must have considered me to be a covetous person. I am living in times of tumult and wicked men come to entice me once and again with their shameful fabrications. I cannot tolerate to hear any more of them." He drowned himself in the Chou River.

Tang then asked Wu Guang to accept the crown and said, "The wise man plans it, the brave man succeeds it, the benevolent man holds it. This has been the way since the ancient times. Why do you not accept it?"

Wu Guang declined and said, "To depose a king is not righteous, to kill people is not kind, to let people risk their lives so that I can enjoy the benefits is not pure. I have heard not to accept rewards for what is not righteous and not to walk on the land where immorality is tolerated, let alone get honored. I cannot bear the look of it." He weighted himself with a rock and sank in the River Lu.

## Section 15

During the rise of the Zhou dynasty, there in Guzhu lived two brother-scholars by the names of Baiyi and Shuqi. They said to each other, "I have heard in the west there is a man who seems to live by principles. Let us go there and take a look." When they arrived at Qiyang, King Wu heard about them and sent his younger brother Dan to see them and offer them an emolument of the second grade and an office of the first grade written on a covenant formalized with an animal blood for safekeeping.

Guzhu is in present Hebei Province. Qiyang at the foot of the Qi Mountain where Tanfu led his people to settle (see Section 2) became a big city soon after. It is in present Shanxi Province. The younger brother, Dan, of King Wu is known later in history as Duke of Zhou, an able administrator and writer of the *Codes of Rites* and part of the *Yi Jing* text. Confucius admired him reverently.

The two brothers looked at each other, laughed and said, “Ah, strange indeed! This is not what we mean by principles. Times ago, when Shen Nong governed the land, he made seasonal offerings to heaven and earth with awe, but did not pray for wealth. He was loyal and trustworthy and asked nothing from the people. He let those who would like to manage or administer do just that. He did not flaunt his success because of someone’s failure, boast his preeminence because of someone’s lowliness, nor take great personal advantages because of opportunity. Now, the Zhou takes advantage of the crisis of the Yin, grasps the power to rule the land, esteems clever strategies for material gains, emphasizes military achievements to demonstrate its power, takes blood from slaughtered animals to certify oaths, proclaims promises to attract people, and depends on sacrifice of human lives to establish authority. This is pushing tumult to replace tyranny! We have heard that ancient scholars did not evade their duty in time of peace and did not choose a dishonorable life in time of tumult. Now a dark age has descended on the world and the virtue of the Zhou has faded away. Instead of letting the Zhou contaminate our persons, we may do better to stay away from them to maintain our pristine spirit.” The two brothers went north into the Shouyang Mountain and eventually died of starvation. Men like Baiyi and Shuqi would not accept preeminence even when it was offered to them. They had high moral principles and weird conduct; they enjoyed their own aspirations, but refused to participate in public affairs. This was the chastity of these two determined men.

Voluntary abdication in favor of a worthy man is as laudable a political provision as monarchy could possibly be. But in the long recorded history of China, it has not been put into practice, although most Confucianists favor the view

that voluntary abdication was used in prehistoric times (prior to 2205 B.C.). In this chapter, many instances of voluntary abdication, real or fictitious, have been described. None succeeded, because the “worthy man” in each case bowed out. Every one of them bowed out, because he did not want the burdensome job. Above all, all of them valued life more precious than anything else. So the author really used abdication as a supporting argument for the importance of living. Not until the last three sections did the author modify his theme. Those who rejected the invitation also chose freely to cast their own lives away. What a pity!

### Notes

1. At that time it was a common practice to have a junior officer informally explore the possibility of meeting or inviting that person before tendering an invitation. See Chapter 17:5 for a similar protocol.
2. A unit of measuring land area. One *mu* equals 6,000 square ft.
3. A stringed instrument.
4. The incidents described in this sentence have been mentioned in Chapters 14:4 and 20:5.

## Zhi, the Brigand

This chapter has three sections and only Section 1 tells a story about Zhi, the Brigand. It is also the longest section in this book. It is about a purported meeting between Confucius and Zhi, the Brigand. Even though it is only a story, it has raised the blood pressure of many famed Confucian scholars since the Tang dynasty, for they charged that the Daoist writer, whoever he might be, wantonly defamed the sage.

### Section 1

Confucius and Liuxia Ji were friends. A younger brother of Liuxia Ji was called Zhi, the Brigand. Zhi, the Brigand had nine thousand followers. They were roaming the whole country with violence in many princely states. They freely entered people's houses and rooms, drove away people's cattle and horses, and took away people's wives and daughters. They had insatiable greed and did not recognize their relatives. They cared not for their own parents and brothers and made no offerings to ancestors. As they roamed through, bigger states defended their cities, and smaller states protected their people in fortresses. They caused sufferings to all people.

Zhi, the Brigand was a real person, but the time period he lived in could not be determined, as ancient relics gave widely different periods when he lived. One thing for sure is that Confucius had never met him. The other character in this article is Liuxia Ji, also known as Liuxia Hui, a worthy man in the State of Lu. Liuxia Ji was not his real name. Liuxia means under a willow tree,

indicating that his house was under a willow tree. He and Confucius were not contemporaries. He was not related at all to Zhi, the Brigand. The three major players, though historical, did not meet each other at any time, but the author made them talk to each other in the story.

Confucius said to Liuxia Ji, "A father must be able to order his son; an older brother must be able to teach his younger brother. If a father cannot order his son or an older brother cannot teach his younger brother, then there is nothing valuable in the relationship between the father and son or the older and younger brothers. Now you, sir, are a brilliant scholar of the time. Your younger brother, Zhi, the Brigand, is injurious to public security and you cannot teach him. I feel ashamed for you. I ask to go to talk to him for you."

Liuxia Ji said, "Sir, you said that a father must be able to order his son and an older brother must be able to teach his younger brother. If the son does not accept his father's order or the younger brother does not heed his older brother's advice, even with your eloquence, what else can you do? Moreover, as a person, Zhi's heart is like a bubbling spring; his senses are like a whirlwind; his strength is sufficient to overwhelm an attacker; his ability in debate is articulate enough to parry off shortcomings. He will be happy if things go his way; he will be furious if not. He often uses foul language to insult people. You must not go."

Confucius ignored his advice. With Yan Hui as driver of a horse-drawn carriage and Zigong sitting by his right, he went to see Zhi, the Brigand. Zhi, the Brigand was having an outing with his gang at the foot of Mount Tai and grilling human livers. Confucius lighted from his carriage and walked to an attendant and said, "I am Kong Qiu<sup>1</sup> of the Lu State. I have heard the prestige of the General. I respectfully bother you."

The attendant went in to report. Zhi, the Brigand was furious. His eyes looked like bright stars and his hair stood straight up, pushing against his hat. He said, "Is he not the pretentious Kong Qiu of the Lu State? Tell him for me, 'You toy with words and letters, falsify the legacy of Kings Wen and Wu, put on an elegant hat, wear a cowhide waist belt, and propose trivial and

frivolous ideas. You do not plow and have food to eat and you do not weave and have clothes to wear. You play with your tongue and lips to create controversies, so as to confuse kings and princes of the world and to make scholars not want to go back to study, but in the name of filial piety and brotherly subordination, take a chance in eminence and wealth. Your serious crime would be punishable by death. You better leave right now. Otherwise, I will add your liver to the menu of my next meal.”

Confucius asked the attendant again for a favor by saying, “I have the honor of knowing [Liuxia] Ji and hope to be able to tread in your tent.”

The attendant went in to report again. Zhi, the Brigand said, “Let him come forth.”

Confucius hastened in, refrained from taking a seat, stepped back and kowtowed to Zhi, the Brigand. Zhi, the Brigand was furious, stretched out his legs, with his sword in hand glared in anger at [Confucius] and sounded like a suckling tiger in saying, “Come close, Kong Qiu. If what you say agrees with me, you will live. If not, you will die.”

Confucius said, “I have heard that people in the world may be grouped according to their virtues into three kinds: Those who were born with great stature and likable demeanor and are admired by both young and old, noble and lowly, are having superior virtues; those whose wisdom extends to heaven and earth and whose talents discriminate many things are having mediocre virtues; those who are courageous and determined, arouse followers and command soldiers are having inferior virtues. Now General, you have all three. Your height is eight-feet-and-two-inches, your eyes shine, your lips are rosy red, your teeth look like cowrie pearls in good order, and your voice is consonant with *huang zhong*.<sup>2</sup> And yet you are called Zhi, the Brigand. I feel ashamed for you, General. If you would listen to me, I could go south to Wu and Yue, north to Qi and Lu, east to Song and Wei, and west to Jin and Chu. I could build you a big city of several hundred *li* in circumference, a capital with several hundred thousand families. They all would honor you as one of the princes, so that there is a new beginning in the world:



armistice, peace, rehabilitation, and offerings to ancestors. These are the deeds of sages and gifted scholars; they are also the hope of the world.”

Zhi, the Brigand was furious and roared, “Qiu, come close. What can be advised for the sake of advantages and what can be admonished in words are all vulgar expressions. Now I have great stature and likable demeanor and am admired by people. I have inherited these virtues from my parents. Qiu, even if you had not praised me for them, does it mean I don’t know them myself?”

Zhi, the Brigand gave Confucius a long lecture. Read on.

“I have heard that he who is delighted to praise others in the front is also delighted to defame others at the back. Now Qiu, you tell me about big cities with many people, because you wish to beguile me with ambitions, but to fool me like an ordinary person. How can it last? The biggest of the cities cannot be bigger than the world. Yao and Shun had the world, but their descendants had not had a land to stand on;<sup>3</sup> Tang and Wu were installed as kings, but their descendants perished. Was it not because of ambition?”

“Furthermore, I have heard that in ancient times, there were more beasts and birds than human beings. People lived in tree houses to evade their attacks. In the day they collected nuts; at night they slept on wood. Therefore, they were known as people of You Chao.<sup>4</sup> Ancient people did not know how to cover their bodies. In the summer they collected woods; in the winter they burned them. Therefore, they were known as people knowing how to live. At the time of Shen Nong, people went to bed in peace and woke up satisfied. They knew their mothers, but not their fathers. They lived with the tailed deer. They plowed in order to eat and weaved in order to clothe. They never had intention of hurting one another. This was the zenith of the supreme virtue. Unfortunately, King Huang could not prevail the virtue and went to battle against Chi You in the wilderness of Zhuolu causing bloodshed over one hundred *li*. Kings

Yao and Shun succeeded him and established ministries. Later, King Tang exiled his King Jie and King Wu killed his King Zhou. From then on, the strong overpowered the weak, the big overwhelmed the small. Ever since Kings Tang and Wu, a reckless mob has ruled the land.

This is a brief narrative of the prehistoric period and early history of China. The last sentence of text covers a period of nearly 1511 years (1766 to 255 B.C.). This was a blatant denouncement of a long standing political system. Confucius was one of many not satisfied with the system (see Section A of the Introduction). He was against revolution *per se* as it always ended with death of countless innocent people. He preached ways to improve and rejuvenate the system without turning the society upside down. Suddenly, we read political commentaries from the mouth of a brigand. In essence, his comments were similar to what we have been reading elsewhere in this book. The brigand continued.

“Now you promote the doctrines of Kings Wen and Wu, control the debates of the world, and leave legacies to later generations. You put on a wide robe with a loose waist belt. You spread lies and hypocritical deeds to delude leaders of the world with your zeal of wealth and eminence. There is not a greater robber than you. Why does the world not call you Qiu, the Brigand and call me Zhi, the Brigand?”

“You used soft words to win over Zilu and made him take off his high hat, disarm his long sword, and accept you as his tutor. Everyone would say that Kong Qiu could stop violence and prohibit wrong doings. In the end Zilu wanted to murder the head of the Wei State, but his plan fouled. He was killed at the east gate and his corpse was chopped into pieces. You talked Zilu into facing this catastrophe, for he was neither able to protect himself nor capable of succeeding like a man. This means that your instructions failed him.

According to *The Analects*, Zilu was intrepid, but lacking strategy. More than once, Confucius cautioned him to calm down. It was also not factual that Confucius played a role in Zilu's death.

“Do you call yourself a gifted scholar or a sage? You have been exiled from the Lu State twice and prohibited to reside in the Wei State, have accomplished nothing in the Qi State, have been surrounded between the Chen and Cai States, and have not been welcomed elsewhere. How can your teachings be of any value? “The world honors none more than King Huang. But King Huang’s virtue was not perfect. He led a battle in the wilderness of Zhoulu, resulting in bloodshed over one hundred *li*. King Yao was not tender-hearted, King Shun was not filial, King Yü was partially paralytic, King Tang exiled his king, and King Wu defeated King Zhou. These six men have been revered by the people of the world, but when scrutinized, they all lost their nature because of ambitions and they all violated their temperaments because of strength. They should have been shameful of what they did.

In the preceding two paragraphs, the historical events were correctly stated. But their causes and effects as explained by the Daoist through the mouth of the Brigand are simplistic from the standpoint of the Confucianist.

“The world recognizes no greater worthy men than Baiyi and Shuqi. Baiyi and Shuqi declined to rule Guzhu and chose to be starved to death in the Shouyang Mountain. Their bodies were not buried. Bao Jiao maintained his lofty conduct and despised vulgarity; he embraced a dead tree and died of dehydration. Shentu Di expostulated his prince in utmost loyalty, but his remonstrance was not accepted; he weighted himself with a rock and drowned in a river to be eaten by fish and turtles. Jie Zitui was most loyal to Prince Wen while escaping with his life and sliced a piece of his leg muscle to feed his prince. Later, after returning to palace, the prince forgot about Zitui in rewarding his followers. Zitui was furious and fled to a mountain. [Soon the prince regretted his mistake and smoked the mountain to force Zitui out. But Zitui refused to come out.] He embraced a tree and was burned to death. Wei Sheng made a date with a girl under a bridge. The girl did not show up, but he refused to leave. The water level kept rising. He was drowned clinging onto a pillar. These six men, like slaughtered dogs, drowned pigs,<sup>5</sup> and

gourd-holding beggars put emphasis on name, but treated death lightly, and disregarded the essence of life.

“The world recognizes no greater loyal subjects than Prince Bi Gan and Wu Zixu. Zixu’s body was thrown into the river. Bi Gan’s heart was dissected. These two men are known to the world as loyal subjects, but finally became the laughingstocks of everyone. From what has been mentioned above to Bi Gan and Zixu, none of them is worthy of respect.

“Qiu, if what you have told me is about ghost stories, then I don’t know; if it is about men’s stories, then it is nothing more than these and I have heard all of them.

“Now let me tell you about human temperaments. The eyes want to see colors; the ears want to hear sounds; the mouth wants to taste flavors; and the ambition wants to be satisfied. A human life span of one hundred years is called high longevity; that of eighty years is called medium longevity; and that of sixty years is called low longevity. If sickness, deaths [of loved ones], and worries are excluded, a person can have hearty laughter no more than four or five days in a month. Heaven and earth exist in infinite time; a man’s life span is limited. Thus, the limited life span of a man in the infinite existence of heaven and earth is as fleeting as watching a galloping horse from a pinhole. Whoever cannot fulfill his ambition or preserve his life is not one versed in Dao.

Here the Brigand turned philosophical. He even mentioned Dao!

“What you have said is what I have thrown away. Hurry home and don’t say it again. Your ideas amount to rushing and searching for clever swindles and hollow affections. They do not perfect our true nature and are not worth talking about.”

This is a long lecture given by a brigand to a well-known educator-philosopher. The essence of his message simply is: give up what you have been doing all along and start to be a Daoist. Wow! The brigand’s name is in Chinese history books, but the time period of his gang roaming through the country is never certain. The Warring States period (475–221 B.C.) is a good guess. We

are familiar with Zhuang Zi's literary technique of writing fables, but this one is a mixture of well-known personalities of diverse characteristics in various time periods, all scrambled in one pot. Taking everything into consideration, this translator doubts very much that Zhuang Zi personally had anything to do with this section.

Confucius bowed and hastened to leave. As he got up into his carriage, he held his reins three times and lost them three times. His eyes appeared dim-sighted and his face looked like ashes. He held onto the wooden board in front of him, bowed his head and said nothing.

When they returned to the east gate of Lu, they happened to see Liuxia Ji. Liuxia Ji said, "I have not seen you for several days. It looks like you have been on a trip. Could it not be that you went to see Zhi?"

Confucius looked up the sky and sighed in answering, "Yes."

Liuxia Ji asked, "Did Zhi reject your ideas as I said before?"

Confucius said, "Yes. It was like a healthy man asking for cauterization with moxa. I was naive enough to rub a tiger's head, stroke its beard, and was almost caught in its mouth."

## Section 2

Zizhang asked Man Goude, "Why do you not cultivate your virtue? Without virtue, you will not be trusted. Without trust, you will not be appointed. Without appointment, you will not make profit. Hence, from the viewpoint of fame and on account of profit, righteousness is truly important. If we could abandon fame and profit and be introspective, even a scholar would find it hard to do without practicing righteousness even for one day."

Zizhang was a pupil of Confucius. His formal name was Zhuansun Shi. Zizhang was his courtesy name. Many disciples of Confucius used similar courtesy names, such as Zixia, Zilu, Zigong, Zihan, and Ziyou. Man Goude was a fictitious name, meaning "satisfied with improper gains."

Man Goude said, “The shameless become rich; the boasting become prominent. Those who are prominent and rich are almost always shameless and boasting. Hence, from the viewpoint of fame and on account of profit, boasting is truly important. If we could abandon fame and profit and be introspective, even a scholar would find it necessary to embrace nature.”

This section adopts a format of debate between Zizhang, a moralist, and Man Goude, a realist on the subject of fame and profit. This was their debate round one. Apparently, Man Goude considers being shameless and boasting is simply second to human nature.

Zizhang said, “In times past, Jie and Zhou were noble as kings and wealthy as owners of the nation. Now if you would say to a laborer, ‘You behave like Jie and Zhou,’ he would feel insulted and the label unacceptable, because they were despised even by the lowly. Confucius and Mo Di were poor as private citizens. Now if you would say to a prime minister, ‘You conduct yourself like Confucius or Mo Di,’ he would lower his demeanor and apologize for his shortcomings, because they were truly admired by the educated. Therefore, a man as powerful as a king may not be admirable; a man as poor as an ordinary citizen may not be lowly. The distinction between nobility and lowliness depends on virtuous or reckless conduct.

Man Goude said, “Little thieves are imprisoned; big thieves become princes. ‘Behind the princely gates, *ren* and justice are preserved.’ Times ago, Duke Huan Xiaobai killed his older brother and then married his widowed sister-in-law, but Guan Zhong served as his prime minister. Tian Chen Zichang murdered his prince, but Confucius accepted his presents. Words may be critical of the base behaviors, but actions become accommodative of the facts. That is to say moral conflicts between words and deeds have prevailed within us. Isn’t it a contradiction? Therefore, it has been written, ‘Who is good; who is bad? Whoever succeeds is good; whoever fails is bad.’”

This was their debate round two. Each cited historical events to support his own argument. Stories associated with the several personal names, such as the wanton Kings Jie and Zhou, the powerful Duke Huan and his able prime minister, Guan Zhong, and the usurper Tian Chen, have been mentioned before. Again, Zizhang emphasized the importance of moral integrity, while Man Goude charged that there were more exceptions than the rule.

Zizhang said, "If you don't cultivate your virtue, then there will be no moral obligations between the close and the distant relatives, no protocol between the noble and the lowly ranks, and no seniority between the elder and the younger generations. What distinction will remain in the five relations and the six positions?"<sup>6</sup>

Zizhang brought up the need for observing an established human relationship in administering official as well as personal affairs.

Man Goude said, "King Yao killed his eldest son and King Shun exiled his uterine younger brother. Was there any moral obligation between the close and the distant relatives? King Tang exiled King Jie and King Wu killed King Zhou. Was there any righteousness between the noble and the lowly ranks? Jili took the title as the head of the little state from his eldest brother and Duke of Zhou sentenced his elder brother to die. Was there any order between seniority and juniority? Followers of Confucius made up false arguments and those of Mo Zi pushed forth the proposition of love without distinction. Under these conditions, how can the five relations and the six positions be maintained?"

This is the first of three paragraphs Man Goude used to conclude his debate round three with Zizhang on human relationships. Most personal names cited are familiar except Jili. Jili was the youngest of three sons of the great forebear Danfu (see Chapter 28:2). Jili was also the father of Chang, later King Wen. Danfu wished to pass the chieftaincy eventually to Chang. So he bypassed his two elder sons and let Jili take over the chieftaincy. The important point is that Jili did not ask for it and he might not even have wanted it, but his father wanted him to take it, so that someday it would pass on to Chang.

“Moreover, you are after fame and I am after profits. The reality of fame and profits is not consistent with reasoning or obvious in Dao. Once you and I debated before Wu Yue and I said, ‘Little men would die for profits. *Junzi* would die for fame. Although the rationale that they change their true nature and transform their original temperament is different, the result that they are willing to abandon what they have been doing and to sacrifice their lives for what they do not do is identical.’ That is to say, do not pursue what the little men pursue in order to recover your own nature and do not pursue what the *junzi* pursue in order to follow nature’s rationale. Leave it to nature to determine what is right or wrong. Observe what is going on around you and make timely changes. Whether it is right or wrong, maintain your flexibility to change. Complete your own idea and wander about with Dao. Do not persist in your deeds and do not promote your justice, because it will compromise your true nature. Do not run after wealth and do not craze for success, because it will lose your true nature.

Wu Yue was a fictitious person serving as a referee. The gist of the essay seems to be: preserve and follow your true nature. If your true nature is for profit, then go for it, too! What the author did not elaborate is how to identify true nature.

“Bi Gan’s heart was dissected. Zixu’ eyes were gouged. These were the calamities of loyalty. Zhi Gong<sup>7</sup> confirmed his father’s misdeed. Wei Sheng was drowned. These were the tragedies of sincerity. Bao Jiao died of dehydration. Shentu sank himself in a river. These were the casualties of purity. Confucius was not present at the bedside of his dying mother. Kuang Zi was critical of his father and left without ever seeing him again. These were the failures of righteousness. Incidents like these have been handed down from past generations and will be discussed in future generations with respect to whether scholars should use accurate expressions, adopt proper conducts, take the blame, and accept the consequences.”



This is the concluding debate between Man Goude and Zizhang. Man Goude cited historical facts to illustrate that loyalty, sincerity, purity, and righteousness often brought criticism to those who practiced them. It directly challenges Zizhang's opening statement that "even a scholar would find it hard to do without practicing righteousness even for one day."

### Section 3

Wu Zu asked Zhi He, "There have never been people who do not want to establish their names and to increase their worth. If a person is wealthy, people will come around him and show humility to him and respect of him. Having people feel humble and respectful is a way to longevity, peace of mind, and happiness. Now you don't even have this kind of idea. Is it because your intelligence is inadequate, or you know how to do it but you don't have enough energy to carry it through and only use searching the Dao as an excuse to cover up what you have not been able to forget?"

Both Wu Zu and Zhi He are fictitious names. *Wu zu* means "not satisfied," *zhi he* means "knowing harmony." We may say the former is materialistic and the latter idealistic. It would be interesting to read how a dialogue between these two types of persons would be like in an ancient society.

Zhi He said, "Suppose there is such a person, who considers others born in the same time period and living in the same village to be men of transcendence. In fact, they lack principles of direction in examining the periods of past and present, and the distinction between right and wrong, but merely integrate them into vulgarity. People abandon the important life and the most honored Dao and pursue whatever they want to pursue. This is how they understand the Dao of longevity, health, and happiness. Are they not far off? Painful sickness and tranquil happiness do not show on the face. Alarming fear and joyous passion do not show from the heart. You know what you do, but do not know why you do it. Therefore, a man as noble as being the son of heaven<sup>8</sup> and as wealthy as owning the world cannot be free from calamities."

Wu Zu said, "Wealth is ever beneficial to a man. It helps him attend goodness and acquire influences beyond what a superior man or a worthy man can reach. He assumes authority by holding up the courage of others; he assumes discrimination by mastering the counsel of others; he assumes worthiness by depending on the virtues of others; he assumes majesty like a king, although he rules nothing. Moreover, a person enjoys sounds, colors, flavors, and authority without learning and feels comfortable with them without practicing. Likes and dislikes, attractions and distractions come naturally without being taught because they are part of human nature. The world may criticize me, but who can deny human nature."

Zhi He said, "What a wise man does is motivated by what is good for the people. By not over possessing, people are satisfied with no excess to quarrel about. By doing it naturally, people make no excuse for more. In time of want, people would look for more, even searching all over the place, but they do not find themselves greedy. In time of surplus, people would decline to take more, even leaving a world of riches behind, but they do not consider themselves modest. Whether it is greed or modesty is not determined by the conditions without, but rather by the characters within. Powerful like the son of heaven, the wise man does not display his nobility before people; wealthy like the owner of the world, he does not boast his possessions before people. He weighs the probable distress and considers all possibilities. Should they be harmful to his nature, he would decline the offer and not be bothered with fame. Yao and Shun accepted the kingship after declining, not because they were kind to the world, but because they did not want the majesty to jeopardize their lives. Shan Juan and Xu You flatly rejected the kingship, not because they were insincere in their rejection, but because they would not allow official duties to burden them. These men accepted what was beneficial and declined what was detrimental. The world lauded them as men of virtues. It may be said that they did not do it for fame."

Wu Zu said, "If a person must guard his fame, toil his body, deny comforts, and maintain a frugal life, he would be like a chronically sick man, though not dead yet."

Zhi He said, "Having balance is a blessing; having surplus is a misfortune. All things follow the same rule, even more so for wealth. Today, the ears of a wealthy man are trained to sounds of musical instruments and his mouth is satiated to tastes of roasted suckling pigs and fine wines, so as to satisfy his desires and forget his duties. This suggests perplexity. He is infatuated in immense pride like hauling a load and climbing up a mountain path. This suggests burden. He incurs ill will on account of being covetous, wastes energy in planning for power, enjoys shallow affection at leisure time, and shows proud demeanor with good health. This suggests sickness. In searching for wealth, he will not be satisfied even when his wealth<sup>9</sup> stacks taller than a wall and knows not to stop. This suggests shame. He finds no use for his wealth. Despite the vexation, he insists on accumulating. This suggests worry. Inside the house, he is concerned with theft, so he keeps windows and gates shut; outside he is afraid of being attacked by robbers, so he dares not walk alone in the street. This suggests fear. These are the six biggest misfortunes of all.

"People ignore the warnings until they encounter the misfortunes. Then they exhaust their cleverness and wealth in searching unsuccessfully for peace of mind, even for one day. Therefore, from the viewpoint of fame nothing has been visible; from the standpoint of profits, nothing has been gained. That a person would exhaust body and spirit in craving for them is incomprehensible!"

These concluding remarks written in about 300 B.C. read like commentaries of today. Nothing seems to have changed in our outlook on fame and wealth for over 2000 years. This alone is truly astonishing.

## Notes

1. Qiu is Confucius' formal given name as pronounced in Chinese. In protocol, it would be humble and polite to present himself as Qiu, and it would be rude and "unthinkable" to address him as Qiu. In the following, Zhi, the Brigand addressed Confucius as Qiu. The author wanted to remind his readers that the outlaw was habitually rude.
2. The name of a musical note is used here to mean that he always spoke in the right tunes.
3. The original expression was "not enough ground in which to stick an awl," meaning no land at all.
4. You Chao was the name of an ancient chieftain who taught people to build tree houses. *Chao* literally means a bird's nest. Here it extends to include primitive tree houses for people. *You chao* means having tree houses.
5. Ancient people dressed slaughtered dogs in offerings and threw baby pigs into the river to worship the river god.
6. Both relations and positions refer to human relationships at that time. The five relations are ruler and the ruled, father and son, husband and wife, seniors and juniors, and friends. The six positions are father and uncles, brothers, mother's brothers, other family members, teachers, and friends.
7. Most of the personal names and their stories mentioned here have been narrated in the preceding section, except for Zhi Gong and the following Kuang Zi. For Zi Gong, his father led someone's sheep away, he confirmed his father's misdeed (from *The Analects*, Zi Lu). For Kuang Zi, he admolished his father, who in turn ordered him to leave. He never saw his father again. (from *The Mencius*, Li Lou lower).
8. The son of heaven is an expression used for the one who ruled the whole nation.
9. In ancient times before the invention of coins, wealth was measured by the possession of certain natural things, such as turtle shells, which could be used in exchange for other things, such as rice and tables, and services.



## A Discourse on Swords

This chapter has been identified by famous scholars, past and present, to be not merely a complete forgery of Zhuang Zi's work. It goes one step further by having nothing at all to do with the Daoist school of thought. It is a poor spurious imitation. These scholars include Han Yu (768–824) of the Tang dynasty, Su Dongpo (1036–1111), Lin Xiyi (1193–1270) of the Song dynasty, and Chen Guying of the present, to mention just a few.

Although this chapter consists of two sections, they are continuous as far as the story goes. The reader can see for himself or herself how Zhuang Zi in this chapter is portrayed as a different personality from Zhuang Zi in other chapters of this book. Both sections are translated here. However, this translator does not feel it worthwhile to annotate an outright forgery.

### Section 1

Once, King Wen of Zhao was fond of sword play. Players numbering more than three thousand assembled as knights-errant in his court. They competed before the king day and night with more than one hundred wounded and killed every year. After three years, the king never appeared to have enough of it. The state affairs were in a shambles and other princely states made plans for invasion.

Crown prince Kui was deeply worried and said to his lieutenants, "Whoever can persuade the king to stop sword play, I will reward him one thousand measures of gold." The lieutenants said, "Zhuang Zi could be the one to do it."

So the crown prince dispatched a messenger with one thousand measures of gold to see Zhuang Zi. Zhuang Zi did not accept the present, but went with the messenger to see the crown prince and said, "What do you advise me to do by bestowing me one thousand measures of gold?"

Crown prince said, "I have heard about your sagacity, my master. I respectfully present one thousand measures of gold for your servants. You do not accept it. How dare I say a word!"

Zhuang Zi said, "I have heard what you, my prince, want me to do is to sever the king's infatuation with sword play. If I speak to the king and my advice grates on his ears, I have failed your trust and will be executed. What do I need the gold for? If I succeed in convincing the king and fulfill your wishes, there is nothing in the State of Zhao I want and will not get! [What do I need the gold for now?]

The prince said, "You are right. But my royal father sees only sword players."

Zhuang Zi said, "Fine. I am good at sword playing."

The prince said, "But all the sword players my royal father sees have disheveled hair and throat-banded hats tipping down in the front. They wear upper garments shorter at the back than at the front. They look at one another with anger and roar with rage. My royal father likes them this way. Now you wear a robe and go to see him. Something is amiss."

Zhuang Zi said, "Please get the outfit ready for a sword player."

After three days, the outfit was ready. He came to see the crown prince. Together they went to see the king. The king drew a sword from its scabbard and waited for him. Zhuang Zi entered the palace gate without hastening his steps. When he saw the king, he did not kowtow. The king asked, "What do you want to advise me by going first to the crown prince?"

Zhuang Zi answered, "I have heard that Your Highness is fond of sword playing. I bring my sword to see you."

The king asked, "How can your sword conquer enemies?"

Zhuang Zi answered, "The sword of your humble subject can kill one person in ten steps and it cannot be stopped in one thousand *li*."

The king was overjoyed and said, "It is matchless in the world!"

Zhuang Zi said, "The supremacy of swordsmanship is first enticing the opponent to a weak point, giving him a chance to attack, just before his making the attack, finishing him up ahead unexpectedly. Let me try it."

The king said, "Please take a rest in a sojourn and you will be informed when preparations for a contest are done."

The king ordered a competition among his sword players for seven days. More than sixty of them were wounded or killed. Five or six of them were selected. They were armed with their swords and waiting at the palace yard. The king sent for Zhuang Zi.

The king said, "Please have a contest with the sword players today."

Zhuang Zi answered, "I have been looking for this day for some time."

The king said, "What is the length of the sword you are going to use?"

Zhuang Zi answered, "I can use any length. But I have three swords as Your Highness directs. Let me explain before trying."

The king said, "I wish to hear about the three swords."

Zhuang Zi said, "There are the sword of the son of heaven, the sword of the princes, and the sword of the common people."

## Section 2

The king asked, "What is the sword of the son of heaven?"

Zhuang Zi answered, "The sword of the son of heaven is like having the City of Shi by the Yan Brook as its point, Mount Tai of Qi as its edge, the States of Jin and Wei as its back, Zhou and the State of Song as its hilt, and the States of Han and Wei as its sheath. It is surrounded on the four sides by barbarians, enveloped by the four seasons, enclosed by the Gulf of Shandong, and tied with Mount Heng. It regulates with the five elements, judges with punishment and reward, alternates with yin and yang, supports in spring and summer, and delivers in autumn and winter. When this kind of sword moves forward, nothing can remain in



its front; when it moves upward, nothing can remain above it; when it moves downward, nothing can remain below it; when it moves sideways, nothing can remain at its sides. As it moves upward, it can cut floating clouds; as it moves downward, it can cleave the ground. Once the sword is put in action, it will bring the princes and everyone else into submission. This is the sword of the son of heaven.”

The king was at a loss of words and he asked, “What is the sword of the princes?”

Zhuang Zi replied, “The sword of the princes is like having the courageous men as its point, the incorruptible as its edge, the worthy as its back, the loyal as its hilt, and the heroic as its sheath. When this kind of sword moves forward, nothing can remain in its front either; when it moves upward, nothing can remain above it either; when it moves downward, nothing can remain below it either; when it moves sideways, nothing can remain at its sides either. It models after the round heaven above for the sun, the moon, and the stars; it models after the square earth below for the four seasons; it harmonizes with the people’s opinions in the middle for peace in the four directions. Once this sword is put in action, it roars like thunder. Within the four boundaries of the state, no one will dare to disobey the command of the prince.”

The king asked, “What is the sword of the common people?”

Zhuang Zi said, “The sword of the common people is like a person with disheveled hair in a drooping cap with coarse tassel, wearing a short-tailed coat, glaring at people, and speaking in a reproving tone. When it engages in settling an issue, it cuts off head and neck from above and lungs and liver from below. This is the sword of the common people. It cannot be different from cock fighting. Once life ends, it can no longer be useful for administering national affairs. Now, Your Highness is the sovereign of a state and yet is fond of a sword of the common people. I feel it unworthy of your position.”

Thus, the king led Zhuang Zi to the dais. The cook brought forth a feast. The king walked around the table three times.

Zhuang Zi said, “Your Highness, please be seated. I have reported to you all I know about swords.”

Thereafter, the king did not leave his palace for three months. The sword players were exasperated and committed suicide in their quarters.

As we can see clearly here, the essay presents Zhuang Zi as an adventurer with a glib tongue and willing to risk his head (if he failed) or fame and wealth (if he succeeded). More importantly, nowhere in the dialogues shows the slightest thinking of a Daoist. It has nothing whatsoever to do with Zhuang Zi the man or Daoism. It is a naked forgery. Most likely, it was the work of a so-called “vertical-horizontal” political opportunist near the end of the Warring States period (see Section A of the Introduction).



## The Old Fisherman

There are two continuous sections consisting of a spurious dialogue between Confucius and a fisherman on the subject of Dao. The fisherman had apprehended Dao and Confucius wanted to follow him.

### Section 1

Confucius was taking a journey to the Black Forest. He took a rest by sitting on a high spot near a river. His pupils were reading, while he was singing and playing a *qin* not half way through.

An old fisherman got off his boat and came over. His beard and eyebrows were glistening white and his hair was disheveled. Waving his sleeves, he walked up along the bank and stopped at a dry spot. With his left hand on his knee and his right hand under his chin, he listened. When the music stopped, he motioned to Zigong and Zilu. Both men came to him.

The visitor pointed at Confucius and asked, "Who is he?"

Zilu answered, "A *junzi* from Lu."

The visitor asked about his family. Zilu said, "His family name is Kung."

The visitor asked, "What is Master Kung doing?"

Before Zilu answered, Zigong said, "As to Master Kung, his nature is to observe loyalty and trustworthiness, his life is to practice *ren* and justice, to polish rites and music, to put human relationships in order, to be loyal to the chief above and to move the hearts of people below, so as to benefit the world. These are what Master Kung is doing."

Again he asked, "Is he the chief of a territory?"

Zigong answered, "No."

"Is he an advisor to a king?"

Zigong answered, "No."

The visitor smiled and said on leaving, "As *ren* is concerned, he is a man of *ren*, but I am afraid that he cannot avoid losing his life. He exhausts his mind and labors his body, but risks losing his true self. What a pity that he is so far away from Dao!"

Zigong returned and reported to Confucius. Confucius pushed away his *qin*, stood up and said, "A sage he is!" He rushed down to find him. When Confucius came to the riverbank, the fisherman was about using his pole to punt his boat. He saw Confucius coming, stopped, and stood facing Confucius. Confucius backed up a few steps, bowed, and walked forward.

The visitor asked, "What is the matter?"

Confucius said, "A little while ago, you did not finish what you wanted to say. I am not smart enough to understand its implications. I am respectfully waiting here to listen to your good words that will help me."

The visitor said, "Ah! You are truly a man given to study."

Confucius kowtowed and stood up, saying, "I, Qiu, have been studying since youth to this day. I am sixty-nine-years-old and have not had a chance to listen to your instructions. How I dare not be diffident!"

The visitor said, "The same kind of living beings lives together; the same pitch of sounds resonates one another. These are natural phenomena. I wish to explain what I know to help you do what you wish to do. What you wish to do concerns human affairs. There are the son of heaven, princes, ministers, and common people. When each class does its duties properly, there will be perfect peace. When each class does not do its duties properly, there will be chaos. Officers fulfill their obligations and common people are content with their own business. So there will be no conflicts. Thus, when fields are left unplowed and houses are allowed to deteriorate, clothing and foods are inadequate, taxes and duties cannot be collected, wives and concubines are not harmonious, and the old and the young are out of order,

then the people are worried. When abilities are not suitable for the positions, official duties are not well performed, moral standards are not beyond reproach, the inferiors are allowed to idle, meritorious performance is lacking, and official titles and emoluments are not guaranteed, then the ministers are worried. When princely courts have no loyal ministers, states are in chaos, technical workers are not skillful, articles of tribute to the throne are mediocre, spring and autumn audiences to the throne are out of order, and things are not to the liking of the son of heaven, then the princes are worried. When yin and yang are not harmonious, cold and hot seasons do not come on time, resulting in poor farm produce, various princes are at war with one another, causing sufferings of the people, use of rites and music is not regulated, national treasury is empty, human relationships are degraded and people feel free to debauch, then the son of heaven is worried. Now you not only do not have the power of a king or prince, but also do not hold an office of an influential minister. And yet you arbitrarily revise the rites and music, reemphasize the human relationships, and re-educate the people. Are you not trying to do too much?

“Moreover, you should not ignore that men are subject to eight foibles and human affairs entail four misdeeds. Doing what is not his business in doing is called over-eagerness. Talking about matters while the intended listener is not listening is called garrulity. Saying only what the listener would like to hear is called flattery. Speaking without regard to right or wrong is called ambiguity. Wanting to speak about faults of others is called calumny. Ignoring friends and relatives is called corruption. Pretending to praise, but really to undermine others is called wickedness. Distinguishing not what is good or evil and minding only what he wants is called treachery. These eight foibles baffle others without and harm the instigator himself within. *Junzi* do not want him to be a friend; discriminating kings do not want him to be in their courts.

“The so-called four misdeeds are: Wishing to make important decisions and to change the established procedure in order to be successful and famous is called avarice. Being proud of his

intelligence and doing things arbitrarily regardless of interfering with others is called arrogance. Seeing errors but failing to correct them and making more errors if advised not to do so is called intransigence. Considering opinions agreeable as good and disagreeable as bad is called haughtiness. When you are free from the eight foibles and the four misdeeds, you will be ready for instruction.”

## Section 2

Confucius sighed with anxiety, kowtowed, and stood up, saying, “I, Qiu, have been exiled twice from Lu, barred from entry to Wei, cited for trees to be cut in Song, and surrounded between Chen and Cai. I do not know what mistakes I made to incur these four detractions.”

The visitor was obviously disappointed and said, “Verily, it is so hard for you to apprehend. There is a person who is afraid of shadows and dislikes footprints and tries to run away from both of them. The more he runs the more footprints he makes. When he runs faster, his shadow is not farther from his body. He thinks he is not running fast enough, so he runs faster and faster, until he collapses and dies. He does not know to stay under the shade to make his shadow disappear and to remain still to keep his footprints minimal. Foolish indeed is he. Now you examine the common ground between *ren* and justice, observe the boundary between similarities and differences, study the changes between motion and rest, regulate the degree between giving and receiving, deliberate the conditions between the likes and dislikes, harmonize the control of joy and anger. They have almost cost your life. Carefully take care of your body, carefully observe the truthfulness, let things and people be as they would, then you will have no worries. Now you do not take care of yourself, but ask for helps from others. Are you not overly naive?”

Confucius asked anxiously, “May I ask what truthfulness is?”

The visitor said, “Truthfulness is the zenith of utmost sincerity. Without utmost sincerity, you cannot move people. Therefore, he whose weeping is forced may sound grieved, but not

mournful; he whose anger is forced may look severe, but not awful; he whose affection is forced may look smiling, but not harmonious. True grief is mournful without sound; true anger is awful before lashing; true affection is harmonious before smiling. That which is inside is truthfulness; that which moves outside is spirit. Hence, truthfulness is precious. How we apply it is based on our rationale. In caring for our parents, it becomes filial piety; in serving our rulers, it becomes loyalty; in drinking wine, it becomes joys and pleasures, and in attending funeral services, it becomes mourning. Loyalty is mainly for the sake of fame; drinking wine is mainly for the sake of joy; attending funeral services is mainly for the sake of mourning; caring for parents is mainly for the sake of their comfort. Merits of success come in more than one way. Caring for parents for their comfort does not need to know the reasons. Drinking wine for enjoyment does not require elaborate tableware. Attending funeral services for mourning does not have to ask about ritual protocol. Rites are what the vulgar people would observe. Truthfulness is what we receive from nature, natural and unchangeable. This is the reason that sainted men model after nature and value truthfulness, for they do not care about vulgarity. Foolish people do exactly the opposite. They cannot model after nature or be sympathetic with people. They do not value truthfulness. They hurry here and there looking for changes to vulgarity. Hence, they know no satisfaction. It is regrettable that you were infatuated with artifacts too early in life and are learning the great Dao too late.”

Confucius again kowtowed and stood up, saying, “I am very fortunate to have met you today. I beg that you do not find it shameful to accept me as your pupil and would personally instruct me later. May I ask where you live, so that I can come to learn the great Dao?”

The visitor said, “I have heard to instruct those who can be instructed even with the great Dao, but be careful not to instruct those who cannot be instructed, so as to be blameless. Exert yourself! I am leaving you now. I am leaving you now.” He poled his boat and left along the reed-grown riverbank.



Yan Yuan turned the carriage around and Zilu handed over the reins. Confucius was not looking. Not until the ripples calmed down and the sounds of sculling were not heard did he dare get up to his carriage.

Zilu, standing by the carriage asked, "I have been your disciple for a long time. I have not seen you, my master, being so respectful to a person. When the king of the nation or the head of a state met you on equal terms, you still showed a demeanor of haughtiness. Now this old fisherman holding a pole stood face to face with you and you bowed low and even kowtowed before asking a question. Did you not go too far? We, your pupils, would all feel strange about why you let the fisherman get this kind of treatment."

According to *The Analects*, Zilu was a straightforward young man. He said what he thought; he did what he said. But the following comments of Confucius about himself as a Daoist and about Zilu as a wayward fellow are both fictitious.

Confucius, leaning on the crossbar at the front of the carriage, sighed and said, "Verily, how difficult it is for you to change. You have been imbued in *ren* and justice for some time, but you have not gotten rid of vulgarity in your outlook. Come close, let me tell you. Lacking proper respect in meeting an elder is to compromise the rites. Lacking proper respect in meeting a worthy man is to compromise *ren*. If he were not a superior man, he could not have made people humble [before him]. A person being humble without the utmost sincerity cannot preserve his native truthfulness. Being unable to preserve his native truthfulness will lead to self-inflicted injury. It is regrettable that you alone incur the greatest misfortune by showing no *ren* toward people. Furthermore, Dao is the source of all things. Living things that lose Dao will die and those that possess Dao will live. Enterprises that are contrary to Dao will fail, and those that are in conformity with Dao will succeed. Therefore, a sage honors wherever there is Dao. Now we may say that there is Dao in the fisherman. How dare I not be respectful [before him]!"

In the closing remarks by Confucius, he not only spoke like a Daoist, but also assumed himself to be one who could “sense” the presence of Dao. If he had apprehended Dao at such a high level, why would he need instructions from the fisherman? Moreover, if the fisherman had a higher level of apprehension of Dao than Confucius had, why could he not apprehend the Dao in Confucius? There seems something amiss in the writer’s formulation of his story.

As has been mentioned elsewhere, Chinese scholars, ancient and modern, have cast serious doubts on the authenticity of the four chapters to be the works of Zhuang Zi. They are Abidation, Zhi, the Brigand, A Discourse on Swords, and The Old Fisherman. Everyone has agreed that A Discourse on Swords (Chapter 30) has nothing to do with Zhuang Zi whatsoever—100 percent forgery. The other three chapters have at least some connections to Zhuang Zi in the ways of Daoist thinking. These chapters, as a whole, were written either by Zhuang Zi’s disciples or by his admirers even later. Chinese scholars believe that Zhuang Zi had no part in writing them at all. Moreover, they believe that Zhuang Zi wrote completely only some of the remaining twenty-nine chapters and partly or none at all of the others. Their opinions are based on (1) the syntax and (2) the thought behind it. Both are difficult to describe, let alone to define. But an example can be given. Take the fisherman’s deliberations as in his dialogue with Confucius in this chapter. They are lengthy, repetitive, and more importantly, lacking profound ideas and literary beauty. Then read again, for example, Chapters 1:1, 2:4, 3:2, 17:1 for comparison.



## 32

### Lie Yukou

There are twelve totally unrelated sections in this chapter. Some sections are as short as two or three sentences. A few sections contain stories about Zhuang Zi. They help us understand this man a little more.

#### Section 1

Lie Yukou was going to the State of Qi. He turned back after having gone half the way and met Baihun Wuren. Baihun Wuren asked, “Why are you coming back?”

Lie Yukou is the personal name of Lie Zi, who lived sometime between Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. Baihun Wuren, is a fictitious name of a Daoist, first mentioned in Chapter 5:2.

Lie Zi said, “I was frightened.”

Baihun asked, “Frightened of what?”

Lie Zi said, “I have been to ten stores selling bean milk and five of them gave it to me free.”

Baihun asked, “So why were you frightened?”

Lie Zi said, “When the sentiment inside is not dissipated, it appears outside as brilliance, which in turn innocently subdues others in making them honor me more than elders. All this could be a prelude to disasters later. Sellers of bean milk did a small trade, made little profit, and had no influence. Yet they still did a favor to me. Think of what a king of a state could do for me! I have prepared myself to serve my country and to use my wisdom

to administer public affairs. The king will appoint me to a position and will reward me according to my merits. That is why I was frightened.”

Baihun said, “Your observation is excellent. You just take it easy. People will support you.”

Not long afterwards, Baihun went to see him and found the front of his gate was full of shoes.<sup>1</sup> Baihun stood facing north<sup>2</sup> with his chin resting on his long staff. After a while, he left without saying a word.

An usher reported the scene to Lie Zi. Lie Zi picked up his shoes, still bare-footed, hurried to the gate, and called out, “My master, since you are here, why won’t you enlighten me?”

Baihun said, “There’s none at all. I did tell you that people would support you. They do support you, not because you can make people support you, but because you cannot make people not to support you. Why should you make people happy in such a way in showing you are different from all of us? There must be some feeling in your heart that alters your nature. This may be something hard to say. Those who are with you do not tell you [the truth]. Those little talks are but poisons. Without roused consciousness, how can there be mutual affection. Skillful men toil and wise men worry. Men with no talents ask for nothing except eating to the full and wandering like untied boats, empty and drifting.”

## Section 2

A man named Huan in the Zheng State was studying in Qiushi. In three years, Huan became a Confucian scholar. His fame spread to a large area and resulted in his three families<sup>3</sup> being honored. He asked his younger brother to study the teachings of Mo Zi. The Confucian and the Mohist scholars debated all the time. Their father was on the side of the younger son named Di. After ten years, Huan committed suicide. One night, the father dreamed of Huan saying, “I was the one who made your son a Mohist. Why don’t you visit my grave to see that the junipers have grown cones?”

What the creator endows men with is not their artifacts, but their nature. Their respective nature makes them develop into

their respective lives. Huan considered himself to be superior and was rude to his father like people digging into ground to make a well and then squabbling with one another as if they had made water. Therefore, it may be said that the people in the world today are like Huan. Self-righteousness is considered unwise by those with virtues, let alone by those having apprehended the Dao. In ancient times, it was called the punishment for disobeying nature.

The term “creator” is used synonymously with Dao. In the Daoist belief, Dao is everlasting in time and everywhere in space. Zhuang Zi once professed that Dao is in dung, too. (See Chapter 22:6).

Sainted men find peace in what is natural, not in what is artificial. Most people find peace in what is artificial, not in what is natural.

Zhuang Zi said, “Knowing Dao is easy, not saying it is difficult. Knowing and not saying it is in conformity with nature. Knowing and saying it is in conformity with artifacts. Superior men in ancient times conformed with nature and not with artifacts.”

### Section 3

Zhuping Man came to Zhili Yi to learn how to slaughter a dragon and spent one thousand measures of gold of his fortune. After three years, he mastered the technique, but had no chance of using his skill.

Sainted men consider that which is certain to be uncertain. So there is no wrangling. Most people consider that which is uncertain to be certain. So there will be wrangling. Along with wrangling, there is a desire of winning and profiting. Reliance on wrangling will end with disaster.

The mind and heart of an ordinary man are preoccupied with exchanging social notes and wasting energy on shallow ideas, but wishing to aid the masses and attending a state of formless oneness. In this way, he will be perplexed by the complexities of the universe; he will wear himself out before learning the state of the very beginning. As to the superior man, he will entrust

his spirit to a state of never-a-beginning and will have a deep slumber in the home of having-nothingness, like water flowing without form and originating from supreme clarity. It is a pity that the thought of an ordinary man remains trivial like a down and touches none on the great tranquility.

The first paragraph is presumed to be a statement of facts and the following paragraphs are supposed to be a commentary of the first. But it does not seem to read that way. To learn the technique of slaughtering a mystic creature is a myth in itself. Nothing that follows explores this oddity. In this example we doubt Zhuang Zi had a hand whatsoever with the idea, let alone its delivery. Wait to compare it with the following story.

#### Section 4

There was a man named Cao Shang in the State of Song. He became a minister representing the prince of Song to the court in Qin. When he arrived, he was presented with several carriages. The prince of Qin liked him so much that he presented him one hundred more carriages. When Cao Shang returned to Song, he went to see Zhuang Zi and said, "Being brought up in a slum, I had to weave my own hempen sandals. My face and neck appeared skinny and dried. These were Shang's weak points. Once I got acquainted with a king, I had one hundred horse carriages at my disposal. This was Shang's strong point."

Zhuang Zi said, "Once the prince of Qin was sick and was looking for doctors. He who could treat facial abscesses got one carriage. He who could operate on the hemorrhoid got five carriages. The lower the treatment, the more the carriages. Did you not operate on his hemorrhoid? Otherwise, how could you get so many carriages? You better leave now!"

Of course, Zhuang Zi was sarcastic with a sense of humor about his visitor's boasting. By nature, Zhuang Zi despised anything that was related to government services. He turned the pride of his visitor into ridicule. In contrast to the preceding "wishy-washy" exposition, this is a succinct essay of a human weakness. If he did

not write this story, he probably had told it to his pupils and one of them wrote it later, for his sarcasm blended with humor was hard to imitate.

### Section 5

Duke Ai of Lu asked Yan He, “I consider Zhongni to be a pillar. Will the state be in peace?”

Yan He was a worthy man. Zhongni was Confucius’ courtesy name.

The answer: “It is dangerous and risky! Zhongni is good at ornamental skills and fond of literary elegance. He takes the periphery as the principal and affects his character before people unaware of his own insincerity. He considers what he does comes from his heart and follows his intuition. How can he lead the people? Will he get along well with you? Will he take good care of the people? I am sure he will not live up to your expectation. Now telling people to abandon reality and learn artifacts is not setting a role model. For the sake of future, it is better to table the idea. It will be difficult to have peace.”

### Section 6

Giving to people without forgetting is not a natural giving. Merchants do not feel worthwhile to talk about it, although they might mention it on occasion. Spirited men will not talk about it.

This translator suspects that this short section is fragmentary. The second sentence is very weak and practically says nothing. The spirit of giving to people is worth elaborating, but none is apparent here.

### Section 7

There are external punishments, such as with instruments of metal and wood.<sup>4</sup> There are also internal punishments, such as with vacillating thought and regrets. Little men who incur external punishments are interrogated with metal and wood.



Those who incur internal punishments are consumed by yin and yang. Only the true men can be free from both the external and the internal punishments.

### Section 8

Confucius said, “The human heart is more hostile than mountains and rivers and is harder to understand than heaven. In heaven there are definite periods for spring, autumn, winter and summer, day and night. All men show trustworthy demeanor and deep affection. Hence, there are those who appear to be honest but are proud, who appear to be elderly but are unworthy, who appear to be accommodating but are intransigent, who appear to be sincere but are disrespectful, and who appear to be cautious but are restless. They go for justice like drinking water to quench a thirst; they run away from justice like avoiding heat. Therefore, *junzi* let them stay far away to observe their trustworthiness, let them stay close by to observe their respectfulness, let them handle complicated assignments to observe their abilities, let them solve urgent problems to observe their intelligence, let them have short deadlines to observe their creditability, let them be trusted with money to observe their incorruptibility, let them be told of crises to observe their moral integrity, let them be drunk in wine to observe their demeanors, and let them gather together with women to observe their behaviors. After all nine observations are done, unworthy men can readily be identified.”

Of course, Confucius is not known to have made these recommendations. Some of the procedures are impractical and seem no way to evaluate. It has the same shortcoming as noted before, that is, wordiness with few new ideas. If this were what Confucius could have said about the guideline used by a *junzi*, fine. There is still no fresh Daoist idea here.

### Section 9

When Zheng Kaofu was first named a scholar, he bowed his head; when he was next named a great officer of the state, he

bent forward his back; when he was last named a minister, he bent down his trunk while he was walking in the street along a wall. Who dared not model after him! An ordinary man would boast himself when first named a scholar, would dance in his carriage when next named a great officer, and would like to be called “uncle” when last named a minister. Who can be so humble like King Yao and Xu You!

Zheng Kaofu was the name of a real person. He was a minister of the State of Song. Some aspects of his life appeared in *Treatise on the Annuals of Spring and Autumn* by Zuo Qiuming (dated ca. fourth century, B.C.). He was a very humble gentleman, for each time he received an appointment more illustrious than the preceding one, he became more modest as shown by the metaphoric bending down of his body. By contrast, an ordinary man would have done it with noisy fanfare.

There is no greater tragedy than doing a good deed with a self-serving intent, like having a heart with eyelashes. Once the heart has eyelashes, it can look inward and becomes corrupt. There are five roots of misfortune: the heart, ears, eyes, tongue, and nose, the worst being the heart. What it means to be the worst is that the heart is self-conceited and it disregards everything else.

This is one of few paragraphs in this work where the heart in its moral sense is analyzed. Unfortunately, the discussion is superficial. The expression, “having the heart” (*you xin*), means “to intend” and is neutral in usage depending on what follows. It can be laudatory, such as he intends to help the underprivileged, or derogatory, such as he intends to mislead everyone. On the other hand, the expression, “having the heart-eyes” (*you xin yan*), is always contemptuous, such as in the present text, in which “eyelashes” is used instead.

Hardship has eight extremes. Versatility has three consequences. A body has six internal organs. Being handsome, bearded, tall, big, strong, elegant, brave, and courageous, a man would excel all others and would be highly demanded until exhausted. Going along with nature, following wishes of others, and being overly humble, a man would be versatile. When intelligence is exposed,

courage invites blame, *ren* and justice invites criticism. He who understands the reality of life is broad-minded. He who understands cleverness is narrow-minded. He who understands the great life follows nature. He who understands the small life finds peace everywhere.

The first paragraph is based on a historical record. The second and third paragraphs are elaborations by the author. There is some Daoist idea here.

### Section 10

A man who had an audience with the king of Song was given ten carriages. He bragged about his ten carriages before Zhuang Zi.

Zhuang Zi said, "There was a poor family by the river making a living by weaving reeds. One day the son dived down the river and got a pearl worth one thousand measures of gold. The father said to his son, "Give me a rock to crush the pearl to pieces. A pearl worth one thousand measures of gold must be under the chin of a black dragon in the deep abyss. The reason you got the pearl must be during his sleep. When the dragon wakes up, you will be completely eaten up." Now Song is deeper than the abyss, the king of Song is more ferocious than the black dragon. That you got his carriages must be during his sleep. When the king wakes up, you will be chopped into pieces."

Song was the home state of Zhuang Zi. It is almost impossible to imagine that Zhuang Zi would characterize his king as vicious as he described him near the end of his stern warning to his visitor. Undoubtedly, this essay was written by one of his disciples after his death. Another story on the carriage has been told in Section 4.

### Section 11

Someone wished to offer an appointment to Zhuang Zi. Zhuang Zi told his messenger, "Have you not seen a sacrificial ox? Clothed in colorful embroidery and served with grass and beans, until

one day, it is led into the grand sacrificial hall. Even if it wanted to be a lonely calf, how impossible it must be for the ox!”

This story sounds more Zhuangian. A similar story related to his appointment scenario is found in Chapter 17:5.

## Section 12

When Zhuang Zi was near death, his disciples wished to give him a formal funeral. Zhuang Zi said, “Heaven and earth are my coffin, the sun and the moon are my gems, stars are my pearls, all things in the world are my funeral presents. Is my funeral not complete? Why do I need anything else?”

One of his disciples said, “We are afraid that crows and hawks will peck up our master.”

Zhuang Zi said, “Above the ground, crows and hawks will peck up; below the ground, worms and ants will swarm on. Why we are so prejudiced in taking it away from one and giving it to another!”

Considering unfair to be fair makes what appears fair to be really unfair; considering unverifiable to be verifiable makes what appears verifiable to be really unverifiable. He who dazzles his own cleverness serves others. A spiritual man can verify that. It has been known that a man who dazzles cannot excel over a spiritual man. Yet a foolish man depending on his prejudice in treating people gets little tangible results. It is a pity.

This last paragraph seems to serve as a commentary to Zhuang Zi’s last words on the prejudice in all of us. True, according to his analysis, “above the ground” and “below the ground” are the same. The choice is based on several considerations, personal, ethical, etc., and may not be an issue of prejudice. Even so, it may still be an overemphasis in linking a personal choice on the one hand to the general intelligence of a man on the other. The association seems somewhat forced.

### Notes

1. It was the custom at that time that man visitors left their shoes at the gate. So, many pairs of shoes at the gate mean many visitors inside. Some Asian countries still observe the custom to this day.
2. In a meeting between a superior and an inferior, the protocol dictates that the superior faces south and the inferior faces north. It follows that main halls of a palace always face south, so that when a king or an emperor is giving an audience, he naturally faces south and his audience faces north. By inference, a person facing north is inferior to a person facing south.
3. The three families: the father's, mother's, and wife's.
4. Here they refer to chains and manacles.

## All Under Heaven

This last chapter of this work is really the first history of Chinese literature ever written. It is a brief essay as far as history goes, but the work of many prominent authors, such as Hui Zi, would have been completely lost without this chapter. So its contributions to our knowledge of early Chinese literature are beyond words. Section 1 is an introduction. Each of the following sections is devoted to one school of philosophical thought and its noted contributors from ancient times through the time this work was being written. So it is an indispensable reference on the history of early Chinese philosophical thought.

### Section 1

There are many who have studied special realms of thought all under heaven. They all consider what they have attained cannot be surpassed. “Where really is what has been called our knowledge of Dao?” The answer is: “It is everywhere.” “Where does spirituality descend on us? Where does wisdom come from?” The answer is: “Saints have been born, kings have been made. They have all originated from the One.”

This first paragraph lays out a broad scope of what will be covered in the following sections. Here spirituality and wisdom may be taken as the two states of one entity. Spirituality is the reserve of wisdom and wisdom is the appearance of spirituality. “The One” refers to Dao.

He who does not deviate from the principle is called a man of nature. He who does not deviate from spirituality is called

a spirited man. He who does not deviate from truthfulness is called a superior man. He who considers nature as his teacher, virtue as his roots, Dao as his gateway, and possesses prescience of changes to come is called a sainted man. He who lets *ren* enrich grace, righteousness enrich reasoning, rites enrich conduct, music enrich harmony, and displays kindness to all is called a *junzi*. Officers should consider obeying the law as a duty, making public statements as a guide, collecting multiple lines of evidence as a preference, and examining various factors as a basis for decision, like the numbers one, two, three, and four in sequence. Officers follow the seniority order and do their duties as usual, so that their primary needs for clothing and food are being taken care of, their desires to support a family and to have savings are met, and the old, the weak, the orphaned, and the widowed are sheltered and fed. This is the essence of caring for the people.

In the *Book of Guan Zi*, a collection of ideas and sayings of Guan Zhong (ca. 720–645 B.C.), a brilliant prime minister of Duke Huan of Qi, there is a chapter on Caring for the People (*Mu Min*), to which the second half of this paragraph bears some similarities. The *Book of Guan Zi* is considered one of early legalist writings.

Well prepared indeed were the ancient sages! They were endowed in spirituality and wisdom, modeled themselves after heaven and earth, cared for the development of all things, and kept peace in the world. Their goodness extended to all people. They clearly understood Dao being the first and the last of all things, moving in the six directions in space and in the four seasons in time, and making huge and minute changes. Their knowledge about these principles still exists in ancient historical records. Many scholars from Zhou and Lu and other intelligentsia can still describe that which is related to odes, history, rites, and music. Literature from many schools of thought has from time to time shown what has been scattered all under heaven and established in various regions in China.

A few explanatory notes on this paragraph seem helpful. (1) This paragraph of text apparently refers to the Confucianists, although no personal names are ever mentioned. Confucius honored Kings Yao and Shun and praised Kings Wen and Wu. The “ancient sages” in the opening sentence hint these kings. (2) “Many scholars from Zhou and Lu” refer to Confucius and his disciples, because Confucius’ father was conferred the town of Zhou as his fief and Lu was Confucius’ home state. Some translators have mistaken Zhou to be the hometown of Mencius. Since Zhuang Zi never mentioned Mencius in his essays, wouldn’t it be odd if he came to mention Mencius’ hometown at this point? Besides, nothing in this paragraph is related to Mencius’ ideas. (3) Reference is made to odes, history, rites, and music, because they are the titles of the four books edited by Confucius. (4) Finally, there are twenty-seven extra characters following the sentence ending with “odes, history, rites, and music,” serving to explain each one of them. Modern scholars believe these extra characters to be an explanatory note without rhetorical balance originally, but mistakenly included as text later. Hence, these extra characters are not translated herein.

The world is now in turmoil. The worthies and the sages disappear in obscurity. Dao and De are not understood uniformly. People hold on to their own favorite viewpoints. For example, ears, eyes, nose, and mouth each has its own specific functions, but each one of them cannot function like any one else. Or, this may be like many artisans each with a specialty and being useful only on a certain occasion. However, without a broad knowledge of the field, they can only be narrow-minded scholars. Judging the beauty of the world, analyzing the rationale of all things, and observing the thoroughness of the ancients, few [of these scholars] can comprehend the beauty of the world and the nobility of the spirit. Therefore, the doctrines that inspire sainthood within and peaceful governance without have been made obscured and smothered in ambiguity. Each scholar does what he wants to formulate his own teachings. It is a pity that the various schools of philosophical thought have gone astray and will not regroup again. Scholars of future generations, unfortunately, will not see the beauty of the world or a complete picture of the thought of



the ancients. Thus, the fundamental knowledge of man and the universe will be broken up.

Here Zhuang Zi expressed his deep worries that the whole philosophical thought from the ancient times to his own time would be broken up into pieces as each philosopher cultivated his own field of interest. We may take his worries to be the reason he penned this chapter. If so, the following sections represent his judgment of value of the many schools of thought, in addition to the Confucianists as narrated in a preceding paragraph. It is interesting to note, nonetheless, that he wrote separate sections, one for Lao Zi and one for himself, despite the fact that these two men were closely related in their deliberations of Dao. By the way, this very fact also gives the dissenters a chance to argue that Zhuang Zi really did not write this chapter, for he would not be so arrogant to place himself as an equal of Lao Zi. The reader is entitled to form his or her own opinion.

## Section 2

Some of the ancient teachings in philosophy have the characteristics as follows: not leaving an example of extravagance to posterity, not wasting one single thing in the world, or not glorifying rules and rites, but examining oneself with strict discipline, so as to be prepared for the immediate need of the world. Mo Di<sup>1</sup> and Qin Guli<sup>2</sup> heard of these teachings and were delighted. They practiced them too rigidly and they made themselves work too harshly. [ Mo Zi ] wrote an essay against music and taught the importance of thrift, such that there was no singing in life or funeral in death. He practiced love for all, insisted on benefits for all, and preached against war. He taught people not to be mad at one another. Moreover, he studied diligently and was well informed, but he did not make himself different from all others. He did not support the teachings of ancient kings and favored to abolish the ancient music and rites.

In ancient music, there were the *Xian Chi* of King Huang, the *Da Zhang* of King Yao, the *Da Shao* of King Shun, the *Da Xia* of King Yu, the *Da Huo* of King Tang, the *Bi Yong* of King Wen, and the *Wu* of King Wu and Duke Zhou. Ancient funeral

ceremonies demanded strict distinction between the noble and the lowly. The coffin of a king had seven layers, that of a prince had five layers, that of a minister had three layers, and that of a scholar had two layers. Then Mo Zi alone proposed that one should not sing in his lifetime or be buried with ceremonies, but only with a three-inch thick wood coffin without layers as the standard for all. In teaching people to do so, he did not seem to love people. In imposing himself to do so, he certainly showed no love for himself. Although these harsh practices have not made the teachings of Mo Zi less popular, what kind of teachings this would be like when one must not sing when he wants to sing, when one must not cry when he wants to cry, when one must not rejoice when he wants to rejoice! He was diligent in life and trifling after death. His teachings are too severe. They make people toil and worry. What he stood for is hard to reach and is probably not the way of the sages. It is against the mood of the people and the people cannot tolerate it. Although Mo Zi himself could take it, the people cannot. Being separated from the people, it is far from bringing peace to the world.

Mo Zi used to profess: "When King Yu was trying to control the flood, he guided the water into rivers and channeled it into the sea through the four barbarian regions and the nine regions in China proper. There were three hundred main rivers and three thousand tributaries and numerous small ones. Yu himself worked with hand tools to divert water, such that his calves had little muscles left and his shins became hairless. He bathed in heavy rain and combed his hair with swift wind to bring safety to all lands. Yu was a great sage. He sacrificed himself so much for the sake of the world." Henceforth, Mohist followers often use sheep hide and coarse cloth for clothing and wear wooden slippers or straw sandals. They work ceaselessly day and night to wear down themselves, saying: "Doing otherwise is not the way of Yu and is not worthy of being called Mohists."

The disciples of Xiangli Qin and Wu Hou, and the associates of the southern Mohists Ku Huo, Ji Chi, and Dengling Zi all studied the *Mo Jing*,<sup>3</sup> But each of these men interpreted it differently and called each other the "revisionists." They criticized

each other on the true meanings of the distinction between hardness and whiteness, between similarities and differences, and between oddness and evenness. They regarded the leader of their movement as their sage and were willing to honor him as their master and hoped to carry on his work. The issue has not been settled even to this day.

Zhuang Zi (ca. 369–286 B.C.) lived nearly one hundred twenty years after Mo Zi (ca. 490–403 B.C.). So, “to this day” in the last sentence of this paragraph means in Zhuang Zi’s time, or nearly 120 years after Mo Zi’s death. The three well-known arguments (hardness vs. whiteness, similarities vs. differences, and oddness vs. evenness) mentioned in this paragraph of text were first proposed by Mo Zi as shown in the *Mo Jing*. Afterwards, they became the favorite subjects of the sophists, particularly Gongsun Long and Hui Shi, contemporaries of Zhuang Zi, as we shall see at the end of this chapter. Clearly, the sophists did not formulate these arguments; they elaborated them and helped their popularity.

The intentions of Mo Di and Qin Guli are laudable, but their ways of carrying them out are not. They will make future generations of Mohists work until their calves have few muscles left and their shins become hairless. This is good in time of chaos and bad in time of peace. Even so, Mo Zi was still the most honorable man of the world. We rarely find another one like him. He would not compromise his ideal, even if it turned his body into a living skeleton. He was truly a talented man.

### Section 3

Some of the ancient teachings in philosophy have the characteristics as follows: not being bothered by vulgarity, not being attracted to decorum, not making harsh demands from others, and not going against public opinions, but hoping peace in the world in protecting the lives of the people and in providing sufficient livelihood for everyone and thus expressing the utmost sincerity from the bottom of the heart. Song Jian and Yin Wen<sup>4</sup> heard of these teachings and were delighted. They wore their hats

in the shape of Mount Hua<sup>5</sup> to express their desire, they started looking at all things without prejudice, they spoke of the tolerance in their hearts as the beginning of their actions, and they adopted a warm attitude toward the happiness of others, such that all people would be content in making their hearts the masters of their actions. They did not feel offended when ridiculed, they resolved conflicts among people, they were against wars and for disarmament, and they tried to eliminate wars among the states. They traveled through the kingdom to preach their teachings to the men in power and the masses. Although few listened, they did not stop talking and seeking audience.

Nevertheless, [Song Jian and Yin Wen] did too much for others and too little for themselves, in saying, “Even a meal with five *sheng*<sup>6</sup> of rice is adequate.” Not only could the masters not be satisfied, but also the disciples would still be hungry. But they did not forget the sufferings in the world. They worked day and night, in saying, “We must continue to live!” Great were these saviors of the world! They said, “*Junzi* should not be critical of others and should not let things control them. Make clear what is disadvantageous to the world and do nothing for it.” On the one hand, they were against aggression and for disarmament. On the other hand, they demanded a restraint in exorbitant desires from many of us. Such are their teachings and their practices, big and small, gross and delicate.

#### Section 4

Some of the ancient teachings in philosophy have the characteristics as follows: being just without affiliation, being easy without prejudice, being selfless without subjectivity, treating all things equally without discrimination, having no worries, seeking no craftiness, showing no preference in the selection of things, and participating in the activities of their changes. Peng Meng, Tian Pian, and Shen Dao<sup>7</sup> heard of these teachings and were delighted. They proposed equality of all things<sup>8</sup> as the starting point and elaborated, “Heaven can cover all, but cannot support all; earth can support all, but cannot cover all. The great Dao

can encompass all, but cannot discriminate all. Everything has its capabilities and limitations. Therefore, any one selection cannot be made popular and any one instruction cannot be made complete. Only with Dao, nothing will be missed.”

Therefore, Shen Dao abandoned intelligence and the self, did only what he had to do, and felt light-hearted toward all things as his principle in living, for he said, “Searching for knowledge of what is not known will result in harming the wholesomeness of the searcher.” Being inattentive and wayward, he ridiculed the honor given to the worthy men of the world; being care-free and romantic, he demeaned the awe paid to the great sages of the world. He followed by turning around and around, went along with others in changing, and abandoned the distinction between right and wrong, such that he could be free from entanglement. He employed no craftiness or strategy and he did not look at the front or back; he stood lofty alone. When pushed, he walked one step; when dragged, he moved a little. He was like a breeze blowing back and forth, a feather whirling down, or a grindstone turning around, protecting himself from blame and making no mistakes in doing something or nothing, so that he would not be guilty of anything. Why this is so? Those things without reasoning do not make worries for themselves. Being not bothered by reasoning, they always act in accordance with the rule of nature and they will never be blamed. Therefore, he said, “When we are like those without reasoning, we should be satisfied. We need no sages or worthy men. Even a lump of mud has not lost Dao.” Critics ridicule him in saying, “The teachings of Shen Dao are not for live persons, but for dead ones. They make the man odd.”

Tian Pian was just like that. He studied under Peng Meng and learned the wordless transmission [of knowledge]. The teacher of Peng Meng said, “The ancients apprehending Dao stopped at the point where they were not influenced by the idea of right or wrong. Their teachings were based on quietude beyond the expression of words.” The teachings of these scholars are often against the feelings of people and are not appreciated by people. The Dao they preached is not Dao. What they taught cannot

avoid being wrong. Peng Meng, Tian Pian, and Shen Dao did not understand Dao, but they had heard some of it.

### Section 5

Some of the ancient teachings in philosophy have the characteristics as follows: considering the fundamental to be delicate and all other things to be gross, and considering the accumulation of worldly materials insufficient and choosing to live simply with the marvelous spirits. Guan Yin<sup>9</sup> and Lao Dan heard of these teachings and were delighted. They founded the teachings of everlasting *you* and everlasting *wu* as originated from the Supreme One, such that it would be weak and humble in appearance, but in a state of emptiness it would not wish to harm one single thing in reality.

According to what is said herein, the fundamental idea of *you* and *wu* in Daoism was founded by both Guan Yin Zi and Lao Zi, and not by Lao Zi alone. When we read only the *Dao De Jing*, we could easily come away with the conception that Lao Zi alone had developed the idea. Unfortunately, this paragraph is short in presenting the common teachings of these two men. The following paragraph on Guan Yin is also short. So we really don't know much about him.

Guan Yin said, "There should be no selfishness in anyone of us. Everything that has a finite form would reveal itself. It would move like water, remain still like a mirror, and respond like an echo. Indistinctly, it would seem to have disappeared. In quietude, it would become clear and vacuous. Similarity brings harmony. Avarice leads to loss. Never try to be the first, but always try to follow others."

Lao Dan said, "Recognize the strong, keep the weak, and be the brook of the world; recognize the bright, keep the dark, and be the valley of the world.<sup>10</sup> People are eager to take the first, I alone am happy to take the last.<sup>11</sup> I am willing to accept the slander of the world. While others opt for reality, I alone opt for emptiness. Because there is no storage, there is always a surplus."

The way he conducted himself is slow and easy, doing it naturally and ridiculing craftiness of others. People beg for blessings, but he would accept grievances in exchange for innocence and said: "I only beg for freedom from reproach." He believes in depth for foundation and simplicity for guidance. He said, "What is hard can be crushed and what is sharp can be blunted. Be kind to all things and do not act to the detriment of others." These teachings may be said to have reached the climax. Guan Yin and Lao Dan were the ancient true greats.

Some of the quotations of Lao Zi in this paragraph are taken from the text edited by Chen Guying (2-b), who has corrected and deleted certain passages in the so-called general edition. We should understand fully the strength of masculinity, but we should choose to stay with the yielding of femininity. Both the brook and the valley symbolize lowliness.

### Section 6

Some of the ancient teachings in philosophy have the characteristics as follows: considering life as indistinct and formless, changeable and unpredictable; being together with heaven and earth or going with the spirits in life and death; and being confused about whither or where to go. They contain all things, but they know not where to stop. Zhuang Zhou heard of these teachings and was delighted. With abstract terms, strange remarks, and eccentric statements, he let his fantasies go wild, not holding on to a narrow view. He considers the world is dull and cannot appreciate serious talk. Thus, he used inadvertent sayings for free referencing, quotations for reality, and allegories<sup>12</sup> for ease of understanding. He communicated in spirit with heaven and earth without looking down at all things or insisting on right or wrong, but always in consonant with vulgarity. Although his writings are marvelous, they are reticent. His sayings are various, but they are beautiful. He was realistic without limits. He was a companion of the creator in wandering about and a friend of those who forgot to distinguish life and death, beginning and end. He talked about the fundamentals of Dao as big and open,

deep and broad. He talked about the principles of Dao, as harmonious and discrete reaching to the zenith. Even so, he adapted to changes and was free from the bondage by physical things. His doctrines are endless; their sources do not depart from Dao. In a formless and confused state, they cannot be defined.

Did Zhuang Zi write this section himself or did he write the rest of this chapter and his disciple wrote this section afterwards? Traditionally, Chinese scholars, such as Wei Zhengtong (41), have considered that Zhuang Zi succeeded Lao Zi by developing the Dao into a more comprehensive, independent school of philosophical thought. Elsewhere in this book, Zhuang Zi often quoted passages from Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing*. Hence, the combined term, "Lao Zhuang," has been used wherever the work of these two men are referred to collectively. The reader may want to refresh his or her reading of Section C in the Introduction. Now, in every other section of this chapter, at least two men having similar contributions are mentioned together. Why only is Zhuang Zi alone mentioned in this section? Regardless of the fact that Zhuang Zi's philosophy has been fully presented elsewhere in this book, why did the author write a longer review for Zhuang Zi than for Lao Zi? For whatever we know about Zhuang Zi as a man, would he have done this for himself as the author? A reasonable answer to these questions would suggest that not Zhuang Zi himself, but one of his disciples, with due respect for his master, was the author of this section.

## Section 7

Hui Shi had knowledge of many disciplines. His books filled five carts. His teachings involved divergent topics and his words were often pompous.

With respect to his analysis of the rationale of things, he said, "The biggest that has nothing outside of it is called the Big One. The smallest that has nothing inside of it is called the Small One. A thing that has no thickness cannot be piled up, but it can extend [sideways] to one thousand *li*. Heaven is as low as earth and mountains are at the same level as wetlands. The moment the sun reaches its zenith, it reaches its nadir; the moment a living thing is being born, it is dying. The difference between



the major similarity and the minor similarity is called the minor similarity and difference. All things are different and yet they are similar; these are called the major similarity and difference. The south is infinite and yet finite. Today a person goes to Yue and yesterday he arrived there. Joined rings can be detached. I know the center of the world; it is north of Yan and south of Yue. Give love to all things; heaven and earth are but one entity.”

These are the ten propositions of Hui Shi (ca. 370–300 B.C.), presented here as a quotation of what he said. Unfortunately, his elaborations on these propositions were completely lost. Otherwise, we could have learned what evidence he used to support his propositions. Let us make a brief notation for each one of them as follows:

(1) “The biggest that has nothing outside of it is called the Big One. The smallest that has nothing inside of it is called the Small One.” Is the universe the biggest? Can we be sure there is nothing beyond it? On the other hand, physicists are still searching for the smallest particle that makes up matter.

(2) “A thing that has no thickness cannot be piled up, but it can extend [sideways] to one thousand *li*.” Hui Zi recognizes that a two-dimensional plane, which has zero thickness, can extend its area indefinitely (or one thousand *li* in a figure of speech).

(3) “Heaven is as low as earth and mountains are at the same level as wetlands.” Hui Zi seemed to have understood the concept of relativity. If we could look at the earth from a point far out in space, mountains and wetlands would appear level.

(4) “The moment the sun reaches its zenith, it reaches its nadir; the moment a living thing is being born, it is dying.” This also can be explained on relativity of time or space. If one looks at the sun at its zenith from a certain point on earth, someone else looks at the sun from another point on earth at the same moment may see it at its nadir. Again, whether a given time period is long or short is also relative. Zhuang Zi once wrote that a legendary 800-year-old man Peng Zu may be considered short-lived (cf. Chapter 2:5). Everything is relative.

(5) “The difference between the major similarity and the minor similarity is called the minor similarity and difference. All things are different and yet they are similar; these are called the major similarity and difference.” Similarity and difference in this proposition refer to living things, both animals and

plants. One simpler explanation of the proposition is to use the concepts of species and family in biology. Members of several species of a given family (e.g. tea) have certain common characteristics. They are referred to as major similarity. Members of several species of different families (e.g. tea and rose) also have certain common characteristics. They are referred to as minor similarity. Then, the difference between these two kinds of similarity is called the minor similarity and difference. When we trace from a certain family upwards eventually to the plant kingdom, then all plants in the kingdom have their common characteristics. These are referred to as the final similarity. Likewise, when we trace downwards eventually to each individual plant, then each plant has its own characteristics differing from all others. These are referred to as the final difference. What Hui Zi tried to show us is that similarity and difference are only *relative* depending on what we use to measure them.

(6) “The south is infinite and yet finite.” The earth is like a globe. So we could point south and go around and around. This implies that the south is infinite. But according to the first proposition, the biggest has nothing outside of it, so the south must stop somewhere. Of course, what is said about the south is equally applicable to any other direction.

(7) “Today a person goes to Yue and yesterday he arrived there.” Yue was the name of a region in southern China at that time. This shows relativity of time. As the planet earth is like a globe, what is today in one region can be yesterday or tomorrow in another region. See (9) below.

(8) “Joined rings can be detached.” The statement does not specify the conditions. Yes, it can be broken with a chisel and detached. It can be detached in time when the metal is corroded. In fact, the rings are in a process of being broken as soon as it is made. Again, there is relativity of time.

(9) “I know the center of the world; it is north of Yan and south of Yue.” Yan was the name of a region in northern China at that time. Since the globe is round, every point on it can be its center, not necessarily in China. This shows that, at Hui Shi’s time the Chinese knew that the earth was round.

(10) “Give love to all things; heaven and earth are but one entity.” Hui Shi was an extremely intelligent person. He perceived the universe somewhat differently from his contemporaries, including Zhuang Zi. He was a sophist, far from a Daoist. Unfortunately, his original writings were totally lost. So this section and the following last section of this book on the sophists or logicians are the only “firsthand” sources to learn of the knowledge and experiences of this brilliant man.

### Section 8

Hui Shi considers what he proposed to be great and showed it to the world, particularly to the sophists. They were very fond of his sophistries: An egg has hair. A chicken has three feet. The capital city Ying contains the world. A dog may be a sheep. A horse can lay eggs. A toad has a tail. Fire is not hot. A mountain has an exit. A cartwheel does not touch the ground. Eyes do not see things. It is impossible to name a thing accurately. A tortoise is longer than a snake. A carpenter's square is not square; a compass cannot make a circle. A mortise does not surround the bit. The shadow of a flying bird has never moved. A flying arrow has its moments of stopping and flying. A puppy is not a dog. A bay horse and a black cow make three. A white dog is black. An orphan colt has never had a mother. If a one-foot long stick is cut off one half everyday, it will last forever. Hui Shi and other sophists talked about these sophistries endlessly.

Here are twenty-one sophistries of Hui Shi, which his fellow logicians were fond of arguing. Since none of his writings has survived, we have no way of knowing how he explained them. Many scholars through the centuries have tried to guess what he meant. The following is a brief sampling of what has been suggested: (1) An egg has hair: an egg has the potential of growing hair. (2) A chicken has three feet: two plus the concept of foot make three. (3) The capital city of Ying contains the world: Ying is part of the world, but based on the concept of "the final similarities" (the fifth proposition in the preceding Section 7), it may be said that Ying (or any other place for that matter) contains the world. (4) A dog may be a sheep, because they both are four-legged animals. (5) Horses lay eggs, because both viviparous and oviparous animals are animals (from the idea of the final similarities). (6) A frog has a tail: only it has atrophied. (7) Fire is not hot: heat is a subjective feeling. (8) A mountain has an opening (or a mouth): this is the most puzzling argument and no sophisticated explanation matching the wit of Hui Shi has been proposed. (9) A cartwheel does not touch the ground: only a part touches the ground at a time; a part of a wheel is not a wheel. (10) Eyes do not see things: surely not in complete darkness. (11) It is impossible to name a thing accurately: our

knowledge about the things around us is always imperfect. (12) A tortoise is longer than a snake: there are things shorter than a tortoise and longer than a snake. Long or short, big or small all are relative. (13) A carpenter's square is not square and a compass cannot make a circle: there is nothing absolutely square or round. (14) A mortise does not surround the bit: a perfect fit is not possible. (15) The shadow of a flying bird has never moved: when time and space are sectioned, in a given time the shadow takes a given space. (16) A flying arrow has its moments of flying and stopping: the argument is based on the recognition that movement is defined as an object occupying and not occupying a certain space at a given moment. (17) A puppy is not a dog: a puppy is part of a dog, not totally a dog. (18) A bay horse and a black cow make three: a horse and a cow plus the name (of bay horse and black cow) make three. This one is similar to (3) above. (19) A white dog is black. When a white dog has black eyes, it could be called a black dog. (20) An orphan colt has never had a mother: the argument considers "orphan" being equal to "never had a mother." (21) If a one-foot-long stick is cut off one half everyday, it will last forever: one half of something is always something else, never nothing.

Huan Tuan and Gongsun Long<sup>13</sup> were sophists who tantalized the hearts and confused the minds of people. They could win them in words, but could not convince their hearts. These are the limits of the sophists. Everyday Hui Shi would use his cleverness to argue with people and make up strange ideas with his fellow sophists. This is a brief description of his activities.

We know very little about Huan Tuan. But Gongsun Long was as well known as Hui Shi. His writings are mostly intact. He proposed five theses: (1) On Whiteness and Horseness: A white horse is not a horse. (2) On Hardness and Whiteness: There is hardness without whiteness and there is whiteness without hardness. It takes sight to tell whiteness; it takes touch to tell hardness. (3) On Designation and Things: Things are nothing without being designated, but designation is not designated. (4) On the Elaboration of Change: Two does not contain one. (5) On Names and Reality: A certain thing with its characteristics should be called by a proper name. If the reader would like to read more about these five arguments, he or she could consult the writings by Wei Zheng-tong (41) (in Chinese) or Joseph Needham (27) (in English).

And Hui Shi valued his eloquence as being unmatched and said, "Great is the world." He was ambitious, but knew nothing about philosophy. Once there in the south was a strange man named Huang Liu.<sup>14</sup> He asked Hui Shi why heaven and earth did not fall apart and why there were wind, rain, thunder, and lightning. Without thinking for a moment, Hui Shi kept on talking and talking, even adding some wild, fabulous stories. He tried to make unrealistic situations into seeming reality in the hope of gaining fame. Hence, he did not get along well with many people. He was weak in the cultivation of virtue, but strong in the analysis of matters. He walked a crooked path. If his ability was evaluated from the standpoint of Dao, he was a mere mosquito, being useless to the rest of the world. It would be fine for him to develop his talents, but almost impossible for him to honor Dao. Hui Shi was unable to have peace in Dao, but tirelessly dispensed his thought on all sorts of things and finally became famous as a logician. Alas! Hui Shi's talents were widespread, but he accomplished nothing. He chased everything and never looked back. This is like using sound to silence echo and chasing your own shadow. What a pity!

This concludes not only a brief history of the several schools of philosophical thought in China up to approximately 300 B.C., but also early Daoism in the minds of Zhuang Zi and his followers. With the founding of Daoism as a philosophical thought by Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi enlarged and amplified it. Its popularity as a philosophical thought has gone up and down among the elite Chinese through the centuries since. Gradually, it branched out into a religious faith with mystical implications as commented in the Introduction of this work. So now we need to make a fine distinction between Daoism the philosophy and Daoism the religion.

## Notes

1. The personal name of Mo Zi (ca. 490–403 B.C.). Like Confucius, he was a native of the State of Lu. He studied Confucian teachings first but disagreed to them later and founded his own school.
2. The only known direct disciple of Mo Zi. He was first a pupil of Zixia, a disciple of Confucius, but later became a Mohist.
3. The *Mo Jing* is a collection of writings and sayings of Mo Zi in two volumes: the Upper and the Lower Jing.
4. Both scholars were academicians of the Ji Xia Academy in the State of Qi. A brief description of this academy is given in the Introduction. They flourished in about Mencius' time (372–289 B.C.).
5. Mount Hua in Shansi Province is one of the five sacred mountains in China. The peak of Mount Hua is kind of flat like its foot. They designed their hats with a flat top to symbolize the top (the noble) and the bottom (the lowly) being equal in society.
6. A unit of a small volume. It is used here to mean "very little."
7. All three of them were members of the Ji Xia Academy. Peng Meng and Tian Pian were Daoists from the Qi State and Shen Dao was a legalist from the Zhao State. They were contemporaries of Zhuang Zi. The *Records of the Arts and Literature* in the *History of the Han Dynasty* by Ban Gu (1) lists their writings. Unfortunately, none of their works has survived.
8. See Chapter 2 of this work.
9. Guan Yin also known as Guan Yin Zi flourished in the mid Spring-Autumn period (770–476 B.C.). His writings were listed in Ban Gu's *History of the Han Dynasty* (referenced earlier in a note in this chapter), but had been completely lost some time since then. What is purported to be his writings in the *Guan Yin Zi* surfaced later is a fake.
10. The *Dao De Jing*: chapter 28
11. The *Dao De Jing*: chapter 67.
12. For a review of "inadvertent sayings," "quotations," and "allegories," see Chapter 27:1.
13. Like Huan Tuan, Gongson Long was also a native of the Zhao State. He was the author of the *Gongson Long Zi* and a contemporary of Zhuang Zi. He became famous for his arguments, particularly on the whiteness and the horseness, and on the hardness and the whiteness.
14. Huang Liu was a sophist from the State of Chu.



## Epilogue

Zhuang Zi was a man of many splendors, especially literary skills. Some people admire his wonderful philosophical thinking; others simply enjoy his flowing literary style. You either like what he said or don't like what he said, but you can hardly ignore it. Of course, the book bearing his name was not completely written by him. Some of it must have been written by his disciples, but we don't know most of them, with only one exception in Chapter 20:8. In some instances, the differences in the literary style are discernible. In others, it is hard to be certain. Sometimes, it seems helpful to keep these uncertainties in mind in reading the text. Throughout more than 2000 years since the text has existed, numerous critical reviews on the themes and the literary style of the book have been made. This translator wishes to use this space to present some of these reviews, so that the reader will have some knowledge of how the book has been evaluated.

The earliest comment on the book was made by Xun Zi (48), a Confucianist. His comment was terse. He said, "Zhuang Zi was misled with respect to nature and he lacked sufficient understanding of men." Luo Dajing (1196–1252) was critical of Zhuang Zi and described his essays as "making something out of nothing." (See [46]). Ye Shi (53) was even more critical of Zhuang Zi and contended that he did more harm to the philosophical thought in ancient China than did Mo Zi or Han Fei Zi. But he seemed to admire Zhuang Zi's literary skills, for he said that those who liked literature enjoyed his syntax and those who sought comfort in Dao appreciated his vocabulary. Yang Shiqi (51) commented, "The *Nan Hua Zhen Jing* should be considered the first-class writing of the Warring States period. Readers might feel at first that the author used his words carelessly and improperly, but soon will realize that every word he uttered was aimed at promoting virtue. Only those who are familiar with the



essence of virtue can benefit from reading the *Nan Hua*.” Moreover, Hu Yinglin (16) was even more emphatic. He wrote: “Zhuang Zhou’s essays were marvelous and his rationale, obscure. After having read them, you would always dance with joy and feel your spirit free. Hence, men of letters through the ages could not but become addicted to his writings.” These are samples of praises and criticisms of Zhuang Zi’s works.

We should realize that Daoism could mean different things to different people. At the time of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi, Daoism represented an independent school of philosophical thought, simple and straightforward. After the death of Zhuang Zi, his followers began to write mystical stories mixed with vulgar superstition. Unlike philosophy, which requires a higher level of apprehension, mysticism can readily be accepted and practiced. It did not take long for the prehistoric King Huang and the pre-Qin Lao Zi, jointly known as Huang-Lao, to become the founders of a new religion, Daoism. Certainly, neither Lao Zi nor Zhuang Zi had the slightest inkling that their teachings would one day branch into a religious faith. As alluded to earlier in the Introduction, these two men were honored as the True Men by royal decrees in the Tang dynasty. They would have emphatically declined the honor. As we know well, Zhuang Zi despised anything handed down from above.

This is a brief history. It tells us there are two kinds of Daoism, one being Daoism the philosophy and the other being Daoism the religion. The latter further branches out into occultism. We should know the differences and keep them separated.

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## Index of Personal Names

*When the name of a person is mentioned more than once within a given section, the page of the section is entered here instead.*

### A

Ai of Lu (Duke), 86, 272, 417  
Aitai Ta, 86  
Ao Hegan, 288

### B

Bai Changqian, 339  
Bai (Duke), 221  
Bai Jū, 338  
Baichen Zigao, 164  
Baihun Wuren, 83, 276, 413  
Baile, 129, 131  
Baili Xi, 273  
Baiyi, 125, 128, 217, 379, 380, 388  
Ban Gu, 17  
Bao Jiao, 388, 393  
Bao Suya, 319  
Bei Yi, 162, 284  
Beigong Che, 256  
Beimen Chen, 191  
Bi Gan (Prince), 65, 136, 260, 347, 383, 389, 393

Bian Sui, 378

### C

Cao Shang, 416  
Ceng and Zhi, 221  
Chang Wu Zi, 48  
Changhong, 135, 347  
Changji, 81  
Changsang, 7  
Cheng, 284  
Cheng Xuanying, 15  
Chezhang Mangji, 171  
Chi Gou, 162  
Chi You, 386  
Confucius (Zhongni, Qiu, Kong Qiu),  
1, 48, 63, 68, 77, 81, 84, 86, 102, 104,  
106, 166, 167, 181, 194, 196, 198, 200,  
217, 225, 235, 243, 244, 245, 248, 257,  
258, 261, 268, 269, 270, 274, 277, 285,  
290, 291, 317, 321, 336, 339, 350, 351,  
361, 375, 377, 383, 390, 406, 417, 418  
Cui Qū, 148

**D**

Dagong Ren, 257  
 Dai Jinren, 334  
 Dan (Duke of Zhou), 379  
 Danfu, 368  
 Dang, (Prime Minister), 190  
 Dengling Zi, 426  
 Deng Xi, 3  
 Di, 414  
 Dong Wu, 320  
 Dongguo Shunzi, 268  
 Dongguo Zi, 287  
 Dongguo Ziqi, 362  
 Dongye Ji, 259

**F**

Fu Xi (Chieftain), 63, 212, 277

**G**

Gaozong (King), 347  
 Gengsang Chu, 297  
 Gong Chui, 135, 251  
 Gong (Earl), 376  
 Gong Gong, 148  
 Gong Yuexiu, 331  
 Gongsun Long, 3, 226, 317  
 Gongsun Yang (Shang Yang), 3, 335  
 Gongwen Xuan, 59  
 Goujian (King), 327  
 Guan Longfeng, 63  
 Guan Yin, 2, 242, 431  
 Guan Zi (Guan Zhong), 3, 235, 247, 319  
 Guang Yao, 290  
 Guangchen Zi, 150  
 Gujie, 234  
 Guo Xiang, 16

**H**

Han Fei (Han Fei Zi), 3  
 Hexü, 131  
 Hong Meng, 11  
 Hu, 116  
 Hu Fei, 2  
 Hu Zi, 114  
 Hua Zi, 334  
 Huan, 414  
 Huan Dou, 148  
 Huan (Duke), 185, 319  
 Huan Tuan, 436  
 Huang (King, also Huang Di), 48, 105,  
 148, 150, 162, 180, 191, 198, 212,  
 234, 235, 277, 281, 291, 315, 319, 383,  
 426, 442  
 Huang Liu, 436  
 Huangzi Gao'ao, 247  
 Hui Zi (Hui Shi), 3, 31, 41, 89, 228, 229,  
 233, 317, 318, 334, 353, 361, 423, 436  
 Hun Dun, 116, 167

**J**

Ji, 23  
 Ji Che, 167  
 Ji Chi, 426  
 Ji Jü, 63  
 Ji Shengzi, 248  
 Ji Ta, 355  
 Ji Xian, 112  
 Ji Zhen, 342  
 Ji Zi, 334  
 Jian Wu, 28, 112, 277  
 Jiānglǔ Mian, 167  
 Jie (King), 63, 96, 145, 148, 173, 225,  
 285, 347, 350, 378, 383, 390

Jie Yü, 28, 77, 112  
Jie Zitui, 383  
Jili, 390  
Jin (Tutor), 194  
Jiufan Yin, 323  
Jü Beiyü, 72, 339  
Jü Liang, 105  
Ju Que Zi, 48

**K**

King of Wu, 320  
Ku Huo, 426  
Kuang Qu, 281  
Kuang Zi, 390  
Kun, 323

**L**

Lao Dan (Lao Zi), 2, 59, 84, 113, 148,  
166, 181, 182, 196, 200, 270, 285,  
297, 299, 337, 364, 431, 442  
Lao Lai Zi, 350  
Lao Long Ji, 228  
Li Zhu, 121, 124, 135, 162  
Li Si, 3  
Lian Shu, 28  
Lie Zi (Lie Yukou), 2, 23, 114, 237, 242,  
276, 372, 413  
Lin Qie, 262  
Ling of Wei (Duke), 72, 88, 256, 339  
Liuxia Ji, 383  
Longfeng, 135  
Lu Jü, 317

**M**

Man Goude, 390  
Mao Qiang, 48  
Men Wugue, 171

Mencius (Meng Ke), 1  
Meng Zifan, 102  
Mengsun Cai, 104  
Min Ziqian, 86  
Mo Di (Mo Zi), 2, 121, 135, 173, 317,  
390, 426, 441  
Mo of Zhongshan (Prince), 376  
Mou of Tian (Marquis), 334  
Mu of Qin (Duke), 273, 307

**N**

Nanbei Ziqi (Nanguo Ziqi), 35, 75, 321  
Nanbo Zikui, 98  
Nanrong Chü, 299  
Nie Que, 48, 111, 162, 284, 324  
Nü Shang, 311  
Nü Yü, 98

**P**

Pan Yang, 331  
Peng Meng, 260, 429  
Peng Zu, 23, 45, 205  
Puyi Zi,, 111

**Q**

Qi Gong, 267  
Qi (Viscount), 347  
Qin Guli, 2, 426  
Qin Yi, 59  
Qing, 249  
Qingji (Crown Prince), 256  
Qu Gong, 323

**R**

Ran Qiu, 290  
Ran Xiang, 333  
Ri Zhongshi, 112



## S

San Miao, 148  
 Shan Bao, 245  
 Shan Juan, 367  
 Shang Yan, 3  
 Shao Zhi, 340, 343  
 Shen Buhai, 3  
 Shen Dao, 8, 429  
 Shen Nong (Chieftain), 212, 253, 261, 379, 383  
 Shen Nong (Daoist), 288  
 Shentu (Shentu Di), 355, 383, 390  
 Shentu Jia, 83  
 Shi Chengqi, 182  
 Shi Kuang, 41, 121, 124, 135  
 Shi You (Shi Yü), 121, 124, 135, 145, 148, 173, 339  
 Shinan Yiliao, 254, 321, 336  
 Shou (Duke), 200  
 Shu, 116  
 Shun (King), 48, 63, 135, 148, 164, 167, 171, 177, 180, 190, 198, 212, 217, 225, 235, 258, 284, 291, 297, 324, 334, 367, 378, 383, 390, 426  
 Shuqi, 379, 363  
 Shushan Wuzhi, 84  
 Sima Biao, 17  
 Sima Qian, 14, 15  
 Sima Ziqi, 372  
 Sishi, 194  
 Song Jian, 428  
 Song Rong Zi, 23  
 Sou (Prince), 369  
 Su Qin, 3  
 Sui Chao, 2  
 Sui Ren (Chieftain), 212, 235  
 Sun Shu'ao, 277, 321

## T

Tai, 111  
 Tai Qing, 288  
 Tai Tao, 339  
 Taigong Tiao, 341, 342  
 Tang (King), 23, 198, 226, 291, 307, 355, 378, 383, 390, 426  
 Tian Chen Zichang, 390  
 Tian Chenzi, 135  
 Tian Gen, 112  
 Tian He, 321  
 Tian Kaizhi, 245  
 Tian Pian, 8, 429  
 Tian Zifang, 267  
 Twelve Kings, 139

## W

Wang Bi, 2, 46  
 Wang Guo, 331  
 Wang Ni, 48, 111, 162  
 Wang Tai, 81  
 Wei, King of, 31, 260  
 Wei Mou, 226  
 Wei of Zhou (Duke), 245  
 Wei Sheng, 383, 390  
 Wen Bai Xüzi, 268  
 Wen Hui (Prince), 57  
 Wen (King), 198, 274, 383, 426  
 Wen of Wei (Marquis), 267  
 Wen Zhong, 327  
 Wu Guang, 355, 378  
 Wu Hou, 426  
 Wu Jie, 378  
 Wu (King), 171, 198, 291, 379, 383, 390, 426  
 Wu Lai, 347  
 Wu of Wei (Marquis), 311

Wu Qiong, 288  
 Wu Shi, 288  
 Wu Wei, 288  
 Wu Xian Zhao, 190  
 Wu You, 290  
 Wu Yuan, 347  
 Wu Yue, 390  
 Wu Zhuang, 105  
 Wu Zixu (Zixu), 136, 232, 383, 389  
 Wu Zu, 394  
 Wuming Ren, 112  
 Wuwei Wei, 281

**X**

Xi Peng, 319  
 Xi Wei, 291, 339, 353  
 Xiang Wan, 162  
 Xiang Xiu, 16  
 Xiangli Qin, 426  
 Xishi, 41, 48  
 Xu Shi, 14  
 Xu Wugui, 311, 313  
 Xu You, 28, 105, 162, 324, 355, 367,  
 376, 418  
 Xun Zi (Xun Qing), 1, 441

**Y**

Yan Buyi, 320  
 Yan Gang Diao, 288  
 Yan He, 72, 250, 370, 417  
 Yan Hui (Yan Yuan), 8, 63, 104, 106,  
 194, 235, 244, 261, 269, 274, 291, 375,  
 376, 383  
 Yanchen Ziyou, 35, 362  
 Yancheng Zi, 321  
 Yang Zhu, 121, 135, 173, 317  
 Yang Zi, 264

Yang Ziju, 113, 364  
 Yao (King), 28, 48, 63, 83, 96, 105, 135,  
 145, 148, 162, 163, 164, 167, 177, 180,  
 190, 198, 212, 217, 225, 235, 254, 285,  
 297, 317, 324, 334, 350, 355, 367, 378,  
 383, 390, 418, 426  
 Ye, Zigao (Duke), 68  
 Yi (Archer), 83, 260, 307, 317  
 Yi Er Zi, 105  
 Yi Jie, 331  
 Yi Yin, 307, 378  
 Yin Wen, 428  
 Ying of Wei, 334  
 You Chao, 386  
 You Yan, 193  
 You Yü, 111, 124, 273  
 Yü Er, 124  
 Yü (King), 39, 63, 164, 198, 226, 258,  
 426  
 Yu Qie, 351  
 Yuan of Song (Duke), 274, 318, 351  
 Yuan Xian, 374  
 Yue (sheep butcher), 372  
 Yüen Feng, 169  
 Yun Jiang, 152

**Z**

Zeng Shen (Zeng Zi), 121, 124, 135,  
 145, 148, 173, 347, 361, 374  
 Zeyang, 331  
 Zhan Zi, 376  
 Zhang Yi (politician), 4  
 Zhang Yi (enthusiast), 245  
 Zhao of Han (Marquis), 370  
 Zhao Wen, 41  
 Zheng Kaofu, 418  
 Zheng Zichan, 83

- Zheng Ziyang, 372  
 Zhi, 281  
 Zhi Gong, 390  
 Zhi He, 394  
 Zhi, the Brigand, 124, 135, 145, 148,  
 173, 383  
 Zhili, 234  
 Zhili Su, 76  
 Zhili Yi, 415  
 Zhou (Duke), 194, 200, 390, 426  
 Zhou (King), 63, 198, 225, 347, 383,  
 390  
 Zhou of Chu (King), 372  
 Zhou Yan, 4  
 Zhu Shen, 247  
 Zhuang (Duke), 250  
 Zhuang Zi (Zhuang Zhou), 2, 31, 53,  
 89, 179, 190, 226, 228, 229, 233, 234,  
 253, 260, 262, 272, 287, 317, 318, 337,  
 351, 353, 361, 414, 416, 420, 421, 432  
 Zhun Mang, 169  
 Zhuping Man, 415  
 Zi, 162  
 Zi Chinchang, 102  
 Zi Hua Zi, 370  
 Zi Lai, 100  
 Zi Li, 100  
 Zi Qi, 323  
 Zi Sang Fu, 258  
 Zi Sanghu, 102  
 Zi Si, 100  
 Zi Yü, 100  
 Zi Zhou Jifu (Jibai), 367  
 Zie Zi, 342  
 Zigong, 102, 167, 198, 235, 373, 376,  
 383, 405  
 Zilao, 337  
 Zilu, 181, 225, 268, 336, 376, 383, 405  
 Zisang, 108  
 Zisang Fu, 258  
 Ziyü, 108  
 Zizhang, 390