

[When a Confucian] takes a wife, he goes to meet her in person, correctly attired as a servant. He takes the reins of the cart himself and hands her the cord to draw herself up as if honouring a revered parent. The wedding ceremony is conducted with solemnity just like conducting a sacrifice. This is to turn high and low upside down, and is perverse conduct towards parents who are brought down to the level of the wife whilst the wife infringes on those above. In serving parents, how can something like this be called filial?

The Confucians say: "After taking a wife, she can join with you in carrying out the sacrifices whilst a son will protect the ancestral temple, therefore they are highly regarded."

In reply I say: "These are false words insofar as a man's uncles and older brothers maintain the ancestral temple for several decades, yet, when they die, he mourns them for one year whilst the wives of older and younger brothers, who assist at the sacrifices to his ancestors, are not mourned at all. Thus, mourning wives and sons for three years is certainly not because they maintain [the ancestral temple] or assist at sacrifices. Such favourable treatment of wives and sons is already excessive. They also say, 'It is the way of honouring parents.' In wishing to treat 'thickly' those towards whom they are most discriminatory, they treat 'thinly' those who are most important. Is this not a great deception?"

They also hold firmly to the doctrine that there is Fate, arguing thus: "Living to old age and dying young, poverty and wealth, peace and peril, order and disorder are determined by Heaven's decrees and cannot be decreased or increased. Success and failure, reward and punishment, good luck and bad are established [by Fate] and cannot be affected by a person's knowledge or strength." If the many officials believed this, they would be careless in their allotted duties. If the ordinary people believed this, they would be careless in following their tasks. If officials do not bring about order, there is disorder. If agricultural matters are attended to tardily, there is poverty. Poverty and disorder strike at the root of government, yet the Confucians take it [i.e. Fate] as a teaching.² This is damaging to the people of the world.

Moreover, they use various elaborate rites and music to delude people. They use prolonged mourning and false grief to deceive relatives. They believe in Fate and accept poverty, yet they are arrogant and self-important. They turn their backs on what is fundamental and abandon their duties, finding contentment in idleness and pride. They are greedy for drink and food. They are indolent in carrying out their responsibilities and fall into hunger and cold, but, when endangered by starvation and freezing, they have no way of avoiding these things. They are like beggars. They hoard food like field mice. They stare like billy goats. They rise up like castrated pigs. When a gentleman laughs at them, they angrily reply: "Useless fellow! What do you know of good Confucians." In spring, they beg for wheat. In summer, they beg for rice. When the five grains³ have already been harvested, they attach themselves to large funerals with their sons and grandsons all following along, and so they get their fill of drink and food. If they are put in charge of several funerals, they have enough to live on. They depend on other people's

households for food and rely on other people's fields for wine. When a rich man has a funeral, they are very happy and say delightedly: "This is a source of clothing and food."

Confucians say: "A gentleman must use ancient modes of speech and dress and afterwards he is benevolent."

I say in reply: "What is called ancient in speech and dress was all once upon a time new so, if the men of old spoke this way and dressed this way, they were not gentlemen. This being so, must we clothe ourselves in the garb of those who were not gentlemen and speak the speech of those who were not gentlemen before being benevolent?"

* * *

THE SCRIPTURE OF THE WAY AND ITS VIRTUE

(*Daode jing*, or *Laozi*)

The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue (*Daode jing*), which is also known as the *Laozi* or the *Five Thousand Character [Classic]* (*Wuqian wen*), is divided in two parts: Book One, the *Daojing* ("Scripture of the Way," chapters 1–37), and Book Two, the *Dejing* ("Scripture of Virtue," chapters 38–81). The passages of the text appear in different order in different versions—in one recently discovered text, the *Dejing* is placed before the *Daojing*—but their wording is remarkably consistent. *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* is traditionally regarded as a form of revealed literature: according to this account, it was delivered by Laozi (the Old Master), also known as Li Er or Li Dan, an older contemporary of Confucius, to a gatekeeper named Yin Xi as he was embarking on his journey from China to the West. Few details about Laozi's biography have been passed down; most scholars now treat him as a fictional creation and believe that the work was compiled from an oral tradition that dates to about the third century B.C.E. Some sections may be even older.

The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue contains aphoristic passages on a broad range of topics, from methods for self-cultivation (chapters 7, 10) to the arts of governance (chapters 3, 30, 37, 57, 58, 75, 80). The text is notoriously difficult to understand, in part because of its self-conscious use of negation: "The way (*dao*) that can be spoken of (*dao*) is not the constant way (*dao*); the name that can be named is not the constant name" (chapter 1). Though many of its concepts and topics became foundational within Daoism, many were also present within Confucianism and Chinese thought more generally. The term *dao* (way) in the title of the *Daode jing* originally referred to a moral social and natural order. Here, however, the *Dao* is presented as being indeterminate and ineffable; it came to be a referent for the source, or creative power, behind everything. In this way, the term pointed beyond any limited, or fixed, reference and toward an absolute reality. That which embodies the *Dao* is "De"—usually translated within Daoist texts as "virtue," though also rendered as "potency," "integrity," or "power." In the Confucian tradition the term referred to moral virtue, but its meaning in *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* is more complicated: the word evokes the basic quality or character that enables a thing to be what it is and to do what it does.

One of the main concerns of *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* is social and cosmic order, yet it also focuses on a perceived break with the Way. The problem is

2. "A teaching" renders the term *daojiao*. A more literal translation would be "a teaching of their

Dao."

3. That is, all the staple agricultural crops.



Painting of Laozi.

things in an attempt to "return" (*fan*) to the undifferentiated primordial Dao (chapters 4, 5, 19, 28, 48, 81).

The exegeses of and commentaries on *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* clearly demonstrate the text's striking openness to different interpretations. Later interpreters variously read the text as being primarily concerned with self-cultivation (see the *Heshang gong* commentary, below), as offering a behavioral code for a community of religious initiates (see the *Xiang'er* commentary, below), as providing a manual for the creation of a moral and political system (the view of orthodox Confucians), and even as richly prefiguring Buddhist dialectical teachings.

The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue is one of the most difficult and problematic texts of early Chinese thought, and (perhaps owing to its opacity) it is also one of the most frequently translated texts in all of world literature—second only to the Bible. It has had a profound impact around the world, with each translator and reader—from Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Martin Heidegger to Ursula Le Guin and the Beatles—finding a different meaning in its compressed language, nebulous philosophy, and mystical orientation. The terseness and vagueness of the text have allowed its Western interpreters and translators to make it into just about anything they wanted.

However the text and its history are interpreted, and despite the long debate among scholars over precisely how to characterize the relationship between early texts like *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* and Daoism, it clearly became a seminal text in the later Daoist tradition. Most of the world's major religious traditions have a figure identified as a founder, but it would be a mistake to view Laozi as the founder and *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* as the main scripture of later Daoism. It might be more accurate to understand the relationship between this work and later Daoism as an influence akin to the impact that Greek philosophy had on later Christianity.

apparently tied to the rise of civilization, an overemphasis on human intellect, and a tendency toward rigidly categorizing and pinning things down (usually caused by a dependence on language and naming practices) at the expense of being at one with the flow of the Dao (chapters 2, 3, 12). Artifice—exemplified in this text by the Confucian "rites" (chapter 38)—has won out over naturalness. If we can unravel the artificial fabric of the social order to return to our presocialized state, if we can eliminate all the distinctions that the exercise of human intellect imposes on us and the world, then we will be able to move without effort and in harmony with the natural rhythm of the Dao as it operates spontaneously (chapter 63). Therefore, much of *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* focuses on "emptying," "undoing," and "unlearning"

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Daode jing: *dow-duh ching*Laozi: *lao-tzu*

From Book One

I

The way that can be spoken of
Is not the constant way;
The name that can be named
Is not the constant name.
The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;
The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.
Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets;
But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe
its manifestations.
These two are the same
But diverge in name as they issue forth.
Being the same they are called mysteries,
Mystery upon mystery—
The gateway of the manifold secrets.

II

The whole world recognizes the beautiful as the beautiful, yet this is only the ugly; the whole world recognizes the good as the good, yet this is only the bad.

Thus Something and Nothing produce each other;
The difficult and the easy complement each other;
The long and the short offset each other;
The high and the low incline towards each other;
Note and sound harmonize with each other;
Before and after follow each other.

Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practises the teaching that uses no words.

The myriad creatures rise from it yet it claims no authority;
It gives them life yet claims no possession;
It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
It accomplishes its task yet lays claim to no merit.

It is because it lays claim to no merit

That its merit never deserts it.

III

Not to honour men of worth will keep the people from contention; not to value goods which are hard to come by will keep them from theft; not to display what is desirable will keep them from being unsettled of mind. Therefore in governing the people, the sage empties their minds but fills their bellies, weakens their wills but strengthens their bones. He always keeps them innocent of knowledge and free from desire, and ensures that the clever never dare to act.

Do that which consists in taking no action, and order will prevail.

IV

The way is empty, yet use will not drain it.
 Deep, it is like the ancestor of the myriad creatures.
 Blunt the sharpness;
 Untangle the knots;
 Soften the glare;
 Let your wheels move only along old ruts.
 Darkly visible, it only seems as if it were there.
 I know not whose son it is.
 It images the forefather of God.

V

Heaven and earth are ruthless, and treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs;¹ the sage is ruthless, and treats the people as straw dogs.
 Is not the space between heaven and earth like a bellows?
 It is empty without being exhausted:
 The more it works the more comes out.
 Much speech leads inevitably to silence.
 Better to hold fast to the void.

VI

The spirit of the valley never dies.
 This is called the mysterious female.
 The gateway of the mysterious female
 Is called the root of heaven and earth.
 Dimly visible, it seems as if it were there,
 Yet use will never drain it.

VII

Heaven and earth are enduring. The reason why heaven and earth can be enduring is that they do not give themselves life. Hence they are able to be long-lived.

Therefore the sage puts his person last and it comes first,
 Treats it as extraneous to himself and it is preserved.

Is it not because he is without thought of self that he is able to accomplish his private ends?

VIII

Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way.

In a home it is the site that matters;
 In quality of mind it is depth that matters;
 In an ally it is benevolence that matters;
 In speech it is good faith that matters;
 In government it is order that matters;

In affairs it is ability that matters;
 In action it is timeliness that matters.

It is because it does not contend that it is never at fault.

IX

Rather than fill it to the brim by keeping it upright
 Better to have stopped in time;
 Hammer it to a point
 And the sharpness cannot be preserved for ever;
 There may be gold and jade to fill a hall
 But there is none who can keep them.
 To be overbearing when one has wealth and position
 Is to bring calamity upon oneself.
 To retire when the task is accomplished
 Is the way of heaven.

X

When carrying on your head your perplexed bodily soul² can
 you embrace in your arms the One
 And not let go?
 In concentrating your breath can you become as supple
 As a babe?
 Can you polish your mysterious mirror³
 And leave no blemish?
 Can you love the people and govern the state
 Without resorting to action?
 When the gates of heaven open and shut
 Are you capable of keeping to the role of the female?
 When your discernment penetrates the four quarters
 Are you capable of not knowing anything?
 It gives them life and rears them.
 It gives them life yet claims no possession;
 It benefits them yet exacts no gratitude;
 It is the steward yet exercises no authority.
 Such is called the mysterious virtue.

XI

Thirty spokes
 Share one hub.

Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the cart. Knead clay in order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the vessel. Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the room.

Thus what we gain is Something, yet it is by virtue of
 Nothing that this can be put to use.

1. Effigies made to ward off evil influences; after being used, they were thrown into the street.

2. The other soul is of the spirit, which rises into heaven at death.

3. That is, your mind.

XII

The five colours⁴ make man's eyes blind;
 The five notes make his ears deaf;
 The five tastes injure his palate;
 Riding and hunting
 Make his mind go wild with excitement;
 Goods hard to come by
 Serve to hinder his progress.
 Hence the sage is
 For the belly
 Not for the eye.
 Therefore he discards the one and takes the other.

XIII

Favour and disgrace are things that startle;
 High rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble.

What is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle? Favour when it is bestowed on a subject serves to startle as much as when it is withdrawn. This is what is meant by saying that favour and disgrace are things that startle. What is meant by saying that high rank is, like one's body, a source of great trouble? The reason I have great trouble is that I have a body. When I no longer have a body, what trouble have I? Hence he who values his body more than dominion over the empire can be entrusted with the empire. He who loves his body more than dominion over the empire can be given the custody of the empire.

XIV

What cannot be seen is called evanescent;
 What cannot be heard is called rarefied;
 What cannot be touched is called minute.
 These three cannot be fathomed
 And so they are confused and looked upon as one.
 Its upper part is not dazzling;
 Its lower part is not obscure.
 Dimly visible, it cannot be named
 And returns to that which is without substance.
 This is called the shape that has no shape,
 The image that is without substance.
 This is called indistinct and shadowy.
 Go up to it and you will not see its head;
 Follow behind it and you will not see its rear.
 Hold fast to the way of antiquity
 In order to keep in control the realm of today.
 The ability to know the beginning of antiquity
 Is called the thread running through the way.

4. Green, red, yellow, white, and black. They, like the five notes (the pentatonic scale) and the five tastes (sour, sweet, bitter, spicy, and salty), belong

to a category in the Five Agents system of correspondences, a set of systematic associations between different categories (see table 2, p. 1563).

XIX

Exterminate the sage, discard the wise,
 And the people will benefit a hundredfold;
 Exterminate benevolence, discard rectitude,
 And the people will again be filial;
 Exterminate ingenuity, discard profit,
 And there will be no more thieves and bandits.
 These three, being false adornments, are not enough
 And the people must have something to which they
 can attach themselves:
 Exhibit the unadorned and embrace the uncarved block,⁵
 Have little thought of self and as few desires as possible.

XXI

In his every movement a man of great virtue
 Follows the way and the way only.
 As a thing the way is
 Shadowy, indistinct.
 Indistinct and shadowy,
 Yet within it is an image;
 Shadowy and indistinct,
 Yet within it is a substance.
 Dim and dark,
 Yet within it is an essence.
 This essence is quite genuine
 And within it is something that can be tested.
 From the present back to antiquity
 Its name never deserted it.
 It serves as a means for inspecting the fathers of the multitude.

How do I know that the fathers of the multitude are like that? By means of this.

XXII

Bowed down then preserved;
 Bent then straight;
 Hollow then full;
 Worn then new;
 A little then benefited;
 A lot then perplexed.
 Therefore the sage embraces the One and is a model for the empire.
 He does not show himself, and so is conspicuous;
 He does not consider himself right, and so is illustrious;
 He does not brag, and so has merit;
 He does not boast, and so endures.

It is because he does not contend that no one in the empire is in a position to contend with him.

The way the ancients had it, 'Bowed down then preserved', is no empty saying. Truly it enables one to be preserved to the end.

5. One's original nature, before socialization.

XXVIII

Know the male
 But keep to the role of the female
 And be a ravine to the empire.
 If you are a ravine to the empire,
 Then the constant virtue will not desert you
 And you will again return to being a babe.
 Know the white
 But keep to the role of the black
 And be a model to the empire.
 If you are a model to the empire,
 Then the constant virtue will not be wanting
 And you will return to the infinite.
 Know honour
 But keep to the role of the disgraced
 And be a valley to the empire.
 If you are a valley to the empire,
 Then the constant virtue will be sufficient
 And you will return to being the uncarved block.

When the uncarved block shatters it becomes vessels. The sage makes use of these and becomes the lord over the officials.

Hence the greatest cutting
 Does not sever.

XXX

One who assists the ruler of men by means of the way does not intimidate the empire by a show of arms.

This is something which is liable to rebound.
 Where troops have encamped
 There will brambles grow;
 In the wake of a mighty army
 Bad harvests follow without fail.

One who is good aims only at bringing his campaign to a conclusion and dare not thereby intimidate. Bring it to a conclusion but do not boast; bring it to a conclusion but do not brag; bring it to a conclusion but do not be arrogant; bring it to a conclusion but only when there is no choice; bring it to a conclusion but do not intimidate.

A creature in its prime doing harm to the old
 Is known as going against the way.
 That which goes against the way will come to an early end.

XXXVII

The way never acts yet nothing is left undone.
 Should lords and princes be able to hold fast to it,
 The myriad creatures will be transformed of their own accord.
 After they are transformed, should desire raise its head,

I shall press it down with the weight of the nameless uncarved block.

The nameless uncarved block
 Is but freedom from desire,
 And if I cease to desire and remain still,
 The empire will be at peace of its own accord.

From Book Two

XXXVIII

A man of the highest virtue does not keep to virtue and that is why he has virtue. A man of the lowest virtue never strays from virtue and that is why he is without virtue. The former never acts yet leaves nothing undone. The latter acts but there are things left undone. A man of the highest benevolence acts, but from no ulterior motive. A man of the highest rectitude acts, but from ulterior motive. A man most conversant in the rites acts, but when no one responds rolls up his sleeves and resorts to persuasion by force. Hence when the way was lost there was virtue; when virtue was lost there was benevolence; when benevolence was lost there was rectitude; when rectitude was lost there were the rites.

The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and good faith
 And the beginning of disorder;
 Foreknowledge is the flowery embellishment of the way
 And the beginning of folly.

Hence the man of large mind abides in the thick not in the thin, in the fruit not in the flower.
 Therefore he discards the one and takes the other.

XLII

The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures.

The myriad creatures carry on their backs the *yin* and embrace in their arms the *yang*⁶ and are the blending of the generative forces of the two. There are no words which men detest more than 'solitary', 'desolate', and 'hapless', yet lords and princes use these to refer to themselves. Thus a thing is sometimes added to by being diminished and diminished by being added to.

What others teach I also teach. "The violent will not come to a natural end." I shall take this as my precept.

XLVI

When the way prevails in the empire, fleet-footed horses are relegated to ploughing the fields; when the way does not prevail in the empire, war-horses breed on the border.

6. The male principle; the term originally referred to the sunny side of a valley, and by extension it came to be associated with the light, heaven, dryness, and activity. "Yin": the female

principle; the term originally referred to the shady side of a valley, and by extension it came to be associated with the dark, earth, dampness, and passivity.

There is no crime greater than having too many desires;
 There is no disaster greater than not being content;
 There is no misfortune greater than being covetous.

Hence in being content one will always have enough.

XLVII

Without stirring abroad
 One can know the whole world;
 Without looking out of the window
 One can see the way of heaven.
 The further one goes
 The less one knows.
 Therefore the sage knows without having to stir,
 Identifies without having to see,
 Accomplishes without having to act.

XLVIII

In the pursuit of learning one knows more every day; in the pursuit of the way one does less every day. One does less and less until one does nothing at all, and when one does nothing at all there is nothing that is undone. It is always through not meddling that the empire is won. Should you meddle, then you are not equal to the task of winning the empire.

LVI

One who knows does not speak; one who speaks does not know.

Block the openings;
 Shut the doors.
 Blunt the sharpness;
 Untangle the knots;
 Soften the glare;
 Let your wheels move only along old ruts.

This is known as mysterious sameness.

Hence you cannot get close to it, nor can you keep it at arm's length; you cannot bestow benefit on it, nor can you do it harm; you cannot ennoble it, nor can you debase it.

Therefore it is valued by the empire.

LVII

Govern the state by being straightforward; wage war by being crafty; but win the empire by not being meddlesome.

How do I know that it is like that? By means of this.

The more taboos there are in the empire
 The poorer the people;
 The more sharpened tools the people have
 The more benighted the state;
 The more skills the people have

The further novelties multiply;
 The better known the laws and edicts
 The more thieves and robbers there are.

Hence the sage says,

I take no action and the people are transformed of themselves;
 I prefer stillness and the people are rectified of themselves;
 I am not meddlesome and the people prosper of themselves;
 I am free from desire and the people of themselves become
 simple like the uncarved block.

LVIII

When the government is muddled
 The people are simple;
 When the government is alert
 The people are cunning.
 It is on disaster that good fortune perches;
 It is beneath good fortune that disaster crouches.

Who knows the limit? Does not the straightforward exist? The straightforward changes again into the crafty, and the good changes again into the monstrous. Indeed, it is long since the people were perplexed.

Therefore the sage is square-edged but does not scrape,
 Has corners but does not jab,
 Extends himself but not at the expense of others,
 Shines but does not dazzle.

LXI

A large state is the lower reaches of a river—
 The place where all the streams of the world unite.
 In the union of the world,
 The female always gets the better of the male by stillness.

Being still, she takes the lower position.

Hence the large state, by taking the lower position, annexes the small state;

The small state, by taking the lower position, affiliates itself to the large state.

Thus the one, by taking the lower position, annexes;
 The other, by taking the lower position, is annexed.

All that the large state wants is to take the other under its wing;
 All that the small state wants is to have its services accepted by the other.

If each of the two wants to find its proper place,
 It is meet that the large should take the lower position.

LXIII

Do that which consists in taking no action; pursue that which is not meddlesome; savour that which has no flavour.

Make the small big and the few many; do good to him who has done you an injury.

Lay plans for the accomplishment of the difficult before it becomes difficult; make something big by starting with it when small.

Difficult things in the world must needs have their beginnings in the easy; big things must needs have their beginnings in the small.

Therefore it is because the sage never attempts to be great that he succeeds in becoming great.

One who makes promises rashly rarely keeps good faith; one who is in the habit of considering things easy meets with frequent difficulties.

Therefore even the sage treats some things as difficult. That is why in the end no difficulties can get the better of him.

LXXV

The people are hungry;

It is because those in authority eat up too much in taxes

That the people are hungry.

The people are difficult to govern:

It is because those in authority are too fond of action

That the people are difficult to govern.

The people treat death lightly:

It is because the people set too much store by life.

That they treat death lightly.

It is just because one has no use for life that one is wiser than the man who values life.

LXXX

Reduce the size and population of the state. Ensure that even though the people have tools of war for a troop or a battalion they will not use them; and also that they will be reluctant to move to distant places because they look on death as no light matter.

Even when they have ships and carts, they will have no use for them; and even when they have armour and weapons, they will have no occasion to make a show of them.

Bring it about that the people will return to the use of the knotted rope,

Will find relish in their food

And beauty in their clothes,

Will be content in their abode

And happy in the way they live.

Though adjoining states are within sight of one another, and the sound of dogs barking and cocks crowing in one state can be heard in another, yet the people of one state will grow old and die without having had any dealings with those of another.

LXXXI

Truthful words are not beautiful; beautiful words are not truthful. Good words are not persuasive; persuasive words are not good. He who knows has no wide learning; he who has wide learning does not know.

The sage does not hoard.

Having bestowed all he has on others, he has yet more;

Having given all he has to others, he is richer still.

The way of heaven benefits and does not harm; the way of the sage is bountiful and does not contend.

THE BOOK OF MASTER ZHUANG

(*Zhuangzi*)

Its vibrant and shocking use of language, imaginative range, and challenging philosophical propositions have made the *Book of Master Zhuang* (*Zhuangzi*) a celebrated classic of Daoist literature—and of Chinese literature more generally. The work is attributed to a certain Zhuang Zhou who reportedly lived in the fourth century B.C.E. in southern China, and early records indicate that it originally contained 100,000 characters in fifty-two chapters: seven “inner” chapters, twenty-eight “outer” chapters, and fourteen “miscellaneous” chapters. The present version of the text, which was edited by Guo Xiang (d. 312 C.E.), has 70,000 characters in thirty-three chapters: seven inner, fifteen outer, and eleven miscellaneous. Guo Xiang apparently discarded chapters he deemed spurious or unseemly (those dealing with superstitions and shamanic practices) and felt free to reorganize the content of others. Scholars generally consider the inner chapters—from which the first three selections below are drawn—to be the oldest core of the text, perhaps even written by Zhuang Zhou himself. But the heterogeneity of the remaining materials has thwarted specialists’ efforts to establish their authorship and chronology (the final selection included here is from the outer chapters). During the Tang dynasty (618–907 C.E.), the *Book of Master Zhuang* was canonized as a “classic” with the title *Authentic Scripture of Southern Florescence* (*Nanhua zhenjing*); in subsequent dynasties it received further accolades and generated numerous commentaries.

The *Book of Master Zhuang* is notable not just for its literary qualities and memorable parables but also for its numerous descriptions of the various speculative trends and spiritual practices of the late Warring States period (403–221 B.C.E.). We find, for example, several accounts of a meeting between Laozi and Confucius: Laozi is always portrayed as the elder, and his Daoist teachings confound his celebrated interlocutor. Whereas *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* (*Daode jing*) can be read as largely concerned with statecraft and governance, the *Book of Master Zhuang* explicitly rejects society and politics (see “Free and Easy Wandering”) and presents a philosophy centered on the individual. It also includes evocative accounts of a special class of beings that dwell apart from the quotidian human realm and live in tune with the Dao (Way). They dine on a special diet of mist and mushrooms and share none of the anxieties of ordinary humans. These ageless “perfect persons” and “transcendents,” existing in the world with a natural effortless spontaneity, have the ability to fly (see “Free and Easy Wandering” and “Mastering Life”). Sages and perfected beings, they were able attain long life by appearing useless, like the gnarled old trees and crippled Shu in the chapter titled “In the World of Men.”

One of Zhuangzi’s signature teachings is the need to maintain a resolute attitude of equanimity toward life and death (see the account of Laozi’s death in “The Secret of Caring for Life”), since they are merely two inscrutable phases in the cosmic

drama of change and transformation. The *Book of Master Zhuang* is also known for its critique of both Confucians and Mohists. Zhuangzi questions the accumulation of knowledge and application of reason; specifically, he points to the possibilities and limitations of language, which rests on human-centered conceptual categories that rigidly constrain the nature of life. Through varied stories that emphasize the skills of particular people, he presents a way of being in the world in harmony with the Dao that involves maintaining a balance of control (care and focused attention) and letting go or losing oneself in the task at hand to respond spontaneously to changes and difficulties (see "The Secret of Caring for Life" and "Mastering Life").

The *Book of Master Zhuang* has confounded generations of scholars seeking to render Zhuangzi's unique vision and evocative literary style in other languages. By the late nineteenth century at least three English translations of the text—done by Frederic Henry Balfour (1881), Herbert Giles (1889), and James Legge (1891)—were circulating in Europe and attracting considerable attention. Oscar Wilde, for example, in 1890 wrote an introduction to Zhuangzi and his teachings for a general readership (see "A Chinese Sage," below) after reading Giles's translation. Martin Buber, the prominent Jewish philosopher, essayist, and translator, appears to have availed himself of both Giles's and Legge's translations in producing his German version of the work in 1910 (see his *Zhuangzi* commentary, below). Henry Miller, in a book published in 1956, mentioned that among the books in his library was *Musings of a Chinese Mystic*—selections from Giles's translation—alongside Allen Watts's *The Spirit of Zen* (1936) and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. In 1965, the well-known Trappist monk Thomas Merton published *The Way of Chuang-Tzu*, his "readings" of the *Book of Master Zhuang*; since he did not know Chinese, he based his free renderings on existing translations into English, French, and German. Though the *Book of Master Zhuang* has not achieved the same international recognition as *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue*, in the West it has served as a catalyst for philosophical thought—in the twentieth century, for example, Martin Heidegger seems to have been aware of Zhuangzi and his writings—and for debate, especially among those working in comparative philosophy.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Lao Dan: *lao dawn*
Zhuang: *chuang*

Zhuangzi: *chuang-tzu*

Free and Easy Wandering

In the northern darkness there is a fish and his name is Kun.¹ The Kun is so huge I don't know how many thousand li² he measures. He changes and becomes a bird whose name is Peng. The back of the Peng measures I don't know how many thousand li across and, when he rises up and flies off, his wings are like clouds all over the sky. When the sea begins to move, this bird sets off for the southern darkness, which is the Lake of Heaven.

The *Universal Harmony* records various wonders, and it says: "When the Peng journeys to the southern darkness, the waters are roiled for three thousand li. He beats the whirlwind and rises ninety thousand li, setting off

on the sixth-month gale." Wavering heat, bits of dust, living things blown about by the wind—the sky looks very blue. Is that its real color, or is it because it is so far away and has no end? When the bird looks down, all he sees is blue too.

If water is not piled up deep enough, it won't have the strength to bear up a big boat. Pour a cup of water into a hollow in the floor and bits of trash will sail on it like boats. But set the cup there and it will stick fast, for the water is too shallow and the boat too large. If wind is not piled up deep enough, it won't have the strength to bear up great wings. Therefore when the Peng rises ninety thousand li, he must have the wind under him like that. Only then can he mount on the back of the wind, shoulder the blue sky, and nothing can hinder or block him. Only then can he set his eyes to the south.

The cicada and the little dove laugh at this, saying, "When we make an effort and fly up, we can get as far as the elm or the sapanwood tree, but sometimes we don't make it and just fall down on the ground. Now how is anyone going to go ninety thousand li to the south!"

If you go off to the green woods nearby, you can take along food for three meals and come back with your stomach as full as ever. If you are going a hundred li, you must grind your grain the night before; and if you are going a thousand li, you must start getting the provisions together three months in advance. What do these two creatures understand? Little understanding cannot come up to great understanding; the short-lived cannot come up to the long-lived.

How do I know this is so? The morning mushroom knows nothing of twilight and dawn; the summer cicada knows nothing of spring and autumn. They are the short-lived. South of Chu³ there is a caterpillar which counts five hundred years as one spring and five hundred years as one autumn. Long, long ago there was a great rose of Sharon that counted eight thousand years as one spring and eight thousand years as one autumn. They are the long-lived. Yet Pengzi⁴ alone is famous today for having lived a long time, and everybody tries to ape him. Isn't it pitiful!

Among the questions of Tang to Qi we find the same thing. In the bald and barren north, there is a dark sea, the Lake of Heaven. In it is a fish which is several thousand li across, and no one knows how long. His name is Kun. There is also a bird there, named Peng, with a back like Mount Tai⁵ and wings like clouds filling the sky. He beats the whirlwind, leaps into the air, and rises up ninety thousand li, cutting through the clouds and mist, shouldering the blue sky, and then he turns his eyes south and prepares to journey to the southern darkness.

The little quail laughs at him, saying, "Where does he think *he's* going? I give a great leap and fly up, but I never get more than ten or twelve yards before I come down fluttering among the weeds and brambles. And that's the best kind of flying anyway! Where does he think *he's* going?" Such is the difference between big and little.

Therefore a man who has wisdom enough to fill one office effectively, good conduct enough to impress one community, virtue enough to please

TRANSLATED BY BURTON WATSON.

1. Literally, "fish roe" (a paradox, since the fish is described as huge).

2. One li measures about 1/3 mile.

3. A large ancient Chinese state.

4. A mythical figure who lived for hundreds of years.

5. A mountain in eastern China, important in the cult of official state rituals and to Daoism.

one ruler, or talent enough to be called into service in one state, has the same kind of self-pride as these little creatures. Song Rongzi⁶ would certainly burst out laughing at such a man. The whole world could praise Song Rongzi and it wouldn't make him exert himself; the whole world could condemn him and it wouldn't make him mope. He drew a clear line between the internal and the external, and recognized the boundaries of true glory and disgrace. But that was all. As far as the world went, he didn't fret and worry, but there was still ground he left unturned.

Liezi⁷ could ride the wind and go soaring around with cool and breezy skill, but after fifteen days he came back to earth. As far as the search for good fortune went, he didn't fret and worry. He escaped the trouble of walking, but he still had to depend on something to get around. If he had only mounted on the truth of Heaven and Earth, ridden the changes of the six breaths, and thus wandered through the boundless, then what would he have had to depend on?

Therefore I say, the Perfect Man has no self; the Holy Man has no merit; the Sage has no fame.

Yao wanted to cede the empire to Xu Yu.⁸ "When the sun and moon have already come out," he said, "it's a waste of light to go on burning the torches, isn't it? When the seasonal rains are falling, it's a waste of water to go on irrigating the fields. If you took the throne, the world would be well ordered. I go on occupying it, but all I can see are my failings. I beg to turn over the world to you."

Xu Yu said, "You govern the world and the world is already well governed. Now if I take your place, will I be doing it for a name? But name is only the guest of reality—will I be doing it so I can play the part of a guest? When the tailorbird builds her nest in the deep wood, she uses no more than one branch. When the mole drinks at the river, he takes no more than a bellyful. Go home and forget the matter, my lord. I have no use for the rulership of the world! Though the cook may not run his kitchen properly, the priest and the impersonator of the dead at the sacrifice do not leap over the wine casks and sacrificial stands and go take his place."

Jian Wu said to Lian Shu, "I was listening to Jie Yu's⁹ talk—big and nothing to back it up, going on and on without turning around. I was completely dumfounded at his words—no more end than the Milky Way, wild and wide of the mark, never coming near human affairs!"

"What were his words like?" asked Lian Shu.

"He said that there is a Holy Man living on faraway Gushe Mountain, with skin like ice or snow, and gentle and shy like a young girl. He doesn't eat the five grains,¹ but sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas. By concentrating his spirit, he can protect creatures from sickness and plague and make the harvest plentiful. I thought this was all insane and refused to believe it."

6. A political philosopher (4th century B.C.E.) who advocated peace and social harmony.

7. An early Daoist philosopher (4th century B.C.E.).

8. An ancient sage; Yao was a legendary emperor

of China (ca. 23rd century B.C.E.).

9. The so-called madman of Chu; he appears in the *Analec*s of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.).

1. That is, the staple agricultural crops.

"You would!" said Lian Shu. "We can't expect a blind man to appreciate beautiful patterns or a deaf man to listen to bells and drums. And blindness and deafness are not confined to the body alone—the understanding has them too, as your words just now have shown. This man, with his virtue of his, is about to embrace the ten thousand things² and roll them into one. Though the age calls for reform, why should he wear himself out over the affairs of the world? There is nothing that can harm this man. Though flood waters pile up to the sky, he will not drown. Though a great drought melts metal and stone and scorches the earth and hills, he will not be burned. From his dust and leavings alone you could mold a Yao or a Shun!³ Why should he consent to bother about mere things?"

A man of Song who sold ceremonial hats made a trip to Yue, but the Yue people cut their hair short and tattoo their bodies and had no use for such things. Yao brought order to the people of the world and directed the government of all within the seas. But he went to see the Four Masters of the far away Gushe Mountain, [and when he got home] north of the Fen River, he was dazed and had forgotten his kingdom there.

Huizi⁴ said to Zhuangzi, "The king of Wei gave me some seeds of a huge gourd. I planted them, and when they grew up, the fruit was big enough to hold five piculs.⁵ I tried using it for a water container, but it was so heavy I couldn't lift it. I split it in half to make dippers, but they were so large and unwieldy that I couldn't dip them into anything. It's not that the gourds weren't fantastically big—but I decided they were no use and so I smashed them to pieces."

Zhuangzi said, "You certainly are dense when it comes to using big things! In Song there was a man who was skilled at making a salve to prevent chapped hands, and generation after generation his family made a living by bleaching silk in water. A traveler heard about the salve and offered to buy the prescription for a hundred measures of gold. The man called everyone to a family council. 'For generations we've been bleaching silk and we've never made more than a few measures of gold,' he said. 'Now, if we sell our secret, we can make a hundred measures in one morning. Let's let him have it!' The traveler got the salve and introduced it to the king of Wu, who was having trouble with the state of Yue. The king put the man in charge of his troops, and that winter they fought a naval battle with the men of Yue and gave them a bad beating. A portion of the conquered territory was awarded to the man as a fief. The salve had the power to prevent chapped hands in either case; but one man used it to get a fief, while the other one never got beyond silk bleaching—because they used it in different ways. Now you had a gourd big enough to hold five piculs. Why didn't you think of making it into a great tub so you could go floating around the rivers and lakes, instead of worrying because it was too big and unwieldy to dip into things! Obviously you still have a lot of underbrush in your head!"

2. That is, everything that exists.

3. The legendary Chinese ruler who followed Yao (ca. 23rd century B.C.E.).

4. A philosopher who specialized in logic (b. 380

B.C.E.); in Chinese texts, he often symbolizes an excess of intellectualism.

5. A picul is a unit of weight (about 133 $\frac{1}{3}$ lbs.).

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "I have a big tree called a *shu*. Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square. You could stand it by the road and no carpenter would look at it twice. Your words, too, are big and useless, and so everyone alike spurns them!"

Zhuangzi said, "Maybe you've never seen a wildcat or a weasel. It crouches down and hides, watching for something to come along. It leaps and races east and west, not hesitating to go high or low—until it falls into the trap and dies in the net. Then again there's the yak, big as a cloud covering the sky. It certainly knows how to be big, though it doesn't know how to catch rats. Now you have this big tree and you're distressed because it's useless. Why don't you plant it in Not-Even-Anything Village, or the field of Broad-and-Boundless, relax and do nothing by its side, or lie down for a free and easy sleep under it? Axes will never shorten its life, nothing can ever harm it. If there's no use for it, how can it come to grief or pain?"

The Secret of Caring for Life

Your life has a limit but knowledge has none. If you use what is limited to pursue what has no limit, you will be in danger. If you understand this and still strive for knowledge, you will be in danger for certain! If you do good, stay away from fame. If you do evil, stay away from punishments. Follow the middle; go by what is constant, and you can stay in one piece, keep yourself alive, look after your parents, and live out your years.

Cook Ding was cutting up an ox for Lord Wenhui. At every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every move of his feet, every thrust of his knee—zip! zoop! He slithered the knife along with a zing, and all was in perfect rhythm, as though he were performing the dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping time to the Jingshou music.

"Ah, this is marvelous!" said Lord Wenhui. "Imagine skill reaching such heights!"

Cook Ding laid down his knife and replied, "What I care about is the Way, which goes beyond skill. When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now—now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural makeup, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are. So I never touch the smallest ligament or tendon, much less a main joint.

"A good cook changes his knife once a year—because he cuts. A mediocre cook changes his knife once a month—because he hacks. I've had this knife of mine for nineteen years and I've cut up thousands of oxen with it, and yet the blade is as good as though it had just come from the grindstone. There are spaces between the joints, and the blade of the knife has really no thickness. If you insert what has no thickness into such spaces, then there's plenty of room—more than enough for the blade to play about in. That's why after nineteen years the blade of my knife is still as good as when it first came from the grindstone.

"However, whenever I come to a complicated place, I size up the difficulties, tell myself to watch out and be careful, keep my eyes on what I'm

doing, work very slowly, and move the knife with the greatest subtlety, until—flop! the whole thing comes apart like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground. I stand there holding the knife and look all around me, completely satisfied and reluctant to move on, and then I wipe off the knife and put it away."

"Excellent!" said Lord Wenhui. "I have heard the words of Cook Ding and learned how to care for life!"

When Gongwen Xuan saw the Commander of the Right, he was startled and said, "What kind of man is this? How did he come to lose his foot? Was it Heaven? Or was it man?"

"It was Heaven, not man," said the commander. "When Heaven gave me life, it saw to it that I would be one-footed. Men's looks are given to them. So I know this was the work of Heaven and not of man. The swamp pheasant has to walk ten paces for one peck and a hundred paces for one drink, but it doesn't want to be kept in a cage. Though you treat it like a king, its spirit won't be content."

When Lao Dan⁶ died, Qin Shi went to mourn for him; but after giving three cries, he left the room.

"Weren't you a friend of the Master?" asked Laozi's disciples.

"Yes."

"And you think it's all right to mourn him this way?"

"Yes," said Qin Shi. "At first I took him for a real man, but now I know he wasn't. A little while ago, when I went in to mourn, I found old men weeping for him as though they were weeping for a son, and young men weeping for him as though they were weeping for a mother. To have gathered a group like *that*, he must have done something to make them talk about him, though he didn't ask them to talk, or make them weep for him, though he didn't ask them to weep. This is to hide from Heaven, turn your back on the true state of affairs, and forget what you were born with. In the old days, this was called the crime of hiding from Heaven. Your master happened to come because it was his time, and he happened to leave because things follow along. If you are content with the time and willing to follow along, then grief and joy have no way to enter in. In the old days, this was called being freed from the bonds of God.

"Though the grease burns out of the torch, the fire passes on, and no one knows where it ends."

In the World of Men

Yan Hui⁷ went to see Confucius and asked permission to take a trip.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to Wei."

"What will you do there?"

"I have heard that the ruler of Wei is very young. He acts in an independent manner, thinks little of how he rules his state, and fails to see his

6. That is, Lao Tzu or Laozi, who is credited with writing *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* (*Daode jing*; see above).

7. The favorite student of Confucius. He, like many of the figures named in this chapter, appears in the *Analects*.

faults. It is nothing to him to lead his people into peril, and his dead are reckoned by swampfuls like so much grass. His people have nowhere to turn. I have heard you say, Master, 'Leave the state that is well ordered and go to the state in chaos! At the doctor's gate are many sick men.' I want to use these words as my standard, in hopes that I can restore his state to health."

"Ah," said Confucius, "you will probably go and get yourself executed, that's all. The Way doesn't want things mixed in with it. When it becomes a mixture, it becomes many ways; with many ways, there is a lot of bustle; and where there is a lot of bustle, there is trouble—trouble that has no remedy! The Perfect Man⁸ of ancient times made sure that he had it in himself before he tried to give it to others. When you're not even sure what you've got in yourself, how do you have time to bother about what some tyrant is doing?"

"Do you know what it is that destroys virtue, and where wisdom comes from? Virtue is destroyed by fame, and wisdom comes out of wrangling. Fame is something to beat people down with, and wisdom is a device for wrangling. Both are evil weapons—not the sort of thing to bring you success. Though your virtue may be great and your good faith unassailable, if you do not understand men's spirits, though your fame may be wide and you do not strive with others, if you do not understand men's minds, but instead appear before a tyrant and force him to listen to sermons on benevolence and righteousness, measures and standards—this is simply using other men's bad points to parade your own excellence. You will be called a plager of others. He who plagues others will be plagued in turn. You will probably be plagued by this man."

"And suppose he is the kind who actually delights in worthy men and hates the unworthy—then why does he need you to try to make him any different? You had best keep your advice to yourself! Kings and dukes always lord it over others and fight to win the argument. You will find your eyes growing dazed, your color changing, your mouth working to invent excuses, your attitude becoming more and more humble, until in your mind you end by supporting him. This is to pile fire on fire, to add water to water, and is called 'increasing the excessive.' If you give in at the beginning, there is no place to stop. Since your fervent advice is almost certain not to be believed, you are bound to die if you come into the presence of a tyrant."

"In ancient times Jie⁹ put Guan Longfeng to death and Zhou¹ put Prince Bi Gan to death. Both Guan Longfeng and Prince Bi Gan were scrupulous in their conduct, bent down to comfort and aid the common people, and used their positions as ministers to oppose their superiors. Therefore their rulers, Jie and Zhou, utilized their scrupulous conduct as a means to trap them, for they were too fond of good fame. In ancient times Yao attacked Congzhi and Xu'ao, and Yu² attacked Yuhu, and these states were left empty and unpeopled, their rulers cut down. It was because they employed their armies constantly and never ceased their search for gain. All were seekers

8. *Zhenren*, a concept that first appears in this work and becomes important in later Daoism.
9. The last, ruthless king of the legendary Xia dynasty (ca. 21st–16th century B.C.E.); he came to symbolize evil rulers.

1. A king during the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1045 B.C.E.).
2. A legendary Chinese ruler, credited with founding the Xia dynasty.

of fame or gain—have you alone not heard of them? Even the sages cannot cope with men who are after fame or gain, much less a person like you!

"However, you must have some plan in mind. Come, tell me what it is."

Yan Hui said, "If I am grave and empty-hearted, diligent and of one mind, won't that do?"

"Goodness, how could *that* do? You may put on a fine outward show and seem very impressive, but you can't avoid having an uncertain look on your face, any more than an ordinary man can. And then you try to gauge this man's feelings and seek to influence his mind. But with him, what is called 'the virtue that advances a little each day' would not succeed, much less a great display of virtue! He will stick fast to his position and never be converted. Though he may make outward signs of agreement, inwardly he will not give it a thought! How could such an approach succeed?"

"Well then, suppose I am inwardly direct, outwardly compliant, and do my work through the examples of antiquity? By being inwardly direct, I can be the companion of Heaven. Being a companion of Heaven, I know that the Son of Heaven³ and I are equally the sons of Heaven. Then why would I use my words to try to get men to praise me, or try to get them not to praise me? A man like this, people call The Child. This is what I mean by being a companion of Heaven."

"By being outwardly compliant, I can be a companion of men. Lifting up the tablet, kneeling, bowing, crouching down—this is the etiquette of a minister. Everybody does it, so why shouldn't I? If I do what other people do, they can hardly criticize me. This is what I mean by being a companion of men."

"By doing my work through the examples of antiquity, I can be the companion of ancient times. Though my words may in fact be lessons and reproaches, they belong to ancient times and not to me. In this way, though I may be blunt, I cannot be blamed. This is what I mean by being a companion of antiquity. If I go about it in this way, will it do?"

Confucius said, "Goodness, how could *that* do? You have too many policies and plans and you haven't seen what is needed. You will probably get off without incurring any blame, yes. But that will be as far as it goes. How do you think you can actually convert him? You are still making the mind your teacher!"

Yan Hui said, "I have nothing more to offer. May I ask the proper way?"

"You must fast!" said Confucius. "I will tell you what that means. Do you think it is easy to do anything while you have a mind? If you do, Bright Heaven will not sanction you."

Yan Hui said, "My family is poor. I haven't drunk wine or eaten any strong foods for several months. So can I be considered as having fasted?"

"That is the fasting one does before a sacrifice, not the fasting of the mind."

"May I ask what the fasting of the mind is?"

Confucius said, "Make your will one! Don't listen with your ears, listen with your mind. No, don't listen with your mind, but listen with your spirit. Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits on all things. The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind."

3. That is, the emperor.

Yan Hui said, "Before I heard this, I was certain that I was Hui. But now that I have heard it, there is no more Hui. Can this be called emptiness?"

"That's all there is to it," said Confucius. "Now I will tell you. You may go and play in his bird cage, but never be moved by fame. If he listens, then sing; if not, keep still. Have no gate, no opening, but make oneness your house and live with what cannot be avoided. Then you will be close to success.

"It is easy to keep from walking; the hard thing is to walk without touching the ground. It is easy to cheat when you work for men, but hard to cheat when you work for Heaven. You have heard of flying with wings, but you have never heard of flying without wings. You have heard of the knowledge that knows, but you have never heard of the knowledge that does not know. Look into that closed room, the empty chamber where brightness is born! Fortune and blessing gather where there is stillness. But if you do not keep still—this is what is called sitting but racing around. Let your ears and eyes communicate with what is inside, and put mind and knowledge on the outside. Then even gods and spirits will come to dwell, not to speak of men! This is the changing of the ten thousand things, the bond of Yu and Shun, the constant practice of Fu Xi and Ji Qu.⁴ How much more should it be a rule for lesser men!"

Zigao,⁵ duke of She, who was being sent on a mission to Qi, consulted Confucius. "The king is sending me on a very important mission. Qi will probably treat me with great honor but will be in no hurry to do anything more. Even a commoner cannot be forced to act, much less one of the feudal lords. I am very worried about it. You once said to me, 'In all affairs, whether large or small, there are few men who reach a happy conclusion except through the Way. If you do not succeed, you are bound to suffer from the judgment of men. If you do succeed, you are bound to suffer from the yin and yang.'⁶ To suffer no harm whether you succeed or not—only the man who has virtue can do that.' I am a man who eats plain food that is simply cooked, so that no one ever complains of the heat in my kitchens. Yet this morning I received my orders from the king and by evening I am gulping ice water—do you suppose I have developed some kind of internal fever? I have not even gone to Qi to see what the situation is like and already I am suffering from the yin and yang. And if I do not succeed, I am bound to suffer from the judgment of men. I will have both worries. As a minister, I am not capable of carrying out this mission. But perhaps you have some advice you can give me . . ."

Confucius said, "In the world, there are two great decrees: one is fate and the other is duty. That a son should love his parents is fate—you cannot erase this from his heart. That a subject should serve his ruler is duty—there is no place he can go and be without his ruler, no place he can escape to between heaven and earth. These are called the great decrees. Therefore, to serve your parents and be content to follow them anywhere—this

4. Two mythological rulers, renowned for their wisdom.

5. A high minister in Qu's government.

6. That is, an imbalance within the body. "Yin" is the female principle; the term originally referred to the shady side of a valley, and by extension it

came to be associated with the dark, earth, dampness, and passivity. "Yang" is the male principle; the term originally referred to the sunny side of a valley, and by extension it came to be associated with the light, heaven, dryness, and activity.

is the perfection of filial piety. To serve your ruler and be content to do anything for him—this is the peak of loyalty. And to serve your own mind so that sadness or joy do not sway or move it; to understand what you can do nothing about and to be content with it as with fate—this is the perfection of virtue. As a subject and a son, you are bound to find things you cannot avoid. If you act in accordance with the state of affairs and forget about yourself, then what leisure will you have to love life and hate death? Act in this way and you will be all right.

"I want to tell you something else I have learned. In all human relations, if the two parties are living close to each other, they may form a bond through personal trust. But if they are far apart, they must use words to communicate their loyalty, and words must be transmitted by someone. To transmit words that are either pleasing to both parties or infuriating to both parties is one of the most difficult things in the world. Where both parties are pleased, there must be some exaggeration of the good points; and where both parties are angered, there must be some exaggeration of the bad points. Anything that smacks of exaggeration is irresponsible. Where there is irresponsibility, no one will trust what is said, and when that happens, the man who is transmitting the words will be in danger. Therefore the aphorism says, 'Transmit the established facts; do not transmit words of exaggeration.' If you do that, you will probably come out all right.

"When men get together to pit their strength in games of skill, they start off in a light and friendly mood, but usually end up in a dark and angry one, and if they go on too long they start resorting to various underhanded tricks. When men meet at some ceremony to drink, they start off in an orderly manner, but usually end up in disorder, and if they go on too long they start indulging in various irregular amusements. It is the same with all things. What starts out being sincere usually ends up being deceitful. What was simple in the beginning acquires monstrous proportions in the end.

"Words are like wind and waves; actions are a matter of gain and loss. Wind and waves are easily moved; questions of gain and loss easily lead to danger. Hence anger arises from no other cause than clever words and one-sided speeches. When animals face death, they do not care what cries they make; their breath comes in gasps and a wild fierceness is born in their hearts. [Men, too,] if you press them too hard, are bound to answer you with ill-natured hearts, though they do not know why they do so. If they themselves do not understand why they behave like this, then who knows where it will end?

"Therefore the aphorism says, 'Do not deviate from your orders; do not press for completion. To go beyond the limit is excess; to deviate from orders or press for completion is a dangerous thing. A good completion takes a long time; a bad completion cannot be changed later. Can you afford to be careless?

"Just go along with things and let your mind move freely. Resign yourself to what cannot be avoided and nourish what is within you—this is best. What more do you have to do to fulfill your mission? Nothing is as good as following orders (obeying fate)—that's how difficult it is!"

Yan He, who had been appointed tutor to the crown prince, son of Duke Ling of Wei, went to consult Qu Boyu.⁷ "Here is this man who by nature is

7. A high government minister of Wei (fl. ca. 500 B.C.E.). Yan He: a noted scholar.

lacking in virtue. If I let him go on with his unruliness I will endanger the state. If I try to impose some rule on him, I will endanger myself. He knows enough to recognize the faults of others, but he doesn't know his own faults. What can I do with a man like this?"

"A very good question," said Qu Boyu. "Be careful, be on your guard, and make sure that you yourself are in the right! In your actions it is best to follow along with him, and in your mind it is best to harmonize with him. However, these two courses involve certain dangers. Though you follow along, you don't want to be pulled into his doings, and though you harmonize, you don't want to be drawn out too far. If in your actions you follow along to the extent of being pulled in with him, then you will be overthrown, destroyed, wiped out, and brought to your knees. If in your mind you harmonize to the extent of being drawn out, then you will be talked about, named, blamed, and condemned. If he wants to be a child, be a child with him. If he wants to follow erratic ways, follow erratic ways with him. If he wants to be reckless, be reckless with him. Understand him thoroughly, and lead him to the point where he is without fault.

"Don't you know about the praying mantis that waved its arms angrily in front of an approaching carriage, unaware that they were incapable of stopping it? Such was the high opinion it had of its talents. Be careful, be on your guard! If you offend him by parading your store of talents, you will be in danger!

"Don't you know how the tiger trainer goes about it? He doesn't dare give the tiger any living thing to eat for fear it will learn the taste of fury by killing it. He doesn't dare give it any whole thing to eat for fear it will learn the taste of fury by tearing it apart. He gauges the state of the tiger's appetite and thoroughly understands its fierce disposition. Tigers are a different breed from men, and yet you can train them to be gentle with their keepers by following along with them. The men who get killed are the ones who go against them.

"The horse lover will use a fine box to catch the dung and a giant clam shell to catch the stale.⁸ But if a mosquito or a fly lights on the horse and he slaps it at the wrong time, then the horse will break the bit, hurt its head, and bang its chest. The horse lover tries to think of everything, but his affection leads him into error. Can you afford to be careless?"

Carpenter Shi went to Qi and, when he got to Crooked Shaft, he saw a serrate oak standing by the village shrine. It was broad enough to shelter several thousand oxen and measured a hundred spans around, towering above the hills. The lowest branches were eighty feet from the ground, and a dozen or so of them could have been made into boats. There were so many sightseers that the place looked like a fair, but the carpenter didn't even glance around and went on his way without stopping. His apprentice stood staring for a long time and then ran after Carpenter Shi and said, "Since I first took up my ax and followed you, Master, I have never seen timber as beautiful as this. But you don't even bother to look, and go right on without stopping. Why is that?"

8. Urine.

"Forget it—say no more!" said the carpenter. "It's a worthless tree! Make boats out of it and they'd sink; make coffins and they'd rot in no time; make vessels and they'd break at once. Use it for doors and it would sweat sap like pine; use it for posts and the worms would eat them up. It's not a timber tree—there's nothing it can be used for. That's how it got to be that old!"

After Carpenter Shi had returned home, the oak tree appeared to him in a dream and said, "What are you comparing me with? Are you comparing me with those useful trees? The cherry apple, the pear, the orange, the citron, the rest of those fructiferous⁹ trees and shrubs—as soon as their fruit is ripe, they are torn apart and subjected to abuse. Their big limbs are broken off, their little limbs are yanked around. Their utility makes life miserable for them, and so they don't get to finish out the years Heaven gave them, but are cut off in mid-journey. They bring it on themselves—the pulling and tearing of the common mob. And it's the same way with all other things.

"As for me, I've been trying a long time to be of no use, and though I almost died, I've finally got it. This is of great use to me. If I had been of some use, would I ever have grown this large? Moreover you and I are both of us things. What's the point of this—things condemning things? You, a worthless man about to die—how do you know I'm a worthless tree?"

When Carpenter Shi woke up, he reported his dream. His apprentice said, "If it's so intent on being of no use, what's it doing there at the village shrine?"

"Shhh! Say no more! It's only *resting* there. If we carp and criticize, it will merely conclude that we don't understand it. Even if it weren't at the shrine, do you suppose it would be cut down? It protects itself in a different way from ordinary people. If you try to judge it by conventional standards, you'll be way off!"

Ziqi of Nanbo was wandering around the Hill of Shang when he saw a huge tree there, different from all the rest. A thousand teams of horses could have taken shelter under it and its shade would have covered them all. Ziqi said, "What tree is this? It must certainly have some extraordinary usefulness!" But, looking up, he saw that the smaller limbs were gnarled and twisted, unfit for beams or rafters, and looking down, he saw that the trunk was pitted and rotten and could not be used for coffins. He licked one of the leaves and it blistered his mouth and made it sore. He sniffed the odor and it was enough to make a man drunk for three days. "It turns out to be a completely unusable tree," said Ziqi, "and so it has been able to grow this big. Aha!—it is this unusableness that the Holy Man makes use of!"

The region of Jingshi in Song is fine for growing catalpas, cypresses, and mulberries. But those that are more than one or two arm-lengths around are cut down for people who want monkey perches; those that are three or four spans around are cut down for the ridgepoles of tall roofs; and those that are seven or eight spans are cut down for the families of nobles or rich merchants who want side boards for coffins. So they never get to live out the years Heaven gave them, but are cut down in mid-journey by axes. This

9. Fruit-bearing.

is the danger of being usable. In the Jie sacrifice,¹ oxen with white foreheads, pigs with turned-up snouts, and men with piles cannot be offered to the river. This is something all the shamans know, and hence they consider them inauspicious creatures. But the Holy Man for the same reason considers them highly auspicious.

There's Crippled Shu—chin stuck down in his navel, shoulders up above his head, pigtail pointing at the sky, his five organs² on the top, his two thighs pressing his ribs. By sewing and washing, he gets enough to fill his mouth; by handling a winnow and sifting out the good grain, he makes enough to feed ten people. When the authorities call out the troops, he stands in the crowd waving good-by; when they get up a big work party, they pass him over because he's a chronic invalid. And when they are doling out grain to the ailing, he gets three big measures and ten bundles of firewood. With a crippled body, he's still able to look after himself and finish out the years Heaven gave him. How much better, then, if he had crippled virtue!

When Confucius visited Chu, Jie Yu, the madman of Chu, wandered by his gate crying, "Phoenix, phoenix, how has virtue failed! The future you cannot wait for; the past you cannot pursue. When the world has the Way, the sage succeeds; when the world is without the Way, the sage survives. In times like the present, we do well to escape penalty. Good fortune is light as a feather, but nobody knows how to pick it up. Misfortune is heavy as the earth, but nobody knows how to stay out of its way. Leave off, leave off—this teaching men virtue! Dangerous, dangerous—to mark off the ground and run! Fool, fool—don't spoil my walking! I walk a crooked way—don't step on my feet. The mountain trees do themselves harm; the grease in the torch burns itself up. The cinnamon can be eaten and so it gets cut down; the lacquer tree can be used and so it gets hacked apart. All men know the use of the useful, but nobody knows the use of the useless!"

Mastering Life

He who has mastered the true nature of life does not labor over what life cannot do. He who has mastered the true nature of fate does not labor over what knowledge cannot change. He who wants to nourish his body must first of all turn to things. And yet it is possible to have more than enough things and for the body still to go unnourished. He who has life must first of all see to it that it does not leave the body. And yet it is possible for life never to leave the body and still fail to be preserved. The coming of life cannot be fended off, its departure cannot be stopped. How pitiful the men of the world, who think that simply nourishing the body is enough to preserve life! Then why is what the world does worth doing? It may not be worth doing, and yet it cannot be left undone—this is unavoidable.

1. Apparently a sacrifice related to the expiation of sins.

2. The eyes, tongue, mouth, nose, and ears.

He who wants to avoid doing anything for his body had best abandon the world. By abandoning the world, he can be without entanglements. Being without entanglements, he can be upright and calm. Being upright and calm, he can be born again with others. Being born again, he can come close [to the Way].

But why is abandoning the affairs of the world worth while, and why is forgetting life worth while? If you abandon the affairs of the world, your body will be without toil. If you forget life, your vitality will be unimpaired. With your body complete and your vitality made whole again, you may become one with Heaven. Heaven and earth are the father and mother of the ten thousand things. They join to become a body; they part to become a beginning. When the body and vitality are without flaw, this is called being able to shift. Vitality added to vitality, you return to become the Helper of Heaven.

Master Liezi said to the Barrier Keeper Yin,³ "The Perfect Man can walk under water without choking, can tread on fire without being burned, and can travel above the ten thousand things without being frightened. May I ask how he manages this?"

The Barrier Keeper Yin replied, "This is because he guards the pure breath—it has nothing to do with wisdom, skill, determination, or courage. Sit down and I will tell you about it. All that have faces, forms, voices, colors—these are all mere things. How could one thing and another thing be far removed from each other? And how could any of them be worth considering as a predecessor? They are forms, colors—nothing more. But things have their creation in what has no form, and their conclusion in what has no change. If a man can get hold of *this* and exhaust it fully, then how can things stand in his way? He may rest within the bounds that know no excess, hide within the borders that know no source, wander where the ten thousand things have their end and beginning, unify his nature, nourish his breath, unite his virtue, and thereby communicate with that which creates all things. A man like this guards what belongs to Heaven and keeps it whole. His spirit has no flaw, so how can things enter in and get at him?

"When a drunken man falls from a carriage, though the carriage may be going very fast, he won't be killed. He has bones and joints the same as other men, and yet he is not injured as they would be, because his spirit is whole. He didn't know he was riding, and he doesn't know he has fallen out. Life and death, alarm and terror do not enter his breast, and so he can bang against things without fear of injury. If he can keep himself whole like this by means of wine, how much more can he keep himself whole by means of Heaven! The sage hides himself in Heaven—hence there is nothing that can do him harm.

"A man seeking revenge does not go so far as to smash the sword of his enemy; a man, no matter how hot-tempered, does not rail at the tile that happens to fall on him. To know that all things in the world are equal and

3. The gatekeeper who persuaded Laozi to transmit his knowledge, which became *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue*.

the same—this is the only way to eliminate the chaos of attack and battle and the harshness of punishment and execution!

"Do not try to develop what is natural to man; develop what is natural to Heaven. He who develops Heaven benefits life; he who develops man injures life. Do not reject what is of Heaven, do not neglect what is of man, and the people will be close to the attainment of Truth."

When Confucius was on his way to Chu, he passed through a forest where he saw a hunchback catching cicadas with a sticky pole as easily as though he were grabbing them with his hand.

Confucius said, "What skill you have! Is there a special way to this?"

"I have a way," said the hunchback. "For the first five or six months I practice balancing two balls on top of each other on the end of the pole and, if they don't fall off, I know I will lose very few cicadas. Then I balance three balls and, if they don't fall off, I know I'll lose only one cicada in ten. Then I balance five balls and, if they don't fall off, I know it will be as easy as grabbing them with my hand. I hold my body like a stiff tree trunk and use my arm like an old dry limb. No matter how huge heaven and earth, or how numerous the ten thousand things, I'm aware of nothing but cicada wings. Not wavering, not tipping, not letting any of the other ten thousand things take the place of those cicada wings—how can I help but succeed?"

Confucius turned to his disciples and said, "He keeps his will undivided and concentrates his spirit—that would serve to describe our hunchback gentleman here, would it not?"

Yan Yuan said to Confucius, "I once crossed the gulf at Goblet Deep and the ferryman handled the boat with supernatural skill. I asked him, 'Can a person learn how to handle a boat?' and he replied, 'Certainly. A good swimmer will get the knack of it in no time. And, if a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before and still he'll know how to handle it!' I asked him what he meant by that, but he wouldn't tell me. May I venture to ask you what it means?"

Confucius said, "A good swimmer will get the knack of it in no time—that means he's forgotten the water. If a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before and still he'll know how to handle it—that's because he sees the water as so much dry land, and regards the capsizing of a boat as he would the overturning of a cart. The ten thousand things may all be capsizing and turning over at the same time right in front of him and it can't get at him and affect what's inside—so where could he go and not be at ease?"

"When you're betting for tiles in an archery contest, you shoot with skill. When you're betting for fancy belt buckles, you worry about your aim. And when you're betting for real gold, you're a nervous wreck. Your skill is the same in all three cases—but because one prize means more to you than another, you let outside considerations weigh on your mind. He who looks too hard at the outside gets clumsy on the inside."

Tian Kaizhi went to see Duke Wei of Zhou. Duke Wei said, "I hear that Zhu Xian is studying how to live. You are a friend of his—what have you heard from him on the subject?"

Tian Kaizhi said, "I merely wield a broom and tend his gate and garden—how should I have heard anything from the Master?"

Duke Wei said, "Don't be modest, Master Tian. I am anxious to hear about it."

Tian Kaizhi said, "I have heard the Master say, 'He who is good at nourishing life is like a herder of sheep—he watches for stragglers and whips them up.'"

"What does that mean?" asked Duke Wei.

Tian Kaizhi said, "In Lu there was Shan Bao—he lived among the cliffs, drank only water, and didn't go after gain like other people. He went along like that for seventy years and still had the complexion of a little child. Unfortunately, he met a hungry tiger who killed him and ate him up. Then there was Zhang Yi—there wasn't one of the great families and fancy mansions that he didn't rush off to visit. He went along like that for forty years, and then he developed an internal fever, fell ill, and died. Shan Bao looked after what was on the inside and the tiger ate up his outside. Zhang Yi looked after what was on the outside and the sickness attacked him from the inside. Both these men failed to give a lash to the stragglers."

Confucius has said, "Don't go in and hide; don't come out and shine; stand stock-still in the middle." He who can follow these three rules is sure to be called the finest. When people are worried about the safety of the roads, if they hear that one traveler in a party of ten has been murdered, then fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers will warn each other to be careful and will not venture out until they have a large escort of armed men. That's wise of them, isn't it? But when it comes to what people really ought to be worried about—the time when they are lying in bed or sitting around eating and drinking—then they don't have sense enough to take warning. That's a mistake!"

The Invocator of the Ancestors, dressed in his black, square-cut robes, peered into the pigpen and said, "Why should you object to dying? I'm going to fatten you for three months, practice austerities for ten days, fast for three days, spread the white rushes, and lay your shoulders and rump on the carved sacrificial stand—you'll go along with that, won't you? True, if I were planning things from the point of view of a pig, I'd say it would be better to eat chaff and bran and stay right there in the pen. But if I were planning for myself, I'd say that if I could be honored as a high official while I lived, and get to ride in a fine hearse and lie among the feathers and trappings when I died, I'd go along with that. Speaking for the pig, I'd give such a life a flat refusal, but speaking for myself, I'd certainly accept. I wonder why I look at things differently from a pig?"

Duke Huan was hunting in a marsh, with Guan Zhong⁴ as his carriage driver, when he saw a ghost. The duke grasped Guan Zhong's hand and said, "Father Zhong, what do you see?"

"I don't see anything," replied Guan Zhong.

4. The minister of the duke, who became ruler of Qi (r. 685–643 B.C.E.) and was a character frequently mentioned in classical Chinese literature.

When the duke returned home, he fell into a stupor, grew ill, and for several days did not go out.

A gentleman of Qi named Huangzi Gao'ao said, "Your Grace, you are doing this injury to yourself! How could a ghost have the power to injure you! If the vital breath that is stored up in a man becomes dispersed and does not return, then he suffers a deficiency. If it ascends and fails to descend again, it causes him to be chronically irritable. If it descends and does not ascend again, it causes him to be chronically forgetful. And if it neither ascends nor descends, but gathers in the middle of the body in the region of the heart, then he becomes ill."

Duke Huan said, "But do ghosts really exist?"

"Indeed they do. There is the Li on the hearth and the Chi in the stove. The heap of clutter and trash just inside the gate is where the Leiting lives. In the northeast corner the Bei'a and Guilong leap about, and the northwest corner is where the Yiyang lives. In the water is the Gangxiang; on the hills, the Xin; in the mountains, the Gui; in the meadows, the Panghuang, and in the marshes, the Weituo."

The duke said, "May I ask what a Weituo looks like?"

Huangzi said, "The Weituo is as big as a wheel hub, as tall as a carriage shaft, has a purple robe and a vermilion hat and, as creatures go, is very ugly. When it hears the sound of thunder or a carriage, it grabs its head and stands up. Anyone who sees it will soon become a dictator."

Duke Huan's face lit up and he said with a laugh, "That must have been what I saw!" Then he straightened his robe and hat and sat up on the mat with Huangzi, and before the day was over, though he didn't notice it, his illness went away.

Ji Xingzi was training gamecocks for the king. After ten days the king asked if they were ready.

"Not yet. They're too haughty and rely on their nerve."

Another ten days and the king asked again.

"Not yet. They still respond to noises and movements."

Another ten days and the king asked again.

"Not yet. They still look around fiercely and are full of spirit."

Another ten days and the king asked again.

"They're close enough. Another cock can crow and they show no sign of change. Look at them from a distance and you'd think they were made of wood. Their virtue is complete. Other cocks won't dare face up to them, but will turn and run."

Confucius was seeing the sights at Lüliang, where the water falls from a height of thirty fathoms and races and boils along for forty li, so swift that no fish or other water creature can swim in it. He saw a man dive into the water and, supposing that the man was in some kind of trouble and intended to end his life, he ordered his disciples to line up on the bank and pull the man out. But after the man had gone a couple of hundred paces, he came out of the water and began strolling along the base of the embankment, his hair streaming down, singing a song. Confucius ran after him and said, "At first I thought you were a ghost, but now I see you're a man. May I ask if you have some special way of staying afloat in the water?"

"I have no way. I began with what I was used to, grew up with my nature, and let things come to completion with fate. I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way the water goes and never thinking about myself. That's how I can stay afloat."

Confucius said, "What do you mean by saying that you began with what you were used to, grew up with your nature, and let things come to completion with fate?"

"I was born on the dry land and felt safe on the dry land—that was what I was used to. I grew up with the water and felt safe in the water—that was my nature. I don't know why I do what I do—that's fate."

Woodworker Qing carved a piece of wood and made a bell stand, and when it was finished, everyone who saw it marveled, for it seemed to be the work of gods or spirits. When the marquis of Lu saw it, he asked, "What art is it you have?"

Qing replied, "I am only a craftsman—how would I have any art? There is one thing, however. When I am going to make a bell stand, I never let it wear out my energy. I always fast in order to still my mind. When I have fasted for three days, I no longer have any thought of congratulations or rewards, of titles or stipends. When I have fasted for five days, I no longer have any thought of praise or blame, of skill or clumsiness. And when I have fasted for seven days, I am so still that I forget I have four limbs and a form and body. By that time, the ruler and his court no longer exist for me. My skill is concentrated and all outside distractions fade away. After that, I go into the mountain forest and examine the Heavenly nature of the trees. If I find one of superlative form, and I can see a bell stand there, I put my hand to the job of carving; if not, I let it go. This way I am simply matching up 'Heaven' with 'Heaven.' That's probably the reason that people wonder if the results were not made by spirits."

Dongye Ji was displaying his carriage driving before Duke Zhuang. He drove back and forth as straight as a measuring line and wheeled to left and right as neat as a compass-drawn curve. Duke Zhuang concluded that even Cao Fu⁵ could do no better, and ordered him to make a hundred circuits and then return to the palace. Yan He happened along at the moment and went in to see the duke. "Dongye Ji's horses are going to break down," he said. The duke was silent and gave no answer. In a little while Dongye Ji returned, his horses having in fact broken down. The duke asked Yan He, "How did you know that was going to happen?" Yan He said, "The strength of the horses was all gone and still he was asking them to go on—that's why I said they would break down."

Artisan Chui could draw as true as a compass or a T square because his fingers changed along with things and he didn't let his mind get in the way. Therefore his Spirit Tower⁶ remained unified and unobstructed.

You forget your feet when the shoes are comfortable. You forget your waist when the belt is comfortable. Understanding forgets right and wrong

5. A famous chariot driver.

6. A Daoist term for the mind [translator's note].

when the mind is comfortable. There is no change in what is inside, no following what is outside, when the adjustment to events is comfortable. You begin with what is comfortable and never experience what is uncomfortable when you know the comfort of forgetting what is comfortable.

A certain Sun Xiu appeared at the gate of Master Bian Qingzi to pay him a call. "When I was living in the village," he said, "no one ever said I lacked good conduct. When I faced difficulty, no one ever said I lacked courage. Yet when I worked the fields, it never seemed to be a good year for crops, and when I served the ruler, it never seemed to be a good time for advancement. So I am an outcast from the villages, an exile from the towns. What crime have I committed against Heaven? Why should I meet this fate?"

Master Bian said, "Have you never heard how the Perfect Man conducts himself? He forgets his liver and gall and thinks no more about his eyes and ears. Vague and aimless, he wanders beyond the dirt and dust; free and easy, tending to nothing is his job. This is what is called 'doing but not looking for any thanks, bringing up but not bossing.'⁷ Now you show off your wisdom in order to astound the ignorant, work at your good conduct in order to distinguish yourself from the disreputable, going around bright and shining as though you were carrying the sun and moon in your hand! You've managed to keep your body in one piece, you have all the ordinary nine openings,⁸ you haven't been struck down midway by blindness or deafness, lameness or deformity—compared to a lot of people, you're a lucky man. How do you have any time to go around complaining against Heaven? Be on your way!"

After Master Sun had left, Master Bian went back into the house, sat down for a while, and then looked up to heaven and sighed. One of his disciples asked, "Why does my teacher sigh?"

Master Bian said, "Just now Sun Xiu came to see me, and I described to him the virtue of the Perfect Man. I'm afraid he was very startled and may end up in a complete muddle."

"Surely not," said the disciple. "Was what Master Sun said right and what my teacher said wrong? If so, then wrong can certainly never make a muddle out of right. Or was what Master Sun said wrong and what my teacher said right? If so, then he must already have been in a muddle when he came here, so what's the harm?"

"You don't understand," said Master Bian. "Once long ago a bird alighted in the suburbs of the Lu capital. The ruler of Lu was delighted with it, had a Tailao sacrifice⁹ prepared for it to feast on, and the Nine Shao music performed for its enjoyment. But the bird immediately began to look unhappy and dazed, and did not dare to eat or drink. This is what is called trying to nourish a bird with what would nourish you. If you want to nourish a bird with what will nourish a bird, you had best let it roost in the deep

7. See *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue*, chapters 10, 51.

8. The eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth, plus either the urethra and anus or the tongue and

throat.

9. An elaborate sacrifice, consisting of an ox, a sheep, and a pig.

forest, float on the rivers and lakes, and live on snakes—then it can feel at ease.

"Now Sun Xiu is a man of ignorance and little learning. For me to describe to him the virtue of the Perfect Man is like taking a mouse for a ride in a carriage or trying to delight a quail with the music of bells and drums. How could he help but be startled?"

MASTER OF HUAINAN

(Huainan-zi)

The *Master of Huainan* (Huainan-zi) is a work that was compiled at the court of Liu An, the king of Huainan, in the second century B.C.E. following a series of scholarly debates; it was presented to the emperor in 139 B.C.E. The text's twenty-one chapters—or twenty-eight, in an alternate division of the same text—include a sophisticated philosophy of statecraft as they seek to provide the monarch with information about various forms of knowledge and rich accounts of self-cultivation practices, all aimed at bringing about and maintaining a harmonious sociopolitical order. This highly syncretic text is valuable today due to its encyclopedic inclusion of material on Confucian, Daoist, and Mohist philosophies. But despite the eclecticism of its material, the *Master of Huainan* is fundamentally Daoist in orientation. An edition dating to the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) or earlier was later included in the Daoist canon, though many other versions circulated.

The *Master of Huainan* is a fascinating compilation that synthesizes many of the important teachings found in *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue* (Daode jing; see above) and the *Book of Master Zhuang* (Zhuangzi; see above), which are both frequently quoted or paraphrased. For example, the chapter titled "Originating in the Way"—which is traditionally understood as laying out the work's overall framework and fundamental principles—presents a cosmology of the Way (Dao) that is clearly indebted to *The Scripture of the Way and Its Virtue*. "Activating the Genuine," on the other hand, offers a picture of human perfection that is indebted to the *Book of Master Zhuang*.

The overarching emphasis in the *Master of Huainan* is on the Dao as creative power, the basis for the potency in all things that enables them to be naturally what they are. Moreover, an important feature of the work's comprehensive vision is its stress on the resonance between all levels of reality—especially between the level of the ethereal, undifferentiated Dao and the level of phenomenal existence, with its particular affairs and manifestations. "The myriad things definitely accord with what is natural to them, so why should sages interfere with this?" ("Originating in the Way"). In place of a Confucian supreme ruler, supported by laws, hierarchies, and institutions, the *Master of Huainan* highlights an ideal type of sage who—having realized the Way—fulfills what is his authentic nature and lives harmoniously with the world, without thought of accumulating wealth, reputation, or other external things.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Huainan: hwai-nawn

Qi/qi: chi

Huainan-zi: hwai-nawn-tzu