

CHAPTER FOUR

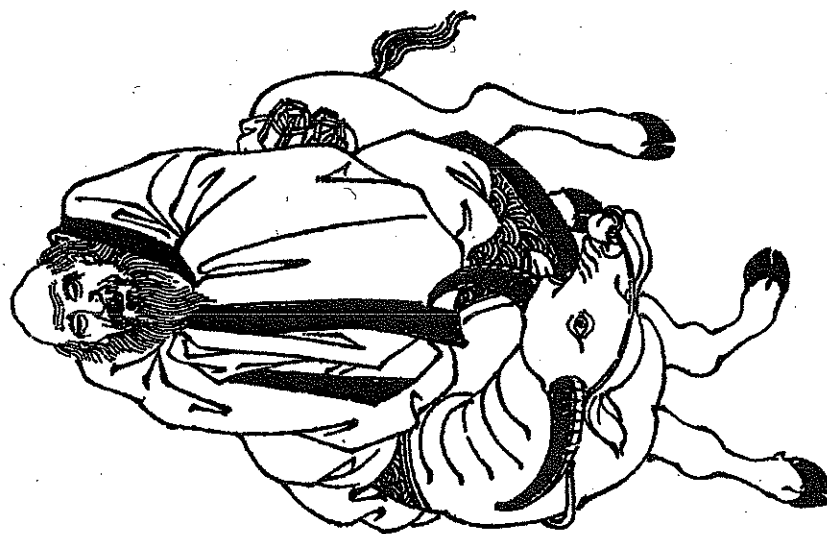
LAOZI

("The Daodejing")

Introduction

Traditionally, Laozi 老子 is said to have been an older contemporary of Kongzi "Confucius" and the author of the *Laozi* or *Daodejing* 道德經. But most contemporary scholars regard Laozi (literally "Old Master") as a mythical character and the *Laozi* to be a composite work. The present version of the text consists of short passages, from a variety of sources, over half of which are rhymed. These were collected together into a single volume of eighty-one chapters that were then divided into two books. Book I consists of chapters one through thirty-seven, the *dao* 道, "Way," half of the text; Book II consists of chapters thirty-eight through eighty-one, the *de* 德, "Virtue," half. On the basis of this organization, this version of the text came to be known as the *Daodejing*, which means simply "The Classic of *Dao* and *De*." This division in no way reflects the contents of the chapters themselves, except that the first chapter begins with the word *dao* and the thirty-eighth chapter begins by describing the highest *de*. The text may have reached its present form sometime during the third or perhaps second century B.C.E. Another version of the text, named after its place of discovery, *Mawangdui* 馬王堆, is similar in content and firmly dated to the middle of the second century B.C.E. But in the *Mawangdui* version, the order of the Books is reversed, giving us the *Dedaoring*.

Though it was probably cobbled together from different sources, the *Laozi* may well have been assembled during a relatively short period of time and perhaps by a single editor. When it was put together, China was near the end of a prolonged era of fierce interstate rivalry known as the Warring



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States Period (see *Important Periods*). The text can be understood, at least in part, as a reaction to this troubled age. In it we hear the lament of a time tired of war and chaos, one yearning for a bygone age of innocence, security, and peace. The text denounces wars of expansion and government corruption, and traces both complaints to the unbounded greed and ambition of those in power. These ideas are connected to the view that excessive desire per se is bad and the related belief that our "real" or "natural" desires are actually quite modest and limited. The text claims that it is unnatural to have excessive desires and having them will not only not lead to a satisfying life but paradoxically to destitution, want, alienation, and self-destruction.

The *Laozi* appeals to an earlier golden age in human history, before people made sharp distinctions among things. This was a time when values and qualities were not clearly distinguished, when things simply were as they were and people acted out of pre-reflective spontaneity. Chapter thirty-eight describes the history of the decline of the Way from an earlier golden age to its present debased state. The *dao* declined as civilization and human self-consciousness arose. The *Laozi* urges us to return to the earlier, natural state when the Way was fully realized in the world. We are to "untangle," "blunt," and "round off" the sharp corners of our present life and let our "wheels move only along old (and presumably more comfortable) ruts."

According to the *Laozi*, the *dao* is the source, sustenance, and ideal state of all things in the world. It is "hidden" and it contains within it the pattern of all that we see, but it is not ontologically transcendent. In the apt terms of all that we see, it is the "root" of all things. The *dao* is *ziran* 自然, "so metaphor of the text, it is the 'root' of all things. The *dao* is *ziran* 自然, 'so of itself' or 'spontaneous,' and its unencumbered activity brings about various natural states of affairs through *wuwei* 無為, 'nonaction' (see *Important Terms*). Human beings have a place in the *dao* but are not particularly exalted. They are simply things among things (a view well represented by the marvelous landscape paintings inspired by Daoism). Because of their unbridled desires and their unique capacity to think, act intentionally, and alter their nature—thus acting contrary to *wuwei* and bringing about states that are not *ziran*—humans tend to forsake their proper place and upset the natural harmony of the Way. The *Laozi* seeks to undo the consequences of such misguided human views and practices and lead us to "return" to the earlier ideal. The text is more a form of philosophical therapy than the presentation of a theory. We are to be challenged by its paradoxes and moved by its images and poetic cadence more than by any arguments it presents.

Book One

Chapter One

A Way that can be followed is not a constant Way.¹

A name that can be named is not a constant name.

Nameless, it is the beginning of Heaven and earth;² - *Dao* (*dao* 道) (absolute)
Named, it is the mother of the myriad creatures. - *De* of the *Dao* (*dao* 道) (relative)

And so,

Always eliminate desires in order to observe its mysteries; *Dao*

Always have desires in order to observe its manifestations. *De* of the *Dao*

These two come forth in unity but diverge in name.

Their unity is known as an enigma.³

Within this enigma is yet a deeper enigma.

The gate of all mysteries!

Chapter Two

Everyone in the world knows that when the beautiful strives to be beautiful, it is repulsive.⁴

Everyone knows that when the good strives to be good, it is no good.⁴

And so,

To have and to lack generate each other.⁵ cf 6/10

Difficult and easy give form to each other.

Long and short off-set each other.

High and low incline into each other.

Note and rhythm harmonize with each other.

Before and after follow each other.

¹Unlike the case of the following line, which has a similar basic structure, there is no way to reproduce in English the alternating nominal and verbal uses of the word *dao* 道, "Way." More literally, the first line reads, *dao* 道 [a] "Way," "path," or "teaching," *kedao* 可道, (which) "can be talked about" or "followed," *fei changdao* 非常道, "is not a constant Way." Cf. the grammar and sense of the poem "The Thorny Bush Upon the Wall" in the *Odes* (Mao # 46). For other passages that discuss the Way and names, see chapters 32, 34, and 41.

²On the idea of being "nameless," see chapters 32, 37, and 41.

³Cf. the reference to *xuanming* 玄同, "Enigmatic Unity," in chapter 56.

⁴The point is the common theme that self-conscious effort to be excellent in any way fatally undermines itself. Cf. for example, chapters 38, 81.

⁵Cf. chapter 40.

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This is why sages abide in the business of nonaction,⁶

and practice the teaching that is without words.⁷

They work with the myriad creatures and turn none away.⁸

They produce without possessing.⁹ *re "all the BS" (2:122);*

They act with no expectation of reward.¹⁰ *re "none the BS" (2:122);*

When their work is done, they do not linger.¹¹ *re "none the BS" (2:122);*

And, by not lingering, merit never deserts them.

Chapter Three

Not paying honor to the worthy leads the people to avoid contention.

Not showing reverence for precious goods¹² leads them to not steal. *re "val"*

Not making a display of what is desirable leads their hearts away from *re "val"*

chaos.¹³ *re "val"*

This is why sages bring things to order by opening people's hearts¹⁴ and

filling their bellies.

They weaken the people's commitments and strengthen their bones;

They make sure that the people are without *zhi*, "knowledge,"¹⁵ or desires;

And that those with knowledge do not dare to act.

Sages enact nonaction and everything becomes well ordered.

Chapter Four

The Way is like an empty vessel;

No use could ever fill it up.

⁶For *wuwei* 無為, "nonaction," see *Important Terms*. A study of this idea, which explores

the notion across different schools of early Chinese philosophy, is Edward G. Slingerland's

Effortless Action: Wuwei as Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China (New York:

Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁷Cf. a similar line in chapter 43.

⁸Cf. chapter 34.

⁹This line also occurs in chapters 10, 51, and 77.

¹⁰This line also appears in chapters 10, 51, and 77.

¹¹Recognizing that the credit for their success lies with the Way and not with themselves

is a characteristic attitude of Daoist sages. For similar ideas, see chapters 9, 17, 34, and 77.

¹²This and the previous line occur together in chapter 77.

¹³For other passages discussing "precious goods," see chapters 12 and 64.

¹⁴Cf. *Analects* 12.18.

Vast and deep!

It seems to be the ancestor of the myriad creatures.

It blunts their sharpness;¹⁶

Untangles their tangles;

Softens their glare;

Merges with their dust.

Deep and clear!

It seems to be there.

I do not know whose child it is;

It is the image of what was before the Lord himself!¹⁷

Chapter Five

Heaven and earth are not benevolent;

They treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs.¹⁸ *contra Confucian thinking*

Sages are not benevolent; *re "val"*

They treat the people as straw dogs.

Is not the space between Heaven and earth like a bellows?

Empty yet inexhaustible!

Work it and more will come forth.

An excess of speech will lead to exhaustion,¹⁹ *no excessive speech*

It is better to hold on to the mean.

Chapter Six

The spirit of the valley never dies;

She is called the "Enigmatic Female."

The portal of the Enigmatic Female;

Is called the root of Heaven and earth.

¹⁶The following four lines, preceded by two lines from chapter 52, appear in chapter 56.

¹⁷This is the only occurrence in the text of the character *di* 帝, "Lord," a name for the high god or supreme ancestral spirit of ancient China. For other passages concerning *xiang*

象, "image," see chapters 14, 21, 35, and 41.

¹⁸"Straw dogs" were used as ceremonial offerings. Before and during the ceremony, they were protected and cherished, but as soon as the ceremony ended, they were discarded and defiled. Others interpret the characters in this expression as "straw and dogs." The point is the same.

¹⁹Cf. the opening lines of chapter 23.

An unbroken, gossamer thread;
It seems to be there.
But use will not unsettle it.

Chapter Seven

Heaven is long lasting;
Earth endures.
Heaven is able to be long lasting and earth is able to endure, because they
do not live for themselves.
And so, they are able to be long lasting and to endure. *sages*
This is why sages put themselves last and yet come first;
Treat themselves as unimportant and yet are preserved.
Is it not because they have no thought of themselves, that they are able to
perfect themselves? *see § 2*

Chapter Eight

The highest good is like water. *cf. Mengzi*
Water is good at benefiting the myriad creatures, while not contending with
them.
It resides in the places that people find repellent, and so comes close to the
Way.
In a residence, the good lies in location.
In hearts, the good lies in depth.
In interactions with others, the good lies in benevolence.
In words, the good lies in trustworthiness.
In government, the good lies in orderliness.
In carrying out one's business, the good lies in ability.
In actions, the good lies in timeliness.
Only by avoiding contention can one avoid blame. *cf. Laozi*

Chapter Nine

To hold the vessel upright in order to fill it²⁰ is not as good as to stop in
time.

²⁰The reference is to a "tilting vessel" that would fall over and pour out its contents if filled to the top.

If you make your blade too keen it will not hold its edge.
When gold and jade fill the hall none can hold on to them.
To be haughty when wealth and honor come your way is to bring disaster
upon yourself.
To withdraw when the work is done is the Way of Heaven.²¹ *see § 2 + § 10*

see § 4

Chapter Ten

Embracing your soul and holding on to the One, can you keep them
from departing?²²
Concentrating your *qi* 氣, "vital energies,"²³ and attaining the utmost
suppleness, can you be a child?
Cleaning and purifying your enigmatic mirror, can you erase every flaw?
Caring for the people and ordering the state, can you eliminate all
knowledge?
When the portal of Heaven opens and closes, can you play the part of the
feminine?
Comprehending all within the four directions, can you reside in nonaction?
To produce them!
To nurture them!
To produce without possessing,²⁴ *see § 2 + § 9*
To act with no expectation of reward,²⁵ — *see § 2 + § 9*
To lead without lording over;
Such is Enigmatic Virtue!²⁶ *ENIGMATIC VIRTUE*

Chapter Eleven → the 'power' of 'negative space' (Xunzi)

Thirty spokes are joined in the hub of a wheel.
But only by relying on what is not there,²⁷ do we have the use of the
carriage. *Something like Buddha's*

²¹For similar lines, see chapters 2, 17, 34, and 77.

²²For other examples of "the One," see chapters 22, 39, and 42.

²³See *qi* under *Important Terms*.

²⁴This line also appears in chapters 2 and 51.

²⁵This line also appears in chapters 2, 51, and 77.

²⁶Chapter 51 concludes with the same four lines. For another passage concerning *xuande* 玄德, "Enigmatic Virtue," see chapter 65.

²⁷Literally, only by relying on "nothing" (i.e., the empty space of the hub) can the wheel turn and the carriage roll.

By adding and removing clay we form a vessel.
 But only by relying on what is not there, do we have use of the vessel.
 By carving out doors and windows we make a room.
 But only by relying on what is not there, do we have use of the room.
 And so, what is there is the basis for profit;
 What is not there is the basis for use.

Chapter Twelve

The five colors blind our eyes.²⁸
 The five notes deafen our ears.
 The five flavors deaden our palates.
 The chase and the hunt madden our hearts.
 Precious goods impede our activities.
 <This is why sages are for the belly and not for the eye>
 And so they cast off the one and take up the other.²⁹

suspicion of
conventional
categories

belly does
this

Chapter Thirteen

Be apprehensive about favor or disgrace.
 Reverse calamity as you reverse your own body.
 What does it mean to be apprehensive about favor and disgrace?
 To receive favor is to be in the position of a subordinate.
 When you get it be apprehensive;
 When you lose it be apprehensive.
 This is what it means to be apprehensive about favor and disgrace.
 What does it mean to reverse calamity as you reverse your own body?
 I can suffer calamity only because I have a body.
 When I no longer have a body, what calamity could I possibly have?
 And so,
 Those who revere their bodies as if they were the entire world
 can be given custody of the world.

²⁸These sets of five refer to conventional standards of evaluation in regard to the different sensory faculties. The passage is not a rejection of the pleasures of the senses nor does it express skepticism regarding the senses per se. Rather, like the view one finds in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 2 (see pp. 213-24), it expresses a profound distrust of conventional categories and values and advocates moderation of sensual pleasures.

²⁹This line also appears in chapters 38 and 72.

Those who care for their bodies as if they were the entire world can be entrusted with the world.

Chapter Fourteen

Looked for but not seen, its name is "minute."
 Listened for but not heard, its name is "rarified."
 Grabbed for but not gotten, its name is "subtle."³⁰
 These three cannot be perfectly explained, and so are confused and regarded as one.

we have to give
it a name

NO -

Its top is not clear or bright,
 Its bottom is not obscure or dark.
 Trailing off without end, it cannot be named.
 It returns to its home, back before there were things.³¹
 This is called the formless form, the image of no thing.³²
 This is called the confused and indistinct.
 Greet it and you will not see its head;
 Follow it and you will not see its tail.

formless form

(cf. Brahman)

the NEED for
WU WEI

Hold fast to the Way of old, in order to control what is here today.
 The ability to know the ancient beginnings, this is called the thread of

the Way. (WU WEI, the Tao)

THE THREAD OF THE DAO

Chapter Fifteen

In ancient times, the best and most accomplished scholars;
 Were subtle, mysterious, enigmatic, and far-reaching.
 Their profundity was beyond understanding.
 Because they were beyond understanding, only with difficulty can we try to describe them:
 Poised, like one who must ford a stream in winter.
 Cautious, like one who fears his neighbors on every side.
 Reserved, like a visitor.
 Opening up, like ice about to break.

³⁰Cf. the thought expressed in these lines to what one finds in chapter 35.

³¹Returning to an ideal past state is a common theme in the text. For other examples see chapters 16, 23, 28, 30, and 52.

³²For other passages that concern *xiang*, "image," see chapters 4, 21, 35, and 41.

Honest, like unhewn wood.³³ — a common metaphor for the
Broad, like a valley.
unadorned natural state

Turbid, like muddy water.

Who can, through stillness, gradually make muddied water clear?

Who can, through movement, gradually stir to life what has long been still?

Those who preserve this Way do not desire fullness.

And, because they are not full, they have no need for renewal.

Chapter Sixteen

Attain extreme tenuousness;

Preserve quiet integrity.

The myriad creatures are all in motion!

I watch as they turn back.

The teeming multitude of things, each returns home to its root;

And returning to one's root is called stillness.

This is known as returning to one's destiny.

And returning to one's destiny is known as constancy.

To know constancy is called "enlightenment."

Those who do not know constancy wantonly produce misfortune.

To know constancy is to be accommodating.

To be accommodating is to work for the good of all.

To work for the good of all is to be a true king.

To be a true king is to be Heavenly.

To be Heavenly is to embody the Way.

To embody the Way is to be long lived.

And one will avoid danger to the end of one's days.³⁴

Chapter Seventeen

The greatest of rulers is but a shadowy presence;

Next is the ruler who is loved and praised;

Next is the one who is feared;

³³ 朴, "unhewn wood," is a symbol for anything in its unadorned natural state. In other contexts I will translate it as "simplicity," but here and in certain later passages the metaphor is an important part of the passage's sense. For other examples, see chapters 19, 28, 32, 37, and 57.

³⁴ This line also appears in chapter 52.

Next is the one who is reviled.

Those lacking in trust are not trusted.³⁵

But [the greatest rulers] are cautious and honor words.³⁶ — see Confucius' the Daoist honors word in the way

When their task is done and work complete,³⁷

Their people all say, "This is just how we are."³⁸

[De - ruling is if not ruling is that the people see through them]

Chapter Eighteen

When the great Way is abandoned, there are benevolence and righteousness.

When wisdom and intelligence come forth, there is great hypocrisy.

When the six familial relationships are out of balance, there are kind parents and filial children.

When the state is in turmoil and chaos, there are loyal ministers.³⁹

What can this mean?

Chapter Nineteen

Cut off sageliness, abandon wisdom, and the people will benefit one-hundred-fold.

Cut off benevolence, abandon righteousness, and the people will return to being filial and kind.

Cut off cleverness, abandon profit, and robbers and thieves will be no more.

This might leave the people lacking in culture;

So give them something with which to identify:

Manifest plainness.

Embrace simplicity.⁴⁰ (= 'unhewn wood')

³⁵ This line appears again in chapter 23. I interpret it as an expression of the *Daodejing's* characteristic view on 德, "Virtue." For a discussion of the idea of "Virtue" in the *Daodejing* and how it differs from related Confucian conceptions of "Virtue" or "moral charisma," see my "The Concept of 德 ('Virtue') in the *Laozi*," in Csikszentmihalyi and Ivanhoe (1999), pp. 239–57. For other passages concerning the concept of trust, see chapters 49 and 63.

³⁶ Pages are reluctant and slow to speak, but their words are worthy of complete trust.

³⁷ Cf. chapters 2, 9, 34, and 77.

³⁸ Literally, "We are this way *ziran* 自然." See *ziran* under *Important Terms*. For other examples, see chapters 23, 25, 51, and 64.

³⁹ The idea that more can lead to less and its implication that less can yield more is a theme that appears in several places in the text. For examples see chapters 19 and 38.

⁴⁰ Literally, "unhewn wood." See n. 33.

Do not think just of yourself.
Make few your desires.

Chapter Twenty

Cut off learning and be without worry!
How much distance is there really between agreement and flattery?
How much difference is there between the fair and the foul?
(What other people fear one cannot but fear.) — *negative influence of society*
Immense!

Yet still not at its limit!
The multitude are bright and merry;
As if enjoying a grand festival;
As if ascending a terrace in springtime.
I alone am still and inactive, revealing no sign.⁴¹
Like a child who has not yet learned to smile.
Weak and weary, I seem to have nowhere to go.
The multitude all have more than enough.
I alone seem to be at a loss.
I have the mind of a fool!
Listless and blank!
The common folk are bright and brilliant.
I alone am muddled and confused.
The common folk are careful and discriminating.
I alone am dull and inattentive.

Vast!
Like the ocean!
Blown about!
As if it would never end!
The multitude all have something to do.
I alone remain obstinate and immobile, like some old rustic.
I alone differ from others, and value being nourished by mother.

Chapter Twenty-One

The outward appearance of great Virtue comes forth from the Way alone.
As for the Way, it is vague and elusive.

⁴¹In this passage, the author enters into an autobiographical mode. See also chapters 69 and 70.

Vague and elusive!
Within is an image.⁴²
Vague and elusive!
Within is a thing.
Withdrawn and dark!
Within is an essence.
This essence is genuine and authentic.
Within there is trust.
From ancient times until the present day, its name has never left it.
It is how we know the origin of all things.
How do I know what the origin of all things is like?
Through this!

Chapter Twenty-Two

Those who are crooked will be perfected.
Those who are bent will be straight.
Those who are empty will be full.
Those who are worn will be renewed.
Those who have little will gain.
Those who have plenty will be confounded.
This is why sages embrace the One and serve as models for the whole world.⁴³

They do not make a display of themselves and so are illustrious.
They do not affirm their own views and so are well known. *See §24*
They do not brag about themselves and so are accorded merit.
They do not boast about themselves and so are heard of for a long time.⁴⁴
Because they do not contend, no one in the world can contend with them.⁴⁵
The ancient saying "Those who are crooked will be perfected" is not without substance!⁴⁶
Truly the sages are and remain perfect.

⁴²For other passages concerning *xiang*, "image," see chapters 4, 14, 35, and 41.

⁴³For other examples of "the One," see chapters 10, 39, and 42.

⁴⁴See chapter 24 for a set of lines similar to the preceding four.

⁴⁵The same line appears in chapter 66.

⁴⁶While the *Daodejing* does not cite ancient sages or texts by name, here and elsewhere it clearly does quote ancient sources. For other examples see chapters 42, 62, and 69.

Chapter Twenty-Three

To be sparing with words is what comes naturally.

And so,

A blustery wind does not last all morning;

A heavy downpour does not last all day.

Who produces these?

Heaven and earth!

If not even Heaven and earth can keep things going for a long time,

How much less can human beings?

This is why one should follow the Way in all that one does.

One who follows the Way identifies with the Way.

One who follows Virtue identifies with Virtue.

One who follows loss identifies with loss.

The Way is pleased to have those who identify with the Way.

Virtue is pleased to have those who identify with Virtue.

Loss is pleased to have those who identify with loss.

Those lacking in trust are not trusted.⁴⁷

Chapter Twenty-Four

Those who stand on tiptoe cannot stand firm.

Those who stride cannot go far.

Those who make a display of themselves are not illustrious.

Those who affirm their own views are not well known.

Those who brag about themselves are not accorded merit.

Those who boast about themselves are not heard of for long.⁴⁸

From the point of view of the Way, such things are known as "excess"

provisions and pointless activities.

All creatures find these repulsive;

And so one who has the Way does not abide in them.⁴⁹

Chapter Twenty-Five

There is a thing confused yet perfect, which arose before Heaven and earth.

Still and indistinct, it stands alone and unchanging.

It goes everywhere yet is never at a loss.

One can regard it as the mother of Heaven and earth.

I do not know its proper name;

I have given it the style "the Way."⁵⁰

Forced to give it a proper name, I would call it "Great."

The Great passes on;

What passes on extends into the distance;

What extends into the distance returns to its source.⁵¹

And so the Way is great;

Heaven is great;

Earth is great;

And a true king too is great.

In the universe are four things that are great and the true king is first

among them.

People model themselves on the earth.

The earth models itself on Heaven.

Heaven models itself on the Way.

The Way models itself on what is natural.⁵²

↳ *zi ran*: 'so of itself'

*we must follow the Way
in order to flourish*

Chapter Twenty-Six

The heavy is the root of the light.

The still rules over the agitated.⁵³

This is why sages travel all day without leaving their baggage wagons.

No matter how magnificent the view or lovely the place, they remain

aloof and unaffected.

How can a lord who can field ten thousand chariots take lightly his role

in the world!

If he is light, he loses the root;

If he is agitated, he loses his rule.

⁵⁰There is a play here on the difference between one's *ming* 名, "proper name," and one's *zi* 字, "style." In traditional Chinese society one does not use the former, personal name in public. And so the author can be understood as saying he is not intimately familiar with the Dao and so knows only its style, or perhaps that it would be unseemly to speak its true and proper name to unfamiliar.

⁵¹Cf. the description of the Way found in the *Zhuangzi*, chapter 6, pp. 235-42.

⁵²"Natural" is *zi ran*.

⁵³Cf. chapter 45.

⁴⁷The same line appears in chapter 17. See n. 35.

⁴⁸See chapter 22 for a set of lines similar to the preceding four.

⁴⁹This line appears again in chapter 31.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

One who is good at traveling leaves no tracks or traces.
 One who is good at speaking is free of slips or flaws.
 One who is good at numbers need not count or reckon.
 One who is good at closing up needs no bolts or locks,
 One who is good at securing cannot be opened.

yet what they have secured needs no rope or string.

One who is good at binding needs no rope or string,
 yet what they have tied cannot be undone.⁵⁴

This is why sages are good at saving people and so never abandon things.

Are good at saving things and so never abandon things.⁵⁵

This is called inheriting enlightenment.⁵⁵

And so the good person is teacher of the bad;

The bad person is material for the good.

Those who do not honor their teachers or who fail to care for their material,

though knowledgeable are profoundly deluded.

This is a fundamental mystery.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Know the male but preserve the female, and be a canyon for all the world.

If you are a canyon for all the world, constant Virtue will never leave you, and you can return home to be a child.

Know the white but preserve the black, and be a model for all the world.

If you are a model for all the world, constant Virtue will never err, and you

can return home to the infinite.

Know glory but preserve disgrace, and be a valley for all the world.

Know glory for all the world, constant Virtue will always be

sufficient, and you can return to being unhewn wood.⁵⁶

When unhewn wood is broken up, it becomes vessels.⁵⁷

See Analects 2.12
 子曰: 木也。故曰: 木也。 (unp-
 hewn)

⁵⁴Cf. chapter 62.

⁵⁵The expression *ximing* 襲明, "inheriting enlightenment," is open to numerous interpretations. I take it as describing the good that bad people inherit from those who already are enlightened.

⁵⁶Or "simplicity." See n. 33.

⁵⁷*Qi* 器, "vessel" or "implement," is a common metaphor for a government official. Playing on this image, it carries the slightly negative connotation of someone with limited "capacity." Cf. *Analects* 2.12 and the note to that passage.

Sages put these to use and become leaders of the officials.
 And so the greatest carving cuts nothing off.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Those who would gain the world and do something with it, I see that they will fail.⁵⁸

For the world is a spiritual vessel and one cannot put it to use.

Those who use it ruin it.

Those who grab hold of it lose it.⁵⁹

And so,

Sometimes things lead and sometimes they follow;

Sometimes they breathe gently and sometimes they pant;

Sometimes they are strong and sometimes they are weak;

Sometimes they fight and sometimes they fall;

< This is why sages cast off whatever is extreme, extravagant, or excessive. >

Chapter Thirty

One who serves a ruler with the Way will never take the world by force of arms.

For such actions tend to come back in kind.

Wherever an army resides, thorns and thistles grow.

In the wake of a large campaign, bad harvests are sure to follow.

< Those who are good at military action achieve their goal and then stop.

They do not dare to rely on force of arms.

They achieve their goal but do not brag.

They achieve their goal but do not boast.

They achieve their goal but are not arrogant.

They achieve their goal but only because they have no choice.

They achieve their goal but do not force the issue. >

For after a period of vigor there is old age.

To rely on such practices is said to be contrary to the Way.

And what is contrary to the Way will come to an early end.⁶⁰

⁵⁸For *qu tianxia* 取天下, "gaining the world," see chapters 48 and 57.

⁵⁹These two lines also appear in chapter 64.

⁶⁰The final three lines also appear at the end of chapter 55.

Chapter Thirty-One (On the atrocities of war)

Fine weapons are inauspicious instruments;

All creatures find them repulsive.

And so one who has the Way does not rely upon them.

At home, a cultivated person gives precedence to the left;⁶¹

At war, a cultivated person gives precedence to the right.

Weapons are inauspicious instruments, not the instruments of a

cultivated person.

But if given no choice, the cultivated person will use them.

Peace and quiet are the highest ideals; ~~peace and quiet~~ ^{peace + quiet = harmony}

A military victory is not a thing of beauty.

To beautify victory is to delight in the slaughter of human beings.

One who delights in the slaughter of human beings will not realize his

ambitions in the world.

On auspicious occasions, precedence is given to the left;

On inauspicious occasions, precedence is given to the right;

The lieutenant commander is stationed on the left;

The supreme commander is stationed on the right.

This shows that the supreme commander is associated with the rites of

mourning.

When great numbers of people have been killed, one weeps for them in

grief and sorrow.

Military victory is associated with the rites of mourning.

Chapter Thirty-Two

The Way is forever nameless.⁶²

Unhewn wood⁶³ is insignificant, yet no one in the world can master it.

If barons and kings could preserve it, the myriad creatures would all defer

to them of their own accord;

Heaven and earth would unite and sweet dew would fall;

And the people would be peaceful and just, though no one so decrees.

When unhewn wood is carved up, then there are names.

Now that there are names, know enough to stop!

⁶¹The left side being associated with happy and auspicious events and the right side with sad and inauspicious events.

⁶²On the idea of being "nameless," see chapters 1, 37, and 41.

To know when to stop is how to stay out of danger.⁶⁴

Streams and torrents flow into rivers and oceans,

Just as the world flows into the Way.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Those who know others are knowledgeable; ^{self + other}

Those who know themselves are enlightened.

Those who conquer others have power;

Those who conquer themselves are strong;

Those who know contentment are rich.⁶⁵

Those who persevere have firm commitments.

Those who do not lose their place will endure.

Those who die a natural death are long-lived.⁶⁶

Chapter Thirty-Four

How expansive is the great Way!

Flowing to the left and to the right.

The myriad creatures rely upon it for life, and it turns none of them away.⁶⁷

When its work is done it claims no merit.⁶⁸ ^{36a}

It clothes and nourishes the myriad creatures, but does not lord it over them.

Because it is always without desires, one could consider it insignificant.⁶⁹

Because the myriad creatures all turn to it and yet it does not lord it over them, one could consider it great.

Because it never considers itself great, it is able to perfect its greatness.

Chapter Thirty-Five

Hold on to the great image and the whole world will come to you.⁷⁰

They will come and suffer no harm;

⁶⁴Cf. the similar line in chapter 44.

⁶⁵For the value of *zu* 足, "contentment," see chapters 44 and 46.

⁶⁶Cf. the teaching quoted in chapter 42.

⁶⁷Cf. chapter 2.

⁶⁸Cf. chapters 2, 9, 17, and 77.

⁶⁹Literally, one could *ming* 名, "name," it or classify it among the small.

⁷⁰For other passages that concern *xiang*, "image," see chapters 4, 14, 21, and 41.

They will be peaceful, secure, and prosperous.
 Music and fine food will induce the passerby to stop.
 But talk about the Way—how insipid and without relish it is!
Look for it and it cannot be seen; 無名之者
Listen for it and it cannot be heard;
But use it and it will never run dry!

Chapter Thirty-Six

What you intend to shrink, you first must stretch.
 What you intend to weaken, you first must strengthen.
 What you intend to abandon, you first must make flourish.
 What you intend to steal from, you first must provide for.
 This is called subtle enlightenment.
 The supple and weak overcome the hard and the strong.
 Fish should not be taken out of the deep pools.
 The sharp implements of the state should not be shown to the people.⁷¹

Chapter Thirty-Seven

The Way does nothing yet nothing is left undone.⁷²
 Should barons and kings be able to preserve it, the myriad creatures will transform themselves.⁷³
 After they are transformed, should some still desire to act,
 I shall press them down with the weight of nameless unhewn wood.⁷⁴
 Nameless unhewn wood is but freedom from desire.
Without desire and still, the world will settle itself.

⁷¹The proper sense of *liqi* 利器, "sharp implements," is a matter of considerable controversy. Whether it refers to the weapons of the state, its ministers, labor-saving tools, the Daoist sage, or something else is hard to say, so I have left it ambiguous. Cf. the use in chapter 57.

⁷²Cf. the similar line in chapter 48.

⁷³For *zibua* 自化, "transform themselves," see chapter 57.

⁷⁴Or "nameless simplicity." See n. 33. On the idea of being "nameless," see chapters 1, 32, and 41.

Book Two

Chapter Thirty-Eight — the decline of the Dao

Those of highest Virtue do not strive for Virtue and so they have it. *wuwei*,
 Those of lowest Virtue never stray from Virtue and so they lack it. *always striving*
 Those of highest Virtue practice nonaction and never act for ulterior motives.

Those of lowest Virtue act and always have some ulterior motive.

Those of highest benevolence act, but without ulterior motives. *different from benevolence*

Those of highest righteousness act, but with ulterior motives.

Those who are ritually correct⁷⁵ act, but if others do not respond, they roll up their sleeves and resort to force. *Benwei is not the same as Benxin*

And so,

When the Way was lost there was Virtue;

When Virtue was lost there was benevolence;

When benevolence was lost there was righteousness;

When righteousness was lost there were the rites.

The rites are the wearing thin of loyalty and trust, and the beginning of chaos.

The ability to predict what is to come is an embellishment of the Way, and the beginning of ignorance. *No prediction — just let things be*
 This is why the most accomplished reside in what is thick, not in what is thin.

They reside in what is most substantial, not in mere embellishment.

And so they cast off the one and take up the other.⁷⁶

Chapter Thirty-Nine

In the past, among those who attained the One were these:⁷⁷

Heaven attained the One and became pure;

Earth attained the One and became settled;

The spirits attained the One and became numinous;

The valley attained the One and became full;

⁷⁵The word rendered here as "ritually correct" is *li* 禮, which in other contexts is translated as "having propriety."

⁷⁶This line also appears in chapters 12 and 72.

⁷⁷For other examples of "the One," see chapters 10, 22, and 42.

The myriad creatures attained the One and flourished;
Barons and kings attained the One and became mainstays of the state.

All of this came about through the One.

If Heaven lacked what made it pure it might rip apart.

If earth lacked what made it settled it might open up.

If the spirits lacked what made them numinous they might cease their activity.

If the valley lacked what made it full it might run dry.

If the myriad creatures lacked what made them flourish they might

become extinct.

If barons and kings lacked what made them honored and lofty they might fall.

And so what is honored has its root in what is base;

What is lofty has its foundation in what is lowly.

This is why barons and kings refer to themselves as,

"The Orphan," "The Desolate," or "The Forlorn."⁷⁸

Is this not a case where what is base serves as the foundation!

Is it not?

And so the greatest of praise is without praise.

Do not desire what jingles like jade,

but what rumbles like rock!

Chapter Forty

Turning back is how the Way moves.

Weakness is how the Way operates.

The world and all its creatures arise from what is there;

What is there arises from what is not there.

Chapter Forty-One

When the best scholars hear about the Way,

They assiduously put it into practice.

When average scholars hear about the Way,

They sometimes uphold it and sometimes forsake it.

When the worst scholars hear about the Way,

The myriad creatures attained the One and flourished;
Barons and kings attained the One and became mainstays of the state.

All of this came about through the One.

If Heaven lacked what made it pure it might rip apart.

If earth lacked what made it settled it might open up.

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Chapter Forty-One

When the best scholars hear about the Way,

They assiduously put it into practice.

When average scholars hear about the Way,

They sometimes uphold it and sometimes forsake it.

When the worst scholars hear about the Way,

They laugh at it!

If they did not laugh at it, it would not really be the Way.

And so the common saying has it:

The clearest Way seems obscure;

The Way ahead seems to lead backward;

The most level Way seems uneven;

Highest Virtue seems like a valley;

Great purity seems sullied,

Ample Virtue seems insufficient;

Solid Virtue seems unstable;

The simple and genuine seems fickle;

The great square has no corners;

The great vessel takes long to perfect;

The great note sounds faint;

The great image is without shape;

The Way is hidden and without name.

Only the Way is good at providing and completing.

Chapter Forty-Two

The Way produces the One.

The One produces two.

Two produces three.

Three produces the myriad creatures.

The myriad creatures shoulder yin and embrace yang

and by blending these qi, "vital energies," they attain harmony.

⁷⁹For other passages that concern *xiang* 象, "image," see chapters 4, 14, 21, and 35.

⁸⁰On the idea of being "nameless," see chapters 1, 32, and 37.

⁸¹The precise referents of these terms are hard to determine. I take the Way to be the most inclusive term designating the hidden, underlying source of things. The "one" would then be its *xiang* 象, "image," the closest thing we can have to a picture or representation of the Way. (For other examples, see chapters 10, 22, and 39.) The "two" would then be the fundamental *qi* 氣, "vital energies," *yin* and *yang* (see *qi, yin and yang* under *Important Terms*). These, together with our image of the Way as a unified whole, give rise to everything in the world. A similar scheme is described in the appendices to the *Changes*. This process, whatever its particulars, was understood as a natural progression. There was no creator and the "nothing" out of which things arose is a primal state of undifferentiated vital energy, the state of no things but not absolute Nothingness. See Slingerland's comments on these passages in *Effortless Action*, op. cit.

⁷⁸The same expressions occur in chapter 42.

People most despise being orphaned, desolate, or forlorn, and yet barons and kings take these as their personal appellations.⁸²

And so sometimes diminishing a thing adds to it;

And so sometimes adding to a thing diminishes it. Sometimes adding to a thing diminishes it.

What others teach, I too teach: "The violent and overbearing will not die a natural death."

I shall take this as the father of all my teachings. ? DO - peace & non-violence

as to the values

Chapter Forty-Three

sc 540
The most supple things in the world ride roughshod over the most rigid.

That which is not there can enter even where there is no space.

This is how I know the advantages of nonaction!

The teaching that is without words,⁸³

the advantages of nonaction,⁸⁴ of Wuwei (wuwei)

Few in the world attain these.

Chapter Forty-Four

Your name or your body, which do you hold more dear?

Your body or your property, which is of greater value?

Gain or loss, which is the greater calamity?

And so, deep affections give rise to great expenditures.

Excessive hoarding results in great loss.⁸⁴

Know contentment and avoid disgrace;⁸⁵

Know when to stop and avoid danger,⁸⁵

And you will long endure.

Chapter Forty-Five

Great perfection seems wanting but use will not wear it out. sc 541

Great fullness seems empty but use will not drain it. as to where ?

Great straightness seems crooked;

Great skillfulness seems clumsy;

Great speech seems to stammer.

Agitation overcomes cold.

Stillness overcomes heat.

Purity and stillness rectify Heaven and earth.

Chapter Forty-Six

When the world has the Way, fleet-footed horses are used to haul dung.⁸⁶

When the world is without the Way, war horses are raised in the suburbs.⁸⁶

The greatest misfortune is not to know contentment.⁸⁷ PLEONEXIA

The worst calamity is the desire to acquire.

And so those who know the contentment of contentment are always

content. c.f. Hanseman; (see §§2, 10, 51) Buddhism

Chapter Forty-Seven

Without going out the door, one can know the whole world.

Without looking out the window, one can see the Way of Heaven.

The further one goes, the less one knows.

This is why sages

Know without going abroad,

Name without having to see,

Perfect through nonaction.

Chapter Forty-Eight

In the pursuit of learning, one does more each day;

In the pursuit of the Way, one does less each day; ~ return to nature = good

One does less and less until one does nothing,⁸⁸ > like the Way; cf §37

One does nothing yet nothing is left undone.⁸⁹

Gaining the world always is accomplished by following no activity.⁹⁰

As soon as one actively tries, one will fall short of gaining the world.

⁸⁶Very close to the city, thus showing a heightened state of mobilization.

⁸⁷For the value of "contentment," see chapters 33 and 44.

⁸⁸Until one reaches the state of *wuwei*, "nonaction."

⁸⁹Cf. the similar lines in chapter 37.

⁹⁰For *wushi* 無事, "no activity," see chapters 57 and 63. For *qu tianxia*, "gaining the world," see chapters 29 and 57.

⁸²See chapter 39.

⁸³Cf. the similar line in chapter 2.

⁸⁴For the value of "contentment," see chapters 33 and 46.

⁸⁵Cf. the similar line in chapter 32.

Chapter Forty-Nine

Sages do not have constant hearts of their own;
They take the people's hearts as their hearts.

I am good to those who are good;

I also am good to those who are not good;

This is to be good out of Virtue.⁹¹

I trust the trustworthy;

I also trust the untrustworthy.

This is to trust out of Virtue.

Sages blend into the world and accord with the people's hearts.

The people all pay attention to their eyes and ears; — beyond 'awareness'

The sages regard them as children.

Chapter Fifty

Between life and death,

Three out of ten are the disciples of life;⁹²

Three out of ten are the disciples of death;

Three out of ten create a place for death.⁹³

Why is this?

Because of their profound desire to live.⁹⁴

I have heard that those good at nurturing life,

On land do not meet with rhinoceroses or tigers,

And in battle do not encounter armored warriors.

Rhinoceroses find no place to thrust their horns;

Tigers find no place to sink their claws;

⁹¹I read this line, and the line three lines below it, as playing on the etymological and semantic relationship between 德, "virtue," and 得, "to get." Since those with virtue naturally are good to and trust others, they accrue ("get") Virtue; this enables them to gain ("get") the support of others and realize ("get") their greater ends. Cf. chapters 17, 23, 27, and 38.

⁹²Cf. chapter 76.

⁹³This passage has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways. I take its general theme to be the preservation of one's natural span of life, here connected to the idea that wanting something too badly often leads to its opposite. Some are fated to live long and others to die young. But about one in three bring misfortune on themselves. The missing person in ten is of course the sage. By not doing, sages avoid creating a place for death to enter.

⁹⁴Cf. chapter 75.

Soldiers find no place to drive in their blades.

Why is this?

Because such people have no place for death.

Chapter Fifty-One

The Way produces them;

Virtue rears them;

Things shape them;

Circumstances perfect them.

This is why the myriad creatures all revere the Way and honor Virtue.

The Way is revered and Virtue honored not because this is decreed, but because it is natural.

And so the Way produces them and Virtue rears them;

Raises and nurtures them;

Settles and confirms them;

Nourishes and shelters them.

To produce without possessing;⁹⁵ — see §2 + §10 (end B6)

To act with no expectation of reward;⁹⁶ —

To lead without lording over;

Such is Enigmatic Virtue!⁹⁷

Chapter Fifty-Two

The world had a beginning;

This can be considered the mother of the world.

Knowing the mother, return and know her children;

Knowing her children, return and preserve their mother;

And one will avoid danger to the end of one's days.⁹⁸

Stop up the openings;

Close the gates;⁹⁹

⁹⁵This line also appears in chapters 2 and 10.

⁹⁶This line also appears in chapters 2, 10, and 77.

⁹⁷Chapter 10 concludes with these same four lines. For *xuande* 玄德, "Enigmatic Virtue," see chapter 65.

⁹⁸This line also appears in chapter 16.

⁹⁹This and the preceding line also appear in chapter 56.

To the end of one's life one will remain unperturbed.
 Unstop the openings;
 Multiply your activities;
 And to the end of one's life one will be beyond salvation.
 To discern the minute is called "enlightenment."
 To preserve the weak is called "strength."
 To use this light and return home to this enlightenment.
 Do not bring disaster upon yourself.
 This is called "practicing the constant."

Chapter Fifty-Three

If I know anything at all, I know that in following the great Way, there is

but one concern:

The great Way is smooth and easy;

Yet people love to take shortcuts!¹⁰⁰

The court is resplendent;

Yet the fields are overgrown.

The granaries are empty;

Yet some wear elegant clothes;

Fine swords dangle at their sides;

They are stuffed with food and drink;

And possess wealth in gross abundance.

This is known as taking pride in robbery.

Far is this from the Way!

people love to take shortcuts

as a mark of distinction of culture

Chapter Fifty-Four

What is firmly grounded will not be pulled out.

What is firmly embraced will not be lost.

Through the sacrifices of one's descendants, it will never cease.

Cultivate it in oneself and its Virtue will be genuine.¹⁰¹

Cultivate it in one's family and its Virtue will be more than enough.

Cultivate it in one's village and its Virtue will be long lasting.

Cultivate it in one's state and its Virtue will be abundant.

Cultivate it throughout the world and its Virtue will be everywhere.¹⁰²

Cultivate it in one's village and its Virtue will be long lasting.

Cultivate it in one's state and its Virtue will be abundant.

Cultivate it throughout the world and its Virtue will be everywhere.¹⁰²

And so, take stock of the self by looking at the self;

Take stock of the family by looking at the family;

Take stock of the village by looking at the village;

Take stock of the state by looking at the state;

Take stock of the world by looking at the world;

How do I know that the world is this way?

Through this!

Chapter Fifty-Five

Those who are steeped in Virtue are like newborn children;¹⁰³

Poisonous creatures will not strike them;

Fierce beasts will not seize them;

Birds of prey will not snatch them away.

Their bones are weak and sinews yielding and yet their grip is firm.

They do not yet know the union of male and female, but their potency is

at its height.

This is because they are perfectly pure;

They can wait all day without growing hoarse.

This is because they are perfectly balanced.

Knowing balance is called "constancy."

Knowing constancy is called "enlightenment."

What helps life along is called "inauspicious."¹⁰⁴

What helps life along is called "inauspicious."

¹⁰²The progression from cultivating the Way in oneself to cultivating it throughout the empire is reminiscent of the progression one sees in chapter 4 of the *Daxue* 大學, "Great Learning," a work not included in this volume. There we are told that those who wish to "make bright their shining Virtue throughout the world" must first "order their states." Those who wish to order their states must first "regulate their families." Those who wish to regulate their families must first "cultivate themselves" and so on. Wing-tsit Chan (1963), p. 196, points out that Mencius identifies this basic idea as a "common saying" in *Mengzi* 4A5 (not in this volume).

¹⁰³The early Confucian Mengzi also uses the newborn as an image for his ideal state of mind. See his discussion of the *chizi zhi xin* 赤子之心, "a child's heart," in *Mengzi* 4B12, not in this volume.

¹⁰⁴Cf. the closing lines of *Zhuangzi*, chapter 5 (see p. 235), where Zhuangzi says, "Follow the natural and do not *yiseng* 益生, 'help life along.'"

¹⁰⁰See *Analekts* 6.14 (not in this volume) for a related use of the word *jing* 徑, "shortcut."

¹⁰¹"If" refers to the Way. Note that in this and the following lines the word translated as "Virtue" also clearly has the sense of a kind of "power."

When the heart and mind is used to guide the *qi* 氣, "vital energies," this is called "forcing things."¹⁰⁵ the opposite of wuwei

For after a period of vigor there is old age.
To rely on such practices is said to be contrary to the Way.¹⁰⁶
And what is contrary to the Way will come to an early end.

Chapter Fifty-Six

Those who know do not talk about it; for 881
Those who talk about it do not know.

Stop up the openings;¹⁰⁷
Close the gates;

Blunt the sharpness;

Untangle the tangles;

Soften the glare;

Merge with the dust.¹⁰⁸

This is known as Enigmatic Unity.¹⁰⁹ — mysterious

And so one can neither be too familiar with nor too distant from them;

One can neither benefit nor harm them;

One can neither honor nor demean them,¹¹⁰

And so they are honored by the whole world.¹¹¹

Chapter Fifty-Seven

Follow what is correct and regular in ordering your state;

Follow what is strange and perverse in deploying your troops;

Follow no activity and gain the world.¹¹¹

How do I know that things are this way?

¹⁰⁵Early Daoists tended to advocate allowing one's *qi* to find its natural course. For example, see the "fasting of the heart and mind" passage in chapter 4 of the *Zhuangzi*, p. 228. They were opposed to those such as the early Confucian Mengzi, who argued that the mind should guide the vital energies. See Mengzi's discussion of nourishing the "floodlike *qi*" in *Mengzi* 2A2.

¹⁰⁶The final three lines also appear at the end of chapter 30.

¹⁰⁷This and the preceding line also appear together in chapter 52.

¹⁰⁸This and the preceding three lines also appear together in chapter 4.

¹⁰⁹Cf. chapter 1, "Their unity is known as an enigma."

¹¹⁰This line also appears in chapter 62.

¹¹¹For *wushi*, "no activity," see chapters 48 and 63. For *qu tianxia*, "gaining the world,"

Through this!

The more taboos and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people.^{the}

The more sharp implements the people have, the more benighted the state.^{the} ¹¹² detour's effect of

The more clever and skillful the people, the more strange and perverse things arise. ^{outwardly} ^{inner} ^{law} ^{etc.}

The more clear the laws and edicts, the more thieves and robbers.

And so sages say,

"I do nothing and the people transform themselves;

I prefer stillness and the people correct and regulate themselves;

I engage in no activity and the people prosper on their own;

I am without desires and the people simplify¹¹³ their own lives."

Chapter Fifty-Eight

The more dull and depressed the government, the more honest and

agreeable the people.

The more active and searching the government, the more deformed and

deficient the people.

Good fortune rests upon disaster;

Disaster lies hidden within good fortune.

Who knows the highest standards?

Perhaps there is nothing that is truly correct and regular!

What is correct and regular turns strange and perverse;

What is good turns monstrous.

Long indeed have the people been deluded.

And so sages are,

Square but do not cut,

Cornered but do not clip,

Upright but not imposing,

Shining but not dazzling.

Chapter Fifty-Nine

In bringing order to the people or in serving Heaven, nothing is as good as frugality.

¹¹²For the expression "sharp implements," see chapter 36.

¹¹³Literally, "unhewn wood." See n. 33.

To be frugal is called submitting early on.
Submitting early on is known as deeply accumulating Virtue.
If you deeply accumulate Virtue, nothing can stand in your way.
If nothing can stand in your way, no one will know your limits.
If no one knows your limits, you can possess the state.
If you possess the mother of the state, you can long endure.
This is known as deep roots and strong stems.
This is the Way of long life and far-reaching vision.

Chapter Sixty

Ruling a great state is like cooking a small fish.¹¹⁴
When one manages the world through the Way, ghosts lose their numinous qualities.

It's not that ghosts really lose their numinous qualities,¹¹⁵
but that their numinous qualities do not injure human beings.
Not only do their numinous qualities not injure human beings,¹¹⁶
sages too do not injure human beings. Virtue gathers and
Since neither of these two injures human beings, Virtue gathers and
accrues to both.

Chapter Sixty-One

A great state is like the delta of a mighty river;¹¹⁷
It is where the whole world gathers.¹¹⁸
It is the female of the whole world.

¹¹⁴The idea is that too much attention and meddling will make either fall apart.

¹¹⁵Laotzi seems here to be arguing against the idea, seen in thinkers like Mozi et al., that the ideal state requires the active participation of ghosts and other spirits in meting out rewards or punishments. Laozi does not deny the existence of such beings but, like Kongzi, sees a direct appeal to them as inappropriate. Cf. Kongzi's advice concerning ghosts and spirits in *Analekts* 6.22.

¹¹⁶They do not disturb the people through too much attention and meddling.

¹¹⁷Literally, *xialiu* 下流, "low flow." Cf. the use of the same term in *Analekts* 19.20 (not in this volume) "... the gentleman dislikes living in low places (*xialiu*) where all the foul things of the world collect." The Daoist of course inverts Confucian values, esteeming what the world regards as lowly.

¹¹⁸In the sense that the ideal great state places itself below and attracts the whole world. Also, like a valley or the delta of a river, the great state is like a woman in being fertile and having the ability to feed the whole world. Consider the common metaphor of the Tigris and Euphrates as the "cradle of civilization." Cf. chapter 66.

The female always gets the better of the male through stillness.
Through stillness, she places herself below the male.
And so, a great state, by placing itself below a lesser state, can take the lesser state.
A lesser state, by placing itself below a great state, can be taken by the greater state.
And so, one places itself below in order to take;
The other places itself below in order to be taken.
The great state wants no more than to provide for all people alike.
The lesser state wants no more than to find someone to serve.
Since both can get what they want, it is fitting that the great state place itself in the lower position.

Chapter Sixty-Two

The Way is the inner sanctum of the myriad creatures.¹¹⁹

It is the treasure of the good man and the savior of the bad.

Fine words can sell things;¹²⁰

Noble deeds can promote someone;

But can one cast away the bad in people?¹²¹

And so, when setting up the Son of Heaven or appointing the Three Ministers,¹²²

Those who offer up precious jades and present fine steeds are not as good as those who stay in their seats and promote this Way.

Why was this Way so honored in ancient times?

Did they not say that through it,

"One could get what one seeks and escape punishment for one's crimes?"

And so, this is why it is honored by the whole world.¹²³

¹¹⁹"Inner sanctum" is the translation of *ao* 奧, the southwest corner of one's house where the household gods are lodged and worshipped.

¹²⁰Cf. chapter 81.

¹²¹Cf. chapter 27.

¹²²Cf. Mozi's discussion of how the Son of Heaven and Three Ministers are to be appointed, in *Mozi*, chapter 2, "Obeying One's Superiors," pp. 65-68.

¹²³This line also appears in chapter 56.

Chapter Sixty-Three

Act, but through nonaction.¹²⁴

Be active, but have no activities.¹²⁴

Taste, but have no tastes.¹²⁵

No matter how great or small, many or few,

Repay resentment with Virtue.¹²⁶

Plan for what is difficult while it is easy.

Work at what is great while it is small.

The difficult undertakings in the world all start with what is easy.

The great undertakings in the world all begin with what is small.

This is why sages never work at great things and are able to achieve

greatness.

Those who easily enter into promises always prove unworthy of trust.

Those who often think that things are easy regularly encounter difficulties.

And so sages consider things difficult and in the end are without

difficulties.

Chapter Sixty-Four

What is at peace is easy to secure.

What has yet to begin is easy to plan for.

What is brittle is easy to scatter.

What is faint is easy to disperse.

Work at things before they come to be;

Regulate things before they become disordered.

A tree whose girth fills one's embrace sprang from a downy sprout;

A terrace nine stories high arose from a layer of dirt;

A journey of a thousand leagues began with a single step.

Those who use it ruin it.

Those who grab hold of it lose it.¹²⁷

Those who grab hold of it lose it.¹²⁷

Those who grab hold of it lose it.¹²⁷

Those who grab hold of it lose it.¹²⁷

¹²⁴For *wuwei*, "no activities," see chapters 48 and 57.

¹²⁵The idea in each case is that one should do what one does in unpremeditated and spontaneous response to the situation at hand. One should do away with set schemes, categories, standards, and plans, and follow one's natural inclinations and tendencies. And so, for example, one should taste and savor what one finds pleasing, not what others might enjoy or what accords with some socially sanctioned view about good taste. Cf. chapter 12.

¹²⁶Here we see a clear contrast with the view of early Confucians. See *Analekts* 14.34. Cf.

chapter 49.

¹²⁷These two lines also appear in chapter 29.

This is why sages practice nonaction and so do not ruin;

They do not lay hold and so do not lose.

People often ruin things just when they are on the verge of success.

Be as careful at the end as you are at the beginning and you will not ruin

things.

This is why sages desire to be without desires and show no regard for

precious goods.¹²⁸

They study what is not studied and return to what the multitude pass by.¹²⁹

They work to support the myriad creatures in their natural condition and

never dare to act.

Chapter Sixty-Five

In ancient times, those good at practicing the Way did not use it to

enlighten the people,

but rather to keep them in the dark.¹³⁰

The people are hard to govern because they know too much.

And so to rule a state with knowledge is to be a detriment to the state.

Not to rule a state through knowledge is to be a blessing to the state.

Know that these two provide the standard.

Always to know this standard is called Enigmatic Virtue.¹³¹

How profound and far-reaching is Enigmatic Virtue!

¹²⁸Cf. *Mengzi* 7B35 (not in this volume), "For cultivating the heart and mind nothing

is better than to make few one's desires."

¹²⁹Daoist sages take Nature as their model. In philosophical discussions of the time, there

was a debate about whether the proper content of learning is part of or opposed to what is

naturally so. This debate in turn was a reflection of a larger debate about the character of

human nature. Mengzi endorses only particular natural tendencies—those that incline us

toward morality—and on this basis claims that human nature is good. Xunzi argues that

our untutored nature inclines us toward bad states of affairs. On this basis he concludes our

nature is bad and must be reformed through protracted study and practice. We can see Laozi,

Mengzi, and Xunzi as representing a spectrum of views about the proper content of learn-

ing that reflects their different views about the goodness of our pre-reflective nature, running

from greatest to least confidence in our raw natural state.

¹³⁰The idea that the best of actions flow forth without reflection or knowledge was not

uncommon in early China. In his note on this line, Wing-tsit Chan cites a passage from the

Odes in which the Lord on High commends King Wen for his behavior, "Without reflect-

ion or knowledge, you comply with my principles" (*Mao* # 241). See Chan (1963), p. 216.

Cf. *Analekts* 15.5.

¹³¹For *xuande*, "Enigmatic Virtue," see chapters 10 and 51.

It turns back with things;
And only then is there the Great Compliance.¹³²

Chapter Sixty-Six

The rivers and ocean are able to rule over a hundred valleys,¹³³
because they are good at placing themselves in the lower position.
And so they are able to rule over a hundred valleys.

This is why if you want to be above the people you must proclaim that
you are below them.

If you want to lead the people, you must put yourself behind them.

This is how sages are able to reside above the people without being

considered a burden,

How they are able to be out in front of the people without being

regarded as a harm.

This is why the whole world delights in supporting them and never wearies.

Because they do not contend, no one in the world can contend with
them.¹³⁴

see § 22

Chapter Sixty-Seven

The whole world agrees in saying that my Way is great but appears
unworthy.

It is only because it is great that it appears to be unworthy.

If it appeared worthy, it would have become small long ago.

Isn't that so!

I have three treasures that I hold on to and preserve:

The first I call loving kindness;

The second I call frugality;

The third I call never daring to put oneself first in the world.

The kind can be courageous;

The frugal can be generous;

¹³²This is the only occurrence of the expression *dashun* 大順, "Great Compliance," in the text. However, as Arthur Waley (1963), p. 223, points out in his note to this chapter, it does occur in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 12 (not in this volume). Note too that the same word *shun* appears in *Mao* # 241 quoted in n. 130 above.

¹³³Cf. chapter 61.

¹³⁴The same line appears in chapter 22.

Those who never dare to put themselves first in the world
can become leaders of the various officials.

Now to be courageous without loving kindness,

To be generous without frugality,

To put oneself first without putting oneself behind others,

These will lead to death.¹³⁵

If one has loving kindness, in attack one will be victorious,

In defense one will be secure.

For Heaven will save you and protect you with loving kindness.

Chapter Sixty-Eight

Those good at fighting are never warlike.¹³⁶

Those good at attack are never enraged.

Those good at conquering their enemies never confront them.

Those good at using others put themselves in a lower position.

This is called the Virtue of noncontention; ㄣㄣ ㄣㄣ ㄣㄣ ㄣㄣ

This is called the power of using others;

This is called matching up with Heaven, the highest achievement of the
ancients.

Chapter Sixty-Nine

Military strategists have a saying.

"I never dare to play host but prefer to play guest."¹³⁷

I never dare to advance an inch but retreat a foot."

This is called a formation without form,

Rolling up one's sleeve but having no arm,

Forcing the issue but lacking an enemy.¹³⁸

Who can avoid misfortune in war?

But there is none greater than underestimating the enemy!

¹³⁵The idea that true virtue lies in a harmony within a tension, that it requires a balance between extremes, is seen in many traditions. Early Confucians too held a version of this view. For example, see *Analek's* 8.2.

¹³⁶That is, they are not overly aggressive and pugnacious.

¹³⁷They avoid initiating the action, the first move being the prerogative of the host.

¹³⁸Cf. the last two lines with a similar line in chapter 38.

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Underestimating the enemy almost cost me my three treasures.¹³⁹

And so when swords are crossed and troops clash, the side that grieves shall be victorious.

Chapter Seventy

My teachings are easy to understand and easy to implement;
But no one in the whole world has been able to understand or
implement them.

< My teachings have an ancestor and my activities have a lord; ^{what does this mean?}
But people fail to understand these and so I am not understood.

< Those who understand me are rare;¹⁴⁰

Those who take me as a model are honored.

This is why sages wear coarse cloth while cherishing precious jade.¹⁴¹

Chapter Seventy-One

To know that one does not know is best;

Not to know but to believe that one knows is a disease.¹⁴²

Only by seeing this disease as a disease can one be free of it.

Sages are free of this disease;

Because they see this disease as a disease, they are free of it.

Chapter Seventy-Two

When the people do not fear what warrants awe,

Something truly awful will come to them.

Do not constrain their homes or villages.

Do not oppress their lives.

¹³⁹See chapter 67 for a possible reference.

¹⁴⁰Cf. this complaint with Kongzi's remark in *Analekts* 14.35.

¹⁴¹They appear common and unworthy on the outside but possess a secret treasure within. In *Analekts* 17.1 (not in this volume) a man named Yang Huo criticizes Kongzi's reluctance to take office by asking him, "Can one who cherishes his treasure within and allows his state to go astray be considered benevolent?" Cf. *Analekts* 9.13.

¹⁴²This passage is similar in thought to *Analekts* 2.17 (not in this volume): "If you know something realize that you know it. If you do not know something realize that you do not. This is what knowing is."

Because you do not oppress them, you will not be oppressed.
 This is why sages know themselves but do not make a display of themselves;
 They care for themselves but do not revere themselves.¹⁴³
 And so they cast off the one and take up the other.¹⁴³

Chapter Seventy-Three

To be courageous in daring leads to death;

To be courageous in not daring leads to life.

These two bring benefit to some and loss to others.

Who knows why Heaven dislikes what it does?

Even sages regard this as a difficult question.

The Way does not contend but is good at victory;

Does not speak but is good at responding;

Does not call but things come of their own accord;

Is not anxious but is good at laying plans.

Heaven's net is vast;

Its mesh is loose but misses nothing.

Chapter Seventy-Four

If the people are not afraid of death, why threaten them with death?

"But what if I could keep the people always afraid of death and seize and put to death those who dare to act in strange or perverse ways?"¹⁴⁴

Who then would dare to act in such a manner?¹⁴⁵

There is always the killing done by the Chief Executioner.¹⁴⁵

The Chief Executioner is the greatest carver among carpenters.

Those who would do the work of the greatest carver among carpenters, rarely avoid wounding their own hands.

Chapter Seventy-Five

The people are hungry because those above eat up too much in taxes;

This is why the people are hungry.

¹⁴³This line also appears in chapters 12 and 38.

¹⁴⁴These two lines introduce a question and mark a dialogue within the text. Cf. *Analekts* 12.19.

¹⁴⁵The death that Heaven brings to each person.

Those with Virtue oversee the tally;
 Those without Virtue oversee collection.¹⁵⁴
 The Way of Heaven plays no favorites;
 It is always on the side of the good.

Chapter Eighty

Reduce the size of the state;
 Lessen the population.
 Make sure that even though there are labor-saving tools, they are never used.
 Make sure that the people look upon death as a weighty matter and
 never move to distant places.
 Even though they have ships and carts, they will have no use for them.
 Even though they have armor and weapons, they will have no reason to
 deploy them.¹⁵⁵
 Make sure that the people return to the use of the knotted cord.
 Make their food savory,
 Their clothes fine,
 Their houses comfortable,
 Their lives happy.
 Then even though neighboring states are within sight of each other,
 Even though they can hear the sounds of each other's dogs and chickens,
 Their people will grow old and die without ever having visited one another.

Chapter Eighty-One

Words worthy of trust are not refined;¹⁵⁶
 Refined words are not worthy of trust.

¹⁵⁴The central idea of this chapter, which is seen throughout the text, is that one cannot force others to be good. If one resorts to force, one's actions will eventually rebound in kind upon oneself. The only way to affect others and turn them to the good is through the power of one's *de*, "Virtue."

¹⁵⁵That is, let them abandon writing. The use of the knotted cord to keep track of records is mentioned in the Great Appendix to the *Changes* and *Zhuangzi*, chapter 10 (not in this volume), as well as elsewhere in the early literature. The details are unclear but the practice probably entailed making a knot in a cord for every ten or twenty units counted. Thus it resembles the Western practice of notching or "scoring" a piece of wood for every twenty units counted, each notch representing a "score" or twenty.

¹⁵⁶In *Analekts* 14.6 (not in this volume) Kongzi says, "Those who have *de*, 'Virtue,' will always speak well. Those who speak well will not always have Virtue." Cf. chapter 62.

The good do not engage in disputation;

Those who engage in disputation are not good.¹⁵⁷

Those who know are not full of knowledge;

Those full of knowledge do not know.

Sages do not accumulate.

The more they do for others, the more they have;

The more they give to others the more they possess.

The Way of Heaven is to benefit and not harm.

The Way of the sage is to act but not contend.

↳ to do
 one's duty but not strive up or against
 anyone.

¹⁵⁷Confucians too had a general mistrust of glib talkers and disputation. This reflects their similar, though distinct, beliefs about the power of a good person's *de*, "Virtue," to sway others. For examples, see *Analekts* 1.3 and Mengzi's explanation of why he must engage in disputation, though not being fond of it, found in *Mengzi* 3B9.

■ CHAPTER FIVE ■

ZHUANGZI

Introduction

Little is known of Zhuangzi 莊子 beyond what we can gather from the book named after him. Much of the book, however, is unapologetically fictional, so the stories it tells about him provide us more insight into his persona than into the historical facts of his life. We know from external sources that his friend Huizi served in the court of King Hui of Liang (390–319 B.C.E.), which places Zhuangzi in the end of the fourth century B.C.E. The version of the text we have was assembled around 300 C.E. and is widely agreed to be the work of multiple authors. Though some passages seem to have been written by Zhuangzi, the book must initially have been compiled by his students and then supplemented by later contributors and editors. The following selections are drawn primarily from what scholars generally recognize as the earliest portions of the text, which were either written or inspired by Zhuangzi himself.

Zhuangzi has a huge vocabulary, draws freely from history and mythology, and is equally at home writing poetry, logical analyses, dialogue, and narrative. His references to Kongzi, Laozi, and the Mohists demonstrate that he was familiar with their ideas, though the absence of quotations leaves uncertain whether he had access to the same texts we do. Huizi, who argued against the possibility of distinguishing one thing from another, is known to have debated one of Mengzi's students. So Zhuangzi must at least have heard about Mengzi's ideas, though he never mentions him by name.

Zhuangzi does not present his ideas systematically or define his central terms. But he regularly speaks of *tian* 天, "Heaven," as the highest ideal



for all things. He contrasts *tian*, which could also be translated as "nature," to *ren* 人, "people" or "humanity." The human, for Zhuangzi, includes everything from concrete activities that interfere with nature, such as the mutilation of criminals, to abstract ideas, such as *shi/fei* 是非, "right and wrong," that people project onto the world. Zhuangzi also speaks of *dao* 道, "the Way," which encompasses both the Way the world is and the way for people to live in it. Though he believes there is a way, he is skeptical of our ability to learn much about it through words or thinking. In fact, he attacks thinking in order to make room, instead, for experience and intuition. Sometimes his attacks are direct, with arguments illustrating the limitations of language, sometimes indirect, with strange stories having no obvious moral or hero. Rather than delivering a message, the *Zhuangzi* seems to go out of its way to defy understanding. In this sense, though the stories are often fantastic, the book is meant to offer a realistic lesson in the uselessness of trying to figure out life. Thinking and talking have a place: Zhuangzi does a lot of both of them. The challenge is to harmonize thinking and talking with the other, incomprehensible aspects of life.

In the second century B.C.E., the historian Sima Qian classified Zhuangzi as a founding member of the Daoist school, rather than as a Confucian or a Mohist. This is an oversimplification. There was no "Daoist school" in his time, and, as readers will soon see, he would have resisted any classification of this sort. He knew and thought a lot about the other philosophers presented in this book, particularly Kongzi. But his relationships to them were too complex to be summarized as simple agreement or disagreement. The influence of these other thinkers on Zhuangzi and the implications of his arguments for their ideas are complex and difficult questions that readers will have to sort out for themselves, with the help of some of the secondary literature that is listed following the translation.

Chapter One: Wandering Round and About

In the northern darkness there is a fish named Minnow. No one knows how many thousand *li* around he is. He changes into a bird named Breeze.¹ No one knows how many thousand *li* across she is. She ruffles and flies, and her wings are like clouds hanging from Heaven. As the seas turn, she thinks

¹The exact meaning of the bird's name is unclear, but it was pronounced similarly to the word for wind.

to migrate to the southern darkness. The southern darkness is Heaven's pool.²

The *Tales of Qi*³ records wonders. It says, "In her migration to the southern darkness, Breeze flaps along the water for three thousand *li*, spirals up on a whirlwind to ninety thousand *li*, and goes six months at a stretch."

Horse-shaped clouds, motes of dust, living things blowing breath at each other—is the blue-green of Heaven its proper color or just its being so endlessly far away? It looks just the same to her gazing down from above.

If water isn't deep it can't support big boats. Spill a cup of water on the floor and crumbs will be its boats. But put the cup there and it will stick—because the water is too shallow and the boat too big. If wind isn't deep it can't support big wings. This is why Breeze rises ninety thousand *li* with the wind there beneath her. Only then can she rest on the wind, carrying blue Heaven on her back, and nothing can stop her. Only then does she set her sights to the south.

The cicada and the student-dove laugh at her, saying, "When we start up and fly, we struggle for the elm or the sandalwood. Sometimes we don't even make it but just plunk to the ground. What is she doing rising ninety thousand *li* and heading south?" People going to the green meadows can bring three meals and return with their bellies still full. People going a hundred *li* need to grind grain for an overnight. People going a thousand *li* need to gather grain for three months. What do these two little bugs know?

Little knowledge does not measure up to big knowledge, or few years to many. How do I know this is so? The morning mushroom does not know the waxing and waning of the moon, and the Hui-cricker does not know spring and fall. This is because they are short lived. South of Chu there is a turtle called Dark Genius, which counts five hundred years as a single spring and five hundred years as a single fall. In high antiquity there was a tree called Big Spring, which counted eight thousand years as a single spring and eight thousand years as a single fall. Nowadays, only eight-hundred-year-old Peng Zu is famous, and everyone compares themselves to him. Isn't it sad?⁴

²The word translated as "Heaven" also means both sky and Nature.

³We have no knowledge of this text and, judging from its name, it appears to be fictitious. Here and elsewhere, Zhuangzi may be parodying appeals to textual authority by appealing to fanciful "classics."

⁴On Peng Zu, see *Analekts* 7.1 and the accompanying note.

This was the subject of King Tang's questions to his teacher, Cramped.⁵

In the bald north there is a dark sea, Heaven's pool. There is a fish there whose breadth is several tens of thousands of *li*. No one knows his length. His name is Minnow. There is a bird there, whose name is Breeze. Her back is as huge as Mount Tai, and her wings are like clouds hanging from Heaven. Circling on the whirlwind, she spirals upward ninety thousand *li*, bursts through the clouds and mist, carrying the blue sky. Afterward she heads south, traveling to the southern darkness.

The accusing quail laughs at her, saying, "Where is *she* going? I rear up and don't go more than a few yards before coming down, soaring and roaming amid brambles and briars—this indeed is the perfection of flying! Where is *she* going?" This is the debate between little and big.

People who know how to do one job, handle a small town, or impress a ruler to get put in charge of a state see themselves like this. Songzi would still laugh at them. The whole world could praise him and he would not be encouraged. The whole world could condemn him and he would not be upset. He has fixed the difference between inner and outer and distinguished the limits of glory and disgrace. Yet he stops there. He is unconventional, but there is still something left unplanted.

Liezi⁶ rides about on the wind. It's wonderful! He's gone two weeks at a time. His attitude toward wealth is unconventional. But, though he manages to avoid walking, he still relies on something. If he could chariot the norms of Heaven and earth and ride the changes in the six mists⁷ to wander the inexhaustible, then what would there be to rely on? Hence it is said that perfect people have no self, spiritual people have no accomplishment, and sage people have no name.

⁵Tang's teacher is named "ji 棘," which commentators explain means narrow—as opposed to "Tang 湯," which means broad. Chapter Five of the book *Liezi* is entitled "The Questions of Tang" and contains an expanded version of what might have been their conversation. For a translation, see A. C. Graham, *The Book of Lieh Tzu*, reprint (London: John Murray, 1973), pp. 92–117. For more on King Tang, see *Important Figures*.

⁶Little is known of Liezi. The book that bears his name contains scant biographical information. He may have been a practitioner of magic, or an ascetic who achieved freedom by withdrawing from the world. Either way, Zhuangzi's highly metaphorical criticism of him here suggests that he would have been better off accepting the world as it is.

⁷"Mists," here and below, is 氣. See *Important Terms*.

The sage-king Yao offered his empire to the hermit Whence. "To keep the torches burning when the sun and moon are shining is troubling too much for light. Irrigating the fields when the spring rains are falling is working too hard for water. You are here, my teacher, and the empire is in order. With me still presiding over it, I feel defective. Please take it."

Whence said, "With you ordering it, the empire is well ordered. If I were to go ahead and replace you, would it be for the name? But name is only the guest of reality. Do I want to be the guest? The tailor bird nesting in the deep forest takes no more than a branch. The mole drinking at the river takes no more than a bellyful. Give it up, my lord. I have no use for the empire. Though the cook at the sacrifice fails to order the kitchen, the presiding priest does not leap over the goblets and platters to replace him."

Shoulder Dig said to Step Brother,⁸ "I heard what Jie Yu said.⁹ It was big but didn't stand for anything. It went on and on without coming back. I was frightened by what he said. It was as endless as the Milky Way, full of inconsistencies, and didn't approach the human situation."

Step Brother asked, "What did he say?"

"He said there are spiritual people living in the distant Maiden Mountains. Their skin is like frost, and they are gentle and restrained as virgins. They don't eat the five grains but sip wind and drink dew. They chariot the cloudy mists, ride the flying dragons, and wander beyond the four seas. By concentrating their spirit, they keep things from harm and ripen the harvests. I thought he was crazy and didn't believe him."

Step Brother said, "Yes. The blind can't appreciate beautiful patterns or the deaf bells and drums. But are blindness and deafness confined to the physical form? Your knowledge has them, too. His talk is like a fertile woman.¹⁰ Those people he describes, with that Virtue of theirs, will align with the ten thousand things and make them one. The world longs for chaos, but why should they fret and make the world their business? Nothing

⁸This character's name, Lian Shu, may also suggest a connection to the Shu clan, one of the Three Families that ruled Kongzi's native state of Lu for most of his lifetime.

⁹In *Analecs* 18.5 (not in this volume), Jie Yu, known as The Madman of Chu, criticizes Kongzi for wasting his efforts on a lost cause. When Kongzi tries to speak with him, he runs away.

¹⁰Jie Yu's words are "like a fertile woman" in the sense that they await the right kind of person in order to bear offspring (that is, to be understood).

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can harm these people. Though a great flood should knock against Heaven, they would not drown. Though a heat wave should melt stone and scorch the earth, they would not burn. From their dust and chaff you could mold the sages Yao and Shun. Why would they want to make things their business? A man of Song¹¹ invested in ceremonial caps and took them to Yue. But the Yue people cut their hair and tattoo their bodies and had no use for them. Yao brought order to the people of the empire and stabilized the government within the seas. But when he went to see the four masters of the distant Maiden Mountains, north of the Fen River, he lost the world in a daze."¹²

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "The king of Wei¹³ left me the seeds of a big gourd. I planted them, and when they grew, the fruit was a yard across. I filled them with water but they weren't sturdy enough to hold it. I split them into ladles but they were too big to dip into anything. It wasn't that they weren't wonderfully big, but they were useless. So I smashed them."¹⁴

Zhuangzi said, "You, sir, are certainly clumsy about using big things. There were some people in Song who were good at making ointment to prevent chapped hands. Year after year, they used it in their business bleaching silk. A traveler heard about it and asked to buy the formula for a hundred pieces of gold. The clan assembled and consulted, saying, 'For years we've bleached silk and never made more than a few pieces of gold. Today in a single morning we can sell the trick for a hundred pieces. Let's give it to him!'

"The traveler got it and recommended it to the king of Wu, who was having trouble with the state of Yue. The king of Wu put him in command, and that winter he met the men of Yue in a naval battle. Using the ointment to keep his soldiers' hands from chapping, he defeated Yue badly and

¹¹The people of Song were the butt of many jokes. Cf. *Mengzi* 2A2 and *Han Feizi*, chapter 49, p. 340.

¹²Earlier in Chinese history, the Fen River had been the northwestern border separating the Chinese from the non-Chinese world (i.e., the "barbarians"). By Zhuangzi's time, however, military expansion and cultural assimilation had moved the boundary back, so the Fen was closer to the center.

¹³Wei is another name for the state of Liang. Hence this is King Hui of Liang, the same ruler who employed Huizi in his administration.

¹⁴It is clear from the beginning of the next anecdote that Huizi's story here is meant as a criticism of Zhuangzi.

was rewarded with a portion of the conquered territory. The ability to prevent chapped hands was the same in either case. But one gained territory while the others never escaped bleaching silk because what they used it for was different.¹⁵ Now you had these gigantic gourds. Why not lash them together like big buoys and go floating on the rivers and lakes instead of worrying that they were too big to dip into anything? Your mind is full of underbrush, my friend."¹⁶

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "I have a big tree, the kind people call Spring. Its trunk is so gnarled it won't take a chalk line, and its branches are so twisted they won't fit a compass or square. It stands by the road but no builder looks twice at it. Your talk is similarly big and useless, and everyone alike rejects it."

Zhuangzi said, "Haven't you seen a weasel? It bends down then rises up. It springs east and west, not worrying about heights or depths—and lands in a snare or dies in a net. Now the yak is so big he looks like clouds hanging from Heaven. He sure can be big, but he can't catch mice. You have a big tree and are upset that you can't use it. Why not plant it by a nothing-at-all village in a wide empty waste? You could do nothing, dilly-dallying by its side, or nap, ho-hum, beneath it. It won't fall to any axe's chop and nothing will harm it. Since it isn't any use, what bad can happen to it?" *Zhuangzi's teaching*

Chapter Two: On Equalizing Things

Master Dapple of the South Wall sat leaning on his armrest. He looked up and sighed, vacant, as though he'd lost his counterpart. Yancheng Ziyou¹⁷ stood before him in attendance. "What's this?" he said. "Can the body really

¹⁵Wu and Yue were two non-Chinese states to the south that were gradually incorporated into the Chinese world during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. When hostilities broke out between them in 510 B.C.E., Wu dominated initially, which was presumably when Zhuangzi's story was meant to take place. Yue rallied its forces, however, and destroyed Wu in 473, which probably meant execution for the traveler or his descendants. The history of Wu, which would have been familiar to Zhuangzi's contemporary readers, makes the moral of the parable uncertain. — *the point?*

¹⁶*Xin* 心 can be translated as either "heart" or "mind," though the latter is usually more appropriate for Zhuangzi. The description of Huizi's mind as full of underbrush may be a reference to Mengzi's metaphor of moral sprouts. See also *xin* under *Important Terms*.

¹⁷This is evidently Kongzi's disciple, Ziyou, who is described in *Analekts* 17.4 (not in this volume) as using music to instruct people in the Way.

be turned into dried wood? Can the mind really be turned into dead ashes? The one leaning on the armrest now is not the one who leaned on it before!"

Master Dapple said, "My, isn't that a good question you've asked, Ziyou! Just now I lost myself. Do you know? You've heard the pipes of people, but not the pipes of earth. Or if you've heard the pipes of earth, you haven't heard the pipes of Heaven."

"May I ask what you mean?"

"The Big Lump belches breath and it's called wind. If only it wouldn't start! When it starts, the ten thousand holes begin to hiss. Don't you hear the *shsh-shsh*? In the mountain vales there are great trees a hundred spans around with knots like noses, like mouths, like ears, like sockets, like rings, like mortars, like ditches, like gullies. Gurgling, humming, hooting, whistling, shouting, shrieking, moaning, gnashing! The leaders sing 'Eecccc!' The followers sing 'Ooooooh!' In a light breeze it's a little chorus, but in a gusty wind it's a huge orchestra. And when the violent winds are over, the ten thousand holes are empty. Haven't you witnessed the brouhaha?"

Ziyou said, "So the pipes of earth are those holes, and the pipes of people are bamboo flutes. May I ask about the pipes of Heaven?"

Master Dapple said, "Blowing the ten thousand differences, making each be itself and all choose themselves—who provokes it? Does Heaven turn? Does earth stay still? Do the sun and moon vie for position? Who is in charge here? Who pulls the strings? Who sits with nothing to do, gives it a push and sets it in motion? Do you think it's locked in motion and can't be stopped? Or do you think it's spinning out of control and can't slow itself down? Do the clouds make the rain? Or does the rain make the clouds? Who rumbles all this out? Who sits there with nothing to do and takes perverse delight in egging it on? The wind rises in the north—now west, now east, now dilly-dallying up above. Who huffs and puffs it? Who sits with nothing to do and blows it? May I ask the cause?"¹⁸

Big knowledge is boundless,¹⁹
little knowledge is unbound.

¹⁸ I follow Graham in importing the final lines of this passage, from "Does Heaven turn?" to the end, from a later chapter.

¹⁹ This next section seems to be a mixture of verse and self-commentary. The Chinese words for "boundless" and "unbound" sound similar; the difference in their meanings is a matter of dispute among commentators, and the argument equivocates on whether big is

Big talk is unstoppable,
little talk doesn't stop.

In sound sleep, spirits mingle,
on waking, bodies open out.
They greet and grapple,
and use their minds all day to struggle.

in another
transliteration,
sun is
very
boundless—
hidden

The humble ones, the high ones, the hidden ones: the little fears panic, the big fears calm.

They fly like an arrow from a bow

See
p. 22
of Feng/
English trans.

That's the way they guard their rights and wrongs.

They stick like they'd sworn an oath.

That's the way they hold to victory.

They die like fall and winter.

That describes their daily deterioration. They drown; and what makes it happen can't bring them back.

They're sated as though sealed.

That describes their stagnation. As the mind nears death, nothing can bring it back to vitality.

Happiness, anger, despair, joy,
planning, sighing, bending, freezing,
elegance, ease, candor, posturing—

supposed to be better than little. Zhuangzi is perhaps intentionally trying to produce this confusion on the part of his readers. (Zhuangzi frequently uses the rhetorical device of rhyming reduplives. Some studies suggest that it is a trans-linguistic phenomenon and such phrases, like "flim-flam" and "ooga-booga," convey a mixture of confusion and mystery.) — interesting

Saying is not just blowing. Saying says something. But if what it says is not fixed, then does it really say anything? Or does it say nothing? We think it is different from the peeping of fledglings. But is there really any difference or isn't there? How is the Way obscured that there are true and false? How are words obscured that there are *shi* 是, "right," and *fei* 非, "wrong"? Where can you go that the Way does not exist? How can words exist and not be okay? The Way is obscured by small completions⁽²¹⁾ Words are obscured by glory and show. So we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the Mohists. Each calls right what the other calls wrong and each calls wrong what the other calls right. But if you want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, it's better to throw them open to the light.

There is nothing that cannot be looked at that way.

There is nothing that cannot be looked at this way.

But that is not the way I see things;

Only as I know things myself do I know them.

Hence it is said, "*Bi* 彼, 'that,' comes from *shi* 是, 'this,' and this follows from that." This is the doctrine of the parallel birth of "this" and "that." Even so, born together they die together. Dying together they are born together. If they are both okay, they are both not okay. If they are both not okay, they are both okay. If they are right in a way, they are wrong in a way. If they are wrong in a way, they are right in a way. For this reason the sage does not follow this route but illuminates things with Heaven's light.²² He just goes along with things. What is this is also that, and what is that is also this. That is both right and wrong. This is also both right and wrong. So is there really a this and a that? Or isn't there any this or that? The place where neither this nor that finds its counterpart is called the pivot of the Way. Once the pivot finds its socket it can respond endlessly. What's right is endless. And what's wrong is endless, too. This is why I say it's better to throw them open to the light.

(21) The phrase translated as "small completions" or "small accomplishments" also referred to small groupings of instruments in contrast to a complete orchestra. People lose sight of the whole because of their attention to a part. → 只顧眼前之小見而忘其大

²² Translating the word for "Heaven" as "nature," this line could be read, "lets them shine by their natural light."

They are music out of emptiness,
mist condensing into mushrooms!

Day and night they alternate in front of us without our knowing where they sprout. Enough! Enough! Morning and evening we've got them, wherever they come from.

Without them there would not be me,
without me there would be nothing to choose.

This is close. But no one knows what makes it like this. It seems as though there is a true master, but you can't get a glimpse of it. In our actions we take the self on faith, but we can't see its form. There is essence but no form.²⁰

The hundred bones, the nine orifices, the six organs all exist together. Which do I think of as closest to me? Do you like them all? Or do you have a favorite? If so, are the rest its servants and concubines? Can't servants and concubines rule among themselves? Can they take turns being lord and servant? But if there is a true lord among them, whether I find its essence or not makes no difference to its truth.

Once you take a complete form, you don't forget it until the end. Clashing with things and rubbing against them, the race is run at a gallop and nothing can stop it. Isn't it sad? Your whole life slaving away and never seeing the completion of your labors. Exhausted, you drudge and slave away without knowing where to turn for rest. Can you not mourn? People say they are not dead, but what difference does it make? Your form changes and your mind goes with it. Can you tell me that's not mournful? Is everyone's life really this confused? Or am I the only one confused and not other people?

If a made-up mind counts as a teacher, then who doesn't have a teacher? Why should it just be the self-chosen experts on the order of things who have them? Stupid people would have them, too. But to have right and wrong before you've made up your mind—that's like leaving for Yue today and getting there yesterday! That's like saying what isn't is. What isn't is? Even the spiritual sage Yu couldn't make sense of that. How could I?

to have perception,
especially natural perception

²⁰ On "essence" (*qing* 情), see p. 235, n. 59, and *Important Terms*.

Making a point to show that a point is not a point is not as good as making a nonpoint to show that a point is not a point. Using a horse to show that a horse is not a horse is not as good as using a nonhorse to show that a horse is not a horse.²³ Heaven and earth are one point, the ten thousand things are one horse.

Okay? Okay? Not okay? Not okay. A way is made by walking it. A thing is so by calling it. How is it so? In so-ing it, it is so. How is it not so? In not-so-ing it, it is not so. There is always a way in which things are so. There is always a way in which things are okay. There is nothing that is not so, nothing that is not okay. You can insist that it is a twig or a pillar, a freak or the beautiful Xi Shi.²⁴ No matter how diverse or strange, the Way comprehends them as one. Their division is their completion and their completion is their ruin. But nothing is completed or injured when they are again comprehended as one. Only the penetrating person knows to comprehend them as one. Don't insist but lodge in the usual. The usual is useful. You can use it to penetrate. When you penetrate, you get it. Get it and you're almost there. Just go along with things. Doing that without knowing how things are is what I call the Way.

But exhausting the spirit trying to illuminate the unity of things without knowing that they are all the same is called "three in the morning." What do I mean by "three in the morning"? When the monkey trainer was passing out nuts he said, "You get three in the morning and four at night." The monkeys were all angry. "All right," he said, "you get four in the morning and three at night." The monkeys were all pleased. With no loss in name or substance, he made use of their joy and anger because he went along with them. So the sage harmonizes people with right and wrong and rests them on Heaven's wheel. This is called walking two roads.

In olden days, people's knowledge got somewhere. Where did it get? There were those who thought there had never been anything. Perfect! Done! There was nothing to add. Next were those who thought there were things but never any boundaries. Next were those who thought there were boundaries but never any right or wrong. The Way is lost in the glorification of right and wrong. The Way is lost in the completion of love. But are there such things as loss and completion? Or are there no such things as

²³A reference to the "School of Names" thinker Gongsun Long. For more, see the Supplemental Text on *Gongsun Longzi* ("On the White Horse"). 343-62

²⁴Xi Shi was a legendary beauty sent by the king of Yue to marry the king of Wu, spy on him, and help overthrow his kingdom.

loss and completion? Loss and completion—that's Master Bright Works playing his lute. No loss and no completion—that's Master Bright Works not playing his lute. Bright Works playing his lute, Shi Kuang holding his baton, Huizi leaning on his desk: the knowledge of these three masters was almost perfect, and they passed their successes on to later years.²⁵ What they liked they tried to set apart from other things. What they liked they tried to illuminate. But they only succeeded in illuminating the other things and so ended in the gloom of "hard and white."²⁶ Their followers ended up tangled in the string of works and were incomplete their whole lives. If this counts as completion, then we are all complete, too. If this doesn't count as completion, then none of us have ever been complete. So the torch of slippery doubt is what the sage steers by. Don't insist, but lodge in the usual: this is what I mean by throwing things open to the light.

Now suppose I say something here. I don't know whether it fits into your category or not. But in terms of the category that includes both things that fit and things that don't, it's no different from anything else. Nonetheless, let me try saying it:

There is a beginning. There is a not-yet beginning to be a beginning. There is a not-yet beginning to be a not-yet beginning to be a beginning.

There is something. There is nothing. There is a not-yet beginning to be nothing. There is a not-yet beginning to be a not-yet beginning to be nothing. Suddenly there is nothing. But then I don't know whether nothing is or isn't.

Now I've said something, but I don't know if what I've said meant anything or not. — *How do I know if what I've said meant anything or not?* *Meaningful?*

Nothing in the world is bigger than the tip of an autumn hair²⁷ but Mount Tai is small. No one lives longer than a dead child

²⁵On Shi Kuang, see *Important Figures and Mengzi* 6A7.

²⁶"Hard and white" is a stock example from the ancient Chinese philosophy of language. Zhuangzi is using it as synecdoche for all subtle rational arguments. (See also the Supplemental Text on *Gongsun Longzi* ["On the White Horse"].)

²⁷An animal's hair is most fine (and hence thin) during the autumn.

and Peng Zu died young. Heaven and earth were born along side me, and the ten thousand things and I are one.

If we're already one, can I say it? But since I've just said we're one, can I not say it? The unity and my saying it make two. The two and their unity make three. Starting from here, even a clever mathematician couldn't get it, much less an ordinary person! If going from nothing to something you get three, what about going from something to something? Don't do it! Just go along with things.

The Way has never been bounded, words have never been constant. Insist on it and there are boundary-paths. Let me describe these paths. There is left. There is right. There are relations. There is righteousness. There are divisions. There are debates. There is competition. There is contention. These are called the eight Virtues. The sage acknowledges what is beyond the six dimensions but does not discuss it. He deliberates on the springs and autumns of successive generations and the records of former kings but does not debate about them. Divisions have something they do not divide. Debates have something they do not debate. "What?" you ask (The sage clasps it to his bosom while ordinary people debate to show it off.) Hence it is said, "Debate leaves something undiscriminated."

The great Way is not announced.

The great debate is not spoken.

Great benevolence is not benevolent.

Great modesty is not reserved.

Great courage is not aggressive.

A way that shines does not lead.

Words in debate do not reach.

Benevolence that is constant is not complete.

Modesty that is pure is not trustworthy.

Courage that is aggressive is not complete.

These five are round but almost square. Therefore knowledge that stops at what it does not know is perfect. Who knows the unspoken distinction, the unled Way? If you could know it, it would be called the store of Heaven. Pour into it and it does not fill up, draw from it and it does not run dry. Not knowing where it comes from, it is called the shaded glow. Once Yao

said to Shun, "I want to attack Zong, Guai, and Xu-ao. I sit on my throne and it bothers me. Why is this?"²⁸

Shun said, "These three small states still dwell among the underbrush. Why are you bothered? Once ten suns came out together and the ten thousand things were all illuminated. Shouldn't Virtue be better than ten suns?"²⁹

Gaptooth asked Royal Relativity,³⁰ "Do you know what all things agree upon as right?"

Royal Relativity said, "How could I know that?"

"Do you know that you don't know it?"

"How could I know that?"

"Doesn't anyone know anything?!"

"How could I know that? But even so, suppose I tried saying something. How could I possibly know that when I say I don't know something, I don't know it? How could I possibly know that when I say I don't know something, I don't know it?"³¹ Let me try asking you something. If people sleep in the damp, their backs hurt and they wake half paralyzed. But is this true of an eel? If they live in trees they shudder with fear. But is this true of a monkey? Of these three, then, which knows the right place to live? People eat the flesh of cattle, deer eat fodder, maggots like snakes, and hawks enjoy mice. Of these four, which knows the right taste? Monkeys take baboons as partners, deer befriend elk, and eels consort with fish. People say that Maoqiang and Lady Li are beautiful. But if fish saw them they would dive deep, if birds saw them they would fly high, and if deer saw them they

²⁸Three backward states that resisted Yao's authority. To see why this bothered him, consider *Analekts* 2.1 and 12.19.

²⁹The *Huainanzi* tells us that the ten suns were too bright, so nine had to be shot down by the archer Yi. Shun's point is that, rather than insist on enlightening these backward states himself, the Virtuous path would be to allow them to find their own way naturally. He is advocating "the shaded glow," "illuminating things with Heaven's light" rather than one's own.

³⁰The second character in this name, Ni, means end or extreme. Elsewhere, in a portion of the text not translated here, Zhuangzi argues that extremes are extreme only relative to one another: the small is small only in comparison to the large, etc., hence the current translation. Later on, Zhuangzi will speak of "harmonizing things by means of Heaven's relativity," that is, taking advantage of their sameness in difference, like the monkey trainer.

³¹Cf. *Analekts* 2.17 (not in this volume): "To say that you know when you do know and that you don't when you don't is knowledge."

would cut and run. Of these four, which knows beauty rightly? From where I see it, the sprouts of benevolence and righteousness and the pathways of right and wrong are all snarled and jumbled.³² How would I know the difference between them?

Gaptooth said, "If you don't know gain from loss, do perfected people know?"³³

Royal Relativity said, "Perfected people are spiritual. Though the lowlands burn, they are not hot. Though the He and the Han rivers freeze, they are not cold. When furious lightning splits the mountains and winds thrash the sea, they are not scared. People like this mount the clouds and mists, straddle the sun and moon, and roam beyond the four seas. Death and life make no difference to them, how much less the sprouts of benefit and harm!"

Master Nervous Maggie asked Master Long Desk, "I heard from my teacher, Kongzi, that the sage does not make it his business to attend to affairs. He does not seek gain or avoid loss. He does not enjoy being sought out and does not follow any Way. Saying nothing he says something, saying something he says nothing, and he wanders outside the floating dust. My teacher thought this was wild talk, but I thought it captured the mysterious Way. What do you think about it?"

Master Long Desk said, "This would make Huang Di's ears ring. How could Kongzi understand it? But you're getting ahead of yourself. You see an egg and listen for the rooster's crow. You see a crossbow and expect roast owl. I'm going to try saying some crazy things to you, and you listen crazily—how about it? Flank the sun and moon, embrace space and time, and meet like lips, settling in the slippery murk where servants exalt each other. Ordinary people slave away, while the sage is stupid and simple, participating in ten thousand ages and unifying them in complete simplicity. The ten thousand things are as they are, and so are jumbled together.

"How do I know that loving life is not a mistake? How do I know that hating death is not like a lost child forgetting its way home? Lady Li was the daughter of the border guard of Ai. When the duke of Jin got her, her

³²Cf. "sprouts of benevolence and righteousness" (*ren yi zhi duan* 仁義之端) with *Mengzi* 2A6.

³³"Gain" (*li* 利) and "loss" (*hai* 害) are important terms for Mozi—who thinks of them as "benefit" and "harm," respectively—and Mengzi, who contrasts *li*, in the sense of "profit," with *yi* 義, "righteousness."

tears fell until they soaked her collar. But once she reached the royal palace, slept in the king's bed, and ate the meats of his table, she regretted her tears. How do I know that the dead don't regret that they ever longed for life?³⁴

"One who dreams of drinking wine may weep in the morning. One who dreams of weeping may go for a hunt the next day. In the dream, you don't know it's a dream. In the middle of a dream, you may interpret a dream within it. Only after waking do you know it was a dream. Still, there may be an even greater awakening after which you know that this, too, was just a greater dream. But the stupid ones think they are awake and confidently claim to know it. Are they rulers? Are they herdsmen? Really! Kongzi and you are both dreaming. And in saying you are dreaming, I am dreaming, too. These words might be called a puzzle. But if after ten thousand generations we encounter a single sage who knows the solution, it would be no different from what we encounter every morning and evening."

Once you and I have started arguing, if you win and I lose, then are you really right and am I really wrong? If I win and you lose, then am I really right and are you really wrong? Is one of us right and the other one wrong? Or are both of us right and both of us wrong? If you and I can't understand one another, then other people will certainly be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to set us right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to set us right? But if they already agree with you how can they set us right? Shall we get someone who agrees with me to set us right? But if they already agree with me, how can they set us right? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us to set us right? But if they already disagree with both of us, how can they set us right? Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us to set us right? But if they already agree with both of us, how can they set us right? If you and I and they all can't understand each other, should we wait for someone else?

Shifting voices waiting on one another may just as well not wait on one another. Harmonize them by means of Heaven's relativity, orient them with the flowing flood, and so live out your years. Forget the years, forget righteousness, but be stirred by the limitless and lodge within it. What do I mean

See 2A6-19

³⁴Lady Li, a legendary beauty and villain, was born a member of the non-Chinese Rong people living to the north and west of China. She was given as a hostage to Duke Xian of Jin (c. 676-651 B.C.E.), became his concubine, estranged him from his wife and legitimate heirs, and wreaked havoc in the kingdom. She is an ambiguous figure: a barbarian in China, beautiful yet dangerous. Zhuangzi compounds the ambiguity by retelling the story from her perspective.

by "harmonize them by means of Heaven's relativity" (mean right is not right, so is not so. If right were really right, it would be so different from not-right that there would be no room for argument. If so were really so, then it would be so different from not-so that there would be no room for argument.)

Penumbra said to Shadow, "First you walk and then you stop. First you sit and then you rise. Why are you so restless?"

Shadow said, "Do I depend on something to be the way I am? Does what I depend on also depend on something to be the way it is? Does a snake depend on its scales to move or a cicada on its wings to fly? How should I know why I am this way? How should I know why I'm not otherwise?"

like Buddhist dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda)

One night, Zhuangzi dreamed of being a butterfly—a happy butterfly, showing off and doing as he pleased, unaware of being Zhuangzi. Suddenly he awoke, drowsily, Zhuangzi again. And he could not tell whether it was Zhuangzi who had dreamt the butterfly or the butterfly dreaming Zhuangzi. But there must be some difference between them! This is called "the transformation of things."

PANAMA'S PASSAGE

Chapter Three: The Key to Nourishing Life

Life is bounded. Knowledge is unbounded. Using the bounded to follow the unbounded is dangerous. And if you take that as knowledge, that's really dangerous! If you do good, avoid fame. If you do bad, avoid punishment. Follow the middle line and you can protect yourself, complete your life, raise your family, and finish your years.

A butcher was cutting up an ox for Lord Wenhui.³⁵ Wherever his hand touched, wherever his shoulder leaned, wherever his foot stepped, wherever his knee pushed—with a zip! with a whoosh!—he handled his chopper with aplomb, and never skipped a beat. He moved in time to the *Dance of the Mulberry Forest*, and harmonized with the *Head of the Line Symphony*.³⁶ Lord Wenhui said, "Ah, excellent, that technique can reach such heights!"

³⁵This is the same King Hui who gave Huizi the seeds to the giant gourds in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 1, p. 212, and who speaks with Mengzi in *Mengzi* 1A1 and 1A3. This story may be a parody of *Mengzi* 1A7, substituting a lesson on butchery for one on compassion.

³⁶The *Dance of the Mulberry Forest* celebrates Tang's victory over Jie and the founding of the Shang dynasty. The *Head of the Line Symphony* is part of a larger corpus known as the

The butcher sheathed his chopper and responded, "What your servant values is the Way, which goes beyond technique. When I first began cutting up oxen, I did not see anything but oxen. Three years later, I couldn't see the whole ox. And now, I encounter them with spirit and don't look with my eyes. Sensible knowledge stops and spiritual desires proceed. I rely on the Heavenly patterns, strike in the big gaps, am guided by the large fissures, and follow what is inherently so. I never touch a ligament or tendon, much less do any heavy wrenching! A good butcher changes his chopper every year because he chips it. An average butcher changes it every month because he breaks it. There are spaces between those joints, and the edge of the blade has no thickness. If you use what has no thickness to go where there is space—oh! there's plenty of extra room to play about in. That's why after nineteen years³⁷ the blade of my chopper is still as though fresh from the grindstone."

"Still, when I get to a hard place, I see the difficulty and take breathless care. My gaze settles! My movements slow! I move the chopper slightly, and in a twinkling it's come apart, crumbling to the ground like a clod of earth! I stand holding my chopper and glance all around, dwelling on my accomplishment. Then I clean my chopper and put it away."

Lord Wenhui said, "Excellent! I have heard the words of a butcher and learned how to care for life!"

How is the butcher caring for his life?

Gongwen Xian³⁸ was startled when he saw the Commander of the Right,³⁹ and he asked, "What kind of man is this? What happened to you? Was it Heaven, or was it human?"

The Commander said, "It was Heaven, not human. Heaven makes each thing unique.⁴⁰ People try to look alike. That's how I know it was Heaven,

Whole Pond Music commemorating the reign of Yao. The spontaneous harmony of the butcher's movements with traditional music may suggest the inner compatibility of Zhuangzi's Daoism with Confucianism. Cf. *Mengzi* 4A27.

³⁷For the significance of this period of time, see the *Mozi*, chapter 31, p. 97, n. 60.

³⁸Nothing is known about this person, though the name does not appear to be fictional.

³⁹The Commander of the Right indicates the supreme military commander.

⁴⁰The word for "unique" can also mean "one-footed," so the suggestion is that the Commander is missing a foot. Gongwen's question asks whether he was born that way or lost it later. Amputations, tattoos, and death were common punishments not just for crimes but for bad political advice, and even for good advice that the ruler did not want to hear, and hence were considered indicative of moral as well as physical deformity. Zhuangzi's stories of criminals, cripples, and outcasts, therefore, address the same theme as the abstract discussions of perfection, completion, and wholeness.

not human. The marsh pheasant has to go ten steps for a peck, a hundred steps for a drink. But it doesn't want to be pampered in a cage. It does the spirit no good even to be king."

When Laozi died, Qin Shih⁴¹ went to mourn him, cried three times, and left. A student asked, "Weren't you our teacher's friend?"

morning
Laozi

"Yes."

"Then is it okay for you to mourn him this way?"

"Yes. At first I thought these were his people, but now I see they are not. When I went in earlier, there were old ones crying as though for a child, and young ones as though for their mothers. The one who gathered them here did not want them to talk, but they talk. He did not want them to cry, but they cry. They've run from Heaven, denied their essence, forgotten what they received, and hence suffer what used to be called 'the punishment for running from Heaven.'⁴² Our teacher came because it was time and left when the time had passed. If you are content with the time and abide by the passing, there's no room for sorrow or joy. This is what they used to call 'the divine release.'⁴³ You can point to the exhausted fuel. But the flame has passed on, and no one knows where it will end."

*the
divine
release*

Chapter Four: The Human Realm

*a great source
of
providential
wisdom*

Yan Hui asked Kongzi for permission to make a trip.⁴³

"Where are you going?" he said.

"To Wei."

"What will you do there?"

"I have heard that the lord of Wei is young and willful. He trifles with his state and does not acknowledge his mistakes. He is so careless with people's lives that the dead fill the state like falling leaves in a swamp.⁴⁴ The people have nowhere to turn. I have heard my teacher say, 'Leave the well-governed state and go to the chaotic one. There are plenty of sick people

⁴¹Nothing is known about this person, though the name does not appear to be fictional.
⁴²Cf. *Analekts* 3.13 (not in this volume): "When you commit a crime against Heaven, there is nowhere you can turn."

⁴³Yan Hui, also known as Yan Yuan, was Kongzi's favorite and most promising student; he died young. See *Analekts* 5.9, 6.3, 6.7, and 6.11.

⁴⁴This is probably Duke Chu, who first ruled in Wei from 492 to 481 B.C.E.

at the doctor's door.' I want to use what I have learned to think of a way the state may be saved."

Kongzi said, "Sheesh! You're just going to get yourself hurt. The Way does not like complexity. Complexity quickly becomes too much. Too much leads to agitation, agitation leads to worry, and worry never solved anything. The perfect people of olden times first found it in themselves before looking for it in others. If what you've found in yourself isn't settled yet, what leisure can you spare for this bully's behavior?"

"Do you know how Virtue is squandered and where knowledge comes from? Virtue is squandered in fame, and knowledge arises from struggle. People use fame to trample each other and knowledge as a weapon. Both of them are tools of ill-fortune, not the means of finishing your mission."

"Though your Virtue is deep and your faith strong, you have not comprehended the man's *qi* 氣. You've got a reputation for not being contentious, but you have not comprehended the man's mind. If you insist on parading standards of benevolence and righteousness before this bully, you will just make him look bad in comparison to you. That's antagonism, and one who antagonizes others is sure to be antagonized in return. You don't want to antagonize him!"

"Or suppose he likes worthy people and dislikes the depraved, then what use is there in changing him? Better not to speak! Kings and dukes love to dominate people and force their submission. He'll want to dazzle you, intimidate you, tongue-tie you, cue you, and persuade you. Trying to reform this kind of person is like piling fire on fire or water on water. It's called 'adding to the excessive.' Your initial compliance will know no end until he no longer trusts your good word. You will surely die at this bully's hands."

... "Even so, you must have a plan. Come, tell me about it!"

Yan Hui said, "Suppose I am upright but dispassionate, energetic but not divisive. Would that work?"

"No! How could that work?" said Kongzi. "You'd use all your energy to sustain the performance, and your face would be unsettled. Other people can't stand that, so they have to resist what you suggest in order to ease their own minds. If gradual Virtue wouldn't work, how much less such a great show of force! He'll dig in his heels and resist change. Though he may seem well disposed on the outside, on the inside he'll never consider it. How could that work?"

Yan Hui said, "Then how about being inwardly straight and outwardly bending, having integrity but conforming to my superiors? By being

inwardly straight, I could follow Heaven. As a follower of Heaven, I would know that even the Son of Heaven and I are both children of Heaven. If I speak only for myself, why worry about the approval or disapproval of other people? I could be what people call childlike, which is what I mean by being a follower of Heaven.

"By being outwardly bending, I could follow other people. Lifting the ceremonial tablets, kneeling, bending, bowing—this is the etiquette of a minister. Others do it, why shouldn't I? As long as I do what other people do, who can complain? This is what I mean by following people.

"Having integrity and conforming to superiors, one follows olden times. My words, whether they are in fact instructions or even criticisms, belong to antiquity; they are not my own. This way one can be straightforward without causing injury. This is what I mean by following olden times. Would that work?"

Kongzi said, "No! How could that work? You have too many policies. You are planning without reconnaissance. Even if you succeeded in avoiding blame, it would stop there. How could you hope to change him? You're still making the mind your teacher."

Yan Hui said, "I have nothing else to offer. May I ask what to do?"

Kongzi said, "You must fast! Let me explain. Is it easy to do anything with your mind? If you think it is, bright Heaven will not approve."

Yan Hui said, "My family is poor. Indeed, I have not drunk wine or eaten any meat for months. Can this be considered fasting?"

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

"May I ask about fasting of the mind?"

"Unify your *zhi* 志, 'plans.' Do not listen with your ears but listen with your mind. Do not listen with your mind but listen with your *qi*. Listening stops with the ear. The mind stops with signs. *Qi* is empty and waits on external things. Only the Way gathers in emptiness. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind."⁴⁵

(Makha-pa-ye a Buddhist term)

Yan Hui said, "Prior to receiving this instruction, I was full of thoughts of Hui. But having applied it, it's as though Hui never existed. Is this what you mean by emptiness?"

⁴⁵In *Mengzi* 2A2, Mengzi criticizes Gaozi for suggesting that the mind must conform itself to words, i.e., doctrine. Here Zhuangzi has Kongzi disagreeing with both of them by saying that both the mind and words must be guided by *qi*.

The Master said, "Perfect. Let me tell you. You can go wander in his cage without being moved by his fame. If you're getting through, sing. If not, stop. No schools. No prescriptions. Dwell in unity and lodge in what cannot be helped, and you're almost there."

See 218-19; 223

"To stop leaving tracks is easy. Not to walk upon the ground is hard.⁴⁶ It's easy to fake what people do. Faking what Heaven does is hard. You've heard of using wings to fly, but not of using no wings to fly. You've heard of using knowledge to know, but not of using no knowledge to know. Look up at the hole in the wall that fills the empty room with light. The blessed stop stopping. Not stopping means galloping while you sit. If you let the ears and the eyes communicate with the inside and banish knowledge outside the mind, then even ghosts and spirits will come to dwell. Why not men? This is the transformation of ten thousand things, the secret of the ancient sages, not to mention ordinary people!"

Zigao, the Duke of She,⁴⁷ was sent to Qi. He said to Kongzi, "The king is putting me on a high-priority mission. Qi treats emissaries very well, but never hurries. You can't budge an ordinary person along, much less a feudal lord! I'm already shaking. You've always told me, 'Few tasks of whatever size are completed happily except by means of the Way. If you don't complete it, you'll be in trouble with other people. If you do complete it, you'll have trouble with your own *yin* and *yang*.'⁴⁸ Only someone of Virtue can avoid trouble in success and failure alike.' I'm the kind of person who eats simply and sparingly so my diet doesn't give me indigestion. But I received my orders in the morning and by evening I was drinking ice-water. I'm burning up inside! I haven't even started on the actual job yet and I'm already having trouble with *yin* and *yang*; if the mission doesn't succeed, then I'll also be in trouble with other people. I lose both ways! I can't handle

⁴⁶Cf. Zhuangzi's criticism of Liezi in *Zhuangzi*, chapter 1, p. 210, "though he manages to avoid walking, he still relies on something."

⁴⁷The Duke of She was an influential politician in the state of Chu in the early fifth century B.C.E. The *Zhaoshuan* describes him as an advocate of the Confucian principle of government by Virtue instead of force who later made good on his word by returning power to the rightful ruler when he was in a position to take over militarily. He and Kongzi spoke about politics and disagreed politely over the priority of obligations to the family and to the state. See *Analekts* 7.19, 13.16, and 13.18.

⁴⁸Success achieved in the wrong way harms a person internally. Good health requires a balanced harmony between the *yin* and *yang*. See *yin* and *yang* under *Important Terms*.

the responsibility of taking on this assignment. Do you have anything you can tell me?"

Kongzi said, "In this world, there are two great concerns. One is destiny. One is righteousness. Children's love for their family is destiny:⁴⁹ you can't undo it in your mind. The service of subjects for their rulers is righteousness; there is nowhere you can go and not have rulers, nowhere you can escape between Heaven and earth. These are great concerns. To serve your family, wherever they go, is the perfection of filial piety. To serve your rulers, whatever they ask, is the height of loyalty. To serve your own mind, so that sorrow and joy aren't constantly revolving in front of you, knowing what you can't do anything about and accepting it as though it were destiny, is the perfection of Virtue. As a subject or a child, there will certainly be things you can't avoid. As long as you stick to the actual job and forget about yourself, what leisure do you have to love life or hate death? You'll be able to do it."

"Let me tell you something else I've heard. In relationships, when people are close together, they generate trust through regular contact. When they are far apart, they have to establish loyalty with words, and words require communication. Communicating the words of two happy or two angry people is the hardest thing in the world. Two happy people inevitably exaggerate the good. Two angry people inevitably exaggerate the bad. But any exaggeration is false, and falsehood destroys trust. That's when communication becomes dangerous. So the *Model Sayings*⁵⁰ have it, 'Communicate the real essence; don't communicate exaggerated words.' Then you might come out whole."

"When people pit their strength in games of skill, they start out bright like *yang* but usually end dark as *yin*. They get up to more strange tricks the longer they go. People drinking wine at a ceremony start out orderly enough but usually end in chaos. The party gets stranger the longer it lasts. Everything is like this. What starts out clean usually ends up dirty. What starts out simple inevitably turns unsupportable."

"Words are like wind and waves. Actions fulfill or disappoint them. Wind and waves are easily moved, and fulfillment and disappointment easily lead to danger. Rage has no other source but clever words and one-

Rage

⁴⁹The word translated here as "destiny" is translated as "orders" in the previous paragraph. In both cases, the character in question is *ming* 命 ("fate" or "mandate"). See *ming* under *Important Terms*.

⁵⁰Another probably fanciful "classical source."

sided language.⁵¹ As the hunt draws to a close, the dying animal doesn't choose its sounds but snorts its breath furiously, breeding a similar madness in the minds of its hunters. Pushing hard toward the conclusion makes people vicious without their knowing it. And if they don't know it, who knows how it will end? So the *Model Sayings* have it, 'Don't change your orders. Don't strive for completion. Anything over the line is too much.' Changing your orders and striving for completion are dangerous business. A fine completion takes a long time, and a bad one cannot be changed. Can you afford not to be careful?"

"Harness things so your heart can wander. Nourish your middle by accepting what cannot be avoided: that's perfection. What is there for you to do in return? Nothing is as good as fulfilling your destiny."⁵² That's as hard as it gets. . . .

Splay-limb Shu's chin is sunk in his belly. His shoulders are above his head, pinched together so they point at the sky. His five organs are on top, his thighs tight against his ribs. Plying a needle and taking in laundry he makes enough to fill his mouth. Winnowing leftover grain he gets enough to feed ten people. When the people in charge are calling out troops, Splay-limb wanders among them waving goodbye. When they are press-ganging workers he is exempted as a chronic invalid. When they dole out grain to the sick, he gets three measures, and ten bundles of firewood. With splayed limbs, he is still able to keep himself alive and to live out the years Heaven gave him. What if he had splayed Virtue? . . .

Chapter Five: Signs of Abundant Virtue

In Lu there was an amputee named Royal Nag who had as many followers as Kongzi. Chang Ji⁵³ asked Kongzi, "Royal Nag is an amputee, yet you and he divide Lu for students. He doesn't stand and teach or sit and discuss, yet they go to him empty and come home full. Can there be teaching without

⁵¹That is, what matters most is not what people do, but what they say, since it is the words that give the actions meaning.

⁵²Fulfilling destiny" could also be translated "following orders."

⁵³Nothing is known about this person, though the name does not appear to be fictional. He may be connected to the Ji clan, the most powerful of the Three Families that ruled Lu for most of Kongzi's lifetime, reducing the Duke of Lu to little more than a figurehead.

words or a developed mind in a deformed body? What kind of person is he?"

Kongzi said, "He is a sage. I'm just running late and haven't been to see him yet. And if I intend to make him my teacher, is it surprising that others do? Forget about Lu; I'm going to lead the whole world to follow him."

Chang Ji said, "If that amputee can lord it over you, he must be far from ordinary. Someone like that must have a special way of thinking."

Kongzi said, "Death and life are big, but they make no difference to him. Heaven and earth could flip over, and it would not matter to him. He peers into the falseless and does not shift with things. He considers it destiny that they should change and holds on to their ancestor." ^{is this to cling on to the roots of the tree?}

Chang Ji said, "What does that mean?"

Kongzi said, "Looked at from their differences, liver and gall are as far apart as the states of Chu and Yue. Looked at from their sameness, the ten thousand things are all one. Someone like him does not know what is appropriate for his ears and eyes but lets his mind wander in the harmony of Virtue. He looks at the way things are one and does not see what they're missing. He looks at losing a foot like shaking off dust." ^{see Ch. 11, 27.9, 28.1}

Chang Ji said, "For his own sake he uses knowledge to gain control of his mind and uses control of his mind to achieve a constant mind. But why should others make so much of him?"

Kongzi said, "People don't mirror themselves in moving water, they mirror themselves in still water."⁵⁴ Only the still can still the crowd's stillness. Of those that receive their destiny on earth, only the pine and cypress are green winter and summer. Of those that receive their destiny from Heaven, only the sages Yao and Shun are proper. Those fortunate enough to correct their own lives can correct the lives of the crowd. The proof of guarding the beginning is the fact of not being nervous. A brave soldier will boldly go against the nine armies. If someone can risk his life like this for fame, how much more so one whose palace is Heaven and earth and whose treasure is the ten thousand things, one who only lodges in the form, treats hearing and sight as images, unifies what knowledge knows, and whose mind never tastes death? He will pick his day to transcend the falseless, which is why people follow him. Why would he be willing to make mere things his business?"

see Ch. 3, 21.8: beginning
in the
world

like Lu

⁵⁴Cf. *Xunzi*, chapter 21, pp. 290-91.

Duke Ai of Lu⁵⁵ asked Kongzi, "There was an ugly man in Wei named Sad Nag. Men hung around with him. They thought about him all the time and couldn't tear themselves away. Women saw him and by the dozen they vowed to their parents that they'd rather be his concubine than another man's wife. No one ever heard him sing the lead, all he ever did was harmonize with others. He had no lordly status to save people from death, no piles of wealth to fill their bellies, and he was ugly enough to shock the world. He harmonized without singing and knew nothing beyond his own borders, but cocks and hens coupled in his presence. There had to be something special about him! So we summoned him for an audience, and he really was ugly enough to shock the world. He stayed with us, and before a month was out we took an interest in his personality. By the time a year passed, we trusted him. Since the state had no minister, we put him in charge. He looked glum and faltered, as though he might even decline. We were embarrassed but eventually got him to take it. Before long, however, he abandoned us. We were crushed, as though we'd lost a loved one, as though there was no one to enjoy the state with. What kind of man was this?"

Kongzi said, "I was once sent to Chu. On the way I saw piglets feeding at their dead mother. After a while, they all blinked and ran off. They didn't see themselves in her, didn't find their kind. What they loved was their mother—not her form, but what moved her form. When someone dies in battle, his people don't bother with medals at his burial. An amputee's old shoes mean nothing to him. Both have lost the root. Women of the imperial retinue don't pare their nails or pierce their ears. A married man is sent on no more outside missions. When we do this to keep the form whole, how much more should we do to keep Virtue whole! Now this Sad Nag was trusted before he spoke and was loved though he accomplished nothing. He got people to give him their own states and worry he wouldn't take them! He must have completed the potential, though his Virtue took no form."

Duke Ai asked, "What do you mean by completing the potential?"

Kongzi said, "Death, life, survival, loss, failure, success, poverty, wealth, worth, depravity, slander, praise, hunger, thirst, winter, summer—their change is the process of destiny. Day and night they alternate in front of

Cf. 29.9

⁵⁵Duke Ai (c. 494-468 B.C.E.) is depicted asking questions of Kongzi and his disciples in several passages in the *Analects*. For example, see *Analects* 6.3 and 12.9.

us, but knowledge cannot measure their beginning. Don't let them slip out of harmony or penetrate the spirit store. Indulge them harmoniously. Let them circulate without leaking away. Day and night, without a break, make it springtime with things. As you greet each new circumstance, generate the season in your own mind. This is what I mean by completing the potential."

"What do you mean by Virtue taking no form?"

"Levelness is the height of still water, so it can be used as a standard.⁵⁶ Hold it from within and it will not be disturbed from without. Virtue is the cultivation of complete harmony. When Virtue takes no form, things cannot leave it."

Later, Duke Ai told Minzi,⁵⁷ "At first when I ruled the empire, I held the reins of the people and worried about their welfare. I thought I had perfected it. Now that I've heard this explanation of the perfect person, I worry that I lacked the real substance and that I damaged the state by neglecting myself. Kongzi and I are not subject and lord, but friends in Virtue."

Where sages wander, knowledge is a curse, restrictions are paste, favors are a patch, and effort is for trade. Sages do not plan, so why do they need knowledge? They do not cut, so why do they need paste? They have nothing to lose, so why do they need favors? They're not buying, so why do they need trade? In these four ways they feed at Heaven. Feeding at Heaven, they are nourished by Heaven. Once they are nourished by Heaven, why do they need other people? They have human form but not human *qing* 情, "essence." Since they have human form, they flock with people. Since they lack human essence, right and wrong do not get to them. Infinitely small, they flock with people. Indescribably large, they complete their Heaven alone.

Heaven alone.

Heaven alone.

Heaven alone.

Heaven alone.

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Heaven alone.

Heaven alone.

Huizi said, "But if you call them 'people,' how can they have no essence?" Zhuangzi said, "Rights and wrongs (*shi/fei* 是非) are what I mean by 'essence.' By 'no essence,' I mean people not letting in good and bad to hurt them. Follow the natural and do not help life along."⁵⁸

Huizi said, "How can people exist without helping life?"

Zhuangzi said, "The Way gave them a face, Heaven gave them a form—by not letting likes and dislikes in to do harm, that's how. But you shut out your spirit, and tire your energies, leaning on a podium ranting, slumping at your desk and napping. Heaven chose a form for you, and you use it to sing of 'hard and white!'"⁵⁹ 故曰 (gù yǔ) (white 白)

Chapter Six: The Great Ancestral Teacher

To know what Heaven does and to know what humans do is to have reached perfection. Those who know what Heaven does are born of Heaven.⁶⁰ Those who know what humans do use what they know they know to nurture what they know they don't know, living out their Heavenly years and not dying along the way. This is the flourishing of knowledge.

Even so, there is a problem. Knowledge depends on something before it can be fitting. But what it depends on has not yet been fixed. So how do I know that what I call "Heaven" is not really human and what I call "human" is not really Heaven? Only when there are true people can we have true knowledge. What do I mean by true people? The true people of olden times did not resist poverty. They did not glory in success. They did not plan their affairs. They could miss without regretting it and hit without being pleased. Such people could climb high without shuddering. They could enter water without getting wet and fire without getting burned. Such is the knowledge that is able to climb up to the Way. . . .

⁵⁸Cf. *Laozi*, chapter 55.

⁵⁹On "hard and white," see p. 219, n. 26. The *qing* 情, "essence," is the underlying truth or fact about a thing, as opposed to its reputation or the opinions people have of it. The "human essence" is understood here as the basic emotions or commitments that give rise to judgments of right and wrong. Cf. *Mengzi* 6A6 and 6A8. Someone without an essence would not necessarily have no emotions but would lack preconceptions about them. Cf. the "perfected people" on p. 222 and the "true people" below and elsewhere in the *Zhuangzi*.

⁶⁰Translating the word for "Heaven" as "nature," the phrase "born of Heaven" could also be read "live naturally."

The true people of the olden days knew nothing of loving life and nothing of hating death. They emerged without delight and returned without resistance. They came and went briskly, nothing more. They neither forgot their beginning nor sought their end. They enjoyed what they received, forgot it, and handed it back. This is called not using the mind to block the Way, not using the human to help Heaven. These are called true people. . . .

Hence what they liked was one and what they didn't like was one. Their being one was one and their not being one was one. Seeing it as one, they were followers of Heaven. Seeing it as not one, they were followers of humanity. When neither Heaven nor humanity wins out over the other, this is called being a true person. . . .

When the springs dry up, the fish are stuck together on the land. They douse each other with spit and spray each other with drool, but it is not as good as forgetting each other in the rivers and lakes. Praising Yao and condemning Jie is not as good as forgetting them both and transforming with the Way. The Big Lump burdens me with a form, labors me with life, eases me with old age, and rests me with death. So if I like my life, for the same reason I must also like my death.

You hide your boat in a gully or your net in a swamp and call them secure. But in the middle of the night a strong man could still take them on his back and leave, and you would be asleep and not know. Hiding the small in the large seems fitting, but still you lose. But if you hid the world in the world, you would have nothing to lose. This is the essence of what lasts. You trespass on human form and still delight in it. As a human, you can change ten thousand times without ever reaching the limit. Can you count the different things that have made you happy? So the sage wanders in what exists everywhere and can't be lost. He likes growing old and he likes dying young. He likes the beginning and he likes the end. People model themselves on the sage. But why not on that to which the ten thousand things are tied and on which every change depends?

The Way has an essence and can be trusted. But it takes no action and has no form. It can be passed on but not received, gotten but not seen. It is its own trunk, its own root. Before Heaven and earth existed, it spiritualized the ghosts and gods, and gave birth to Heaven and earth. It is above the supreme ultimate but not high, below the six limits but not deep. It was born before Heaven and earth but does not age. It is more venerable than high antiquity but is not old.⁶¹ . . .

the Way:
takes
no
action
it is its
own

South Lord Master Flower said to Out-of-step Woman, "You are old in years but have the look of a child. How do you do it?"

She said, "I've heard the Way."

South Lord Master Flower asked, "May I study the Way?"

She said, "How? How could you? You're not the person for it. Yellow Emperor's Dependent had the stuff of a sage but not the way of a sage. I have the way of a sage but not the stuff of a sage. I wanted to teach him, to see if maybe he really could become a sagely person. If not, at least it would be easier to explain the way of a sage to someone with the stuff of a sage. So I stuck with it, explaining it to him for three days, after which he could put the world outside of himself. Once he'd put the world outside, I kept at it. After seven days he could put things outside. Once he'd put things outside, I kept at it. After nine days he could put life outside himself. Once he'd put life outside himself, the light dawned. After the light had dawned, he could see he was alone. Having seen he was alone, he could have no past or present. With no past or present, he was able to enter no living or dying. What kills life does not die; what lives life is not alive. The kind of thing it is—there is nothing it does not see off, nothing it does not greet, nothing it does not ruin, nothing it does not bring to completion. Its name is Disturbing Peace. The Disturbing Peace completes things only after disturbing them."

South Lord Master Flower asked, "Where did you hear it?"

She said, "I heard it from Ink-Aid's son. Ink-Aid's son heard it from Faltering Recitation's grandson. Faltering Recitation's grandson heard it from Looking-up-at-the-light. Looking-up-at-the-light heard it from Whispered Promise. Whispered Promise heard it from Needs Work. Needs Work heard it from Sing "Ooh!" Sing "Ooh!" heard it from Mysterious Darkness. Mysterious Darkness heard it from Present-in-vacancy. Present-in-vacancy heard it from Dubious Beginning."

Master Sacrifice, Master Chariot,⁶² Master Plow, and Master Arrive all four spoke together, saying, "Who can take nothing as the head, life as the spine, and death as the tail? Who knows death, life, existence, and annihilation as all the same thing? I'll be that person's friend." All four looked at each other and smiled. There was no resistance in their hearts, and so they became friends.

⁶²Zi Yu, "Master Chariot," is also the name of Kongzi's disciple Zengzi. Since none of the other names refer to real people, however, it is probably not significant.

Suddenly, Master Chariot got sick. Master Sacrifice went to ask after him. "How extraordinary of the maker of things to knot me up like this. My back is hunched out. My organs are all out of order. My chin is hidden in my navel. My shoulders are peaked. And my neck bones point to Heaven." But though his *yin* and *yang qi* were fouled, in his mind there was nothing the matter. He hobbled over to look at his reflection in the well. "Sheesh! The maker of things really is knotting me up."

Master Sacrifice said, "Do you dislike it?"

He said, "Not at all. What is there to dislike? If, in time, he turns my left arm into a rooster, I'll use it to crow the day. If he turns my right arm into a bow, I'll shoot down a dove for roasting. If he turns my buttocks into wheels and my spirit into a horse, I'll climb aboard. What better carriage? You get something when it's time. You lose it when it's passed. If you are content with the time and abide by the passing, there's no room for sorrow or joy. This is what the ancients called 'loosing the bonds.' If you don't loose yourself, things will bind you. Nothing has ever beaten Heaven. What is there to dislike?" *embracing one's destiny*. Ch 232-3

Suddenly Master Arrive got sick. Gasping, he was on the point of death. His wife and children circled around him weeping. Master Plow came to ask after him and said to them, "Stop! Get back! Don't be afraid of the change." Leaning on the door frame he said, "How extraordinary, the one who makes these changes! What will he do with you next? Where will he send you? Will he make you a rat's liver? Will he make you a bug's arm?"

Master Arrive said, "A child goes wherever its parents say—east, west, north, or south. How much more are *yin* and *yang* to a person than parents! If they bring me to the point of death and I refuse to obey, I would only be being stubborn. What fault is it of theirs? The Big Lump burdens me with a form, labors me with life, eases me with old age, and rests me with death. So if I like my life, for the same reason I must also like my death. Suppose a great smith were casting metal. If the metal were to rear up and say 'I insist on being a *Moye*!' the great smith would certainly take it as inauspicious material. If, having once trespassed on the human form, I were to say 'Only a human! Only a human!' then the maker of changes would certainly take me as an inauspicious person. If you take Heaven and earth

⁶³ *Moye* was the famous sword of King Heli of Wu (c. 514–496 B.C.E.), the smelting of which was said to have required human sacrifices in order to fuse the alloys. The art of metallurgy was endowed with mystical significance, partly because it was dimly understood, and partly also because of the enormous military advantages it conferred upon its possessors.

as a great furnace and the maker of changes as a great smith, then where can you go that will not be all right? I will doze off whole and, drowsily, wake up."

Master Mulberry-door, Anti-Mengzi, and Master Great-Zither were all three friends.⁶⁴ They said, "Who can join with others in not joining with them, do for others by not doing for them? Who can climb Heaven, roam the mists, and whirl in the infinite, living forgetful of one another for ever and ever?" The three men looked at each other and smiled. None was reluctant in his mind, so they joined as friends.

Nothing happened for a while and then Master Mulberry-door died. Kongzi heard about it and sent Zigong over to help out. One of them was plaiting frames for silkworms and the other was playing the zither while they harmonized together and sang:

Oh, Master Mulberry-door,

Oh, Master Mulberry-door,

You've returned to your true self,

While we go on as men-o!

Zigong hurried in and approached them, saying, "Excuse me! But does it accord with the ritual to sing over a corpse?"

The two men looked at each other and smiled, saying, "What does he know about the meaning of ritual?"

Zigong went back and reported this to Kongzi, asking, "What kind of men are those? Correct behavior is nothing to them, as though their physical bodies were something external. They sing overlooking the corpse without even changing expression. I don't know what to say about them. What kind of men are they?"

Kongzi said, "Those are men who wander outside the rules. I am one who wanders within them."⁶⁵ Inside and outside don't meet, and it was rude

⁶⁴ These are all allegorical names that bear relation to elements of the following story. For example, "Anti-Mengzi" reflects his disregard of the funeral rituals held in such high esteem by the Confucians. If this is the correct interpretation, the name of this character is the only direct reference to Mengzi in the *Zhuangzi*. (But see p. 222, n. 32 regarding an implicit reference.)

⁶⁵ The word *fang* 方 can mean either "rules" or "realm." Both meanings may be implied here. The social realm—that is, the world that people live in and know—comprises, among other things, rules, standards, and definitions. By questioning these things, the friends live simultaneously outside of the rules and outside of the shared social realm.

of me to send you to mourn. They are about to join with the generator of things in being human and wander in the single breath of Heaven and earth. They think of life as a hanging tumor and a dangling mole and of death as a wart falling off or a boil bursting. People such as this, how can they say whether death and life are ground gained or lost? They commit themselves to different things but trust to their all being of one body. They forget liver and gall and abandon the ears and eyes. They exchange the beginning for the end and cannot tell a premonition from an echo. Bemused, they wander about beyond the dirt and dust and play at the business of nonaction.⁶⁶ How could they get worked up over conventional politeness just to put on a display for the ears and eyes of the crowd?

Zigong said, "So why then does my master follow rules himself?"

Kongzi said, "Me, I am one of those who are punished by Heaven. Even so, I share this with you."

Zigong said, "May I ask about these rules?"

Kongzi said, "Fish school together in water. People school together in the Way. For things that school together in the water, dig a pond and they will be provided for. For things that school together in the Way, don't busy yourself with them and their lives will be settled. Hence it is said, 'Fish forget one another in the rivers and lakes; people forget one another in the arts of the Way.'"

Zigong said, "May I ask about deviant people?"

"Deviant people deviate from people but converge with Heaven. Hence it is said, 'Heaven's petty person is a prince among men. The prince among men is Heaven's petty person.'"

Yan Hui questioned Kongzi, "When Mengsun Cai's mother died he cried without tears.⁶⁷ In his inner heart he did not mourn. And conducting the funeral, he did not grieve. With these three lapses, his reputation as a mourner still covers Lu. Is it really possible to gain the name while lacking the substance? I was shocked."

⁶⁶Wandering beyond the dirt and dust is a potent image that did much later to endear Zhuangzi to the Buddhists. What it probably means in this context is that, trusting to nature, the sages are freed from the anxiety normal people feel in their pursuit of conventional values that are probably wrong anyway. Sages are described as engaging in *wuwei*, "nonaction," because their goals rise spontaneously and not by any act of will on their part. (See *wuwei* in *Important Terms*.)

⁶⁷The Mengsun clan was one of the Three Families that ruled Lu during Kongzi's lifetime, though nothing specific is known of Mengsun Cai.

Kongzi said, "Mengsun is done. He is beyond knowing. He would make it even simpler, but he can't. Still, he did simplify it some. Mengsun does not know why he lives. He does not know why he dies. He's not aware of moving forward. He's not aware of falling back. If he changes into something, he lets the unknown change finish it. When he changes, how does he know he isn't not changing? When he doesn't change, how does he know he hasn't changed already? Take you and me—we're dreaming and haven't woken up! But something can shock his body without harming his mind. He stays here only for a day but feels no death. Mengsun is awake. People cry, so he cries; this is why."

"We say 'I.' But how do I know what I mean by 'I'? You dream you're a bird crossing Heaven or a fish sunk in the depths. There's no telling if the one who speaks now is awake or dreaming. Directing the trip doesn't measure up to smiling, and laughing doesn't measure up to stepping aside. Step aside and leave the changes. Then you will enter the oneness of the vacant sky."

Master Thinker went to see Whence. Whence asked him, "How has Yao rewarded you?"

Master Thinker said, "Yao told me, 'You must submit to benevolence and righteousness to speak clearly about right and wrong.'"

Whence said, "So what did you come here for? Yao's already tattooed your face with benevolence and righteousness and cut off your nose with right and wrong. How can you expect to wander distant, unrestrained, and rolling paths?"

Master Thinker said, "But still, I'd like to wander along the edge."

Whence said, "It's not like that. The blind can't share in the loveliness of faces or the near-sighted in far-off vistas."

Master Thinker said, "But beauties lose their looks and strong men lose their strength. Even Huang Di forgot his knowledge—all in the process of being recast. How do you know the maker of things won't erase my tattoos, replace my nose, and make me whole so I can follow you, sir?"

Whence said, "Ah, you never know! I'll give you the main outlines."

My teacher! My teacher! He orders ten thousand things but is not righteous. He's kind to ten thousand generations but is not benevolent. He's more venerable than high antiquity but is not old. He roofs Heaven, floors earth, and fashions everything between but is not handy. That's how you wander."

Yan Hui said, "I'm improving."

Kongzi said, "How so?"

"I've forgotten benevolence and righteousness."

"Good, but there's more."

Yan Hui saw him again the next day and said, "I'm improving."

"How so?"

"I've forgotten rites and music."

"Good, but there's more."

Yan Hui saw him again the next day and said, "I'm improving."

"How so?"

"I sit and forget."

Kongzi started and said, "What do you mean by 'sit and forget'?"

Yan Hui said, "I cast off my limbs, dismiss hearing and sight, leave my form, abandon knowledge, and unify them in the great comprehension."

That's what I mean by 'sit and forget'."

Kongzi said, "If you've unified them then you have no preferences. If you've changed then you have no constancy. You really are worthy! I would like to ask to be your follower!"⁶⁸

Chapter Seven: The Proper Way for Emperors and Kings

Gaptooth asked Royal Relativity four times and got four "I-don't-know's" in response.⁶⁹ Gaptooth jumped up and down, he was so happy, and went to tell Master Reed Coat.

Master Reed Coat said, "You're just learning that now? Shun didn't measure up to the really ancient sages. Shun still stockpiled benevolence in order to win people. He got people, but he never escaped from not-people.⁷⁰ Now the really ancient sages—they slept calmly and woke blankly. Sometimes they took themselves for horses. Sometimes they took themselves for cows. Their knowledge of the essence was trustworthy, and their Virtue was exceptionally true. They never entered into not-people."

Don't make a name for yourself or follow a plan. Don't take responsibility or claim knowledge. Thoroughly embody what can't be exhausted and wander where you can't be seen. Take everything you get from Heaven but

⁶⁸Cf. Kongzi's remarks in *Analec* 5.9 and 6.11.

⁶⁹See *Zhuangzi*, chapter 2, p. 221.

don't consider it gain. Just be empty. Perfected people use their minds like mirrors, not welcoming things as they come or escorting them as they go. They respond without keeping, so they can conquer without harm.

The emperor of the north sea was Whish. The emperor of the south sea was Whoosh. The emperor of the center was All-full. Whish and Whoosh sometimes lodged together at All-full's place and he treated them exceptionally well. Whish and Whoosh decided to return All-full's kindness. "Everyone has seven holes to see, hear, eat, and breathe, but he alone has none. Let's try drilling him some!" Each day they drilled a hole. And in seven days, All-full died.⁷⁰

Chapter Twelve: Heaven and Earth

... Kongzi's student Zigong⁷¹ wandered south to Chu and was returning through Jin. As he passed the south bank of the Han River, he saw an old man gardening a small plot. He'd dug a tunnel for a well and was coming out carrying a jug to water his fields. He was huffing and puffing, working hard for little reward.

Zigong said, "There's a machine now that can water a hundred gardens in one day. You get a big reward for easy work. Wouldn't you like one, sir?"

The gardener raised his head to look at him. "How does it work?"

"You carve the contraption⁷² out of a piece of wood. The back is heavy and the front is light. You can lift the water with one hand, until it's practically bubbling over. It's called a well sweep."⁷³

The gardener flushed angrily and laughed, "I heard from my teacher that where there are mechanical contraptions there will be mechanical business, and where there is mechanical business there are mechanical minds. With a mechanical mind, you cannot preserve your simplicity. When you cannot preserve your simplicity, your spiritual life is unsettled, and the Way will

mechanical mind make preservation of spirit so *practically impossible*?

Cf. the *Apocrypha*

⁷⁰This marks the end of the "Inner Chapters," which many regard as the earliest strata within the *Zhuangzi* and possibly the work of the man Zhuangzi.

⁷¹Zigong was arguably Kongzi's most successful student. He was held in high esteem both by the Master and also by influential politicians. Kongzi sometimes seemed to worry that things came too easily to him. See *Analec* 1.15, 5.9, 5.12, etc.

⁷²This word can also mean "shackle."

⁷³For an image of a well sweep, see the web site for this volume.

not support an unsettled spiritual life. I'm not ignorant of your contraption. I would be embarrassed to use it!" . . .

When the freak gives birth in the middle of the night, she reaches frantically for a torch, gasping, worrying only whether the child⁷⁴ looks like her. . .

Chapter Thirteen: Heaven's Way

^{Calinness} . . . The sage is calm, but not because he declares calmness good. None of the ten thousand things are enough to rattle his mind, so he is calm. When water is calm, you can see the wispy hair on your temples in it. Its surface is level and sets the standard for great builders. If water is so clear when calm, how much more so the spirit! ^{See 243} The calm mind of the sage is a mirror to Heaven and earth and a looking glass for the ten thousand things. . . .

Duke Huan⁷⁵ was reading a book up in his hall. Wheelwright Slab was chiseling a wheel [in the courtyard] below.⁷⁶ He put down his hammer and chisel and ascended, asking Duke Huan, "Excuse me. What are you reading?"

The Duke said, "The words of the sages."

"Are the sages still around?"

The Duke said, "They're dead."

"Then what M'Lord is reading is nothing more than the leftovers of the ancients."

Duke Huan said, "How dare a wheelwright criticize what We read? If you have an explanation, okay. If not, you die!"

Wheelwright Slab said, "Your servant looks at it from the point of view of his own business. When I chisel a wheel, if I hit too softly, it slips and won't bite. If I hit too hard, it jams and won't move. Neither too soft nor too hard—I get it in my hand and respond with my mind. But my mouth

⁷⁴This puzzling passage is evocative of several themes in the *Zhuangzi*, including human deformity and illumination. Is the woman worried that the child looks like her or that it doesn't? On the one hand, one would naturally expect her to hope her child is well. This would make for a touching passage but one seemingly out of place. On the other hand, perhaps this is meant to be a parody of the Confucian insistence on passing the deformities of the past on to future generations.

⁷⁵For Duke Huan of Qi, see the entry for Guan Zhong under *Important Figures*.

⁷⁶The scene in this passage is similar to what we see in *Mengzi* 1A7. See *Mengzi* 1A7; see especially n. 3.

cannot put it into words. There is an art to it. But your servant can't show it to his own son, and he can't get it from me. I've done it this way seventy years and am growing old chiseling wheels. The ancients died with what they could not pass down. So what M'Lord is reading can only be their leftovers." ^{Ch Pinbo's Seventh Letter}

Chapter Fourteen: Heaven's Turning

. . . For traveling on water there's nothing like a boat. For traveling on land, there's nothing like a cart. But though a boat can go on water, if you try pushing it on land, you can push until you die and not go an inch. Aren't past and present like water and land? Aren't the states of Zhou and Lu like boats and carts? Those who insist on using the ways of Zhou in Lu might as well be pushing a boat on land. They exhaust themselves without success and bring certain misfortune on their heads. They do not know the directionless revolution that responds to things without tiring. . . .

The beautiful Xi Shi had a stomach ache and glowered at the villagers. When her ugly neighbor saw how good she looked that way, he went home clapping his stomach and glowering at his neighbors, too, until the wealthy people slammed their windows and doors and the poor grabbed their children and ran. . . .

Chapter Seventeen: Autumn Floods

. . . The *ku*⁷⁷ said to the millipede, "I go hipperly-flopping on one foot, and there's nothing like it! How do you manage those ten thousand feet of yours?"

The millipede said, "It's not like that. Haven't you seen a man spit? He just hawks and—drops big as pearls! fine as mist! mixing and falling! You can't count them all! I just put my heavenly mechanism into motion. I don't know how it works!"

The millipede said to the snake, "I use this mob of legs to walk but still don't match up to you with none at all. How do you do it?"

The snake said, "The heavenly mechanism does it. What could be easier? What use would I have for legs?"

The snake said to the wind, "I move with just my ribs and spine. But I still seem to exist. You bluster up from the north sea and bluster off to the south sea, but you don't seem to be anything at all. How do you do it?"

⁷⁷A mythical one-legged beast.

The wind said, "Yes, I bluster up from the north sea and off to the south sea. But a finger raised against me can stop me. A screen can beat me. Even so, only I can snap huge trees and lift great buildings, because I turn all those little defeats into a great victory. Only the sage is capable of the great victory."

The sage is like the wind

Did you hear about the frog in the collapsed well? He said to the turtle of the eastern sea, "Aren't I happy! I come out and spring on the railing, or I go in and rest in the hollow of a missing brick. When I float in the water, it hugs me under the arms and supports my chin. When I stomp in the mud, my feet sink in until it covers my ankles. Look around at the larvae and shrimp and polliwogs. None of them can match me! To control the water of an entire gully and straddle the happiness of a whole collapsed well—this is really getting somewhere! Why don't you come in some time and see?"

Before the turtle of the eastern sea could get his left foot in, his right knee was already stuck. He teetered and fell back, and then began to tell of the sea. "A thousand *li* wouldn't measure its breadth. A thousand fathoms wouldn't plumb its depths. In Yu's time there were floods nine years in ten, but its waters never rose. In Tang's time there were droughts seven years in eight, but its shores never receded. Not to change or shift for an instant or ever, not to advance or retreat a little or a lot—that's the happiness of the eastern sea."

When the frog in the caved-in well heard this, he spluttered in surprise and forgot who he was. . . .

Did you hear about the toddler from Shouling who studied walking in Handan? Before he learned the local walk, he'd lost his native gait and had to shuffle home on his hands and knees.⁷⁶

Zhuangzi was angling by the Pu River when the king of Chu sent two officers to him, saying, "We would like to trouble you with administering Our kingdom."

⁷⁶Shouling was not actually a city but a tomb, construction of which was begun in 335 B.C.E. and probably continued throughout Zhuangzi's lifetime. Handan was the walled capital of Zhao and was also famous for its funerary parks. Assuming that the project at Shouling was to some extent modeled on the one at Handan, Zhuangzi's story may imply a sly criticism of people who follow the past to make sepulchers for themselves in the present.

Without looking up from his pole, Zhuangzi said, "I've heard Chu has a sacred turtle. It's been dead three thousand years and the king keeps it wrapped and boxed and stored up in his ancestral hall. Now, would that turtle rather have its bones treasured in death, or be alive dragging its tail in the mud?"

The two officers said, "It would rather be alive dragging its tail in the mud."

Zhuangzi said, "Go! I'll keep my tail in the mud, too." . . .

Zhuangzi and Huizi were wandering on a bridge over the Hao River. Zhuangzi said, "Look at those mottled fish out wandering at ease. That's what fish like!"

Huizi said, "You are not a fish. How do you know what fish like?"

Zhuangzi said, "You are not me. How do you know I don't know what fish like?"

Huizi said, "I'm not you, so I certainly don't know what you know. And since you're not a fish, you don't know what fish like. There, perfect!"

Zhuangzi said, "Let's go back to the beginning. When you asked how I knew what fish like, you had to know I knew already in order to ask. I know it by the Hao River—that's how."⁷⁷

Chapter Eighteen: Perfect Happiness

. . . When Zhuangzi's wife died, Huizi came to mourn her. At that moment, Zhuangzi was squatting down, beating on a tub, and singing.

Huizi said, "You lived with this person, raised children, and grew old together. Not to cry when she died would be bad enough. But to beat on a tub singing! Isn't that too much?"

Zhuangzi said, "No. When she first died, don't you think I was like everyone else? But then I considered her beginning, before she was alive. Not only before she had life, but before she had form. Not only before she had form, but before she had *qi*."

In all the mixed-up bustle and confusion, something changed and there was *qi*. The *qi* changed and there was form. The form changed and she had life. Today there was another change and she died. It's just like the round of the four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. She was resting quietly, perfectly at home, and I followed her crying 'Wah-hah!' It seemed like I hadn't comprehended fate. So I stopped." . . .

Nothing did change.
she was

⁷⁷The word translated as "how" can also mean "where."

Chapter Nineteen: Penetrating Life

... Yan Hui said to Kongzi, "I once crossed the depths at Goblet Gulf. The ferryman handled the boat like a spiritual being. I asked him, 'Can a person learn to handle a boat like that?' He said, 'A good swimmer can master the ability. And a diver can handle it easily even if he's never seen a boat before.' I asked him for more but he wouldn't tell me. May I ask you what he meant?"

Kongzi said, "A good swimmer can master it because he forgets the water. A diver can handle it easily without ever seeing a boat before because he views the depths like a hillside and a flipped boat like a slipping cart. The ten thousand things could all flip and slip in front of him and they wouldn't get in his front door. Where could he go and not be at ease? Betting for gold, for tiles, you're good. Betting for buckles, you worry. Betting for gold, you panic. Your skill is the same, but you care, so you value what is on the outside. Those who value what is on the outside are clumsy on the inside." ...

Chapter Twenty: The Mountain Tree

... Zhuangzi was wandering by the edge of the Diaoling preserve when he saw a strange magpie flying up from the south. Her wings were seven feet across and her eyes were an inch around. She bumped into his forehead and then crashed in a chestnut grove. He said, "What kind of bird is this, with such magnificent wings that don't get it anywhere and such big eyes that can't see?"⁸⁹ Hunching up his robes and tiptoeing forward, he pursued it, bow in hand. He saw a cicada forgetting itself in a pretty bit of shade. A praying mantis took advantage of the cover to grab for it, forgetting its own body at the sight of gain. The strange magpie was right behind, eyeing the prize and forgetting its truth. Zhuangzi shuddered. "Eeeee! Things certainly entangle one another, each one dragging in the next!" He threw down his bow and ran back the way he came—but then the warden of the grove saw and pursued him, cursing.

Zhuangzi went home and didn't come out for three days. His attendant, Straw, asked, "Sir, why haven't you left the house recently?"

Zhuangzi said, "I was guarding my body but forgot myself. I looked at muddy water and mistook it for clear depths. I've heard my teacher say, 'Out in the world, follow its rules.' Now I was wandering by Diaoling and

⁸⁹The strange magpie could be Breeze on her return journey. See *Zhuangzi*, chapter 1, pp. 208-13.

forgot myself. A strange magpie bumped my forehead, wandered into the chestnut grove, and forgot its truth. And the grove warden took me for a poacher! That's why I haven't been out." ...

Chapter Twenty-Two: Knowledge Wandered North

... Master East Wall asked Zhuangzi, "Where is this so-called Way?" Zhuangzi said, "There's nowhere it isn't."

Master East Wall said, "You must be more specific."

Zhuangzi said, "It's in an ant."

"How about even lower?"

"It's in the grass."

"How about lower still?"

"In tiles."

"How about even lower than that?"

"It's in dung and urine."

When Master East Wall did not reply, Zhuangzi said, "Your questions don't reach the substance. When the inspector of the hunt asked the superintendent of the market about poking pigs for fatness, he was told the lower the better. But you shouldn't insist on that. There is nowhere it isn't. The perfect Way is like this and so are great words. 'Whole,' 'everywhere,' and 'all' are three different names for the same thing, making a single point." ...

Chapter Twenty-Three: Mister Gengsang Chu

... People who have had their feet cut off forsake jewelry, because they are beyond praise and blame. Chained convicts are not afraid of heights because they have left life and death behind them. They have given up. They do not care. They have forgotten other people, and by forgetting other people they have become people of Heaven. You can honor them and they won't be pleased. You can despise them and they won't be mad. Only those who have identified with Heaven's harmony are like this. ...

Chapter Twenty-Four: Mister Ghostless Slow

... Zhuangzi was accompanying a funeral when he passed by Huizi's grave. Turning to his attendants, he said, "When Plaster Monkey got a speck of mud on his nose as thick as a fly's wing, he would ask Builder Stone to slice

if off. Builder Stone would twirl his axe like the wind and chop away obediently, getting all the mud and leaving the nose unharmed, while the plasterer stood there without changing his expression. Years later, when Plaster Monkey had passed away, Lord Yuan of Song⁸¹ heard about the trick and summoned Builder Stone.

"Do it for Us!" he commanded.

"Builder Stone replied, 'I was able to do it once, but the material I worked with died long ago.'

"Since my own teacher died," Zhuangzi continued, "I have been without material. I have no one to talk to."

Kongzi said, "I have heard the unspoken speech but I've never tried to speak it. . . . I wish I had a beak a yard long!"⁸²

Chapter Twenty-Six: Outside Things

... A trap is for fish: when you've got the fish, you can forget the trap. A snare is for rabbits: when you've got the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words are for meaning: when you've got the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find someone who's forgotten words so I can have a word with him? ...

like Buddha's ferry

Chapter Thirty-Two: Mister Clampdown Lie

... When Zhuangzi was about to die, his students wanted to bury him lavishly. He said to them, "I'll have Heaven and earth for a casket, the sun and moon for ornaments, the constellations as pall-bearers, and the ten thousand things as mourners. Isn't everything prepared for the funeral? What could you add?"

"We're afraid the crows and kites will eat you."

"Above ground I'll feed the crows and kites. Below I'll feed the crickets and ants," Zhuangzi said. "Stealing from one to feed the other would be awfully unfair."⁸³

⁸¹Reigned 531–517 B.C.E.

⁸²Cf. *Zhuangzi*, chapter 2, p. 217, "We think [human speech] is different from the peeping of fledglings. But is there really any difference or isn't there?"

⁸³Cf. *Analects* 9.12.

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